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# The Joy Of Belonging

## Alison's Weekend in the Blue Mountains

by Alison Cook

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A couple of weeks ago I was invited to attend a Women's Retreat in the Blue Mountains, being organised by my Church, the Metropolitan Community Church in Darlinghurst. M.C.C. is a non-discriminatory church for Gays, Lesbians, Trannies etc.

*Those trannies ... learn to grit their teeth and accept that life can be an incredibly lonely affair.*

As a tranny, only six months into fulltime transition I found the prospect of a weekend of communal living with twenty biological women a little daunting to say the least. I was scared s\*\*\*less. As I find it difficult lying to a Pastor, and I couldn't find an adequate excuse for not going, I had little choice, I went, this last weekend.

Whilst there we did lots of women type things. The girls made a wall hanging banner for the church. We practised as a women's choir and we talked a lot. We returned about Sunday lunch. And we all attended the church service later that evening.

On arriving home after the service, about 10:00pm, I changed, made a cup of tea, composed myself and wrote the following, which I emailed to the Pastor a few hours later for inclusion in their next newsletter. It is not something that had been mulled over for weeks, changing bits here and there. It was written I believe from the heart and reflects feelings that many trannies experience.

The weekend quite dramatically changed my thoughts about myself. Those constant niggling doubts as to whether what I was doing was right have gone completely. I no longer consider myself in some kind of half way house, neither male nor female. I am a woman, and proud of it.

This weekend I experienced a miracle, the indescribable joy of belonging.

Let me explain. I am an M.T.F. tranny, and I only made the transition, fulltime, early this year. What is an M.T.F. tranny? Well in autopsies on stillborn babies, doctors are now able to tell the sex of the baby by subtle differences in the brain. So when Nature in its wisdom produces a baby that has the brain of one gender and the genitalia of the other, you have the starting point for a tranny. In my case a female brain and male genitalia. So a tranny is a transsexual or what we prefer, a transgendered person. And M.T.F. means male-to-female.

In order to understand the miracle to which I refer one needs to understand also that most friendships and relationships seem to start from an expectation of how the other person reacts. That initial expectation almost always derives from ones outer appearance i.e. male or female. Thus men bonding with men is almost always based on an expectation of common interests. Likewise with women.

Trannies have a major problem here. They have the psyche, thought processes, interests and expectations of one gender but their outward appearance tends to indicate the other. With the net result that friendships and relationships do not even get to first base, especially with those trannies trying to deny to themselves that they are not what their inner voice says.

Those trannies who don't commit suicide learn to grit their teeth and accept that life can be an incredibly lonely affair. As a male before transition, the number of times I played golf on my own or went fishing on my own would be a thousand times the occasions when I played golf or went fishing with company.

So friendships, relationships, the ability to get on with either ones own apparent gender or the other become non-existent. And you just learn to live with it. It is not that society ostracises trannies, it's just that they never seem to fit in anywhere.

So to the miracle of the joy of belonging. This weekend I was invited on a Women's Retreat. I am in my mid-fifties and I do not recollect ever being invited to an event where the invitee has actually wanted me to turn up. Even family occasions like christenings and weddings, I always had the impression that it would have been preferable if had sent a present and not turned up.

I was perceived to be an oddity. I didn't drink large amounts of beer with the men and discuss the football nor did I wander around chatting up the women. I didn't come across as being gay either. And I tried to avoid groups of women in case I accidentally divulged

my inner-most secret. Nor did I appear to have any interest in sex. I just didn't fit in end of story.

At the Women's Retreat this weekend, I DID fit in! I couldn't mention one of the girls without mentioning them all. Each and every one made me welcome. I spent the whole weekend doing what my spirit and soul have always wanted; to be able to spend time in the company of women as a woman. It was an incredible experience.

And then at the evening service back in Sydney, I was able to join them in the women's choir. When I was told that I'd been chosen to help unfurl the banner, I couldn't believe that this was actually happening to me, Later when I joined the group in front of the banner for photographs I could feel the emotion beginning to well up and I left shortly after.

As I drove home the tears began to flow and by the time I arrived they were gushing freely. I had cried all the way home, but they were tears of happiness. I really had experienced a miracle, that of the joy of belonging for the first time in my life. As to a miracle, surely a cure for a mental anguish can be just as miraculous as that for any physical ailment.

I can't find the words that would even come close to describing my gratitude to the girls at the retreat for their kindness and generosity of spirit, other than to say they were part of my miracle.

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