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Fear: the Great Motivator

Most of Us Understand Living With Fear

by Sarah Rutherford

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Transition is rarely easy, but always worth the effort, because no matter what fear you face, no matter what opposition is against you, at the end of the road, the reward is more than worth it ... it is real life, as it always should have been, freedom.

We all like to believe that our actions and activities, our thoughts and understandings are all premeditated, that what we do is rational, sensible and logical in progression; but in truth, often they are not.

In many ways using that fear in a positive way makes us stronger, more determined to succeed, after all, we deserve to, don't we?

More likely what drives us much of the time is fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of being seen, fear of being detected or abuse, fear of losing, family, home, friends ... there is so much fear, one wonders how it is ever possible to survive at all, never mind compensate for it.

Being transsexual merely adds one more element onto the fear scale, that of being ourselves, yet for many of us we manage to not only be ourselves, but also survive the sometimes seeming army of people who resent not just our existence, but also who we are.

The first thing one realises when beginning transition is that it has probably taken half a lifetime to reach that point. It is not a matter of courage or bravery, but that of needs driven, the need to express oneself and feel free and able to do so. Opposition at this stage is usually thick and fast, as family, friends, work mates ... all seem to take a stance either for or against this change. For them the person they knew could not be the person they see emerging before them, as the image they have formed over years has always been one of compliance to a set stereotype, and irrespective of whether they always approved or disapproved of that stereotypical model, they happily accepted it as being ... 'normal'.

Fear though, is the great motivator, and for this reason no matter how scared we are, our inner fear of staying as we were is far greater than anything the fear of transition can throw at us. I am sure that few transsexual people would ever want to return to their original facade, nor could be at all happy that way. So fear drives our needs, and to fulfil those needs we face fear head on, and deal with it one action, one moment, one day at a time.

So, understanding ourselves on a needs basis, we venture out into the world as ourselves, and to be honest, unless we are extremely lucky and have influential friends with good dress sense and age related taste, we usually make total parts of ourselves the first few times out and about. Of course it's all in the learning curve, simply because the things we should have learnt as little girls or little boys, we never had a chance to do. In general the vast majority of early life was just in trying to survive, and that meant conforming to opinion and supposition of a visual gender image.

Puberty over for the second time, some get a little more adventurous, now this can take time, or happen in a hell of a rush. There are a few of us who come out like bulls at a gate, not wanting to waste one precious moment of time, not after waiting so long for freedom. Others, well, some cruise along at a set pace, others really take their time, every step cautiously plotted along the way. In reality there is no set time limit for transition, no routine that must be followed or adhered to, and certainly no pace that can be considered as the right one ... people transition at their pace, and that is something only they can decide, not anyone else.

Having got past the early fears then, some take to finding work, that is assuming they haven't transitioned at work, which can be incredibly hard, but that depends upon the workers and the company. Others chose to return to some form of education, as in my case to obtain that always dreamt of university degree. It sounds straight forward enough, but it usually isn't, for even in the highest of education systems, there are still opinionated idiots, staff and students alike, who believe they have a mandate to put the word on you, voice their narrow mind, or lay down the law according to Moses.

Overcoming such opposition is something we have to deal with if we want what we want, and if we are determined enough to win the day. If you look at each event as a sort of a battle, you wouldn't be far wrong. It is a battle of minds, of wits and intellect, after all what you are usually dealing with is ignorance and gross intolerance, and yes, even fear ... but their fear, not yours. Often people attack because they are afraid, afraid of what they see or feel, it may well be they have a gender or sexual issue of their own, or it may just be they are afraid of being in some way contaminated. Such confrontation can happen, and the secret is not to bite, to not lower yourself

to that level of your attacker, to set an example they should have had the decency to follow. In short, be patient, be calm, think clearly, and where there is a system such as university for dealing with extremes of abuse, apply that system. In short, taking the law into your own hands rarely works, and no matter what people do to you, you will always emerge as the protagonist.

Fear, it certainly has its uses, and it can keep us going no matter what the obstacle. In many ways using that fear in a positive way makes us stronger, more determined to succeed, after all, we deserve to, don't we?

Living with fear is something most of us grow with, and while it can influence parts of our life, it certainly should not dominate it. Just getting out the front door in the morning can be hard, using public transport, working or studying, shopping or merely going out to try to enjoy oneself can always hold the fear of being in some way at risk from a public rebuke. The problem is if we cannot overcome that fear, if we cannot set aside other people's fear, and if our expectations of ourselves are not far greater than those of others, then life will be intolerable, for us.

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There will never be total acceptance of transsexual people, not while people have holes in their behinds, but by being ourselves, by overcoming our own fears, we can show people we are very human, deserving and an important part of any community. Our lack of intolerance, our examples of tolerance and acceptance, may well be a defining influence in the future, and if we can surpass our fears, one day society, for the most part, may put aside its fear, and make all our lives more enjoyable.

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