

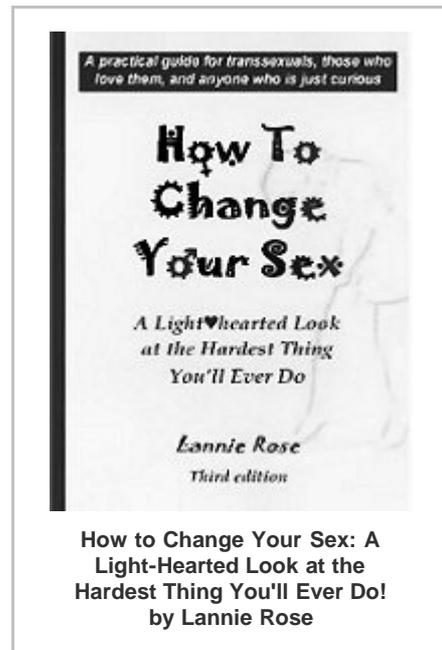
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Book Review: How to Change your Sex

A Light-hearted Look at the Hardest Thing You'll Ever Do!

reviewed by Willow Arune

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How to Change Your Sex

A Light-hearted Look at the Hardest Thing You'll Ever Do!

by Lannie Rose

Published by Lulu Press 2004

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... not a clinician or therapist, no pretence, no degree of relevance, just a friend telling you the steps involved.

Perhaps the closest comparison of this book is Mildred Brown's *True Selves*, long a favourite in transsexual circles. But this book is distinctive, as noted in the use of 'light-hearted' in the title. It is not a comedic look at the transsexual world, but a very well written, entertaining and informative look at all the steps along the way in transition. If I were to select a book to give to a family member of a transsexual person, *True Selves* would win; for a person trying to figure out to do or not to do, Lannie's book is far preferable.

'Light-hearted' is the key. There is no demand, just a cheery guide to starting out and where all this can head. A 'no pressure' book to read, enjoy, and perhaps follow written by one of us and not a clinician or therapist. No pretence, no degree of relevance. Just a friend telling you the steps involved.

We have needed such a book for a long time. There are candid discussion of the practical aspects, telling friends and family, dating, and even sex! What I enjoyed so much about this

book was that it was more like the conversations I enjoy with my trans women friends when nobody else is listening. Not that it gets deep into any subject, but enough is there to start your mind thinking.

Now, no book by a trans person is going to please all other trans people. There is always something for critics to seize upon and differ from. So? This book contains statements that I do not agree with, but those are matters of deep transsexual theory and their inclusion and viewpoint is a matter of opinion. I might have preferred some mention of diverse opinions, but given the broad statement the writer makes at the outset, that is really not necessary. Any reader will find out how diverse we are rather quickly if they have access to the Internet (and this book is intertwined with the Internet to some degree for full benefit, including reference to the major Internet sites).

Perhaps what this book does better than many is to point out that "you are not alone", that feeling that seems to plague so many of us starting off. Nor are we freaks by being different. The breezy and chatty style of the writer flows over some rough rocks, pointing them out to those that follow, but not scaring them off in so doing. In general, the advice is go as far as you are comfortable and go further only if that makes you more comfortable, coupled with a soft encouragement to go a little further than you might at times. A person reading this book who is contemplating any form of transgender living will find support, encouragement, and good company without academic or clinical colouring.

I think this book would be especially good for a younger person starting transition. Not to limit the age group of readers, this is most certainly a book I would refer to a late-teen or twenties type for a start. A primer if you will. Up here in the frozen North, some 'newbies' are 500 miles into the bush and this book (also available as an e-book) is strongly recommended for them. For older groups this book represents a good start perhaps supplemented by a recommendation to other books that would go further into concepts and theories selected on a personal basis. With that in mind, the bibliography is very limited. We transsexuals excel at the autobiography, and a carefully chosen one can greatly assist a person starting out. Reference to a few more would add to the value of this book for those reading it far from support groups and kindred spirits.

Lannie sets, and maintains, a very good balance between wants and reality. One example, on the results of S.R.S. she clearly points out that "some can, some can't" as to 'the big O' and that theme is consistent through other parts of transition, not 'selling' all the good without mentioning the bad. Discussing the things that can happen to a married transsexual woman, she points out to be sure of what is wanted at the end, a very wise caution.

All in all, this is a delightful quick read for anyone starting off, a way of getting your bearings in a new and strange world. Not aimed at those who have already done the deed, it is a book to keep on the shelf in case anyone asks "Do you think I am?". Let them read Lannie and come back! Many of their questions will already be pleasantly answered.

Is this a good book? Yes indeed, for the target market perhaps the best one out there. Consider this book as a very effective alternative to *True Selves*. For a support group, almost a necessity.

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