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# Why Don't You Want to be a Woman or a Man?

## The Real Reason for Going Through the Perilous Journey of Transition

by Jennifer Dianne Reitz

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Jennifer Diane Reitz

**I** just want to be an ordinary woman" cries out the Male-to-Female transsexual. "I wish I had just been born a man in the first place!" storms the Female-to-Male Transsexual. These are common enough statements. I too have said both of them, properly gendered to fit me of course, and felt them to be the absolute truth. And in a part of my heart, they are.

***Gender roles are always limiting for the simple reason that they are scripts, artificial stereotypes based on averages rather than true self-expression.***

But the experience of sixteen plus years have allowed me to learn and grow enough to see a few things that I could not entirely see, back during my transition. And the biggest lesson I have learned, is the real reason for going through the perilous journey of transition - and it is not to be a woman or a man.

Curious statement? Let me explain.

Being a "Woman" or a "Man" is more complex than you may realise. The simple words convey a very great amount of information. To say that someone is a "Woman" not only defines a physical sex, but also suggests a companioning gender identity, a common set of

behaviour traits related to both, and ... a socially created role as well.

One of the first things that the very young transsexual finds is that the natural behaviours that they express just being in the world, are not accepted by those around them. In every way, in every action, there are expectations that conflict with natural expression. The penalties for failing to meet these expectations can be very harsh, and so the young transsexual most often picks up on this and finds ways to adjust or act that reduce suffering.

This means that the young transsexual soon learns to become affected in behaviour, to become unnatural. They try very hard to conform, to fit the expectations given them, so as not to be caused hurt. It does not take many years of this, before understanding of what is natural behaviour and what is affected behaviour, is lost or compromised.

When the transsexual reaches a time where something must and can be done about their gender issues, there is often a great deal of separation from both life, and true-self going on. The best the lost soul can do is to grasp at the nearest ideal or form of the original suppressed self. The transsexual identifies with and seeks to emulate the desired gender role, just as they emulated an uncomfortable one.

Gender roles are very elaborate and structured. They contain virtually complete scripts, complex expectations, that cover every aspect of life, from little matters such as walking or sitting, to large matters, such as choice of career or options for lifestyle.

Lost to their core selves after years of self-suppression, the closest artificial role to that sought after self becomes overwhelmingly desirable. But the transsexual will usually learn, after several years, that this too, is not entirely right. Much better than before, but still confining.

This is a state not limited to transsexuals. Gender roles are always limiting for the simple reason that they are scripts, artificial stereotypes based on averages rather than true self-expression.

When I went through transition, I thought at first that I wanted to be a traditional woman, or some variation on the concept, a mother, a wife, a proper fit to the social role. Within months, for me at least, this started to chafe, and by the time of my surgery, I was angry at the entire concept. Few transsexuals realise the concept of role and their limits so quickly, and they suffer accordingly.

What I grasped so early was that the reason I was going through transition was not so that I could be a "Woman". I had no desire to conform to an artificial role of any sort whatsoever. I realised that trading one narrow set of expectations for another set of narrow expectations - even if that new set was closer to my core-self - would not make me happy. I would be less unhappy, but still miserable, in the conventional and limited role of a woman in society.

The reason I was transitioning, was not to become a woman, it was to become myself - whatever that actually turned out to mean.

The hormones definitely gave me a body that pleased me, that "felt right", a chemistry and perception that made me feel comfortable for the first time. Surgery finally gave me the genitalia that conformed to my own inner feeling of how I should be shaped. No longer did I feel deformed, but instead finally felt healed.

But I quickly found that I did not want to be limited by any expectations of how or what I was supposed to be. I wanted no part of the role that society uses to define being a "Woman".

I reasoned it thus: If transsexuality is a real thing, and if it is caused by innate gender differences in the brain, then it has nothing whatsoever to do with social roles. Social roles must be derived from natural expressions of average behaviour, turned into stereotypes. These stereotypes become rigid expectations.

If I truly had a female brain, then I would naturally already be a woman, and the adoption of any social role would be equivalent to acting out an affected performance. Much of my suffering had derived from feeling forced to perform an artificial role. The only path to enduring happiness would come from being myself. If my brain was truly as female as I believed, then my natural behaviour, my unaffected self, would make that obvious. If my brain was something else, it did not matter, what mattered was that I would be free.

Surgery and hormones did serve me well. They gave me contentment and peace of mind. They made me feel good, and feel physically and mentally healed. There is no other reason to do either. Surgery and hormones will not make anyone into a "man" or a "woman". What they can do is to alter shape, perception, chemistry, and flesh to a form that the transsexual can live with comfortably. Really being a man or a woman can only come from expressing one's true self, naturally.

What I learned is that the reason to go through transition is definitely not to be a definable, labelled thing, such as a "Man" or a "Woman".

The reason to go through transition is to be able to be content with the flesh that we wear, so that we can concentrate on being a changing, dynamic, unique individual expression of our heartfelt selves.

Whatever that mysterious-self may turn out to be.

I have learned that no other path leads to enduring happiness.

Understand this.

## Jennifer Diane Reitz

**Edited from Wikipedia:**  Jennifer Diane Reitz was born in 1959 in Baker, Oregon U.S.A. is an American writer, web comic author, and computer programmer, known for creating web comics such as *Unicorn Jelly*, *Pastel Defender Heliotrope* and *To Save Her*, and computer games such as *Boppin*. She is also the proprietor of *Transsexuality*, a website with general information on transsexualism and the home of the *COGIATI* gender identity test.



Jennifer is also a transsexual woman who underwent sex reassignment surgery in 1982. Since her transition, she has lived in a polyamorous relationship with three spouses. She currently lives in Olympia, Washington U.S.A. and considers herself agnostic. She identifies as bisexual, leaning toward lesbian.

Jennifer created the *COGIATI* (Combined Gender Identity And Transsexuality Inventory), a prototype test for people who think they might qualify as pre-op., pre-transitional male-to-female transsexuals, but feel uncertain. She claims on her *Transsexuality* website that some medical professionals have adopted her prototype test instead of developing a better version, and she expresses mixed feelings about this. She cautions that the *COGIATI* has many flaws and is not a reliable test for diagnosing transsexualism or gender identity disorder. Her insistence that the *COGIATI* is unfinished and not to be taken seriously and its emphasis on stereotypical gender roles has sparked controversy as some people who have taken the test in the process of exploring their gender identity have later said that the test's results skewed their understanding of themselves.

Learn more about Jennifer Diane Reitz at the [Transsexuality](#)  website.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.