

Chapter 1 - Living a life in shame

I remember one of the books I read in my youth vividly it was “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” by Eric Carle in it an ugly green caterpillar went about eating everything in site then in the end weaved a cocoon and transformed into a butterfly. I often wished in my life that such a thing would happen to me in life. However, the idea of a simple change of who I was on the outside would never come. There are no magical or even scientific ways to change me as I wish properly. The idea is thrown about in several stories I have read over the years. From stories that are prominent in Japanese manga (Comics) / anime culture to the idea of waking up in the body of another person like in the movie “Switch”. No as much as I wished for it, hope that perhaps there was some magical or instant cure for my pain then I would stop at nothing for it. However, I knew the answer already there is no such thing as instant cures or true magic as many storytellers over the years have placed it.

A comic in honor of Ranma ½ by the quote Queen of comics, Rumiko Takahashi, and Cheeky Angel by, Hiroyuki Nishimori. For those that don't read manga or watch anime both these stories are about boys cursed to become girls and dealing with humor about it. I'm of course a big fan of both stories (Takahashi's work in general) and like many TS wish that these had some real fact to them as it would make getting things resolved a lot easier with just a plane trip to swim in a cursed spring or reading a cursed book. Both books are can be found through VIZ Publishing.



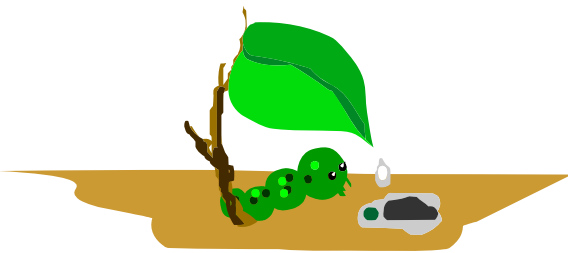
Many people would give the answer to me when I confronted me with the answer. You are a guy, you need to get over it and live your life as you were created. There is no way I can answer them back. I mean it is hard to tell them how far it is that you hurt in the 12-second attention span of people. I mean it is said you will never truly understand a person unless you walk through their shoes. However, the very idea of living in the body I have been born with and not the one I see myself as actually being.

It is documented that the difference in telling if a person is truly a transsexual versus just a Transvestite (a person who wishes to wear clothing of the alternate sex) it is the idea of suicide as a solution to resolve the pain of looking in the mirror at one self. It is not the only connection but it is one notable difference that brings many a sufferers to their end. Unable to go on living the quote lie in their life it is often seen as an easy way out.

I was the same. I spent my nights lying awake praying for a way to have my body changed and wake up in a form I could live with, but each night I was denied this wish. It through me in depression. In the last few years before coming out about the issue, I had constant thoughts of suicide. I found little joy in my life and along with letting my body be destroyed through bad health, I thought of ways to end my life. I thought of jumping from my living room window to the alley below from my 3rd floor apartment, but I knew that chances are too great I would survive and be further damned in this body, I had a fear of cutting myself and knew that I could never pull that off. I would try gassing myself and in a way, I did. I never reported a gas leak at my apartment until after I came out. However, with my luck it only resulted in giving me a headache. When I went over bridges in my car I thought, "if only I turned sharply I would plummet the car to my doom" but something always kept me moving forward.

It is the shame that gets you. The shame of never being able to be what you want in life. The shame that no matter what you do you will never be accepted, loved or even willing to go on. This is depression. It comes deeply with the territory of this life. If you're not careful the depression will hit you and you'll be stuck in what I can only describe as a trap where you only see the wrong way out as your only out. The wrong way being Suicide.

It takes a lot of soul searching to get out of this negative trap one places oneself in.



It was told to me that depression is like sitting down and looking at the sky and seeing nothing but a cloudy grey sky. Then one day through a process of drugs, treatment and / or therapy, that the sky will clear up and you will see the sun through the clouds. Well I am not saying that this is or isn't the case perhaps its best put to words in Glen Beck's "A Christmas Sweater", that it is a storm but off in the distance its clear, with every now and then another storm following behind the clearing and so on so forth. Just one issue or one problem never causes depression. Transgender issues that lead to depression in the lives of the transgender individual tend to bring with it other issues that are attached and intertwined with the basic issue of one hating the life they are forced to live by how they are born.

The storm everyone must face in ones life is different but getting through that storm is always the same by facing with all you hold dear.

In my personal experience I was having a lot of anger issues and self hatred issues some that where caused by my transgender issues others that where

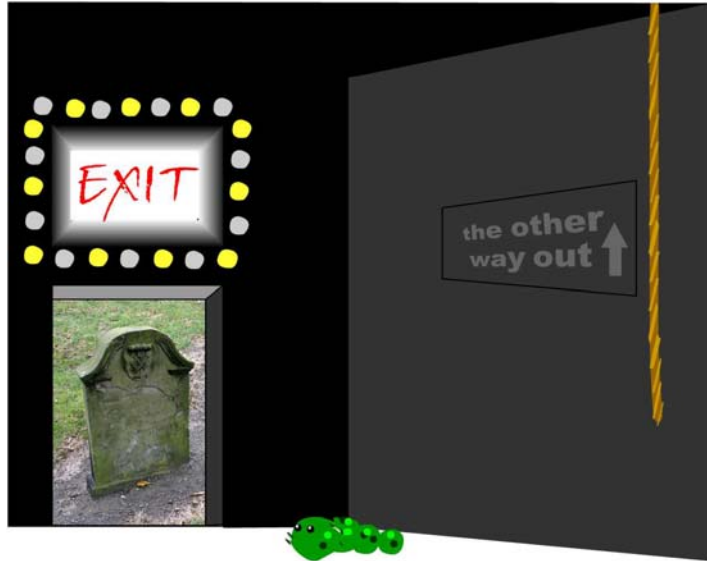
caused by my frustration and failure to get any where in my work. Also I had issues with anxiety that often had me being a quite keeping to myself person as to how I felt about things and sharing my opinion. I was able to easily come to terms with both my anxiety and my anger issues quickly and without doubt. However, since I did not come clean with the transgender issues I kept unknowingly adding guilt to my pain. Guilt that I hid myself from the world, hid myself from myself, and was denying what I wanted in life when people asked me what it was that I wanted to do with my life. I eventually added more guilt, Guilt for hurting my friends and family with out letting them know what really was hurting me, guilt that I could never find happiness. Slowly I was being crushed under this guilt and all I could see is pain and suffering. There was no out for me as I saw it there was no hope. My depression was my storm and I refused to see a way out even as I sat in therapy. The only answer that would run in my mind was to end it. Only by ending it all only by taking my life could my suffering truly be over and with it the suffering of my friends and family. I was wrong yet I did not have the strength of will to admit my error.

I was alone and in tears on a late night in the beginning of October. I had often cried myself to sleep. Nevertheless, this night was the hardest for me. I had been given the exercise, which I have been given several times before with Therapist and Psychiatrists. The exercise was a simple dairy, a letter to me. I was in pain I had no job other then my drawing and I threw that aside as I did not feel like working on my own work at the time.

I was in debt and once again, my family was paying the bills for me adding more guilt to my pile. I was sitting in front of my computer it was two in the morning and I could not sleep. I could not find a way to speak to myself. I found it ironic that here I was a cartoonist of a comic call "Critical View" where I looked at the true-life issues and problems at my life and made fun of those situations, as a means of stress relief could not reach down far enough to speak what mattered truly to me, where my pain truly lied. I had music playing on my computer as I sat there mainly tossing blame at people that did me wrong along the way placing blame that hind

sight now tells me that most likely they had no reason for my irritation and fury to be directed at them. I sat there struggling with myself. Tossing my hatred around at any one to keep it from myself but I was growing short on a list of people and shorter on common sense. At no point in my life had I ever seen the darkness greater then that moment. I remember getting up from my desk and walking the five feet to the kitchen. There I knew I had an answer to my pain. I reached inside and pulled out a large kitchen knife. I stood there staring at a means to an end. I walked the knife back with me to the computer desk where I started to write what I had full intention on being my last words ever.

Instead, I wrote something different. Call it the voice inside. My conscience. The devil and angel that sit on my shoulders or what not. I wrote a message to myself but it was not to the me that was on the inside. No this was a message from the inside it was a message for the me on the outside to wake up and listen. It was 3:05 in the morning, the day before was overcast but the coming day was a bright, my computer was playing the song "Blue" from the end of the anime Cowboy Bebop, and as the songs words hit me I began to write without knowing what it was I would come out with. I did not look at what I wrote. Part of me never wanted to look. It took me an hour and half to finally stop and read what it was; the me on the inside had to say. My eyes where red by now stinging from the constant flow of tears. I noticed the sky first before looking at the screen of my computer. Dawn was starting. From my computer desk, I could look out and see one of the constantly busy roads of town only now at this time there was no traffic. Two small yet long clouds hung in the sky that had now begun to lighten slightly as dawn was still and hour to go. It was quite when I looked at the words I had typed. I cut off the music, as a headache was starting form the hours of noise and tears. I finally gave in and looked at the words to myself.



The choice a person has to make is a hard one when transgender issues first come to life you ether has a hard climb out of depression by accepting you for yourself or death and shame of never being whom you see yourself as.

These were the words I wrote

I am here. I am here yet you do not hear me see me or acknowledge my presence. You shut me off and hide me away. I am the real you. I create I love I hurt I forgive I live. I am not as you see yourself on the outside. I am beautiful. I love to cook; I love to be with my family and friends. I do not care what others may say. I do not care if even with these words that I might further alienate myself from my friends, my family, my world. No the only one I cannot lose is myself. I cannot lose me I can never forget who I am. I am a woman. I know not in body but in heart in soul and in mind. And if I go through with this destruction of my life before I have the chance to even live then I will never truly have known how it was to live free. All I ask is for a chance. A chance to live. If you cannot take the pain then let it go and let me carry that burden. Allow the me that you deny to become.

I sat there quietly taking in those words and watching the dawn of the new day lighten the sky outside the window. I now knew what had to be done. I had to come clean with myself. Sure, I knew I would find myself depressed again from time to time. However, if I did not take this path here and now then, I would not be here for long and never again find happiness in my life. From here, I began to work on finding the words to tell my friends and family. The day I came clean was a Wednesday night and a game night for me. Although I spent the day calling my family working on gathering them up for a get together where I would come clean with them. My friends were another matter. I had no idea how coming out publicly would be taken it took me time over the week to come clean with all of them but thankfully I found nothing but support from them along the way. The first time I came clean it was hard on me and I broke out in tears crying it out. By the time I came clean with my family it was a little easier but coming from a Southern family that follows in Christian beliefs I had my worries and still find issues to this day, but the one thing that brought me fear never happened, my family still loved me. Even though we may not see eye to eye at times the love is still there and with that hope for a future life free of shame.

Okay so here is how I will try to end each chapter. With some great advice, that covers how to deal with these issues at hand. In this chapter was all about dealing with the problem of depression and shame that is placed on oneself and the following are a few exercises / suggestions to help.

Transgender Exercise (dealing with the self-doubt)

Okay the first exercise is one I found and did myself and that was making a pros and cons chart. You do a chart for both living your life as is and one for changing your life that way you want it to be. You give yourself 20 minutes to do this no more no less in the end count them and see where you stand.

Pros of my gender as it is to me	Pros of changing my gender to me
Cons of my gender as it is to me	Cons of changing my gender to me

Suggestions

1. Seek out professional help - no matter how strong you think you are no one can do this alone you need help and therapist / Psychologists are there to help you, be your issue be one of transgender nature or not, its good to have a strong support

2. Be open with yourself - Do not ever say the words “I don’t want to” or “I cant” these will help force you into making excuses and bring you closer to misery. I’m not saying go out and shout at the hill tops or making sure every one in your life needs to know how you are but it helps that you let yourself explore both new things and new ways to do old things.

3. Exercise - It’s not just good for ones physical health but also ones mental health. It’s often hard to think about issues that bother you when you really concentrate on breaking a sweat.

4. Make and Keep a Regular daily schedule - Being organized in your life helps, you keep your mind straight and helps cut down on surprises that can bring you down.

5. Sleep the right amount - Getting 8 to 9 hours sleep is all you need, too little and it will stress your body and mind, too much and it can do the same. It’s also a good idea if you can to be up in morning hours the early day sun is not only good for the body producing vital vitamins but it’s also a way to calm the stressed out mind.

6. Have a contact - This is vital and possibly the most important step in this chapter. If you feel that you are slipping into a deep place its good to have a contact with not only the basic help lines but with friends and family that can each lend their support and help you through the rough times cause there will be those times.

7. Take time - find something you love or enjoy when your depressed go and do that thing. It’s a small step but helps greatly with calming yourself down and helping you think rationally about things.