

## Chapter 3: Bringing the truth to Family and friends

First steps are always the hardest and none are more difficult than facing the ones you love and having to come clean about yourself with them. This chapter is designed to tackle this very issue. We hit four key divisions of friends and family, they are as follows, Close family (Parents, Grandparents and Siblings), Loved Ones (Spouses/significant others), The Little ones (Children/grandchildren), and finally Buddies (Friends). This is possibly my hardest chapter to write not just because my own family and friends mean so much to me, but also because two of these categories (Loved Ones and The little ones) do not exist in my own life. So as with every chapter I suggest you seek assistance in the help of a trained professional and not try to take my advice on whole. But unlike other chapters I'm going to give advice at the start of this subject and then tasking each type one at a time, I will also for the sake of my family who still bear issues we currently try to work through on this subject will gloss over much of my own life only really giving examples of how I would or did deal with each issue.

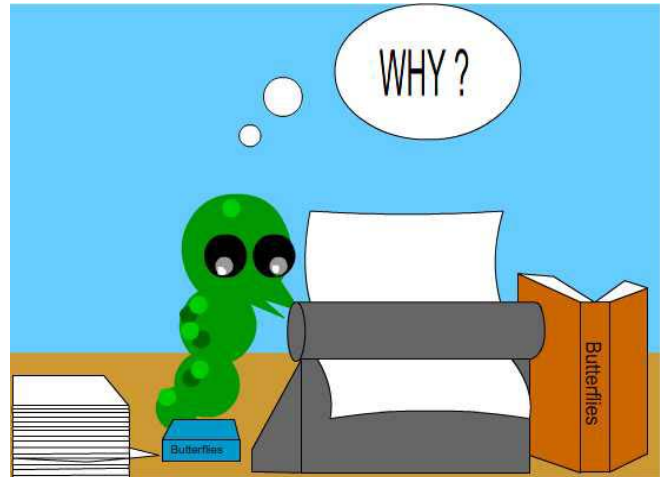
### **My basic Advice in general on this subject.**

In the past few chapters I covered about learning how to be open to yourself and be willing to share. Here is where I have to place the first speed bump in the plans of many and that is. **DON'T GO IN DRAG TO ANNOUNCE IT.** When you get with the group your going to meet up with and start to become open to it be calm and patient but mainly come prepared to offer both evidence and a open mind and discuss the issues and how they feel about you being the way you are. Do not do the whole Hollywood dramatic come out with it all in one blast. You'll only confuse and upset the person and bring hurt out in a otherwise strong relationship. The way to look at handling the issue is calmly slowly unearthing the issue before them and gauging their take on who you are. Having materials prepared such as doctor notes from therapy, Medical studies or a personal letter towards them. Anything stronger and they might take offense anything less and they might shrug it off as a joke. The Fact is that in coming out each time towards someone you have to be willing to sit down and explain your situation and even then you might not win them over but you at least tell them where it is you stand.

### **Close Family (Parents, Grandparents, Siblings)**

Despite what we care to believe in childhood these are the folks in most of our lives that know us best. Unless you're a single orphan of the streets you more than likely will find your biggest challenge to coming out is addressing the people who raised and stood by you as you grew up. A strong bond has been built for years and here and now your going to test that bond by nearly destroying it.

Many people when I queried how their families took it often replied the same way. They would say its like they asked their family to bury a child. In many ways it is. Being transgender while is not a bad thing develops a lie around a illusion in the early years of a normal life and when that lie is exposed it takes with it the belief that the transgender child ever had a happy relationship and childhood. Parents and other close members of the family go into a state of regret and despair. They often begin to doubt their judgments on how they raised the child and what went wrong. Sometimes it can even bring them to depression, Resentment, and even excommunication and expulsion of the child from their lives. I'd be lying if I didn't say that even in following the advice I give you could still lose out on the relationship you had before. Instead you need to at least build a relationship that will hold this test of your bonds.



*Do Your Homework.*

*When preparing to come out be sure to focus on being Able to answer any and every possible question that may arise from your new life and how it effects the others around you.*

The best way possible is to take awhile after you came out about the subject to yourself and think through how best to confront your family. Personally I suggest doing this over a night or even longer in the home. Things will get questioned and most likely heated and cause issues you don't want to have seen out in public.

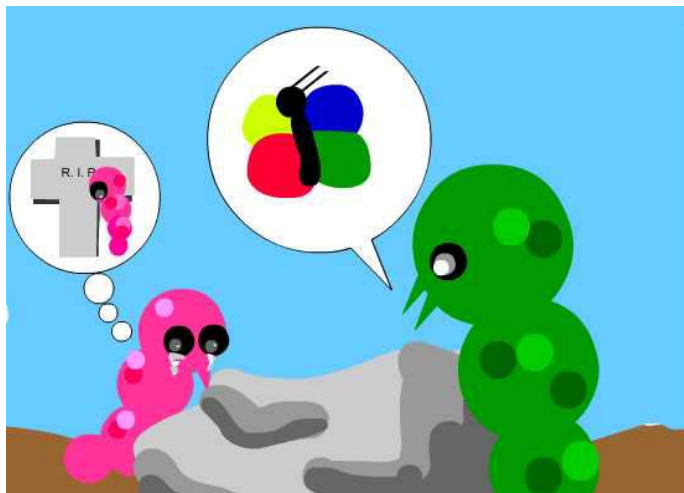
Bring along as much info as you can find. Personally I suggest several doctors studies and even the reports and opinions of individuals online. The more information you can provided outside your own feelings the better you can support your point when family question as to why.

All is a good suggestion but keep in mind the greatest question that will develop will ultimately a personal one that is never easy to answer.

*“What makes you feel this way?”*

There is no easy answer and each case has a different answer. In my own life I faced this question and said,

*“I Never in my life felt like I was in the right body, I would curse my body and let it slowly die by not caring for it and from time to time even try to bring harm to it. I am at a cross roads and if I choose to keep on this path as a guy its only a matter of time before it all comes to an end. I cant keep fighting who I am and if I do you might as well start planning for my ultimate death as I don't know how much longer I can hold on to my life.”*



*No matter how things turn out those seriously close may be stuck going through the stages of grief suffering in ways as if the one had passed away. it's a common thing and the best thing that can be done it to give the person time and comfort them as much as possible.*

Therapist to help deal with the fallout of the events but unlike the other cases to be covered in this chapter even though its suggested family therapy is not a requirement.

### **Loved One's (Spouse / Significant Others)**

From what I've learned in my studies much of the advice given in the last section also applies here. But as the person your dealing with isn't some one causally in your life but someone you gave your heart to then its best you absolutely seek help in the form of couples counseling on this subject.

Its sad and tragic that I came to that point in my life and worse that I saw only two choices. When asked if I thought I could hold off and remain a man and take meds to effect my mood or that I was showing signs of being Bi polar and should see a doctor about it. I said well if I went that route what would happen when the meds wore off or ran out. I would be in a worse case cause now the problem brought on greater depression and bringing me closer to suicide. A doctor visit a few weeks later along with Therapy sessions proved that I was not Bi Polar and was in the right mind set. Over the years I showed along with my life change that I became healthier both physically, Mentally and socially. Even though issue still to this day arise based off my decision, my family has started to see the change in my life as a improvement in my life, From the depressed unwilling to be active in any way slob that I was.

While dealing with these issues it might not be a bad idea to set up a session for both yourself and your family with a certified

No one is more close to your decisions and your life than the one you love. When you face this part of your life and bring it to light with you love, chances are it can not only test your love but has a high chance of ending your relationship without it being an issue of if you two still love each other or not. No greater challenge of any relationship will ever be given than this test. It's a matter of each person's understanding of the other and tolerance on dealing with the effect of outside forces on that relationship.

Lets look at the first part of this, the understanding of one another. Despite working to be an open book in a relationship things remain hidden and bringing up an issue like this will bring up questions in each person's judgment and feelings towards the other. The issue will strain each person's feelings and can cause significant mental and health based stress. The best solution I have found is to step up and bring this info out in a therapy controlled environment. The reason for this is it grants each person a chance to talk in a controlled situation that might keep from having a dramatic event that will cause a violent act. Once out give each other some time and space to think over how they wish to move forward. Don't push let the issue be something for them to understand and seek their own answers. Be willing to answer any and all questions you are asked. Being asked questions is believe it or not a good sign that your loved one is actually thinking of how they feel in the end. Try not to be dramatic if your true self is rejected. If your loved one wants to end the relationship then it over don't try and force this decision of your life upon them and make them forcefully try and understand you. Forcing will close the heart of the one you love and bring you on the path of a more dangerous possible situation than just giving time and being patient with them will result in a better shot at acceptance.

The key to maintaining some resemblance of your relationship is patience, understanding and remembering the things that brought you two together. The old saying "Love will see you through" is put to the test here. Just make sure that you protect yourself and your significant other from the pain that can be brought upon each of you from this decision.

### **The Little Ones (Children and Grandchildren)**

My best advice to keep you and your children from facing ridicule and harassment is to not go through transitioning if you have children under the age of college students involved in your life. The issue will cause not only stress and strain on your relationship with each other but also with the relationship the children have in social interactions of their school and friends. An issue like this brings a stain upon the child's life even if they accept you for you. Friends of children can easily find out and cause rifts and alienate your child for your actions causing problems from name calling, bullying, and even thoughts of suicide on their parts. The older the child the better they have to understand without the problem becoming a severe tear in a relationship.

#### **Suggestions**

Maintain your built relationship, if you raised your child as a father figure then don't pressure them into accepting you as a mother figure. You still are that figure that was the one originally in the child's life. Studies show that a strong parental figure of both mother and father will strengthen the child's development changing that structure on your child by force may cause social and mental anguish in the child later in life.

It's not contagious. Assure the child that even though signs of being Transgender are in reality a genetic disorder there has been no sign that it's a defect that is inheritable. Thus just because you are like this doesn't mean that they too will go through it.

Be a Support system. As stated before issues like name calling, bullying or worse can develop around your child and you need to make sure you comfort and help your child to be protected and strong enough to handle the threats and dangers that society may bring to them because of your actions.

Be Understanding. Make it a regular thing to talk about the issue with your child and try to get to

understand how they feel about the issue. Try to talk to them on their level. Be patient children take time and may even try to avoid answering if it bothers them. If you need to play with them and bring up questions through play time.

Be Willing to sacrifice your choice for your child's safety. If you don't think you will be or shows no sign of wanting to accept your decision or you feel your putting your decision ahead of your child's development then DO NOT TRANSITION. No matter how depressed about it you may be this life decisions benefits is ultimately one that is fully personal, yet the negative effects are felt to those around us. Your Family comes first before you in this case. Don't ruin your child's life by changing your own. But this is fully your call. I know I'm sorry these words have to be harsh but do you truly want others to suffer for you.

Seek Help. Family Therapy is a definite suggestion. What you may think you getting through with your child might just be a cover they through up hiding the true nature of this and other issues on their lives. A good therapist can help break down the walls and establish a better understanding of one another and how they feel about the issue.

Overall if you have a strong love and involvement with your child's life more than likely they will understand and sometimes might even like to play games of dress up with you or be proud of their parent. With Hope and Love nothing can stop your life long relationship with each other.

### **Buddies (Friends)**

Here is where you learn if you have true friends or people just hanging on you for some reason or another. The easiest yet at the same time most difficult to read situations is coming out to ones friends. My main suggestion is to truly know where your friends stand on issues of similar nature such as gay issues or even dealing with people who have transitioned. They may surprise you, I know I was when I came out. Because we tend to hang out with people of similar tastes many friends may know of sorts what is bothering you before you come out about it. However the closer your relationship the more stress it may put on them. The best thing you can do is to be open and understanding.

Listen to their responses and see how close your friendship will remain. When you come out to them

*Basically don't put yourself in a situation that will pressure both of you in your friendship. When I came out lucky for me all my friends were comforting and understanding to me. The only awkward situation was right after my announcement to the group one of my friends guessing it before I truly said the words while another friend shouted "I'm Psychic, I knew this is what it was about." we all looked at her and since she was quiet and did say anything about it and wasn't the one to come out and say what it was. Since then its become a joke that we look to her for her psych predictions to spew out of other peoples mouths.*



*Sometimes friends just wont get it or choose not to understand it. Its okay don't risk your safety over forcing friends to understand. Be willing to maintain your friendship but don't risk your life or who you are for your friendship if its in danger of ending with this announcement.*

Don't pressure the change too much on them.

*In my life I share the basics about my life with my friends, things like stuff that bothers me, physical issues and maybe from time to time odd dreams I have. Things I don't share are the details. My sex life while sometimes a talked about issue mainly is a matter of shock that I briefly cover in life and don't cover the stronger details of flirts and sometimes the pictures (often scary to me) I have sent to me from all kinds of places.*

Be forgiving, if they say things that might. Your friends may have questions but don't pressure them with things that may make them uncomfortable about.

*My own issues that have developed have been being called sir, and while my friends try to call me by my new name (Brittany) I do from time to time get my old name (Brian) called from them. All be it I get the most of this from work. My job has me be very much in front of several strangers and from time to time I do get called "miss" but often mainly do to the look of my neck, face and build I get "sir". The word often causes me to cringe but since they often are strangers I make nothing of it but when someone who does know I respond with the stare of death.*

Be willing to laugh about it, if you carry a solid serious mood about the subject then your likely to cause a rift in your friendship.

*In my own life I tend to joke around with many things including my transgender life. But from time to time you might be surprised by some that say its wrong to look at the lighter side of the subject. I got such a talking to when I came out to my boss at work. He felt I was opening myself up to verbal abuse, I assured him that there is a difference in what we joke about and abuse a good example my friends often like to say the phrase "that's what she said" after I talk a long winded and I will jokingly reply "Yeah I just said that" where as I have had situations where people would tell me I need to get on the floor and suck some cock that's verbal abuse.*

Overall friends can be the strongest support structure one can get when going through this situation. They are close enough to see how it effects you and yet distant enough to not be trapped within the problems that can arise from the issue.

In Closing the concept of coming out to any of these people is vital and important yet at the same time takes time patience, understanding, love and support at times in the form of therapy. As I stated in the past chapters its important to be open about things but at the same time make sure your not putting yourself at risk of a dangerous situation. You should not be putting yourself in a situation where you can become the victim of a crime. Go into the situation when you feel safe and right. Make sure you have materials to back your feelings and be honest about it as you can. Spend time listening to the questions others will give you and take time thinking threw your answers. This is not a whim decision this is a life changing one and these first individuals will be the ones to give you the strongest support you will need in the time to come. Take your time I know I wrestled the idea for two weeks and was fighting back tears when I came out to my family and friends.

## EXERCISE

Okay This Chapters Exercise is one that more then likely everyone has done in their childhood at one point or another. I'm dividing it two fold one for those who can muster the courage and speak openly and those who cant.

The First - (For all but mainly for those that cant muster the courage to say it in person)

Write a letter to each person about how you feel. Tell them how you came to this point. Give them resources that they can seek the answers that you cant provide. Assure them that you are there to answer any questions they have. Lastly ask them one important question. "In my choice to go through this part of my life, I will face hardships and prosecution for me being who I am, I ask you will you stand by my side to help me when I need support of your love?" it's a hard question to ask but it ultimately tells if they are willing to help you through the mental and social issues that come along the road. The letter is better if its Hand written, a hand written letter speaks that your truly trying to tell them in your own words how you feel and who you are as a person.

The Second - (For those that can speak out)

Learn your lines. Prepare yourself not only for the words and questions that will arise but for the emotion behind it. Some say a speech with true emotion behind it can never be a lie. But don't fake or force the emotion in your words just speak out from the heart and try to keep a cool head.

## Chapter Suggested Resources

### **Websites for help as a family**

Transfamily

<http://www.transfamily.org/>

Pflag

<http://community.pflag.org>

Transsexuals and their parents: Telling your Parents about Your Transgender Transition

<http://www.tgguide.com/Library/telling-your-parents.htm>

Transsexuals and their parents: The Grief Process

<http://www.tgguide.com/Library/the-grief-process.htm>

Letter To parents of a Transgender Child

<http://www.tgguide.com/Library/letter-to-parents.htm>

Transsexualism: Information for the family

<http://www.tgguide.com/Library/transsexualism-information.htm>

Expressing Our Needs: Coming out for Transsexuals and Transvestites

<http://www.tgguide.com/Library/coming-out.htm>

Suddenly I see

<http://www.tgguide.com/Library/family-and-friends.htm>

### **Actual Letters about trans people from their families**

Thanks to Transfamilies.org and tgguide.com

A Brother learns to accept his new brother

<http://www.transfamily.org/letters/letter4.htm>

How Grandma told her 5 ½ year old granddaughter

<http://www.transfamily.org/letters/letter1.htm>

From Mother to Family and Friends

<http://www.transfamily.org/letters/letter2.htm>

Why don't you tell them I'm a boy

<http://www.transfamily.org/letters/dillon.htm>

Ex-Wife about Losing her Transitioning Husband

<http://www.tgguide.com/Library/transitioning-husband.htm>

A Wives Bill of Rights

<http://www.tgguide.com/Library/bill-of-rights.htm>

My Daughter Changed her Sex

<http://www.tgguide.com/Library/my-daughter-changed-sex.htm>

Nicole's Escape - (unfortunate possibility in any case)

<http://www.transfamily.org/letters/nicole.htm>

### **Books on dealing with Transgender issues as a family**

**Dress Codes**, Howey, Noelle.

**Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones**, Boenke, Mary.

**The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals**, Brill, Stephanie, and Rachel Pepper.

**True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism--For Families, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals**, Mildred L. Brown, Chloe Ann Rounsley

**My Husband Wears My Clothes: Crossdressing from the Perspective of a Wife**, Peggy Ed.D Rudd

**She's Not the Man I Married: My Life with a Transgender Husband**, Helen Boyd

**The Transsexual's Survival Guide to Transition & Beyond: Vol 2 for Family, Friends & Employers**, JoAnn Altman Stringer & JoAnn Roberts Ph.D.

### **Movies dealing with issues involved in this chapter**

**Prodigal Sons** (2008) - Documentary (covers issues with being transgender and dealing with family issues)

**Beautiful Daughters** (2006) - Documentary (covers the various stories of Trans women in the first all trans version of the 'Vagina Monologs')

**Transamerica** (2005) - Drama (covers issues of a trans female suddenly discovering she had a son)

**Normal** (2003) - Drama (HBO made this film, about a older man coming out about being a woman)

**Let Me Die a Woman** (1978) - Documentary (covers the concept of gender disorder in the early years documentary)

**Wild Side** (2004) - Drama (covers the issues and trials of a transgender person returning home to her mothers funeral)

**Trans generation** (2005) - Documentary (covers the lives of 4 transgender college students)

**Beautiful Boxer** (2003) - Drama (Based on the real life transition of a Thai boxer, Parinya Charoenpho)

**All About My Mother** (1999) - Drama (A young writer finds out about their father from their mom)

**Different for Girls** (1997) - Comedy/ Romance (Two childhood friends meet again only to see one has really changed )

**Just Like a Woman** - (1992) Comedy (transgender husband is caught by wife in drag)



**Red Without Blue** - (2007) Documentary (twins that deal with their family issues as one is gay and the other transgender)

**Glen or Glenda** - (1953) Documentary sort of (The infamous Ed Wood film starring Bella Lugosi actually one of the first films to cover the subject)

**The Christen Jorgenson Story** - (1970) Drama (Based on the real life first scientific studied Transgender individual)

**Trained in the ways of a Man** - (2007) Documentary (a film covering the funeral, murder trial of Gwen Arajuero and how it effects the family and community) I'm placing this film in the list along with the others to show the harsh reality that can befall ones life after coming out, and how transgender victims are treated as less than human in cases like this