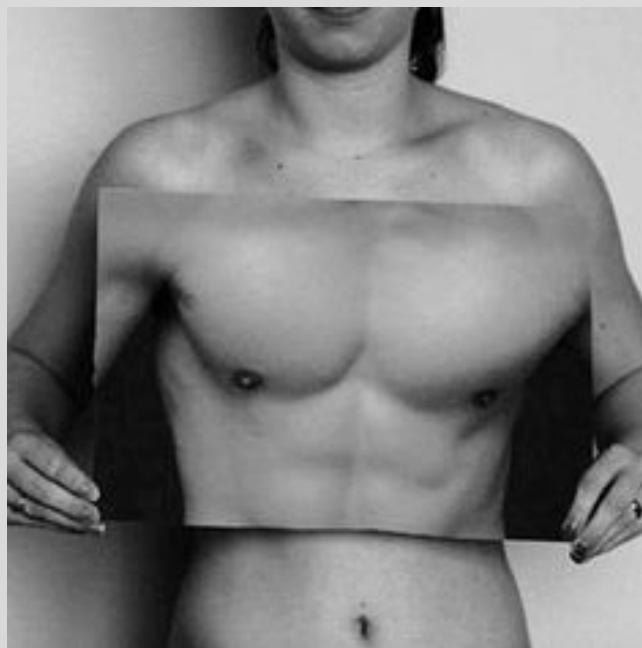


connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 38, No. 5, June 2014

Living



Whole

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WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a non-profit support organization. We minister to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of current and former Seventh-day Adventists who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is a global organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people worldwide.

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 2,500 people in more than forty-three countries.

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn or even mention homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts that are used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up as LGBTI has its roots in the misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

REGIONS AND GROUPS WORLDWIDE

www.sdakinship.org/regions-groups

CHAPLAIN

Marcos Apolonio, chaplain@sdakinship.org

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SUPPORT KINSHIP

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below or donate securely online at sdakinship.org. (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org. You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)



PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA
or visit Kinship's website www.sdakinship.org/resources
for information about

- Find a Gay Friendly Church
- *Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It?*
- *Living Eden's Gifts*
- Previous *Connection* issues
- ... and more.

RESOURCES

www.someone-to-talk-to.net
www.buildingsafeplaces.org
www.itgetsbetterforadventists.org
www.sgamovie.com
www.facebook.com/sdakinship
... and more

From the Editor

Whew... as I wrote in the *eNews* this month, because of social media and the speed of the internet, at the *Connection* we have begun to address more stories and long-term or educational issues. That said, there is so much going on with how locations and components of the Seventh-day Adventist church are responding to LGBTI issues that we want to make sure you all have a chance to know at least some of the exciting changes that are happening. Eliel Cruz has written about the LGBT vespers at Andrews. The Netherlands Union Conference wrote in response to the General Conference summit on homosexuality and the subsequent "guidelines." That same union has scheduled the training team from buildingsafeplaces.org to hold a two-day in-service in June with all their pastors as part of their participation in the "Safe Church" initiative in The Netherlands. We also continued our series on the "TI" part of LGBTI. Dane shares his story as a transman. Because we find her articles so helpful, we've included Arlene Taylor's piece on limit setting. We hope you find these interesting and helpful. More than that we want you to have hope, even in the many stressful situations in which you find your life. Take good care of yourself, for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine



European Kinship Meeting

By Mike Lewis



Plans are well underway for the upcoming European Kinship Meeting. This year it will be held over the long weekend August 28-September 1 at the beautiful old St Mark's College halfway between London and Cambridge, easily accessible from Stansted or Heathrow airports.

The theme for the weekend will be
"Aspects of Prayer."

There will be talks and activities around the subject as well as social times and a trip to two local places of historical and religious interest. And the food at St Mark's is wonderful!

We are privileged to have Rev Cecilia Eggleston as our speaker for the weekend. She has great skill in making her talks both serious and stimulating as well as fun and relevant. Her activity sessions are unbelievably great. It's going to be a wonderful weekend! Plan to be there and meet with your pals in Kinship!

Bookings are open online on and remain open until August 1 on a first-come-first-served basis. To ensure your place, why not book today? ▼

St Marks College



Building Community at Andrews

By Eliel Cruz



It was Saturday afternoon at 3:38 p.m. The doors to the auditorium had been open for 18 minutes, and we already had a filled room. We talked about streaming in one overflow room, but we ended up with three rooms. This was the first program Andrews University, the flagship educational institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, had with LGBT students.

In fact, this was the first officially recognized program with out LGBT people in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

This has been years in the making. It was three years ago that I helped start the unofficial Gay-Straight Alliance ([aull4one](#)) at Andrews. The group has flourished with dozens of out individuals all over the spectrum; and now, these LGBT students had a venue to share their stories and experiences of being both queer and growing up Christian.

The program started with stories from brave students—my friends, my peers. I cried in the hallway as I listened to them tell their stories to complete strangers.

From a bisexual girl asking herself, “Is my very existence wrong? Should I remove myself from the equation to make the universe a little more right?” to a story by someone who attempted suicide: “My sexuality is no longer an issue of what to do to keep the church happy—it’s an issue of staying alive.” One student shared his story of what he was told by his mother: “You’re an abomination to me; I just can’t look at you anymore.”

Yet, these students affirmed that after arriving at Andrews University, they were able to find supportive friends. As one student said, “Andrews allowed me to love myself for who I am, and to want to live—not just survive.”

It's a scary thing to share your experience—it makes you vulnerable—but we are resurrection people.

We’ve survived silencing, being kicked out of homes, and attempted suicides. We have seen some of the darkest parts of the church as people who claim to be Christians have kicked us out of the pews, and we still come back. We’ve stood at the edge of cliffs and have been pushed off them; yet,

like Lazarus, God continues to bring us back.

In the end, over 600 people came to attend the program, with people sitting on the steps and more left standing. The entire scene reminded me of Mark, chapter 2, when Jesus healed the paralyzed man.

They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:2-5).

The attendees had faith—this was no longer a debate.

It was a conversation *with* the LGBT community, instead of *at* us. We knew there had to be a better way to have this conversation, and we set our theological differences aside to see the humanity in each other. For too long people have been paralyzed with fear from the way this conversation has taken place. That evening we had faith and found reconciliation.

It’s fitting that this all happened on Sabbath of Easter weekend. Easter is a time to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and a time to reflect on the most beautiful gift of salvation. Christ’s death was a gift of reconciliation. His death was the remedy, and it promises us healing. We sought healing.

There were queer folk with deep scars who participated and attended, but it seemed it wasn’t only queer people who had moments of healing. Through

my own tears I saw that there was barely a dry eye in the crowd as we finished the program with the praise song "How He Loves." He is jealous for me.

The auditorium was packed and the air was vibrant, electrified with God's presence.

We found community in a place many of us have felt homeless. We shared stories, cried tears of joy and sadness, and connected as people of faith. It was a hard road to get this program to happen, but in the end love prevailed—love will always prevail. ▼

See more at: believeoutloud.com



KERKGENOOTSCHAP DER
ZEVENDE-DAGS ADVENTISTEN

Dear Friends,

At a recent executive committee, the Netherlands Union Conference voted to publish the following statement on LGBTIs in the church. This is especially current considering the recent General Conference events on this topic. The statement can be found (in Dutch) here: homoseksualiteit-en-de-kerk.

I have provided a translation at the bottom of this email for those of you who haven't learned Dutch yet.

I thought you might be interested in this statement.

Greetings in Christ, Tom de Bruin



There is a great deal of discussion about sexuality, and specifically LGBTI individuals (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex), at this moment. The General Conference recently held an international conference in South Africa on this topic, and last week the board of the world church voted on guidelines regarding LGBTI individuals.

In The Netherlands the topic of sexuality has been under discussion for quite some time, and in 2012 the delegates of the local churches voted the following:

Following the example of the "Safe Church" initiative, the delegates, gathered together in committee, charge the Executive Board in the coming administrative period to consider the problems of and concerning people with a non-heterosexual nature, so that they can feel safe in the church.

Following this vote, the Executive Committee has committed itself to ensuring that LGBTI individuals feel safe in the church. In taking this decision to

**Being GAY
isn't a choice
HATE is**

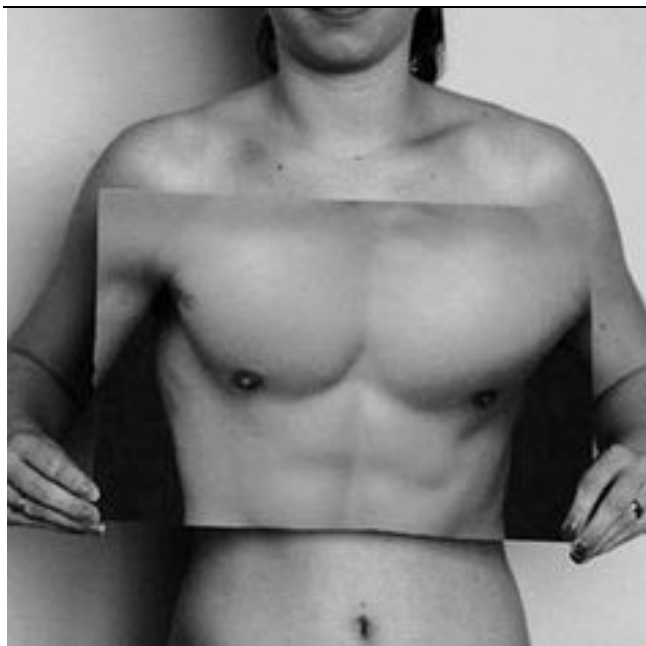
Oud Zandbergen, The Dutch Union Office near Utrecht



heart, the Netherlands Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church would like to respond to the General Conference's recently voted guideline.

Although we acknowledge the biblical ideal of a monogamous, heterosexual relationship, we continue to emphasize that it is an ideal. The basis of Christianity is that all people fall short of God's ideal; this is why we require God's grace and Christ's sacrifice. This leads to the conclusion that we, as Christians, must welcome all children of God—who all fall short of God's ideal—into our churches with love.

We advise the churches in The Netherlands to fully commit themselves to ensuring that LGBTI individuals feel safe in the church. We would strongly advise against any steps to revoke the membership of LGBTI people, given the unsafe environment this would create in churches. ▼



Living Whole

By Dane

Dedication

**To the ones who understand me
To the ones who accept me
To the one who loves me
To the One who guides me
This is written to you with love, from me.**

It is for anyone who wants to learn about female-to-male transgendered individuals. Specifically, it is for relatives and friends of transpeople, especially those with a Christian background, who are sincerely trying to understand what their loved one is going through. But it is really the story of one individual. It is my story, and shouldn't be extrapolated to be representative of all transmen. There is a kindred between us, but our stories are all different. Read with an open heart and a mind to learn. And may you never condemn another until you have walked a mile in their shoes.

Invariably, this will also be read by transpeople on various points of their own journeys. May you find understanding and solace.

Basic Facts

I am a transman. You pass me every day on the street. I look like an average guy and you have no idea that I was born a female. It's not that I don't want you to know, it's just that you really don't need to know because I am just me. That said, there are some things I want you to know.

First of all, I want you to know what *trans* means. I was born a female; I had a sex change and am now a male. You can refer to me as a transman or transguy. Technically, transsexual, transgendered, FTM, or female-to-male

all mean the same thing, although some of those terms seem to be associated with various negative connotations. *Trans* can also mean that someone was born male, had a sex change, and is now female. You might call them transwomen, transladies, MTFs, male-to-females, or just women. I honestly don't know what most transwomen prefer to be called, so I will leave it at that. Although we may have certain similarities, I will let them tell you about themselves if they so choose. For now, I will tell you about me. I can't help but

speak for my kindred "brothers;" but, again, this is my writing and my story, so I apologize if I offend any of my brothers or if I say things that they don't agree with. Please understand that not everyone in my situation will agree with me or share my same sentiments and ideas.

I am not a creepy child molester or a perverted sex addict. I wasn't abused as a child. I have a life with friends and family, some of whom do not see eye-to-eye with me. Isn't that the way it is in your family, too? I had friends in

grade school, teenage crushes, and graduated from college with honors. I have a doctoral degree and am highly trained in a specialized field where I interact with regular people and colleagues daily.

I have faith in God. This article is not specifically about that; but, since it is part of who I am, you will read about my Christian journey. If you are a Christian, I hope you find insight. If you are not a Christian, please know that this is not meant to offend you or

convert you, but is simply part of who I am. If you are inspired to pursue your own faith-based journey, great. But mostly, I hope you are inspired to develop an understanding, respect, and appreciation for people who are different than you.

Beginning My Story

I bet you have a lot of questions. Questions like, "Does she, I mean he, have a penis?" "Is it 'he' or 'she' anyway?" "Do you like guys or girls?" OK, OK, I get it. You're curious about stuff you don't know about. That's human nature. The funny thing is, if you met me on the street you wouldn't have any of these questions.

I was about four years old when I became aware that I did not think like other little girls my age. I was standing outside of church when three "older girls" in their early teens exited the door and walked across the parking lot. They were dressed in their fine dresses, with their hair all done up and wearing nylons and "church shoes." I distinctly thought to myself, "That's how people think I am going to be when I grow up, but I'm not like that." I didn't share that thought with anyone, and it took me years to understand it myself; yet, somehow I knew I was different.

I was a smart kid, had a good family, and had a few close friends. My best friends were two brothers, and together we played with LEGO® toys, built birdhouses, had our own woodworking shop, collected beetles and bugs, and enjoyed our childhood in the country. But I couldn't understand the girls. Even though I was supposed to be one of them, I just didn't *get* them. For one thing, they wanted breasts, and leg hair to shave off, and makeup to attract the boys. I couldn't imagine ever having breasts. I wanted leg hair and arm hair. And I couldn't imagine putting makeup on. The thought of it just seemed wrong.

And then one day I got cancer. Well, I thought I did, anyway. I had taken a shower; and, while drying off, I discovered a lump under my nipple. A little "rolly" lump. I was sure it was cancer. Shirtless, I ran down the hall to find my mother putting clean linen away in the closet. She was on the phone with a good friend. "Mom," I shrieked, "something's wrong!"

I showed her the little lump, and she gleefully exclaimed, "Oh, you're developing!"

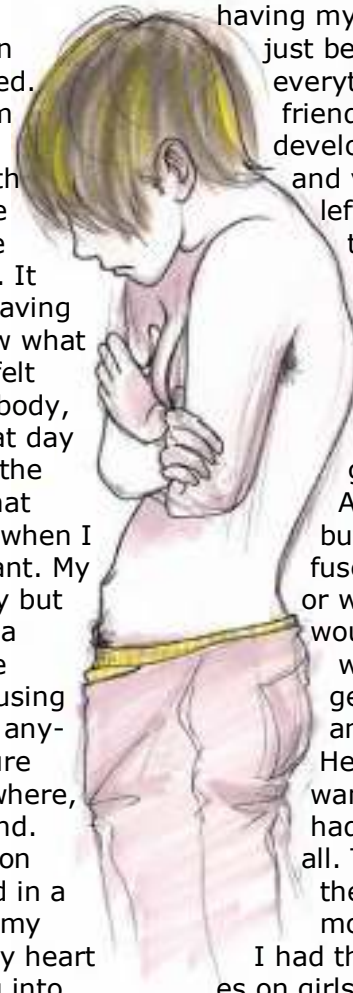
Developing? I was developing? You mean breasts? I was horrified. I ran back to my room and stood for what seemed like hours with my head buried in the robe that hung on the hook behind my door. It seemed worse than having cancer. I did not know what to do with breasts. I felt betrayed by my own body, by life itself. From that day on my life was never the same. I now knew what those thoughts I had when I was four actually meant. My body was a girl's body but my heart was that of a boy's. It did not make sense. It was so confusing that I couldn't talk to anyone about it. I was sure that no one else anywhere, ever, would understand.

Life from that day on seemed to be covered in a dark, black cloud. As my breasts got bigger, my heart got smaller, shrinking into something unrecognizable,

unthinkable. I refused to wear a bra until one day I was over at a friend's house playing flight simulator. His mother asked him to come fold laundry, so I volunteered to help. I happened across his mother's sports bra. I hadn't noticed one of those before. I thought it would help to compress and hide things under my already baggy clothing. Other than that, there wasn't anything else I could do. I would lay in bed at night and dream of waking up and having the right body—a guy's body, or having my body transplanted, or just being in a world where everything made sense. My friends were growing up, developing into young ladies and young men. And I was left, stuck in a place in time where my boy heart had no place to grow and my girl body continued to betray me, day after day.

My parents were oblivious to what was going on inside of me. All they saw was a shy but intelligent girl who refused to stand up straight or wear a dress. My father would push me against the wall to show me how to get my shoulders back and have good posture. He didn't realize that I wanted good posture; I had nothing against that at all. The problem was what the good posture made more prominent: breasts.

I had the usual teenage crushes on girls my age. I enjoyed hanging out with them, giving



them rides on my bicycle, and playing music together. Music was something that put me in a place where gender didn't matter. It lifted me above the confusion of my life and gave me something that elevated my soul and spirit. I loved music. Fortunately, my natural talents allowed me to learn a variety of instruments easily, play with different music groups, and write my own songs. I could express my thoughts and feelings in ways that made sense.

Then I fell in love. She was beautiful, with flowing blond hair, bright blue eyes, and a voice like an angel's. We became instant friends. We spent hours making music together, traveled Europe, and shared an apartment. Our relationship grew over time, until one day she realized that the way I felt about her was not the way she felt about me. She was emphatic that our relationship could not continue as it was, and that it was wrong—that it was the way "homosexuals were." I struggled, more confused than before, to make sense of everything. I didn't think I was gay. I hadn't meant to love her "that way." I didn't mean to fall in love at all. It had happened in the most natural, guy-

falls-in-love-with-girl kind of way.

I moved out and tried to move on with my life. I silently fought within myself to understand. Perhaps I was gay. Maybe that was what was wrong with me. I didn't know anyone that was gay, except a distant relative who shot himself in the head because his family couldn't accept him. Perhaps that was an easy way out. No, I decided, no matter how bad this was, I thought my mother would still hurt more if I was dead; so that just wasn't an option. What could I do? Who could understand?

Time went by. I continued to search for answers. I prayed that God would heal me and take away my sins and make me who and how I was supposed to be. During this time, I spent a year overseas with a mission organization, and had much opportunity to reflect, pray, and study the Bible. Over and over again, I read that "God is love" (1 John). That He knows where I was born (Psalm 87:6). That He puts my tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8). That He understands my infirmities (Matthew 8:17, Hebrews 4:15) and forgives my sins (1 John 1:9). I didn't understand my life and my heart, but I was comforted by knowing

that there was Someone who did understand me, Who made me who I am, and Who loves me in spite of anything. Psalm 139:13-16 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.... When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body."

"He [God] has planted eternity in the human heart," wrote the great King Solomon (Ecclesiastes 3:11, NLT). Seventeenth-century scientist and philosopher Blaise Pascal expounded on this thought in his book *Pensees*: man tries in vain to use everything around him to fill the void inside of him, but "this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object, in other words, by God Himself." The proof I needed to understand the existence of God was in my own heart. It was in the beautiful things of nature that were all around me, and it was in the music that I loved so much. That made sense. But I still could not make sense of myself.

Hope



One lazy weekend afternoon during college I was lounging around at my friend's place, daydreaming. My friend was talking to me, but I wasn't paying much attention. I was thinking of all the things I knew for sure:

- I wasn't gay, because gay women feel like women and I sure didn't.
- God loves me and I love Him, too, and always want to follow Him.
- I had friends, though few, who loved me, as me.

In the middle of my reverie I heard the word, "transsexual."

"What?"

"A transsexual," my friend repeated, "you know, someone

whose body on the outside doesn't match the gender they are on the inside."

"I've always felt like a guy on the inside," I replied.

"No, I mean, *really* feel like a guy. I *really* feel like a guy inside," my friend retorted.

"Yeah, I get it. I've always felt that way, too."

We stopped, looked at each other, and suddenly realized that we both felt the same way. I now had a term for how I felt. And I realized that I was not alone.

I began to investigate what "transsexual" really meant, what other people said about it, and what could be done about it. My friend already had concluded that

she was “trans” and that someday she wanted to change her body to match her true gender. I began to feel like there was hope, after all, and that perhaps I could get to the bottom of what had plagued me thus far in life. It did not take me long to come to the same conclusion as my friend had: I was “trans.” I would do just about anything to be able to have congruency between my mind, soul, and body. However, I wanted to be absolutely sure in my heart and mind that that was the right

thing to do, and I had to wait for the right time.

As the next few years of life went by, I remained relieved that at least I had answered some of my questions and found some people who understood and identified with me. I sought out counselors with varying perspectives and also pursued an exhaustive Biblical study to help in my understanding. Some changes occurred in my family, with the passing of the person I knew would have the hardest time if I “transitioned”

(i.e., physically became a male). I became more secure in myself as a person. Finally, I knew the time had come for me to take the steps I needed to truly become male.

“I see no problem with this,” said the judge discreetly, as I stood before him. My voice had deepened. My body was becoming more masculine. And, just like that, I was declared by the state to be officially male. The hard part of telling my family was done. I was finally free to live my life the way it was always supposed to be.

How to Become a Man

This section is written purely to satisfy your curiosity. Therefore, it is not specifically about me, but about transguys in general. If explicit details make you uncomfortable, it’s fine to skip this part.



What does it take to become a man? Is it a penis? Is it testosterone? Is it all in your head? I’m sure there are many ways to answer that question, but I think what you want to know here is how someone has a sex change. First of all, you have to know that you have the heart of a guy—that you think like a guy and that you are a guy on the inside. You know this just because you know it. If

you are not a male, you should never try to be one. Nobody does this kind of thing just for kicks. Many transguys will see a therapist or counselor at some point. Some seek out help in understanding and sorting out what they are going through. Others simply seek clearance for medical treatment, such as hormones and surgeries. No one should put their body through these kinds of changes without direction from a physician.

Speaking of hormones, testosterone is the hormone in utero that causes a fetus to develop into a male. Even if a fetus has the male karyotype (the genes, XY chromosomes) it will be phenotypically female (look like a female) if either testosterone or the receptors that attach to testosterone are missing. Testosterone is what is secreted by the testes when guys go through puberty. It causes the distinctly male characteristics to emerge—facial and body hair, deepening of the voice, muscle development, and enlargement of the external genitalia. If an anatomic female takes testosterone, the same things happen. Additionally, testosterone blocks the effects of female hormones and menstrual periods usually cease. The increased development of facial musculature adds to a masculine appearance.

Some transmen have one sur-

gery, some multiple, and some have none at all. The most common surgery that transmen have is bilateral mastectomies, or removal of the breasts. This is usually done by a plastic surgeon. Small-breasted transmen may not need any surgery to remove breast tissue, and others may be able to have what is called a “key-hole” mastectomy, leaving their own nipples and skin in place but removing underlying breast tissue through a very small incision. Many transmen, however, undergo routine mastectomies with some form of reconstruction of the nipple and areola (the pink or dark skin around the nipple). The incisions are usually made in the infra-mammary fold, the crease that lies underneath the breast. Breast tissue and excess skin is removed. The nipples and areolae are sized to a typical male size and grafted back into the appropriate position, creating an anatomically male chest.

Some transmen have hysterectomies (removal of the uterus) and oophorectomies (removal of the ovaries). Testosterone may increase the risk of some female cancers, so having a hysterectomy is probably a good idea. Keep in mind that surgeries are not cheap and transmen generally have to pay out of pocket. Mastectomies cost somewhere around \$7000, a hysterectomy around \$8500, and

genital reconstructive surgery runs around \$30,000.

There are different types of genital surgery that transmen may have. A phalloplasty is creating a new penis (phallus). The clitoris, the female equivalent of a penis, enlarges with testosterone and is often incorporated into the new phallus during phalloplasty to retain the sexual sensations. A metoidioplasty is a procedure that essentially releases the clitoris, freeing it to be a small penis. This is usually combined with the creation of a scrotum from the labia and placement of testicular implants. With some of these procedures, the vagina is removed. Urethral extension is sometimes

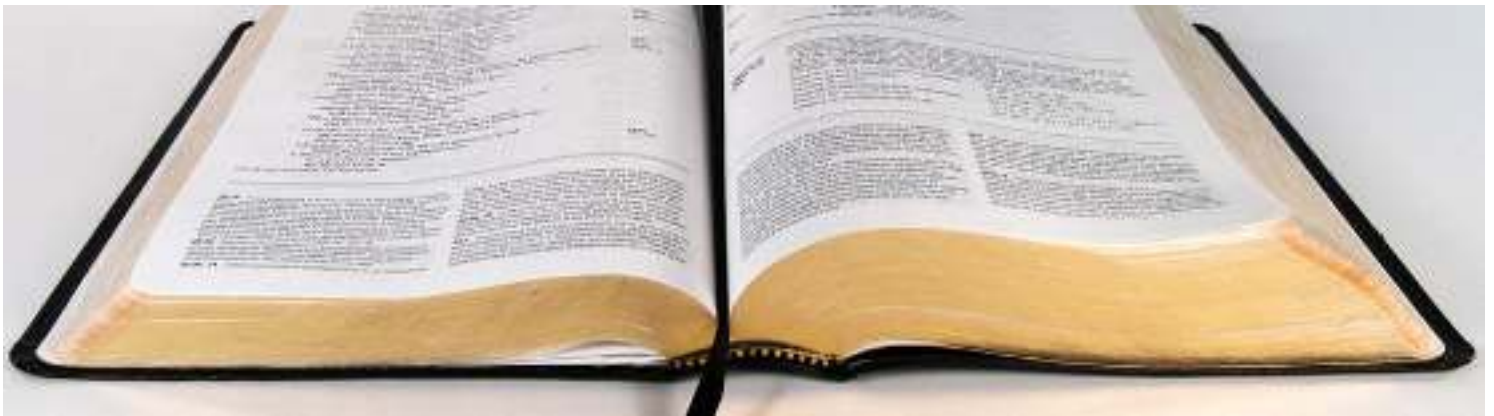
performed, so the person can urinate while standing.

There is also a legal aspect to having a sex change. This can be simple or difficult, depending on which state you live in and where you were born. Some states have a relatively simple process of changing your gender, similar to having a legal name change. Not only do you need a court-ordered gender and name change, but you also need to change all your legal documents, such as your driver's license and passport. Again, this can be more or less difficult depending on your state. Some states will also change the gender on your birth certificate. Once the legal part is done, you are now

officially a man, with all rights thereunto except for the ones you don't get, like being able to join the military. In reality, much of what you are entitled to depends on the state you live in. Some people are able to get legally married, while others fight legal battles simply to keep their jobs. Unfortunately, most states do not have antidiscrimination laws protecting transgendered people.

So what, really, does it take to become a man? Maybe it's a penis. Maybe it's testosterone. Maybe it's all in your head. I guess it all depends on your perspective. Somehow you just know.

Family and Faith



My mother is the most unselfish, wonderful, loving person in the world; yet she cannot understand or "accept" me. If there was one thing I could wish for in all the world, it would be for her understanding. She did not want me to "go through with this." She said over and over, "How can you do this to your family? Think of all the people this will hurt and affect. What about your siblings? Your cousins? Your other relatives?" *I know, Mom. I thought of all of them, including you. I still do. Someday, I hope you understand the heart-wrenching decisions I have had to make. I was willing to go through my whole life uncomfortable and out of place, for you. But I realized that "for the greater good," I had to do*

what I had to do. God gave me dreams in my heart and a mission in life, and it was my God-given duty to fulfill it. I couldn't do this mission without being able to be who I really am. I could not give to and take care of other people without first taking care of myself. I could not fill my "vessel" while it was broken. I needed God to help me be repaired, in part, to be able to take His love to others. I hope that someday you will understand. Until then, I know that you love me, and I am forever grateful for that.

I was raised with a keen sense of right and wrong. My mother also instilled in me a love for God and a personal knowledge of His love for me. I never had to question the existence of God—the

ample evidence I find through nature, the Bible, personal experiences, and the writings of other Christians make God all too real to me. I have had plenty of other questions, however. I don't profess to have all the answers or even to be right. And yet some things I do know. If you are not a Christian, this may not mean much to you. But if you are a Christian, it may be quite significant.

I believe in eternal life (John 3:16). I believe the Bible when it says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). I believe that the Ten Commandments still stand as rules to live by today (Exodus 20). I believe that we (humans) are created in the image of God

(Genesis 1:27). I also believe that something has gone horribly awry on this planet (Genesis 3). We are not in a perfect world as God created us to be. We are marred and broken, and "the whole creation groans and travails in pain" (Romans 8:22, NKJV). Things are not as they should be. God is a compassionate God, and it seems He takes all this into account. For example, He calls David a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), despite David's fall with Bathsheba. Another example is how man's diet changed over time. In the Garden of Eden, man was provided with plant-based food to eat (Genesis 1:29). After the Flood, people were allowed to kill animals and eat their meat (Genesis 9:3). Things dying were certainly

not in the original plan; but as the world changed, so did God's allowance of certain things. It seems to me that being transgendered is in this same category. Something that was not in God's original plan, but it happens now that things are not perfect in this world. It's almost a birth defect, of sorts. God certainly did not intend for babies to be born with imperfect bodies any more than He intended for anyone to have to suffer the consequences of evil.

Some people argue about whether God is male or female. Some argue that He is both. I don't know, but I suspect that He just *is*. "I AM that I AM," God said (Exodus 3:14). "There is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, but you are all one in Christ" (Ga-

latians 3:28). Both male and female are made in God's image. And someday, in heaven, maybe gender won't matter at all. Do you know Jesus' answer when asked about marriage in heaven? He said, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30). Maybe that means we will be neither male nor female in heaven. I'm not sure, but I do know that however it is will be perfect. That is how God is. Someday, everything will be right again. The world will be made new. Whatever gender I am in heaven will be perfect. Until then, I will do the best I can with what I have been given.

FAQs

"Do you have a penis?"
This has got to be the top question that everyone wants to ask but nobody actually will. That being the case, I won't actually answer it either, because really, that's none of your business. But, in all candidness, I will say that most transguys probably don't have penises. Think what you want, but this makes them no less men than the other guys you know.

"Are you a he or a she?"
Plain and simple. I am and always have been a "he."

"Do you like guys or girls?"
I have always identified as a straight guy and been attracted to girls. But just as with the general population, there are some transpeople that identify as gay and are attracted to people of the same gender with which they identify.

"If you're really a guy now, why do you call yourself a transman?"

I'm a guy now, just a regular guy, for all practical purposes. If you met me, you wouldn't know that I wasn't always just a guy. But in the real sense of the word,

I am truly a transman. I was not raised as a boy or brought up to be a man. I was not socialized as a male, coached as a male, or treated like a male. Therefore, there are things that go along with being a man that I know I will never know or understand. For example, one of my friends once commented that the worst thing about being a guy was having erections at inappropriate times, such as during church. I don't *know* about that, *per se*. But though I was raised female, there are, oh, so many things about being a girl or a woman that I also will never understand. So I find myself in a unique position, crossed-over, so to speak, in a place that only other transpeople can really truly know. If there were more than two genders in our society, I would probably fit into one of them. (Other books have been written on this very topic, which you can read if you are interested.) I know that I am not 100% male, but I am certainly not female either. Gender is probably a spectrum, and I fall onto the male side. Perhaps I am 90% male, I don't know, and it doesn't

matter much anyway. Essentially forced to choose one or the other, I had to choose what fits me best, and that is the male gender. I blend in well, fit in fine, and rarely think about the fact that I am trans. But every so often, in the world of men, I find a detail that I don't understand. I am OK with that. I understood very little in the world of women.

Having the heart of a man, I now have the body of a man, too. The congruency in my life allows me the freedom to do what humans do—interact with other people, help people, and be fulfilled in life. It allows me to think less of myself and more of God and of others. It relieves the selfishness of being so absorbed with myself that I could not focus on anything else. Some people say that to change your gender is an act of selfishness that only causes hurt to other people. If only they could understand the anguish transpeople go through, and realize that often the most unselfish choice is to go through the struggle, the pain, the hurt, and the rejection to finally be who we really are. ▼



Proposed Slate of Officers

Bob Bouchard, Nominating Committee Chair

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, I am providing Kinship members with the nominations for this year's Kinship positions that are up for election. They are:

Secretary	: Rosemarie Buck Khng
Treasurer	: Karen Lee
Director of Development	: Keisha McKenzie
Director of Youth Interests	: Rebecca Kern
Director of Communication	: Jonathan Cook

All have been invited individually and have accepted the nomination.

While there is only one nominee per office, I can assure you that we approached another eight potential candidates, who declined. I know some of you wish that we had multiple candidates for each office. So far, not this year. Our process has been to ask for suggestions from the Board, ask for suggestions from the membership through the monthly eNews, and to ask many individuals directly and pursue all suggestions. The above is the result.

The nominating committee is providing you with the above pursuant to Section 16.2.1 of the Kinship Bylaws which requires this report by "no less than eight weeks before the start of Kampmeeting" (we are early!). Section 16.2.3 states that "The Board

shall designate an interval of time and identify a process for members to propose names to be added to the slate." Although we did put out a call in the April eNews for individuals to suggest names to the Nominating Committee, which would satisfy that obligation, if you are interested, or if you know of someone who is interested in running, please send an email to rbouch9595@aol.com or secretary@sdakinship.org ASAP. This will allow us to finalize the slate, get the bio material that is needed, and have names, bios, and position statements published by the end of June, which is before the deadline stated in the Bylaws of "no less than two weeks before the start of Kampmeeting" (or July 14). ▼

How Do You Say "No"?



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Wielded wisely, "no" is an instrument of integrity and a shield against exploitation. It often takes courage to say. It is hard to receive. But setting limits sets us free.

—Judith Sills, PhD

If I ever say 'no' to my family or friends, they complain I'm selfish or have a negative attitude or am not being nice or don't know how to be a team player. My brother says 'no' all the time—at least it feels that way—and most

of the time they just say 'okay.' It's not fair!"

Clara, it turned out, was twenty-three and, as far back as she could recall, "no" from her was an unacceptable response. Even during the so-called *terrible twos*,

when children begin to differentiate themselves from other human beings—likely by saying “no” because there is usually little opportunity for saying “yes”—Clara had been expected to do as she was told and be quick about it.

Used appropriately, saying “no” means something. It is a clear statement that you, as a separate and unique individual, have personal limits, e.g., ethical, social, spiritual, sexual, financial, physical, mental, emotional, and professional. These boundaries help you connect with others and stay safe at the same time. When you say “no,” it affirms your personal limits clearly and positively. In one setting it may announce your integrity while in another it may shield you from being exploited. If you can never say “no” to anything, you are being controlled, possibly by expectations, family scripts, and/or perceived rules or threats—whether verbalized or not.

“Growing up there was always only one option,” said Clara, “and I was expected to be agreeable and immediately acquiesce. I didn’t have any other choice.”

I wanted to respond empathetically. “I regret that you had few opportunities to practice making choices.”

The words *options* and *choices* clearly imply decision-making, a key developmental task that underlies much of a person’s success in life. The wise parent or care provider offers children choices very early in life and as often as possible. Giving only two choices at a time is preferred, since the brain has only two cerebral hemispheres. Almost any two choices work if they are safe and healthy. This gives the child practice at making choices by saying “no” to one and “yes” to the other.”

For example:

- Pick either the red top or the blue top. Your choice.
- Would you like me to cut your

potato, or will you do it yourself? You choose.

- I have water and orange juice. You may choose either one.
- This morning you can play kickball or climb on the jungle gym.

When the child makes a choice, make sure to follow that choice so he or she learns that there are consequences to making choices. Sometimes a child who wants desperately to please or who has learned it is unsafe to verbalize personal wishes will say, “I don’t care. You choose.” That’s a great opportunity to reply with: “You are the only person who will be with you for your entire life. It’s important that you learn to take good care of yourself by knowing how to make choices. You are old enough to start now.”

Make no mistake. It takes courage to offer choices, especially in the short term. An anxious, overcontrolling, or perfectionistic adult, or a care provider with self-esteem issues, is typically too fearful to encourage a child to make choices. At times it may be faster and easier to just tell the child what to do. This is unhelpful in the long term, however. The healthy, functional adult or care provider, one with a balanced sense of self-worth and high levels of emotional intelligence (EQ) understands the critical importance of each human being learning to make choices and experience the consequences of those choices. Generally they provide this opportunity on a regular basis. And the sooner in life the better.

Negativity is as different from a healthy and functional ability to say “no” as night from day. Negativity is an *undesirable* mindset. Think of it as a whining approach to life, a way to avoid making a decision and then complaining about the outcome. Negativity looks for what is undesirable or focuses on what did not or cannot happen. Sometimes it reflects the

person’s attempt to feel better about himself or herself by finding fault with the environment or with the behavior of others. It will sap your energy, diminish the enthusiasm of others, and pretty much ensure that you will not be pleased.



“When someone says ‘no’ to you,” I asked Clara, “what do you think?”

“I think, *I wish I could say that*,” said Clara. “I think, *it must feel wonderful to have a choice*.”

“You have the power to say ‘no,’” I replied. “It appears to be built into every human brain. Many people relinquish their power to others, however. Individuals (females especially) often are controlled in the name of love. The more they want love, the more likely they are to give up their power of ‘no.’ My brain’s opinion is that in adulthood you can never genuinely say ‘yes’ unless and until you can appropriately say ‘no.’”

Clara really started to open up. “Most of my life I’ve felt like a puppet on a string. The string may have been invisible, but it was there. When I said ‘yes’ everyone was happy; if I ever tried to say ‘no’ all hell broke loose. Now I can never say ‘no.’ What’s wrong with me?”

“Children often perceive themselves as little giants, powerful enough to make everyone around them either happy or mad. In adulthood, think of the ability to say ‘no’ as a metaphorical insur-

ance policy," I suggested. "Prevention and pre-planning are usually so much better than cure."

"I want to take back my power of 'no,' but have no idea where to start," said Clara.

"Start by practicing with yourself," I replied. "Use the language with yourself."

"Practicing?" asked Clara. "How do I practice saying 'no'?"

"Let's begin now," I said. "I will give you some simple options and you answer 'no' to one and 'yes' to the other—or 'no' to both, as the case may be. Here we go. Would you like a glass of water or some hot herb tea?"

"I'm fine," said Clara.

"I know you are fine," I said. "The issue is to practice making a choice and using the language. You can do this."

Suddenly Clara laughed. A hearty, mirthful laugh. "In that case," she said, "my answer is *no* to the water and *no* to the tea. I'm not thirsty."

"Good girl," I said. "Do you perceive any difference between saying *I'm fine* and *no*?"

Clara nodded. "Saying that I'm fine isn't really answering the question." Now it was my turn to nod.

"Begin at home around the house or when grocery shopping. Think *two options at a time* and create opportunities to practice. Whenever you have a decision to make, ask yourself this: 'Clara, do you want to wear blue jeans or slacks? Do you want asparagus or broccoli?' Give yourself two options and then answer 'no' to one and 'yes' to the other. Practice, practice, practice!"

"I can do this," Clara said. "I can make a game of it."

"The more *fun* you have, the better. With time, you'll become more comfortable using the language with yourself. The next step is using it appropriately with others."



"How do you say no?" asked Clara. "There must be tons of requests you cannot meet."

"You are correct," I said. "If I acquiesced to all requests, I would fail to accomplish my own life goals. When the answer needs to be 'no,' I try to deliver it in the way I would want to receive it."

"People always act hurt or angry when I say no," said Clara.

I nodded. "Most brains want a 'yes' rather than a 'no,' so they can have difficulty hearing a 'no.' And if the individual perceives he or she is valuable only when others acquiesce, it can be downright uncomfortable. Sometimes I can respond without using the actual word 'no' and add it only if my answer appeared not to be heard, understood, or accepted."

"But *how* do you say no?" Clara repeated.

"There are several strategies I've honed over the years," I replied. "It began with a clarity that I will be with me for my entire life. As my own best friend, I choose to make optimum, healthy choices for my brain and body."

Clearly, Clara needed some examples, so I offered several from my own experiences.

Request: "We'd like to take you to dinner tonight."

Answer: "Thank you for the invitation. It's very kind of you. Since I speak again first thing tomorrow morning, however, I need to call it a day right after my last lecture."

"But what if they coax or say it can be an early dinner or come up with lots of reasons that sound

good at the moment or pout?" asked Clara.

"In that case I'll usually say that I'll let them know later in the day. This gives me time to think things through, monitor my energy levels, evaluate whether or not I really want to accept, and if so, whether I can go and still keep my life in balance. If I still choose to decline, I just repeat my earlier response. If they keep pushing, I'll say calmly and firmly, 'No, thank you.' A 'no' that follows some thoughtful decision-making is far better in the long term than an emotionally impulsive 'yes' that you end up either regretting or having to retract."

Request: "We're going to the beach tomorrow, and we'd like you to go with us."

Answer: "Thank you for wanting to include me. I must decline as going to the beach does not work with the type of skin I have and my history of skin cancer."

"You'd really tell them you've had skin cancer?" asked Clara.

"I divulge personal information judiciously, when I am comfortable doing so and believe it will help others better understand my response. Someone with my type of fair skin is doing the smart thing to avoid baking on the beach, especially when he or she already has had a skin cancer due to sun damage."

Request: "I'm going bowling tonight. Do you want to come with me?"

Answer: "Thank you. I already have an appointment so will be unable to accept your invitation. I think it would have been fun. Have a great time." I paused. "If it's something I'd really like to do, I can negotiate. 'Tonight is out but Wednesday or Thursday nights are open if either of those works with your schedule.' Sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't."

"But what if I don't have an appointment," said Clara. "Then what?"

"Create a standing appointment

with yourself," I said. "Write it on your calendar each day. You have the option to set it aside if you decide on a different course of action, but it's always there should you need it.

"Oh, my goodness!" Clara exclaimed. "That's wonderful! No one ever told me I could have a standing appointment with myself. But who better? I like the thought that I'm the only person who will be with me for my entire life! But what if they won't take no for an answer?"

"Sometimes people keep pushing for what they want, that's true," I replied. "Especially when they have poor personal boundaries themselves or self-esteem issues. If they suggest that you should change your schedule, a simple 'no' is sufficient. If they want you to disclose all the details and reasons, I simply repeat calmly that I already have an appointment. My father once told me: 'Unless you are being cross-examined in court, you do not have to answer every question you're asked simply because someone asked it. Live the 11th commandment,' he would say. 'Thou shalt not explain.' Of course, the first time I used that with him, my father said that while he wanted me to learn the strategy I was only to apply it (to him) after I'd grown up and left home."

Clara laughed. "I think I'd have liked your father!"

It's a continual balancing act: evaluating, making choices, following through on my decisions, being able to negotiate, being willing and able to alter my decision if that appears to be the wiser course, and sometimes just agreeing to disagree. There are times when I absolutely must take care of myself and my schedule in order to accomplish my personal goals. At other times I might prefer a quiet afternoon at home but my concern for others outweighs that desire. For example, I might choose to read to a vision-impaired shut-in, donate a couple of hours to present anti-aging strategies at a retirement center, help a friend move, fix dinner and take it to a family who has just brought their child home from the hospital or who has suffered a bereavement. Maturity, for me, involves being able to find my voice to say "no" as well as "yes."

Do you ever say "no"?

If your answer is "no," you might want to reconsider. Plan ahead, practice, and then remind yourself often that "no" is a legitimate response. In some situations, it can be life-saving. And, as my father said, not offering an explanation can be all right, too! ▼



connection

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Meeting
in
Rehoboth

