

IVEN QUARTERLY

Two Sides of a Coin
A Blessing from
Two Perspectives

Gender Expression
& Speech Therapy
Exploring the Relationship
Between Client & Pathologist

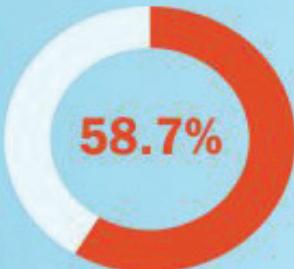
Growing Pains
Surviving the Loss
of Relationships

WHY TRANS PEOPLE NEED MORE VISIBILITY

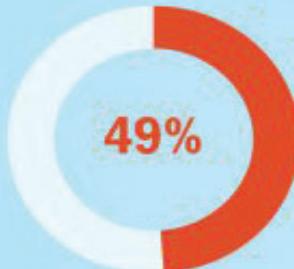
With more visibility comes more understanding. These statistics can and will get better as trans people become more visible in our society.



80% of trans students feel unsafe at school because of their gender expression



of gender non-conforming students have experienced verbal harassment in the past year because of their gender expression, compared to 29% of their peers



of trans people reported physical abuse in a 2007 survey

The Gender, Violence, and Resource Access Survey found that



of trans people have been raped or assaulted by a romantic partner

Trans people of color are...

6X more likely to experience physical violence when interacting with the police than white cisgender survivors of violence



of trans people have attempted suicide



1 in 5 transgender people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives



1 in 8 have been evicted due to being transgender

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Infographic Design by Landyn Pan

Editor's Letter



Sarah Flowers is the Founder & Executive Director of the Transgender Visibility & Education Network and the Senior Editor of the TVEN Quarterly magazine. A graduate of the University of California - Davis, Sarah has spent the last 25 years researching transgender topics and issues simply because she wanted to learn more about who she is as a transgender woman.

Aside from devoting all of her time to TVEN, Sarah also enjoys spending time with her wife, Amy, and their two kitties, Chewie & Hunter. As much as she loves reading a good book, she also loves writing them and is currently in the middle of writing 7 novels, each in a different genre. She has also been known to have fun with calligraphy, rock climbing, singing to the radio, and cruising around on her motorcycle.

Ah, Love is in the air! The sweet smell of flowers and chocolates and special dinners. Tis the season for blossoming friendships, maturing relationships, and the creation of new families.

In this issue of TVEN Quarterly we are exploring all things relationships. Taking into consideration that this issue is coming out in February, you're probably thinking that we are only going to be talking about dating advice or possibly how to keep your marriage together. I won't lie, we did consider those topics. But then we thought a little more about it and realized that there are already hundreds of magazines out there who publish those types of articles every month. If that is what you were hoping for, I am sure that you could probably find some pretty interesting ideas in some of those articles.

Instead, we chose to focus on relationship topics that are of prime importance to you, our favorite readers. A sampling of the kinds of relationships you can typically find within the transgender community. Before you ask, yes this does include dating and marriage relationships as well. But it also includes, family relationships, therapist and client relationships, and friendships, among others. Unfortunately, within the transgender community, there is also a higher occurrence of lost relationships and we examine a few of those, too.

To start off with, Rachel explains the relationship between speech pathologist and a transgender client (or any client for that matter) and what a patient should look for when seeking out a new vocal therapy professional. Then Amy and I discuss the kinds of work it takes to keep a marriage (or any relationship) healthy and strong, and mostly happy. Here's a hint, it is *a lot* of courageous work.

Then, after Amy discusses the different types of attraction and attachment that can be found in a relation, Randy leads us on a journey through the eyes of an ally. He gives a perspective, as an ally, about connecting with, loving, and supporting the transgender and gender non-conforming individuals he knows and cares about, and in a larger sense, how other allies can do the same thing for the trans* individuals within their own lives. And finally, since breakups usually happen at the end of a relationship, our last article discusses some of the most difficult relationships found within the trans* community.

As you read through this issue, I want you to know that I am happily honored that I get to be in such a wonderful family with all of you and with the transgender and gender non-conforming community as a whole.

 Faithfully Yours!!
Sarah Flowers
Editor in Chief

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Phone: (530) 443-9596

Email: info@transgenderven.com

Website: www.TransgenderVEN.com

Facebook: @TransVENetwork

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Gender Expression & Voice Therapy:

A Speech-Language Pathologist's View

By: Rachel Tarro-Zylema MS, CCC-SLP





Being a speech-language pathologist for the past fourteen years has been a rewarding career for me. I have learned so much already and continue to learn every day from my clients, students, mentors, and colleagues. As a speech-language pathologist I am proud to be able to help my clients communicate more effectively and reach their voice goals.

The American Speech-Language & Hearing Association (ASHA) defines the role of the speech-language pathologist as: clinical services which include assessment, diagnosis, planning and treatment of voice disorders, prevention and advocacy, education, administration and research. Additionally, I thought about all the qualities that I feel make for a successful speech-language pathologist. If you are looking for a good voice coach or speech pathologist keep these qualities in mind and don't settle for less.

Compassion

Compassion is the most important characteristic in any helping profession. Many people have been through extremely difficult situations. Many people seeking voice therapy have a negative self-image of their voice and how it may or may not be a reliable factor in determining someone's gender. Often times I will simply listen and help guide people through feelings of hopelessness and challenges, this can create a special bond and strong trusting relationship with my clients that is important to their success.

Open Minded

Being open minded is also a vital element to any successful therapist. I think once you close your mind to different ideas, people, or situations you really sell yourself short on everything you can experience in this life. Having an open mind allows both yourself and your therapist to try new techniques or strategies that may be beneficial to your voice goals and help advance your communication skills even further than you hoped for.

Team Player

Being a team player is an essential element to ANY therapeutic activity whether it be voice, speech or any other type of rehabilitative relationship. Your therapist should be part of a team approach to your care. I work closely with a whole team of professionals, including mental health providers, women's health providers, endocrinologists, pharmacists, dermatologists, and primary care physicians that specialize in a wholistic approach to care for individuals who are transgender. Having this knowledge helps me perform at the top of my game, giving my clients the best care

possible, and knowing when they require additional services from the colleagues on our team.

Organized

I find that being organized helps not only myself with the amount of paperwork and scheduling involved with what I do, but also helps my clients in that they receive the correct information in the right order and format that benefits them the most. Not everyone learns in the same manner, so being organized helps me switch between different modalities and levels of treatment so my clients can get the most out of each session. In your own voice therapy work, it will be helpful to keep your information and resources organized. I like giving my clients their own "homework" folder to help them keep information handy for when they need it.

A People Person

It probably goes without saying that a good speech-language pathologist should be a "people person." I remember comments on my third-grade report card from my teacher saying I was "*a delightful student, but she talks too much in class!*" I think that has served me well in my career. I find being friendly and genuinely interested in all the people I meet in my practice is an exciting and meaningful way to connect with different people. I find it incredibly rewarding and satisfying to build these relationships and help people in this way.

Flexibility

A speech-language pathologist should be flexible. You, the voice client, should have as much say in the goals and directions of your

treatment as you like, your therapist should be flexible in both time, ideas, and methods of treatment. A person who is flexible is willing to try new ideas, think outside the box, and come up with interesting and meaningful therapy approaches that benefit you the individual.

Willing to Learn and Make Mistakes

We are all human, we all make mistakes and we can all learn from those mistakes. I have had wonderful success in my career, but I've also had some pretty painful failures. It's important to learn from those mistakes and take away new information and knowledge you can then bring to your next adventure. I have continued to learn and grow in so many areas of speech-language pathology as well as my personal life. I think the day you stop wanting to learn is a sad day indeed! I can also say that I have learned a tremendous amount from my clients and my students, everyone has something special they can teach others.

Hard Working

I work hard for my clients. I work hard for myself and my colleagues as well. I think you have to put in effort to achieve your goals in anything you do. Hard work and determination can get you far in life. Don't be afraid of trying new things, taking advantage of opportunities that arise and putting all your effort into something you care deeply about. If you don't think your therapist is working hard enough for you, it's time to find someone else.

Motivational

I find it very rewarding to help motivate others and empower them with tools and knowledge that help them make positive changes, reach their goals, and feel heard. Sometimes all anyone needs is having that special person in their corner, saying "YES YOU CAN!" Different things motivate different people in a variety of ways, so having a wealth of these characteristics we've been talking about helps me motivate my clients and empower them to reach their goals. My clients also motivate me to be the best I can be, to learn new things and to go that extra step for them.

Problem Solver

I think one of the most helpful characteristics to have in this field is to be a good listener and a problem solver. I don't solve the actual problems FOR people, but I listen and help them discover and develop solutions to their problems themselves. I love brainstorming ideas, thinking up plans and teasing out answers with people, solutions that make a real difference in the lives of my clients. Each client is different, each client has

different problems and require different actions to find the right solution, that challenge is very rewarding to me.

When working with a speech-language pathologist don't be afraid to express your thoughts and ideas about treatment. Your goals are important and really should be the driving factor behind therapy. Your speech-language pathologist should listen to you, they should be patient and knowledgeable in the field of voice. Don't be afraid to ask questions about anything you don't understand. Knowledge is power and part of our role is to help educate people. TVEN also has a brilliant amount of information and resources available on the topic of Voice (<https://TransgenderVEN.com/speech-therapy>).

I would say in all the areas I've worked in, in the field of speech-language pathology, working with my voice clients has been the most rewarding. The challenges are unique, the people I meet are amazing, and at the end of the day it makes me feel great to know that I made a difference in someone's life. Really that's what it's all about, making a difference every day.

Rachel Tarro-Zylema MS, CCC-SLP

After returning to college for a second career, I received my bachelors and masters degrees in Speech-Language Pathology at California State University, Sacramento in 2003 and 2005 respectively. My areas of expertise in speech-language pathology include transgender voice therapy, augmentative & alternative communication, swallowing disorders and program development. Aside from Speech & Voice topics I love reading about motivational interviewing and mindfulness. I am a native of Sacramento, California. My wife, Dawn, and I have two grown sons. We enjoy playing cards and board games, spending time with our boys, traveling, cooking international cuisine and playing with our Shih-tzu/Maltese, Sneezy.



**USA: 877.565.8860
CAN: 877.330.6366**

Proper Pronoun Usage

Why is it important to respect people's pronouns?

- You can't always know what someone's pronouns are by looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity.

What are Gender Pronouns?

- A gender pronoun is the pronoun that a person uses for themselves.
- For example: If Alex's pronouns are she, her, and hers, you could say "Alex ate her food because she was hungry."
- *Never refer to a person as "it" or "he-she". These are offensive slurs used against trans and gender non-conforming individuals.*

How do I ask someone what pronouns they use?

- Try asking: "What pronouns do you use?" or "Can you remind me what pronouns you use?" It can feel awkward at first, but it is not half as awkward as making a hurtful assumption.
- If you are asking as part of an introduction exercise and you want to quickly explain what gender pronouns are, you can try something like this: "Tell us your name, where you come from, and your pronouns. That means the pronouns that you use in reference to yourself. For example, I'm Xena, I'm from Amazon Island, and I like to be referred to with she, her, and hers pronouns. So you could say, 'she went to her car' if you were talking about me."



Transgender Visibility & Education Network

TransgenderVEN.com

Facebook: @TransVENetwork

Info@TransgenderVEN.com

Phone: (530) 443-9596





"JUST LIKE EVERY COIN
HAS TWO SIDES, EVERY
RELATIONSHIP ALSO HAS
TWO SIDES."

Two Sides of a Coin

By Sarah & Amy Flowers

“Every blessing, just like a coin, has two sides” — Sunday Adelaja

I am sure that many of you have heard the old saying that a marriage, or any relationship really, takes work. Well, if you hadn't heard it before, now you have. Relationships take work. Lots of work.

I've heard some people claim that each partner should do 50% of the work and that equals the 100% that a relationship needs. I'm not even sure I can begin to describe how wrong that is. If you only do 50% of the work, then you are really only giving your partner and your relationship 50% of yourself.

For a relationship to truly succeed, each partner must give 100% of themselves. And for relationships between transgender and cisgender individuals, like Amy (cisgender) and I (transgender), this fact becomes even more important.

I guess we should probably start a little closer to the beginning of the story.

TRANSGENDER SIDE OF THE COIN:

Over the last few years, I've surprised a lot of people when I tell them that I am currently forty-four years old – they all seem to think that I am quite a younger – and I always have to giggle because my age isn't the only secret I've kept. For the first thirty-nine years of my life, I hid a very massive part of myself. This was a part of myself that, from a very early age, I was taught to hate and revile; those teachers being my parents, my family, many of my then-friends, my doctors, my church, the media, and the global society at-large. And many of those same teachers still profess the same hate and ignorance to this very day.

“What was that secret” you ask?

The very large secret that I was keeping was that every bit of me (i.e., my heart, brain, and soul) was rebelling against my physical body and genetic chromosomes about my actual gender and gender identity. You see, the doctors and my parents assigned the male sex and gender to me when I was born. When I began understanding more about who I am as an individual, I discovered that I was never actually a boy at all. I was a girl. A transgender woman, if you will. It was about ten years between the time that I started discovering that I was not like any of the other boys around me and the age at which I finally learned the proper terminology.

Over the course of about thirty years, I learned from all those seemingly reputable sources I mentioned a moment ago, that my being transgender was a sin against God and the world and that to be a good little Christian I had to hide the best part of me and hate on everyone else who might be transgender or LGBTQIA+ as well. For reference, I was raised in the Southern Baptist church by a father who was a youth minister for the first half of my childhood and a preacher for the second half. To say that I had religion forced down my throat for most of my life would be a bit of an understatement. I will be honest, I no longer attend organized religious institutions primarily because of all the hypocrisy I have witnessed in far too many of those churches, but I still maintain all of my Biblical beliefs. You know the ones I mean: (1) Love one another unconditionally; (2) Care for one another unconditionally; (3) Help one another, especially when they can't help themselves; and everyone's favorite (4) Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; this last one being known as the Golden Rule.



I attempted to do that for a while because I didn't want to hurt my parents' feelings. But it almost destroyed me. And for 30 years I hated everything about myself, all the while internalizing all of that transphobia and transmisogyny. And I kept all of me hidden from everyone I knew. I couldn't share the best parts of me with anyone because I was so afraid of them finding out my secret.

Needless to say, I was able to develop a few good acquaintances, but not really anyone that could be called a friend. In my adult life I became a loner; someone who enjoyed going out, but usually by myself or in very small groups. I was never able to fully open my heart to anyone and truly trust them with that heart. For the first twenty years of adulthood, I opened up to a grand total of three people, all three of which I happened to be married to. And all three of those consecutive marriages failed miserably in large part because I was transgender. As you can probably imagine, I was absolutely terrified to ever let anyone else in ever again.

Then in June of 2014 I made the incredibly massive decision to stop hating myself and to fully embrace the woman that I am. I was just starting the last two years of my college career in a new city where I didn't know anyone. I thought to myself: "this is the perfect opportunity to discover who I truly am because there is nobody here who knew the old me."

I spent the rest of 2014 and nearly all of 2015 learning who Sarah is and also everything I could about hair, fashion, and makeup. I won't lie, there were quite a few fashion fails. When I wasn't on campus and in class, I was busy learning everything I could about recent advances in feminizing hormones, medical procedure, and laws. And during the rest of the time I forced myself to open up to others and show them my real self. I even, somehow, managed to start the Transgender Visibility & Education Network during that time. Over the course of that year, and the years since, I have gone from having a few close acquaintances, to having several very close friends, an adoptive older sister (one of my closest friends from high school from before she knew the real me), and hundreds of good acquaintances. And up until that point, I figured that was going to be the bravest thing I would ever do.

Then I met Amy.

We met very briefly during the summer of 2015 when I helped her move into a joint apartment with a then-friend of hers. We chatted briefly during that day and friended each other on Facebook, but that was about the extent of it. In late October of that same year, I happened to have a very ego-boosting day and I posted about it on Facebook. Seemingly out of the blue, Amy was the first person to comment on that post and our short conversation went like this:

Amy: I can't speak for what strangers might think, but I know I for one would take you out in a heartbeat.

*Sarah: *blushing* So what's stopping you?*

Amy: I'm a pretty busy girl so dating hasn't been a priority. Plus asking people out is scary! They might say no!

Sarah: Depends on who you ask. Some might say yes, which is just as scary.

Amy: Is that a hint? Hmmm. This is getting interesting.

Sarah: Just saying. You never know till you try, Love.

That was the end of the conversation that night. But, as luck would have it, that wasn't the end of the conversation. While I was hanging out with a very dear friend of mine that very next day – we just happened to be talking about how both of us were very ready to get back into relationships again – Amy texted me and asked me out. She had conquered her fear and she asked if I wanted to go on a date that next Friday; the day before Halloween. I can very excitedly say that the first date started on that Friday, but it didn't end till Monday.

It has been nearly three and a half years since that first date, but we are still happily working on our relationship. Having eloped on November 25, 2016, we have had more than our fair share of uphill battles. Just like every couple in a relationship, we have had arguments, some more tear-inducing than others, but we always work towards getting a grip on our own emotions and then coming together to work through the problem. Interestingly, all of our disagreements tend to have the same theme, albeit with different triggers. That theme being our different communication styles.

Every day we have to work together to learn more about how the other communicates and then interpret that through our own communication style. Amy and I have very different communication styles which frequently confounds what we are trying to say as opposed to the words that come out of our mouth. And sometimes this leads to hurt feelings and misunderstandings. But we always



work together to get to the bottom of the issue and get it resolved.

Every day we get to work together to keep our heartfelt smiles going even when the entire world seems like it is against us. Every day we get to work together to keep our frequent silliness alive and well. Frequently, we get to work together to heal physical aches and pains. We enjoy working together to get her through her Ph.D. program, to plan our vow renewal wedding (fairytales wedding on June 10, 2019), and to keep pushing closer to turning the Transgender Visibility & Education Network into a fully recognized 501(c) (3) non-profit organization.

But the best part about our relationship, from my side of the coin, is that she has only every known me as a transgender lesbian woman. And it is such a wonderful feeling to know that my being transgender is only one of the plethora of things that she really loves about me. She doesn't love me because I'm transgender, but rather she loves me and I'm transgender.

Just like every coin has two sides, every relationship also has two sides. And one of the best parts of being in a relationship, regardless of the gender or gender identity of the people involved, is getting to enjoy the person and the perspective on the other side of that coin. I love my wife with every atom of my being and I hope and pray that each and every one of you can someday experience that same jubilation with your own partner(s).

CISGENDER SIDE OF THE COIN:

I think one of the most important things in relationships is loving a person for who they actually are, not who you want them to be. This is true no matter the gender of the people involved, but it is especially important if you are loving a transgender person. As Sarah has pointed out, they may have spent much of their life being told that who they are is "wrong." Your love for their authentic self is one of the greatest gifts you can give a transgender person, in any kind of relationship (friendship or romantic).

My own journey into the LGBTQ+ world began long before I met Sarah. I grew up in a mostly white Christian area of the Midwest, and knew very little about sexuality and gender until college. I did know fairly early on that I was attracted to women, but I spent many unhappy years ignoring those feelings. I thought if I just tried hard enough that I could also be attracted to men, and be "normal." It would be a long time before I realized this was just never going to work.

By my early 20s I was learning that there was an enormous spectrum of identities for sexualities, romantic attractions, and gender identities. Attempting to sift through this information and determine what was correct and what fit me, all while managing a heaping pile of repressed emotions, was a difficult time. Coming out ultimately lost me a very close friend.

In California, I was also starting over. I was living life fully out of the closet, and making new friends. I think this is one of the things that initially drew Sarah and I together. I met Sarah well after she began her transition, so to me, she has always been the beautiful and amazing woman I know her as today. Since I was so new to dating women, I was very nervous to ask her out, but she eventually gave me enough hints that I was able to do it. Now that we have been together for a few years, when we talk about her past I often forget her transition was recent, and picture the little girl that was in her heart, rather than what she might actually have looked like.

As Sarah mentioned, we work at our relationship every day. We are always working to make sure our differing communication styles and love languages don't leave either of us feeling like the relationship is one-sided. With my very busy schedule and chronic health conditions I also work to make time that we can spend together. I find that, overall, this is just like any other relationship — except better, obviously, since I married her!





"Lil John Conner in Happy Valen-time Paradox" was created by Sabrina Symington of Life of Bria Comics. Reprinted with permission. <https://lifeofbria.com/> and Facebook: @BriaComics

The Love Spectrum

By Amy Flowers

Gender, Love, & Romance

What is “love?” While romance comes to mind for many people, especially this time of year, it is a serious oversimplification to equate love and romantic attraction. Just like sexuality and gender, romantic attraction has a spectrum of identities. Romantic attraction is an emotional response, involving a desire to experience a connection with a person through activities that are usually non-sexual in nature (such as cuddling, for example). It can be based on aesthetic, psychological, or social qualities, and is a distinct response from both sexual attraction and platonic attraction (a desire to form a friendship).

Romantic orientation and sexual orientation are two distinct entities, and while for many people they align, it is perfectly normal to experience different attractions toward different numbers or subsets of genders. I, for example, am panromantic, sapiromantic and homosexual. There are some who find that their type of attraction toward people is more or different than platonic, but also not the same as romantic, so the alternative “alterous” was born. Some of the most commonly used identities and terms are defined on the next page, but many additional terms have been coined if you find none of these suits you.

Love, then, is yet another separate thing from all of these. It could perhaps be described as the emotional response as the result of the sum of a person’s attractions to another. It can also be described by the chemical processes that occur in the brain during this response. Love serves to help enhance the bond from attraction into attachment, forming a long-term relationship. In an evolutionary sense, this allows potential partners to bond in a way that will outlast the time needed to raise potential children. No matter where you are on the romantic or sexual spectra, however, falling in love is a possibility for your future (or staying in love, if you’re already so lucky)!

With identities, orientations, and attractions to keep straight, it can become very confusing very quickly. How do we know all of these things are different? There is actually quite a lot of science to back this information up, and the basics are summarized in the table below. Previously, I have explored gender and sexual identity in our August 2018 issue. Sexual orientation, the gender(s) and/or sex(es) that a person is sexually attracted to, has been shown with many studies to have a significant genetic component. Some genes that may influence sexual orientation have been identified, but no specific “gay gene” is known, yet. Sexual attraction is generally mediated by the sex hormones, testosterone and estrogen; levels of these hormones have been shown to influence libido and may help regulate hormones involved in other attraction types.

In the absence of anxiety disorders, moderate stress will encourage social interaction; thus, stress can be a facilitator in initiating sexual or romantic relationships. In fact, one of the hormones related to romantic attraction (norepinephrine) is also a part of the stress response system. Attraction and the positive social interactions related to it appear to link this moderate stress response to the reward pathways in the brain. Once attachment forms, activation of these reward pathways encourages maintenance of the relationship and gives us the actual sensation of “love.” Interestingly, it has also been shown that sexual and/or romantic attractions are not necessarily prerequisites for activating the attachment and love pathways, reinforcing the idea that every attraction type is “normal”.

Identities	Age of Development	Major Determining Factors
Gender Identity ¹	2 - 5 years	Early Brain Development
Sexual Identity ¹	Conception & Early Development	Sex Chromosomes Testosterone, Estrogen
Orientation		
Sexual Orientation	Typically Puberty	Likely genetic, not yet known
Attractions		
Sexual Attraction (Lust) ²	Puberty to Late Teens	Testosterone, Estrogen
Romantic Attraction ²	Childhood to Puberty	Dopamine, Norepinephrine, Serotonin
Attachment (Love) ²	Puberty to Late Teens	Vasopressin, Oxytocin

¹See Flowers, Amy (2018). “Sex and Gender: The Science of Identity”. TVEN Quarterly Issue 2, pg 6-7 for more information.

²See Seshadri, Krishna (2016). “The Neuroendocrinology of Love”. Indian Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism Vol 20 Iss 4, pg 558-563 for more information.

RESOURCES

Crisis / Suicide Resources

- Trans Lifeline
 - USA: 877-565-8860
 - Canada: 877-330-6366
- Trevor Lifeline (a service of the Trevor Project)
 - Phone: 866-488-7386
 - Text: Send "Start" To 678678
 - Chat: <https://bit.ly/2qUOf1U>

TVEN Resources

- Contact Us
 - Phone: (530) 443-9596
 - Email: info@transgenderven.com
 - Web: <https://TransgenderVEN.com>
 - Facebook: @TransVENetwork
- Speech Therapy
 - <https://TransgenderVEN.com/speech-therapy>
- TVEN Downloads
 - <https://TransgenderVEN.com/Downloads>

Additional Resources

- National Center for Transgender Equality
 - <https://transequality.org/additional-help>
- Everything You Wanted to Know About Trans* (But Were Afraid to Ask)
 - Book by Brynn Tannehill
 - <https://amzn.to/2Epxnrw>
- Find a Transgender Friendly Therapist Near You
 - <https://bit.ly/2Xj4rJ5>
- TransWhat? A Guide Towards Allyship
 - <https://bit.ly/2xi3nwa>

Romantic Attractions and Other Helpful Terms

- **Abroromantic** – A romantic attraction which is fluid or changing; can be related to fluid sexual or gender identities.
- **Alloromantic** – A person who experiences romantic attraction toward other people; the opposite of aromantic.
- **Alterous** – An attraction which is more than platonic, yet different than romantic. A desire for emotional closeness without necessarily being limited to platonic or romantic labels.
- **Amatonormativity** – A societal expectation of romantic relationships as being more “normal” or valuable than non-romantic ones.
- **Androromantic** – A romantic attraction toward masculinity and male identifying people
- **Apresromantic/Demiromantic** – Romantic attractions that only occur after another form of attraction is felt. In apresromantic, the original attraction may fade and be replaced by the romantic attraction. In demiromantic, an emotional connection must first be developed prior to forming romantic attraction
- **Aromantic/Grayromantic** – Romantic attractions which are reduced or not experienced. Aromantics do not experience any romantic attraction, while grayromantics vary and may include reduced strength or frequency of attraction.
- **Aromate** – The aromantic equivalent of a soulmate.
- **Crush** – A strong desire to form a romantic relationship with someone.
- **Biromantic/Polyromantic** – Romantic attractions to more than one sex or gender. Biromantic and polyromantic are more suggestive that sex or gender are still a factor in determining who one might be attracted to, unlike panromantic.
- **Gyneromantic** – Romantic attraction to femininity or female identifying people
- **Heteroromantic** – Romantic attraction to the opposite sex or gender
- **Homoromantic** – Romantic attraction to the same sex or gender
- **Panromantic** – Romantic attraction to all people, regardless of sex or gender
- **Plush** – A queerplatonic crush
- **Squish** – An aromantic crush
- **Smush** – An explicitly sexual crush (lust)
- **Queerplatonic** – A relationship that is not romantic but involves a close emotional connection beyond a typical platonic relationship, and involving a commitment level typical of a romantic relationship. Some queerplatonic relationships may also include a sexual element
- **Sapioromantic** – A romantic attraction specifically to intelligence or human minds

Amy Flowers is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California at Davis — Molecular, Cellular, and Integrative Physiology program — where she is completing a dissertation in reproductive physiology. Amy is interested in development and diseases of the female reproductive tract, and transgender women's medicine, and hopes to work making a difference in the health of all women. When not working on her research or TVEN, Amy enjoys spending time with her wife Sarah and their 2 cats, Hunter and Chewie. Her favorite thing about research is knowing science fiction is just science that hasn't happened yet (and she can't wait to own a light saber).



Caring for the Community

An Ally's Perspective on Supporting the Transgender Community

By Randolph Carpadus

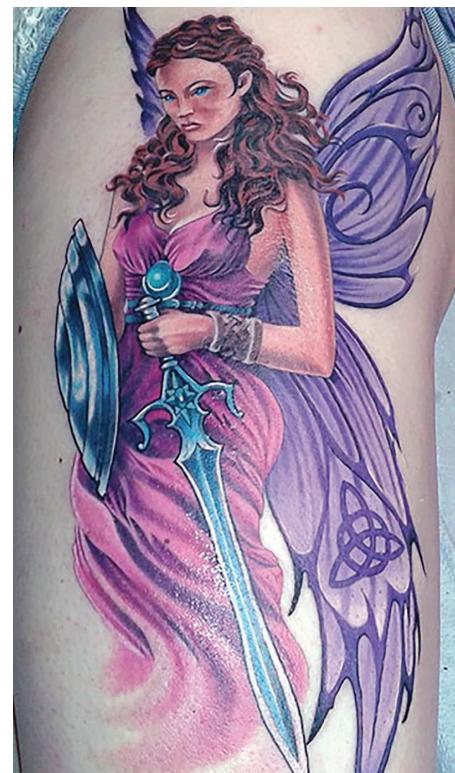
I was asked to do an article from a cis-male perspective on what it's like working with, living with, or being close to someone who has transitioned or is in the process of transitioning from one gender to another, or is genderqueer. My first reaction was fear. I'm not a writer, I have never written an article before, and can take days to generate a measly little blog post! My next reaction was "what the hell am I going to write about? It's no different than working with anyone else" . . . until I thought about it some. Then I wondered how to write this without coming off like some self-congratulating jackass (and I can't guarantee that that won't be the case). I have permission from everyone mentioned here to talk about our relationships and they have looked over this article before it was submitted. I do have to say that the farther I got into writing this, the more uncomfortable I became. The focus of the article feels strange to me, like I'd been asked what it was like to work with a P.O.C. or something like that. I'm concerned that it will come off "wrong" or even offend or hurt others. I'm not sure where it will go or exactly what I'm trying to convey here, so I'm just going to let the chips fall where they may.

Let me start off by telling you a bit about myself. I'm a cisgender, heterosexual (mostly), older male a few years short of social security. That, and being white-appearing, puts me in the demographic that is commonly known for transphobic behavior (as well as racism, sexism, homophobia, and a host of other societal ills, but I digress). However, I was lucky enough to grow up in a liberal, multi-racial/cultural household in the northern San Francisco Bay Area, in and around the old Northern Renaissance Faire in the 60s and 70s – a safe-haven for many LGBTQ persons – during both the Hippy and Gay rights movement. I like to think I am largely openminded and supportive of most existences that are not narrow-minded or hate-based.

There have been some things that have been different about working with your editor here, the amazing Sarah Flowers. For about two years we worked together at an animal training publishing company here in California. The first thing I was asked about before I even got an interview was my thoughts on trans women and my ability to work with one. I had never been asked that before and wondered if my boss-to-be had just outed someone without their permission. Being such a small company (three employees in the West Coast office) and knowing that there are still a lot of ill-informed people out there, I thought that it was an excellent screener question and that they were protecting Sarah from

trouble. One thing that was different in working with her vs. another office has to do with my background in emergency services (Fire/EMS) and event security. I always had one eye out for anyone having an "issue" with Sarah. Now don't get me wrong, she can handle herself for sure, but it's still in my nature to be on the lookout for trouble. There was never anything transphobic, though there was the occasional garden variety misogyny (there were those that came through our office and talked to the only guy there, me, even about things that Sarah would know about), but I still was on alert for potential narrow-minded bigots. I do have to say that one fun thing about working with Sarah was my continual delight in her style. I never knew what the heck she was going to show up to work in! I've never met a Warrior Faerie before. LOL!

When Sarah began to plan for, and then go through gender affirmation surgery, things did get slightly "weird" for me, but that was solely due to my Emergency Medical Services background! There were medically based technical questions I wanted to ask just because I wanted to understand from a medical standpoint how everything was done (it was straight up professional curiosity. Okay,



The Warrior Faerie

I'm weird that way, most of us in EMS are like that!). However, my curiosity alone doesn't give me the right to ask those questions. I knew that it ultimately wasn't any of my business, but I also didn't want to ignore the whole thing, especially since it was such a huge deal for her, such a major step and an incredibly brave one. If I ignored it, I was doing harm, but if I stepped too far, I'd be doing the same.

It was a bit of a tight-rope for a while and something I still worry about a bit. Also, what could I joke about or not joke about? We work together and are humans. Coworkers and friends joke. What if I cross a line? Am I being funny or hurtful? I feel that many of the issues today come from people who are angry that they can no longer be free to be ugly or insensitive and must watch what they say and do. My fear was not knowing where my line was, where her line was, and wanting to be the good person. That isn't always 100% natural as our society has changed a great deal and some things no longer have the same rules, which is usually a good thing. However, my instincts and experiences gave me no guidelines so running a bit blind is very uncomfortable.

Now I want to stop right here for a second and say that NOTHING I am saying means that I in anyway am anywhere close to going through what people in marginalized communities are going through. This isn't an "oh look at the poor old cis white guy" by any means. I was asked to talk about what it's like from a cis perspective and that's all I am doing.

I'd also like to introduce you to another friend of mine that I grew up with at the old northern Renaissance Pleasure Faire at Black Point in Marin County, California. This was the place that shaped most of my attitudes about sex and sexuality. I started working there when I was turning 13 and it opened a whole new world for me. Hippies, bikers, history nerds, wanna-be actors (and real ones), artists, idealists, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, heterosexuals, flaming queens, and non-conformists of all stripes were all now part of my world and I loved it.

About a year later I met my best friend for many years, Maya, or as she called herself then, "Michael". A quick aside



here. As I mentioned above, I have talked this article over with everyone involved and she said that "she didn't know she wasn't male then and that was what she went by so it's ok to use it for the past." I am also going to use neutral pronouns solely to identify the state of being at that point of time to avoid any confusion. I am very aware of deadnaming and misgendering issues and am doing this with permission.

"Michael" was a booth worker and performer and ran with a "pack" of girls all about the same age. I wanted to get to know this "guy" who had all those girls around! We were close to the same age, both had brothers that were also the same age, Mothers that were somewhat alike and we became very close. We partied hard, chased girls together, played A LOT of Dungeons & Dragons together and I think we even slept with the same girl a time or two, but had no jealousy between us. "Michael" was handsome, well spoken, somewhat promiscuous (as many of us were in those days) and very much what the 70s ideal of a San Francisco Bay Area 16-21-year-old "male" would be. We ran together for 6 or 7 years then time and circumstances pulled us apart. When I left the Renaissance Faire in the mid 80s I lost complete touch with "Michael."

In 2009 we reconnected via the wonders of FB and they were still going by "Michael" at that point. Over the next few years, unbeknownst to many of us, they began to acknowledge and accept the pull towards "the femme" as she puts it. As I had not personally seen or experienced this before, and as we were not as close as we once were, I was somewhat confused about what I was seeing at a distance. I wasn't sure what was going on, wasn't comfortable asking and so didn't, but stayed as non-judgmental and respectful as possible. We had way too much history for me to not be. Part of my "issue" was that they appeared to be Gender Fluid and that was something I had no basis of understanding about. As I said to them during a later conversation in 2015 (THE conversation): "Gender fluidity is not something that I quite 'get' yet. Not that I'm dismissing it or have some type of 'issue,' just that the concept has no reference point for me. I get changing traditional genders one way or another, or there being more feminine males and masculine females (so called Femme - Butch), or having physical attraction to one or both sexes, but not being fluid between the two 'traditional' sexes. There is no frame of reference for me internally." I didn't understand, wanted to, but didn't know how to gain understanding.

In 2015, while talking to them privately on social media about a mutual friend from our past that suddenly appeared, the door was opened on gender issues and I took the opportunity to ask about some of the things they were posting on-line (okay, I'd had a few glasses of wine!). We had a good discussion back and forth over several days and I learned a lot about my friend, about what I had missed in the years we were apart, where they were now, and where they wanted to be in the future. They were feeling that they were being pulled more to the feminine side of themselves but did not feel outright dysmorphic about the male side. It was not a real long talk, but it was so educational, and I felt honored to have been trusted

enough to have an open discussion.

One thing that really stood out for me during it was the longing to be “on the other side of the glass” referring to women-only spaces and being a woman in general. They referred to a time while in college of “nose-against-the-glass” longing, a sense that I ‘should’ have access to them but didn’t.” Being someone that has often been on the outside of parts of life looking in, that touched me. I get that. And the use of the word “sense” I found interesting. It’s so telling that one’s body or subconscious brain is telling the rest of the brain, “Hey I am not what my body appears to be. While I am me, that ‘me’ is different than what you think.” It’s not someone “deciding” that they are A, B, or C, it’s something inside saying “Here is where I belong.” I knew that all along, but when reading it, those words stood out to me as proof that the haters are so, so wrong. They, as “Michael,” knew somehow that they were “on the wrong side of the glass.”

She is now Maya and I learned so much from watching her journey to self and to who she really is. It also turned out to be very important for me as I am now a step-parent-to-be of a young teen who is beginning to question their place in life, their state of being, and is becoming Genderqueer. Although this is a fairly recent development, AJ has been trending towards the “masculine” for several years now both in dress and hairstyle, though not in other ways (they can be such a teen “girl” at times). It’s only been in the last year or so that they realized where they had been going, really having begun to explore presenting as male and having chosen a more representative name, though they aren’t asking it to be changed legally, nor are they moving to it 100% as they still answer to and use their birth name. They also do have places that they feel more to the masculine side and those that they feel more to the feminine, which is something I find interesting. In talking with AJ, I do get the feeling that this may not be a situation of changing gender or even questioning the binary, but a possible defense mechanism to a rapidly developing body and new attentions from boys, or an exploration of self and of expression, or a way of addressing sexuality, or even a way of cracking the patriarchy and challenging gender norms, or a combination of all the above. Regardless, I will continue to love, support, and protect them no matter what. It’s my job both as a human and, in their case, as a parent-by-choice. There is the added burden of having to now not only watch out for predators, but bigots and fools as well, something that parents of color live with daily, but even more so, and I’m ok with that. Go ahead and be stupid with my kid. I will light you up.

As to the subject that I was asked to write about, I have had some stumbling blocks and missteps with AJ. As I mentioned at the beginning I’m up there in years and have decades of speech habits, both good and bad, and my mouth sometimes runs faster than my brain, so I stumble over the use of them/their vs he/she/him/her. With Sarah there wasn’t that issue as she was “she” in every way, that’s all I ever knew her as, and it (the use of the speech forms) was natural and even subconscious. With AJ, the use of “they” (as they haven’t committed yet to “he/



Genderqueer & Gender Non-Conforming young adults.

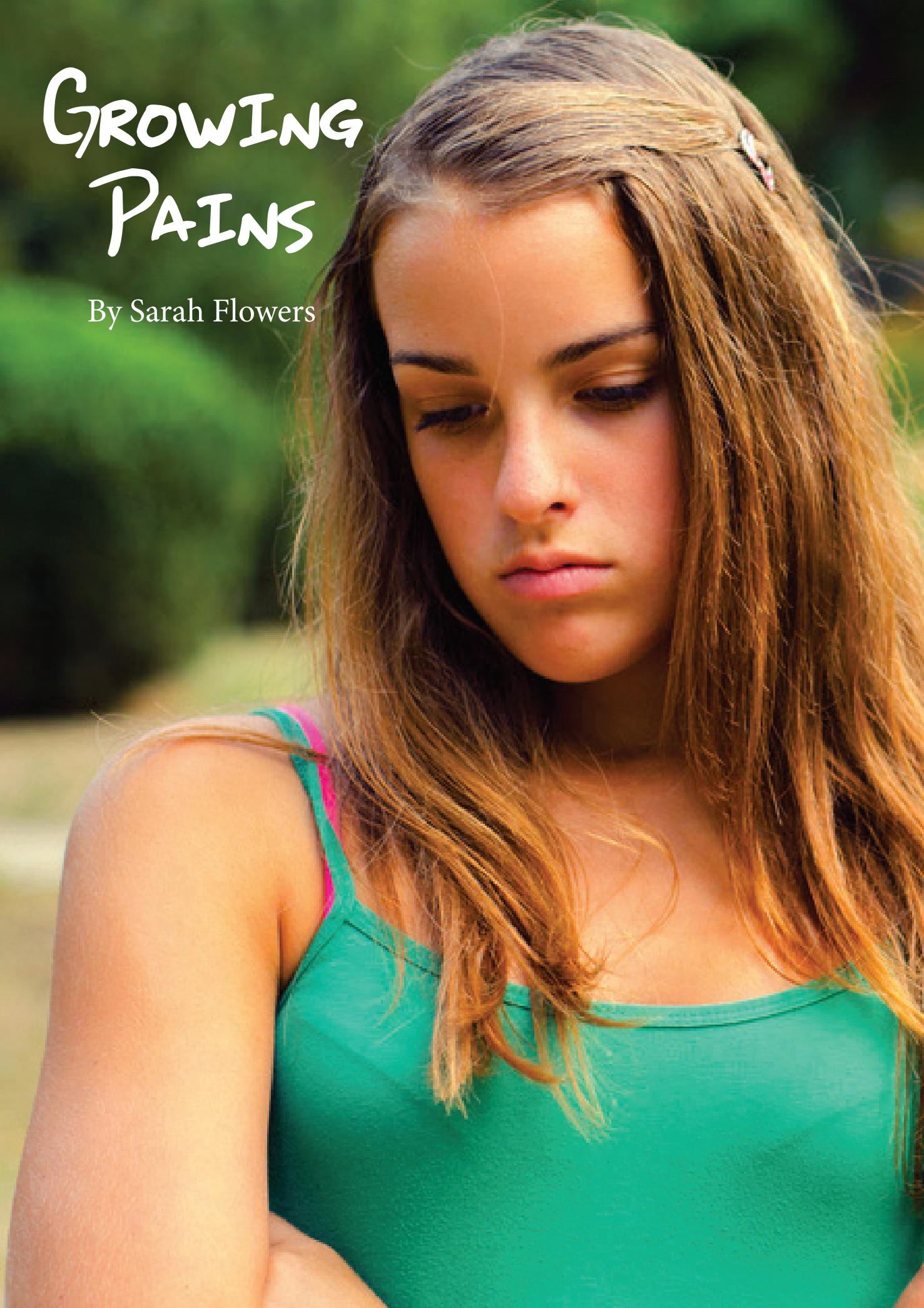
him”) doesn’t come “naturally” to the tongue and I screw up often. It’s become something that I have to think of consciously and pay attention to. It’s not automatic, but will become so over time. AJ and I have talked about it and they know that there is no ill intent in my occasional screwups.

The other issue is kind of weird. I’m a father of two grown sons, grandfather to 3 boys, and have always wanted a daughter. I knew how much of a problem I was to my parents and when I finally wanted kids, I wanted daughters. Instead I got boys, both of whom I love very much. When AJ’s mother and I became partners, I finally had the daughter I’d always wanted, and an amazing and talented one at that. I’d watched them grow up via FB (AJ’s mother and I were old friends before we became a family unit) and was proud to have them as my step-“daughter.” AJ and I used to often joke about it with me telling them “You are the daughter I’ve always wanted” and them saying “Well that’s good because I’m the one you got!” With this new exploration of self by AJ, I feel a sense of loss. I am losing my “daughter.” Yeah, it’s odd. I know. They are not going away. They are still talented, and funny, and oh so smart, and I still love them with all my heart, but there is still that sense of loss. Is it right or wrong? Don’t know, it just is.

Well there you have it, a perspective from an ally on what it is like to know/be close to someone (or in my case several someones) who turns gender norms on their head. Personally, I think it makes life more interesting, educational, and a lot less boring.

GROWING PAINS

By Sarah Flowers



**"THE GREATEST CERTAINTY IN LIFE IS DEATH.
THE GREATEST UNCERTAINTY IS THE TIME."**
CARL SANDBURG



If there is any one certainty within the transgender and gender non-conforming community, it is that there will most certainly be a lot of things that will change. Sometimes there will be miraculously happy life changing events such as taking your first dose of estrogen or testosterone, receiving your new birth certificate in the mail with your legally changed name and gender, or maybe even being given a date for one of the various gender confirmation/affirmation surgeries. Or maybe that change is the simple realization of what your gender identity is or the decision of what name you choose to match your gender identity.

But sometimes, that change isn't a happy one.

One of the hardest changes we encounter most frequently as a community is that of relationships which change for the worse when we reveal our unique gender identity to those around us. Often there are a lot of tears, some yelling and name calling, and almost always there are broken hearts. There are three main categories of relationships where these heartbreakin changes are most frequently experienced: (1) Friends, (2) Family, and (3) Partners / Spouses.

FRIENDS

For teens and young adults, a popular first option for who to come out to is those we consider friends. In many instances these are people that we have known for years, sometimes growing up through childhood together. These are people that we have shared some of our biggest struggles and secrets with.

But what happens to that friendship when a friend reacts negatively to the news and realization of our true gender identity?

In the best of worlds, there would be a conversation where the two friends discuss what being transgender means and what the newly revealed gender identity means to the friendship. Then after the conversation the two friends would keep being friends and the one's gender identity would just become another beautiful aspect of their friendship. But, sadly, this isn't always the case.

Sometimes, because of religious views, political or social pressures, or even the possibility of personal misunderstandings, the revelation of a new gender identity can drive friends away. In many instances, this is a direct result of a lack of education about transgender individuals and the transgender community. The most challenging aspect of the revelation process is that some people, regardless of how good of friends they might have been, refuse to be educated on the subject. So, no matter how much we may want to salvage the friendship, it might now be unsalvageable.

When friendships end, it can leave a mark. When friendships end because someone refuses to accept the gender identity of someone they once called friend, it can elicit a feeling of betrayal. For a transgender or gender non-conforming individual to open their heart to others and confide in them, it can feel like a big slap in the face out of nowhere. Opening up to someone about something so deeply personal takes a lot of courage.

When that refusal to accept does happen, the trans* individual will typically go through a lot of different emotions. The range of emotions will differ from person to person, but may include: sadness, depression, anger (at the friend and at themselves), and even fear. This rejection can also foster within the trans* individual a sense of mistrust for others and can lead to what some may call a “loner” syndrome. An affected person could withdraw from the friendships that still remain and could in turn also start isolating themselves from the world around them. As hard as it was for the trans* person to open themselves up to friends the first time, it takes true strength and courage to attempt it again after being rejected. Every rejection thereafter hurts just that much more.

But when the trans* person tells a friend about their gender identity and is wholeheartedly accepted for exactly who they are, it can have the potential to change the person’s entire outlook on life for the better. Memories of friends that are lost will hurt and there will be a lot of painful tears at times, but with the number of humans on this planet, it is almost a certainty that more friends will come along. No one will ever be able to replace that lost friend, but they will fill the void left by that friend. There are many wonderful people in this world who might be potential friends and many of those could potentially become the best friends that you will ever meet.

From personal experience, I have lost more than a few friends over the years in large part because I am a transgender woman or because I had sunk into that “loner” syndrome and every one of those losses hurt. I didn’t find my first “real” friends until I was 39 or 40, and one of those friends that I found then just happened to be one of my best friends back in high school whom I had lost touch with for more than 20 years. Friends may come and go and come again, but – and this is for the friends and allies out there – the simple act of accepting someone for exactly who they are is powerful enough to change even the stormiest of days into one filled with rainbows and unicorns, metaphorically speaking.

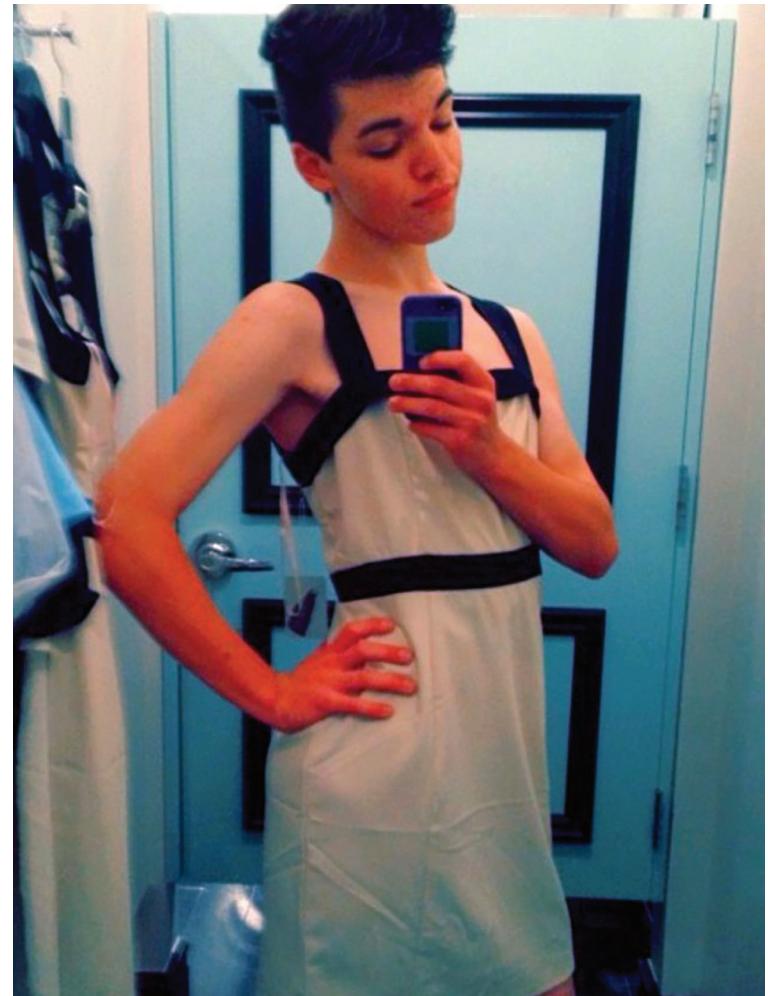
PARENTS & FAMILY

Like friends, our parents and families are many times the people who tend to know us best. In theory, we have known them since the day we were born, or the day they were born in the case of younger siblings. With all of that time getting to know someone, presumably years or even decades, one would think that they would know you best and love you unconditionally.

Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Yes, there are some amazing families out there, like my sister Angela (part of my tribe of amazingly wonderful friends) and her family who would do anything for her young transgender daughter and who is an amazing ally for the transgender community – you may have read an article by Angela in our November 2018 issue. But there are also a lot of families where acceptance and support are nowhere to be found.

When a parent or family member rejects the declaration of our gender identity, it can feel like the ultimate betrayal of what family and unconditional love are supposed to mean. For those who come from a religious background, like I did – I was raised in the Southern Baptist church and my father was a youth minister for the first half of my childhood and a preacher for the second half – it can seem like they gave that betrayal an extra turn of the knife.

Before I go any further, it is important to note that I refuse to speak ill of anyone’s religious beliefs. I personally do not attend church anymore due in large part to modern religious institutions’ corrupt and hypocritical practices and doctrines, especially in relation to the LGBTQIA+ community. I do, however, hold to my religious beliefs, most specifically the part that says “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (New Testament – John 15:12) and I do it unconditionally, with no strings attached, ever.



Leelah Alcorn. Transgender teen who committed suicide on December 28, 2014, after being rejected and ostracized by her parents.

When religion, politics, and other societal pressures tell your parents and/or family to stop loving you unconditionally, it makes one begin to wonder if the love was ever really there to begin with. Here's a hint, the love was always there . . . the parent or family member just lost sight of their priorities in who should come first in their life.

It is understandable that there may be some initial reluctance on the part of the parent or family member as the gender identity may have been presented to them very unexpectedly and they may not have any kind of understanding about it. Sometimes this may take a while to work through. But when that parent or family member absolutely refuses to accept the trans* person's gender identity or offer any kind of support, the relationship will forever be damaged by that person's religiously or socio-politically influenced preference for a chosen ignorance.

From my personal point of view, this is the hardest relationship to get past. After I came out as a transgender woman to my parents at the age of 39 (circa November 2014), my parents wouldn't even talk to me for the better part of a year. My mother tried very briefly to carry on conversations, but they adamantly refused to learn anything about the real me or about the transgender community despite how much I offered. By the end of 2016, both of my parents, citing their religious beliefs as the reason, had disowned me because their religion, not the Word of God (i.e., the Holy Bible), became more important to them than their own daughter.

Even though my parents have chosen to no longer be a part of my life, I still leave that door open for them with the hope that someday they might change their minds. I have shed more than a few tears over the loss of my relationship with my parents, but there have been a few silver linings that came after that. There is a variation of the old phrase that goes something like this: "When life closes one door, you can almost always find a window open somewhere." For me, that window came in the form of me reconnecting with two cousins and an aunt that I hadn't heard from in more than 30 years and my oldest friend in the world and her mother adopting me in love and acceptance.

TVEN UPDATE:

We have a new phone number: (530) 443-9596 (M-F, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Pacific)

We here at Transgender Visibility & Education Network are constantly looking for new and better ways to serve you, our most favorite people in the world. We are hard at work making updates and upgrades to our website, <https://www.transgenderven.com>, which will help you be able to locate the services and resources that you are looking for more easily. We have created a brand new Downloads page where you will find all of our flyers, handouts, brochures, and every issue of TVEN Quarterly. Speaking of the TVEN Quarterly (the magazine you are reading right now), did you know that businesses and organizations, or even individuals, can have professionally printed copies of every issue of the magazine? On our Downloads page, we have placed professional print-ready versions (in addition to the regular PDF versions) of the magazine and instructions on how to have it printed. In addition to constantly updating our lists of resources, we are currently working on building a members-only forum section where you will be able to pose questions, communicate with other members of the transgender community and our allies from around the world, and seek support in learning more about yourself, your loved one, and/or the transgender community as a whole, all within a safe, secure, and monitored environment. We will provide more information via our website and social media as soon the forum is ready for you.

In our last issue, we mentioned that our founder and Executive Director, Sarah Flowers, was going to be giving a presentation to the nursing staff at one of the Kaiser Permanente hospitals in San Francisco, California. Following that presentation, she was asked to serve on a Patient and Family Advocacy Council to help improve relations and education between hospital staff and Kaiser Permanente clients and patients. She is also assisting both local and regional teams within the Kaiser organization to increase both diversity, education, and relations specifically for the transgender and gender non-conforming patients and staff who interact with Kaiser Permanente hospitals and clinics on a daily basis.

If you are interested in playing a more active role in helping to build and develop the Transgender Visibility & Education Network into a worthy and sustainable non-profit organization, we can definitely use your help. We have numerous [currently] volunteer positions that we are looking to fill as we work to build this non-profit from the ground up. And many of these positions have the potential to eventually become paid positions (once we attain adequate funding) for the right individuals. If you would like to learn more about our open positions, please visit our website at <https://www.TransgenderVEN.com/Support> and scroll down to the Volunteer Today section. If you have any questions about TVEN, the TVEN Quarterly magazine, or any of our open positions, please e-mail us at info@transgenderven.com or call us at (530) 443-9596.

The loss of a familial relationship may very well be the hardest relationship to get over. You have spent numerous years and countless hours getting to know them and attempting to help them get to know you and that ultimate rejection may very well be a betrayal of everything that it means to be a family.

A modern understanding of the word family truthfully prescribes that you may choose your own family from those you hold dear and they don't necessarily have to be related to you by blood. Family can come in many different forms and one of the most comforting of those forms is the knowledge that, just in America alone, you have a family of more than 1.4 million brothers, sisters, elders, and youth who will love and support you through everything and that family is known as the transgender community. And as a transgender woman, I am so truly blessed and honored to be a part of your transgender family.

PARTNERS & SPOUSES

Next to the loss of parental or familial relationships, the loss of partner/spouse relationships can be just as heartrending. While all friendships require an investment of both time and self, the level of investment required for a partner or spousal relationship is greatly increased. In order to even get to the marriage or civil union stage, for instance, requires large investments of time together getting to know each other and learning how to become a cohesive family unit.

If you happen to be among the lucky individuals who met their partner or spouse after having transitioned or come out as trans*, you are among a very beautiful minority because your partner has only ever known you as being part of the transgender community. I met my current wife about a year after I transitioned, and yes, we have had our difficulties, but it has been a wonderful experience being in a relationship with someone who has only ever known me as being a transgender woman. Unfortunately, a large majority of partner relationships aren't lucky enough to start out that way. In some instances, the trans* partner in the relationship may not even fully realize that they are transgender or gender non-conforming until long after the relationship first began. In others, the trans* partner may spend years or even decades suppressing, for whatever reason, or attempting to hide the fact that they are trans*, typically for the purpose of either denying to themselves or the world around them that they are transgender or gender non-conforming.

When the gender identity is finally revealed to the partner, it can oftentimes be a harrowing experience as the partner may have been completely unaware of any leanings towards a gender identity different from the one they started the relationship with. It is quite understandable that the partner may feel a sense of betrayal by their trans* partner. Some partners may even attempt to go along with it for a while, to kind of test the waters of possibility, as it were. Where for some couples this may become the start of a beautiful evolution in the relationship, for others it could be the beginning of the end of the relationship.

For the partner, the end of the relationship may be because they don't want to be in a same sex relationship, possibly because of some religious or socio-political reason, or even because they realize they didn't know and love their trans* partner as well as they thought they did and the revelation of the new gender identity could be just the excuse they were looking for to end the relationship. For the partner, the end may happen for any number of different reasons, or even a combination of reasons.

But for the trans* partner, the end of the relationship could feel like a betrayal of the love and wedding vows that they had exchanged, specifically the part that says: "to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part." When the trans* partner comes out to their significant other it is our hope that nothing in the relationship will change. We have spent such a long time coming to an understanding of who we are as trans* individuals and the coming out process is our way of being honest with the partner that we love and cherish. Our coming out to our



Sarah Flowers lost her wife and two sons in divorce by coming out as a transgender woman. The image above is from prior to her transition to being Sarah.

partner is our way of helping them to get to know us even better as part of building the relationship.

When a relationship ends because one of the partners comes out as trans*, the trans* partner can quickly begin to feel as if their entire life has been turned upside down. The most difficult part of committed relationships that end is that many times there are also children involved which can certainly complicate things very quickly. To have everything we have loved and cherished and worked for ripped out from under us just because we were honest about who we are is a blow to the heart that not everyone can withstand.

The loss of a committed partner, and possibly children as well, can be absolutely devastating. Aside from the obvious feelings that come with any terminated relationship, for the trans* individual this can also produce increased anxiety and depression about their gender identity, anger toward themselves and the partner, and fear about ever trusting anyone with their gender identity every again. And when children (of any age) are involved, the matter becomes even more complicated as they may become pawns or cannon fodder in the hurt feelings of the parents or they might be forced to choose between their parents if custody battles ensue.

Dealing with those feelings once the dust settles is another challenge altogether. A moment ago I mentioned that my current relationship was one of the lucky ones. Unfortunately, it took three broken marriages and the loss of my children before I was lucky enough to find my forever love. While there were other matters that complicated those terminated relationships, the largest reason they ended was because I am transgender. And my second terminated marriage also included the loss of access to my children following a not-so-fun divorce and custody battle. Losing my wife was hard enough, but not being allowed to see my children for the past 11 years has caused a lot of depression and has led to many tear-filled nights.

It took many years and a lot of courage to be able to come to terms with the emotions of those losses. After a lot of conversations with friends and my current wife, Amy, I have learned how to process those emotions. None of it was easy, but it can be done. In the end, I am a better woman for it and am once again able to open my heart to the love that I am able to share with Amy. And in hindsight, while I do still have a lot of painful memories from those three previous marriages, I bear no ill will towards the women I was married to. I know now that they were and are good women, I just wasn't the person for them, even though I thought I was at the time, because I wasn't able to be fully open and honest with them about who I am as a transgender woman.

In the end, the loss of any relationship is never a fun prospect. But, it is how we deal with the loss that determines our future as trans* individuals. If you are experiencing any of the emotions that I have described, I encourage you to speak to a friend or family member or even a therapist or councilor. Don't let those emotions fester and lead you to increased anxiety, depression, fear, anger, or even suicidal thoughts. Talk to someone and share your struggles. The Trans Lifeline and The Trevor Project are two great starting points and they are always available, night and day.

And know that you are always welcome, loved, and forever supported in my family and within the transgender community.



866.488.7386

The nation's only, around-the-clock crisis intervention and suicide prevention lifeline for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Call us toll-free, 24/7.

TREVORchat

A free, confidential and secure online messaging service that provides live help by trained volunteers. Check our website for specific hours of operation.

www.TheTrevorProject.org

Writers Wanted:

Do you enjoy reading the articles you find in the TVEN Quarterly magazine each quarter? Would you like to write for us? We are currently looking for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, allies, and subject matter experts (e.g., doctors, lawyers, therapists, scientists, businesses, etc.) who would like to help contribute to each issue of the magazine. If you would like to write engaging articles and perspective pieces for us or for more information, please email Sarah Flowers at info@transgendersen.com.

Upcoming Issues:

- Trans-Feminine (May 2019)
- Trans-Masculine (August 2019)
- Transgender Culture & Community (November 2019)
- Gender Non-Binary & Non-Conforming (February 2020)
- Remembering Our Heroes (May 2020)

Building Stronger Lives Through Education



<https://www.TransgenderVEN.com>
Facebook: @TransVENetwork

ABOUT TVEN

The Transgender Visibility & Education Network offers information, resources, and visibility for all things transgender.

There are tons of websites out there which offer pieces of the puzzle, but this Facebook page pulls all of those resources together into one easy-to-find place and serves to offer information which caters to:

- Transgender Individuals
- Family, Friends, Coworkers, and Allies
- Professionals and Businesses

This page is a global community resource for anyone looking to learn more about what it means to be transgender (and all categories under the transgender umbrella).

EDUCATION

Learn about the medical, psychological, emotional, and social issues that affect every transgender individual.

"Life isn't always easy, but it does get better."

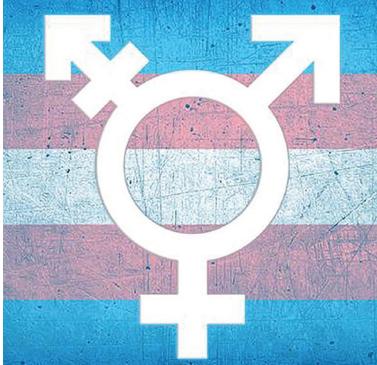


RESEARCH

Learn about new research and policies that are helping transgender & non-binary individuals to live a better life.

POLITICAL

Learn about the various global political movements and policies that affect transgender individuals around the world.



SOCIAL

Discuss topics that are important to you and meet new friends and allies along the way. Post websites and articles that might be useful to others in the community.

