

Ask Matt: My Feminine Side is Screaming to Get Out

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Abstract

A reader writes: "I have questions, but have never had the strength or will to voice them and ask. I am, of course, a genetically born male, and most of the time I'm fine with that. But more often, in recent months, I've felt that it's not right. I feel like there is a feminine [...]"

Article

A reader writes:

"I have questions, but have never had the strength or will to voice them and ask. I am, of course, a genetically born male, and most of the time I'm fine with that. But more often, in recent months, I've felt that it's not right. I feel like there is a feminine side of me that is screaming to get out, like it's trapped."

"But it's not just a matter of acting more feminine. I don't want to say it's genetic, but that's the best way to describe it. I used to chalk it up to just being a sensitive guy, because I am. I have more in common with more girls I know than I do with guys. But lately it feels like there is more to it than that."

"It's an uncomfortableness with my own appearance as a man. But then that leaves me for a few days, then returns. It has gotten to the point where I'm confused about myself. Not sexually, though I know that has nothing to do with gender, but I am confused genderwise."

"But then at the same time, I'm scared. I don't know if I'd be happy if I started to transition, but I do know I don't feel right the way I am now, or I don't think I do. I don't know what the right choice is right now, and believe me I'm not asking you to tell me exactly what I should do, but I am asking for your guidance, and maybe asking someone who might have been in the same spot I am."

"I know that ultimately it is my decision and only me that knows what I should do. But I could use some help, even if it's that I'm not looking at the right things or asking the right questions. If I'm not, the what are those things? Those questions?"

As you said, only you know what is right for you, and you might not know that right now. There is no hurry, so take a breath and realize that finding out what to do is a process.

You say that you want to hear from someone who might have been in the same spot that you are right now. I can honestly say that a great many trans people have been in the same spot that you are right now. So you're not alone.

I don't know how old you are, but I think you are an adult. In many of the books about transgenderism

and/or transsexuality, and in many of the personal accounts that you might read or hear, you will find that, for a large percentage of trans people, these incongruent feelings - “My identity and body don’t match” or “Who I think I am and who I’m supposed to be are not the same” - started in childhood and have been persistent throughout life.

But that is not the case for everyone, so don’t let that steer you in the wrong direction. For some people, gender issues manifest in adulthood, for whatever reason (and one reason could be just out-and-out denial until then). It doesn’t matter why. What matters is that it’s happening, and it’s happening now. So now you need to deal with it.

Of course it’s scary. It’s okay to feel scared. I know very few people who have not been scared by this, at least in the beginning, as they were starting to come to terms with it. But if it is truly a gender identity issue, it won’t go away. It can be wrestled underground for a while, but it will continue to return. So that’s why you have to deal with it - but on your own schedule and in your own way.

You don’t have to transition. Because trans people who have transitioned are so prominent in the media and elsewhere, it sometimes seems to people that this is their only option - I have to do this, then I have to do this, then I have to do this. You might eventually decide that this is the path for you. But understand that it is one possible path of many.

You don’t say whether or not you have been presenting or dressing as female, even in the privacy of your own home, but that might be one place to start - to safely express this identity and see how it feels to you. What does it mean to you to express yourself as female? Does it mean a certain type of clothing, makeup, jewelry?

You can get some inexpensive clothing and jewelry at a thrift shop and some inexpensive makeup at a dollar store. Don’t spend a lot until you know for certain that this is right for you, and until you know what the female you likes and is comfortable in.

Another thing that I would recommend is trying to find a support group in your area for trans women or questioning people. Yes, it will be scary! But remember when you walk in that everyone in that group was terrified at one time, and look where they are now.

Being around trans women - seeing them in “real life,” hearing their stories, and finding out what they went through - can help you decide whether or not you can relate. Is this you? Are they where you want to be?

I would also recommend doing some research on crossdressers and on bigender people. Can you relate? Do either one of these things ring true for you?

And, although some people do not agree with me, I’m a big proponent of therapy - if you can find the right therapist. Although the future of transition seems to be informed-consent clinics, most doctors still want a therapist’s letter to prescribe hormones or perform any major surgeries.

For someone in your position, who has not grown up with these feelings and is not unshakeable in your certainty about your situation, I think therapy could be very helpful.

You asked about the right things to think about and the right questions to ask. I think what you should

be thinking about is exploring the various explanations for what you are feeling - by reading books, looking at websites, and attending support groups. And the questions to ask are “Is this like me? Can I relate? Are these my people?”

Don’t rush into anything. There is no hurry. And don’t let anyone tell you that you must transition or that you have to transition in a certain way. If you are getting that kind of pressure, go somewhere else.

Take your time and look at this as an exciting new challenge - a quest to find out who you truly are. I wish you the best of luck and I hope that readers have some other thoughts and experiences to share.

Cross-posted from Tranifesto

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