

This document is re-printed from a personal website of an SA member who identifies as being in recovery from transgender lust.

This is not official SA literature and the member, writing in a non-SA forum, expresses a lot personal opinions about recovery and religion and his experience in another S fellowship, prior to SA.

This document is included, as no other writings by SA members on transgender recovery could be found.

Anything you read here is strictly the opinion of the individual participant; the principles of SA are found in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

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## **From transsexual to recovering sex addict: a different approach to gender dysphoria**

I'm a transgender fantasy addict. I've created this site to share a message drawn from my personal experience – one that may not be relevant to very many people, but which I hope may be of life-changing, even life-saving, significance to those few.

In a nutshell, my story is this:

- Starting in early childhood I developed a behaviour pattern of compulsively fantasizing about being a woman.
- I became convinced that the only way I could have a fulfilling life was actually to become a woman.
- I came to the recognition that my condition was really a form of addiction – that I was using my fantasies the way an alcoholic reaches for the bottle.
- I found a way to recover from my addiction that does not involve changing my gender identity.
- For anyone who identifies with my experience, my message is: THERE IS HOPE!

## **Contents**

<b>What's working</b>	<b>Sunday, August 07, 2011</b>
<b>Suggestions for a Path of Discernment and Recovery</b>	<b>Friday, August 11, 2006</b>
<b>Recovery: setting boundaries</b>	<b>Friday, April 28, 2006</b>
<b>The Promises: three special promises for transgender fantasy addicts</b>	<b>Thursday, May 04, 2006</b>
<b>Questions for self-diagnosis</b>	<b>Friday, April 28, 2006</b>
<b>Sanity</b>	<b>Friday, May 05, 2006</b>
<b>My Story</b>	<b>Sunday, February 05, 2006</b>
<b>Autogynephilia: men trapped in men's bodies</b>	<b>Friday, May 05, 2006</b>

## Sunday, August 07, 2011: What's working

I'm not working a perfect program of recovery and I know I never will. But I'm finding that - by the grace of God - my recovery really is strengthening over time. Here is a list of some of the main things that are working for me.

1. Since 2008 I have been a member of Sexaholics Anonymous\*. At first I was just going along because there was a meeting in my town, but after a while I decided it was where I belonged. Why? Because it tells me that sex has a place in my marriage and nowhere else. No ifs, no buts. It doesn't help me to be told that this is just my personal choice, one among many choices I could make. The choice has been made by my Higher Power and my choice is simply whether or not I go along with his.

Also because SA identifies what I'm really addicted to and gives it a name: lust. The stuff that goes on in my head, the chemical I can flood my brain with just by playing a fantasy on my internal DVD player. And this means that there's more to being really sober than giving up external behaviours, vital though that is. More about that in point 4.

\*As ever, this blog represents my personal views only and not those of any group.

2. I go to meetings.

3. I do service at my meeting. Nothing heroic and spectacular, just service.

4. I have a zero tolerance policy towards sexual fantasy. It's taken me a long time to get there, but it really has been working for several months now - after a rather serious "wobble" made me realise I had to stop using half measures in this area.

In particular, I've accepted that for me there is no such thing as an "innocent" fantasy of being a woman. They're all sexual and they will all lead me to the "hard stuff" before I know where I am. So the time to stop is as soon as I become aware of what's popping up inside my head.

How do I stop? By turning the fantasy over to my Higher Power. Usually I use a prayer formula adapted from the White Book of Sexaholics Anonymous: "God, I surrender the right to entertain this fantasy. Please take it away from me". I use this for any other lust triggers too. The beauty of it is that in an instant it turns each of them from a threat into a moment of contact with my Higher Power. He is a reality in my life and wants to keep me safe - I just have to do my bit by asking.

5. This flows on from the previous point. Lust is spiritual anti-matter. My head used to be full of it. Cutting it out leaves a void and the void must be filled with something. For me that means putting prayer at the centre of my day-to-day life. For a long time I thought prayer was a means to an end. But that meant I was trying to manipulate God, turning him into a kind of slot machine - I put my coin in and out comes the chocolate. The truth is that prayer works when I stop trying to make it work - when I'm talking to God just because actually that's the most important thing I can ever do, and if it's the only thing I do all day the day hasn't been wasted.

So: I pray in church when I can. I take a prayer book to work with me and use it on the train. I have a "starting work" prayer on my computer. I say some prayers before I go to sleep. And I have a particular short prayer which I use as a "mantra", saying it over and over throughout the day

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6. I believe I have found my way to the form of religious practice that can support my recovery better than any other. .... Here I encounter a God who is infinitely loving; who, being infinitely loving, is gently uncompromising in his demand that I do his will - because what he wills can only ever be what is best for me, what brings me out of the darkness of addiction into the light of his love.

If you are in any way affected by the issues discussed in this blog, I would like to offer you my prayers that you will find help, healing and blessings.

## **Friday, August 11, 2006: Suggestions for a Path of Discernment and Recovery**

First, we examine our thoughts and feelings about our condition. Am I sure I am transsexual? Am I happy about it? Am I sure that SRS is the solution? Am I happy about that? We remind ourselves honestly about the implications. If the answer to any of the preceding questions is 'no', we owe it to ourselves to explore every possible alternative.

We inform ourselves about the concept of sexually motivated, or autogynaephilic, transsexualism. Is there anything there we can identify with? Could this be at the root of our unease? Are we in denial?

If we can accept that our transgender behaviours may be sexually motivated, we ask ourselves: could I simply decide that I am not going to act on these sexual urges, and stop the behaviours? If not, what does that imply?

We consider whether any of our sexual behaviours in general may be addictive. We examine in detail whether our transgender behaviours in particular have sexually-motivated and compulsive characteristics.

We ask: do I want to be freed from my transgender compulsions? Am I prepared to take action and make contact? We start to work a programme of recovery. As part of this programme we set boundaries around our transgender behaviours.

We trust in a Power greater than ourselves to fulfil the Promises of the 12- Step Programme. [read the Promises, and my suggestions

## **Friday, April 28, 2006: Recovery: setting boundaries**

Here are some suggestions for boundaries that we can set as tools for achieving sobriety:-

- Don't wear women's clothes or cosmetics
- Don't buy women's clothes, or window-shop for them
- Don't shave or remove hair from arms, legs or armpits (unless these are normal male behaviours in your culture)
- Don't take female hormones
- Don't have treatment for beard removal
- Don't use transgender fantasies to masturbate, to suppress feelings or to avoid dealing with problems
- Don't enter transgender fantasies while being sexual with a partner
- Don't surf the Internet for material to stimulate transgender fantasies
- Don't buy or keep transgender pornography
- Don't keep catalogues of women's clothing
- Don't use a femme name, for example as an e-mail address
- Don't attend transgender social gatherings en femme, or avoid them altogether

**Thursday, May 04, 2006:**

## **The Promises: three special promises for transgender fantasy addicts**

'The Promises' is a beautiful passage from the book 'Alcoholics Anonymous' which has been adopted by all 12-Step fellowships. It is often read out near the end of a meeting:

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development we will be amazed before we are half-way through.

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

We will comprehend the word serenity and

We will know peace.

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

Self-seeking will slip away.

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

We will suddenly realise that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialise if we work for them.

My experience and hope suggest three things which can be said about the particular ways in which the Promises will be fulfilled for those of us recovering from transgender fantasy addiction:-

1. We will learn to cherish our bodies unconditionally as gifts from a loving God.
2. We will come to accept our personalities as a unique mix of masculine and feminine and value both aspects, and we will not feel that we need to change our bodies or gender identities in order to express our true selves.
3. We will find in loving relationships with other human beings a joy we could never know while our sexuality was obsessively focussed
4. on fantasy and on our own bodies.

## **Questions for self-diagnosis**

These questions are meant to help you think about your situation. There is nothing scientific about them – they are simply drawn from aspects of my own experience which I feel are significant. There is no scoring system.

Some of them raise the issue of sexual orientation – you can read an explanation of my thoughts on this [here](#).

How many of the following statements do you identify with?

The first time I can remember having sexual feelings as a child is when I first had a transsexual fantasy.

I frequently masturbate whilst having transgender fantasies.

I use sexual fantasy as a refuge from the problems of real life.

The woman I am in my fantasies is the kind of woman I find sexually attractive, and bears no relation to my own age, size, appearance etc.

I fantasize compulsively about particular female anatomical characteristics (breasts, vagina, etc.) or biological functions (menstruation, pregnancy, breastfeeding etc.).

My sexual fantasies of being a woman involve sado-masochistic or fetishistic elements.

In my fantasies I may be sexual with men, but they are "faceless" – I don't fantasize about specific male individuals.

I regularly engage in sexual behaviours which I want to stop because I feel they are not ways in which a woman would typically behave, but I am unable to stop them.

I use pornography, but tell myself that I am different from normal male pornography users because I identify with the women portrayed.

I spend a lot of time looking at TS websites and using them to fuel my fantasies of becoming a beautiful woman.

I have had one or more long-term sexual relationships with women.

I have had no sexual experiences with men.

I wear women's clothes in private, but rarely or never go out in public en femme – I am too nervous.

I worry a lot about not being young and attractive enough as a woman.

I don't enjoy social gatherings of transgendered people – I just feel awkward and out of place.

I have, or have had, typically male leisure interests.

I work in a male-dominated occupation.

I turn particularly strongly to transsexual fantasies and behaviours at times of great emotional stress.

When I fantasize about being a woman I become less inclined to mix with other people and just want to isolate myself.

"I want to be a woman" describes my feelings more honestly than "I am a woman".

Finally, one to sum up all the rest: • I use my fantasy of being a woman like an alcoholic uses a drink.

## **Friday, May 05, 2006**

### **Autogynephilia: men trapped in men's bodies**

'Autogynephilia' is a long word built up from three short Greek words meaning 'self', 'woman' and 'love'. It refers to a condition in which a biologically male person becomes sexually aroused when he imagines being a woman.

I was introduced to this concept by an essay written by Dr Anne Lawrence, a post-operative transsexual who identifies herself as autogynephilic., and I've yet to find a better introductory account of it.

I'm not necessarily endorsing everything Dr Lawrence writes. For one thing, there has been much controversy over her views within the transgender community. For another, the path she has taken is the opposite to the one I have chosen (and I have no idea how she would react to the contents of this site). But there's no need to get into theoretical debates, nor, at this stage, to prejudge what is the best way of dealing with the condition. The point is simply to read her account of her own condition and ask whether you can identify with it.

Speaking for myself, after I had read it I could never again say to myself with complete conviction "I'm really a woman".

How do you react on reading it? Can you identify with it? Or does it make you angry? If so, why?

Denial is a central feature of addiction. It seems logical to me to suggest that it may also be a powerful temptation for autogynephilic transsexuals. For as soon as we accept the fantasy of being a woman for what it is – as something we experience as men wanting to be what we are not, we have to accept that it cannot be realized. Whatever we do to our bodies, there is no escape from the people we are inside.

I certainly tried very hard to convince myself that I didn't fit the diagnosis of autogynephilia - for instance by inflating the handful of episodes from my childhood where I experienced transgender feelings into a biography in which I was 'really a girl' all the time.

## **Sanity**

If we have considered transitioning and obtaining Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS), what are we thinking of letting ourselves in for?

**Medical consequences –**

We will need a long and painful course of hair removal treatment; we will take hormones in potentially lethal doses and undergo surgery – with the risks that always go with it – to reshape our genitals, enlarge our breasts, and perhaps to remodel our faces; life expectancy statistics show that it is significantly lowered for post-op TSs.

**Financial consequences–**

We can expect to spend many thousands of dollars/pounds/Euros on hair removal treatment, voice training, hormone treatment, and surgery; at the same time we are likely to find that society's inability to accept us drastically impairs our career prospects – even if we have the benefit of anti-discrimination legislation, it cannot force employers, colleagues and clients to accept a gender identity which does not conform with their perceptions.

**Sexual and reproductive consequences –**

We will sacrifice our ability to have children; our capacity for orgasmic sexual pleasure will almost certainly be reduced and is likely to be lost altogether.

**Social consequences –**

We are very likely to find that family and friends are unable to accept what we are doing and reject us; if we are married or in a long-term relationship, the relationship is unlikely to survive in its existing form; we may find that even after we have undergone all the treatment available to us we are still unable to "pass" as women, and so face a lifetime of stares, double-takes and worse; although the legal position of TSs is gradually improving, it remains the case in many places that we will not have full legal status as women.

**Emotional consequences–**

All the consequences already listed have a greater or lesser degree of emotional fallout, but above all we risk the pain of rejection by those we love; we will be undergoing irreversible surgery in the knowledge that a significant minority of those who have done so have regrets - we cannot be sure in advance that we will be among the lucky ones.

What would make it rational to take all this on? Speaking for myself, if I'm honest with myself the answer I must give is this: only the certain conviction that, without it, life itself would be impossible and we would be driven to suicide. If that is not the case, and we are looking to this course of action to solve our problems and make our lives better, we must question whether our thinking is sane.

## **Sunday, February 05, 2006**

### **My story**

I was a shy and lonely boy. My early childhood was marked by two experiences of separation: hospitalization when I was eighteen months old, and a move which took me hundreds of miles away from my old home and friends when I was four. By the time I was five and starting school, I was experiencing the world as a threatening and frightening place. My family's culture was firmly based on the notion that nice Christians do not show their feelings, so I learned to keep my fear and pain inside. I suspect that the expectation that I should be able to keep a stiff upper lip was especially strong because I was a boy.

My earliest memory of transsexual thoughts goes back to when I was six. I had a dream in which I was a young woman working as a rich woman's maid, and wearing a pretty dress something like one of my mother's slips. In effect I was dreaming of a life in which I had traded autonomy for security. I have little doubt that strong sexual feelings must have accompanied the dream, ensuring that it made a lasting impression on me.

I can remember a couple of other occasions during my childhood when I fantasized about being female, and found this was a pleasant escape from reality. But it was in puberty that such fantasies really came into their own. My sexuality divided me in two. I longed for a normal relationship with a girlfriend, but my crippling lack of self-confidence made it impossible for me to approach girls. As an escape from this painful reality I could spend hours in my fantasies of being a slave girl, forced to wear skimpy clothing and to have sex at the whim of my owners.

Going to university and finding myself surrounded by attractive women who were so near yet so far (a new experience, as I had attended a single-sex school) made my shyness still more painful. My sexual acting-out progressed to include pornography. As I masturbated I would imagine that I was one of the models in the photos. I had discovered the existence of transsexualism from a book review in a newspaper and a paragraph in a sex education book. I did not believe I could really be a transsexual – my yearning for a heterosexual relationship as a man was too strong, and I could not deny to myself that my transgender fantasies were at bottom sexual – but I felt very envious of those who were.

Social phobia and depression made it impossible for me to study effectively. I was living virtually as a recluse. I eventually sought treatment from a psychologist, but it didn't help, and I could see no alternative to dropping out of university. At this low ebb in my life I lost my virginity by going with a prostitute.

I found a job after a few months, and although it was badly paid it enabled me to fund my collection of pornography and regular visits to prostitutes. After each sexual encounter I was consumed with shame, self-loathing and despair, but I couldn't stop. I saw a "normal" relationship with a woman as my one hope of redemption. I had crushes on various women, but I only ever asked one of them out, only to be turned down.

When I was in my mid twenties a legacy enabled my parents to move into a bigger house, which meant that I no longer had to share a bedroom with my brother. My almost immediate reaction to this new-found privacy was to begin buying and wearing women's clothes. The first night I spent sleeping in lingerie bought from a sex shop was intensely pleasurable. Although clothes were far from being enough to realize my fantasies, I decided I must at least be a transvestite even if I wasn't a transsexual.

This phase ended after a year or so with my getting rid of all the women's clothing I had accumulated. The pleasure of indulging my transgender urges was eventually outweighed by the fear that being 'kinky' would make it totally impossible to have a normal relationship with a woman. However, I could not change the pattern of masturbating to transgender fantasy.

As I neared 30 there were some positive changes in my life. Success in studying led me into a job which had a future, and the boost to my self-esteem enabled me to begin going on some blind dates. But fundamentally I still had no confidence that I was attractive and loveable. The first woman I had a second date with became my partner for ten years. It was a sick, co-dependent relationship between two sick people. For me it was 'any port in a storm', as I was driven by loneliness and guilt to find some alternative to the misery of anonymous sex with prostitutes. Once the co-dependency bond was established I felt trapped.

I stopped seeing prostitutes throughout this time, but towards the end I was making increasing use of pornography – now available to me in especially addictive form on the Internet. What never stopped was my use of transgender fantasy. I would habitually use fantasy whilst having sex with my partner, both as an escape from the pain of the relationship and as the only way I could achieve orgasm.

I increasingly thought about becoming a woman as a serious option. In my distorted thinking it seemed to me to be the only morally justifiable reason for breaking my commitment to the relationship. When the relationship finally did break down, the dam burst. Within a couple of days I'd begun buying women's clothes again. I pored over TS websites and magazines. I got involved in a TV/TS support group. I found a TS-friendly hairdresser who would give me a unisex style, and a beautician to teach me about makeup. I 'came out' to some of my friends and my sister. I embarked on an expensive and painful course of pulsed-light treatment to remove my beard. I thought the next step would be to see a specialist who would give me the green light to begin taking hormones.

And yet something wasn't right. Was it that I always felt ill at ease in transgendered gatherings? That I was still terrified of going out in public en femme? That when I met TSs I could never, in my heart of hearts, feel that they were really women? That I couldn't reconcile a realistic expectation of what hormones and surgery could do for my fortysomething-year-old body with the stunning beauty I dreamt of being? Was it the reluctant identification I felt with accounts I read of sexually-motivated, "autogynaephilic" transsexualism – being a "man trapped in a man's body". Or all of this rolled together into that nagging voice in my head asking if I was doing the right thing?

And there were other things going on for me that were hard to reconcile with my desired self-image as a 'woman in waiting'. I had started seeing prostitutes again. The first time was when I was on my way home from a meeting with a pre-op TS with whom I'd been exchanging letters. I'd been disillusioned to find her highly unconvincing as a woman. After a while, paying for sex developed into a habit which I'd indulge every ten days or so. And my use of Internet pornography and prostitution-related sites was out of control. I'd stay on in the office until everyone else had left, then start surfing. Sometimes I wouldn't even wait. Then I started working from home (I was living alone) and got a broadband Internet connection, and there were simply no boundaries. I'd surf all through the night, seeking out increasingly extreme and abusive material.

Eventually I reached a crisis point where I was forced to admit to myself that there were no longer any boundaries around my use of pornography that I could trust myself not to cross. Having admitted this I could not deny that I needed help. I delayed for a while, then a further 'rock bottom' experience pushed me into taking action. A woman I'd paid for sex told me her story. Basically she

had been driven into prostitution by pure financial desperation after an injury forced her to give up a job she loved. It dawned on me that I had in a real sense paid for the right to rape this woman. The next week I attended my first meeting of Sex Addicts Anonymous and for the first time spoke the words "I'm a sex addict".

I entered the recovery programme of SAA with clear goals: to stop my use of prostitution and of Internet pornography. The relationship of these goals to my transgender feelings seemed equally clear-cut: by removing the compulsion to engage in these characteristically masculine behaviours, I would resolve the conflict between them and my desired self-image as a woman, and thus clear the way to full gender transition. Others in the fellowship with whom I shared these thoughts, my sponsor included, were entirely supportive of me as a transsexual.

I did however identify the use of sexual fantasy, and masturbation to fantasies, as part of my addictive behaviour pattern, and decided that I therefore needed to try to give this up. My fantasies were so consistently abusive (mainly to myself) in nature that it was obvious to me that they could not form part of a healthy sexuality. Whereas in the first few months of my recovery I struggled to maintain abstinence from my "bottom line" behaviours for more than a few weeks, I found it relatively easy to stop fantasizing. I was very much helped by a path of spiritual growth that I was following outside the SAA programme – I was preparing to be confirmed in a church which I had started attending.

It was after I had been in the SAA programme for about four months that I had a profound experience of spiritual awakening. I chanced to be in the area where my ex-partner and I were staying when our relationship came to an end almost exactly two years before. There was a little church nearby, and I went into it to pray. Almost as soon as I got down on my knees, tears started coming, and didn't stop for the next hour. All the bottled-up grief and pain over the failed relationship was coming to the surface. At the end of it I felt a deep serenity, a sense of being healed and at peace with God. These feelings were accompanied by a tremendous clarity of mind, through which I saw my gender issues in a completely new light. I realized how much they were bound up with my feelings about the relationship – that the dream of being a woman had given me something to hope for as the relationship fell apart, and something to cling to when it finally collapsed. I found myself positively wanting to stay male rather than try to become what could only ever be a poor imitation of a woman – accepting both my male body and my complex gender identity as gifts from God. I also felt ready to open myself to the possibility of a new relationship – not attempting to conform to anybody else's expectations of masculinity, but simply as myself.

To be sure, I asked myself whether this was all wishful thinking. But as I wrote in my diary, "it has the ring of truth because I felt so emotionally alive after such a long deadness".

Over the next few weeks I let go of all my transgender behaviours and, most importantly, the fantasies which fed them. I have now been abstinent from them since April 2002, and from my original 'bottom line' behaviours of paying for sex and using the Internet for sex since the following July. I am not "cured", and never will be, but I am recovering. Recovery has not always been an easy ride, especially in the early stages when I was often left confronting a great emptiness which I had previously filled with fantasies of being a woman. Medical treatment for clinical depression has played a vital part here. At the same time I sought God's help and guidance in filling that emptiness through spiritual growth – and my prayers are being answered. The most wonderful of God's gifts to me has been my marriage to a woman I met whilst in recovery. I felt total trust that it was God's will for me to commit myself to this relationship as a man, and the love, tenderness, open communication and joy I experience within it are continually strengthening me in my positive acceptance of my maleness. It's great to be a man!

March 2008 update: still abstinent, still no regrets!