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SEXUAL HEALTH
CLINIC 30
MENTAL HEALTH



QUEENSLAND AIDS COUNCIL
LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANS INTERSEX

20 things no one told
YOU about



Being the PARTNER
of a Trans person

This resource has been developed for Queensland AIDS Council from the thoughts, opinions and lived experience of a cisgender female in a committed relationship with a transman.

Where ever possible examples used will be gender neutral, if an example is used that is gender specific it is because, it has been drawn from that lived experience.

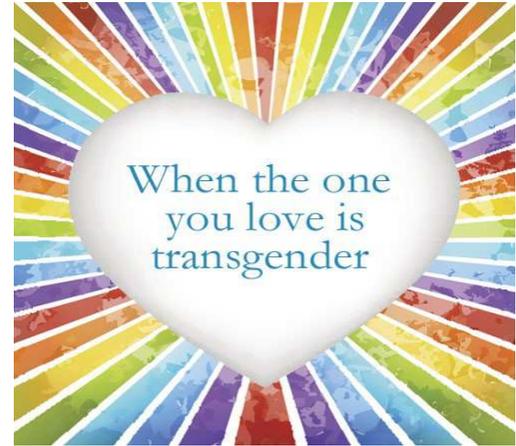
Queensland AIDS Council recognises the importance of every person being represented in our community and would never intentionally use examples that may cause offence.

In the case that may occur we offer our sincerest apologies.



Written by Ailish Forbes

Resource developed for Queensland AIDS Council
September 2016



For peer lead support for Partners of Trans People you can join;

Supporting Partners of Trans People Qld

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SPOTQld/>

And if you ever need someone to talk to;

Lifeline 13 11 14 (24 hours)

QLife 1800 184 527 (LGBTIQ 3pm-12am)

Relationships Australia QLD (Rainbow Program)

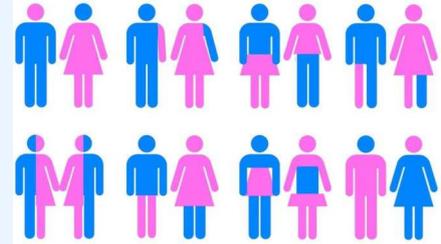
1300 364 277 (8am-8pm Mon-Fri & Sat 10am-4pm)



20. THEY ARE AS SCARED AND WORRIED AS YOU ARE!

While you might be scared of the things that could happen during surgery or the emotional change that hormones might enhance or all the small changes that make way for the bigger changes... They are scared too because, what if you don't like those changes, what if you aren't attracted to them anymore, what if you regret supporting them.

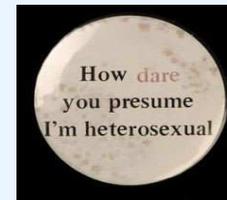
For every thing you are worried about, they are worried for themselves and for you. For all of your struggles they will have pangs of guilt, because they will see it, as they have caused you, someone they love and care about, to suffer. Make sure you keep talking, keep supporting each other.



I. YOU WILL QUESTION YOUR IDENTITY

Did you identify as Straight? And now you're in an outward appearing lesbian or gay relationship? Were you in a lesbian or gay relationship and now to the world you look like a heterosexual couple? Just without any of the privileges that come with that kind of relationship?

I did and for me the only thing that changed was I wasn't at as much fear walking down the street holding the hand of my partner. I still have no rights or equality and no true sense of community that you would expect from that "privilege"



2. COMMUNITY WILL LET YOU DOWN

I'm yet to meet a person that has had their community rally around them and support them while their partner transitioned. I'm not heterosexual so the "straight" conversation while humorous at times isn't what I've experienced and I'm no longer viewed as a lesbian because I have a male partner—never mind if you identify outside of that black and white of the straight, gay or lesbian identifier for example a Queer Femme who doesn't "exist" within the visible rainbow community.

Ignorance doesn't excuse the sense of isolation you'll experience as the partner of a trans person.



I loved you then
and I love you now.

19. YOU CAN TALK ABOUT YOUR LIFE TOGETHER BEFORE TRANSITION

It might be hard to begin with, especially trying to focus on now and not then.

In time you'll find you will still talk about the moment you first met and that one time you played giant chess on your honeymoon...

For me, I use a nickname I had for her, it helps me for those moments and then I can still enjoy my memories of her without the pain I once experienced.

Just be mindful when sharing those precious memories with other people that your partner might not be "out" of and to use their name and the pronouns that you do now.



18. PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

I realised a long time again Trans People aren't very virtuous.

Things take time and since your partner has already waited so long to get to this point it all seems very frustrating.

Also, paperwork for EVERY LITTLE THING gets overwhelming!

Don't be a hero, don't try to be the voice of reason, just admit the system sucks and feed your partner fairy floss or what ever makes them happier in that moment.



3. YOU WILL BECOME AN ALLY

When you love and support someone through their transition, you see and feel the injustice they experience every single day. You will without meaning to, become an Ally.

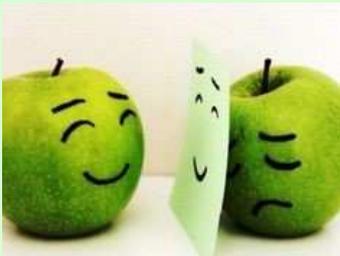
You will stand up for the rights of the person you care about and sometimes you may do it completely inappropriately because you've had enough of seeing their heart and soul being broken... for example screaming at a barber that your partner is a transman when she is insistent on the fact they only cut men's hair when he went for a haircut.

We the partners aren't always diplomatic but often our hearts hurt as much as the person we care about.

4. YOUR MENTAL HEALTH COUNTS!

You'll learn from the moment your partner announces to the medical world that they are Transgender they will have GP and specialist appointments. At those appointments you might get to sit in, you will more often than not be in the "seen but not heard" category. Your partner will likely have psychologist and or psychiatrist appointments to talk things over in great detail, their GP/specialist will check on them constantly.

No one will ask you how you are, if you are coping etc. Your mental health is important, you need to be able to talk openly and freely. Sometimes your partner isn't the best sounding board because even though you are supportive, you may have genuine concerns and they are so use to people not being ok with them being trans that they often get defensive and that can cause stress to you both.



17. YOUR PARTNER IS A DOUCHECANO

They don't mean it, but they will say things like "my whole life up until now was a lie". While their gender identity and aspects of their life has been a lie, things that weren't for example—your relationship and life time of memories created.

We are all great of making dramatic sweeping statements, the important thing to remember is they don't mean to hurt you when they do it. It's just now they are feeling liberated and understood.



16. YOU KNOW THOSE EYES

While everything changes, we say it's the same person and fundamentally it is... just nothing about them is the same anymore.

When you are overwhelmed, stop and look them in the eyes.

You know those eyes and when they smile, you'll remember you know that smile too.

When they laugh for the first time you will realise it isn't the same laugh anymore—it's finally real.

Don't get wrapped up in the changes, focus on what you know and you know for once in their life, your partner is finally living.

5. YOU WILL MOURN

You met and fell in love with someone pretty amazing.

Even with days, weeks, months or years of knowing that that person will no longer exist and you prepare as best you can and even happily buy new clothes, underwear etc., one day someone new will wake up beside you.

You'll know it was coming but it doesn't stop it from hurting somewhere deep inside of you. Remember that person you fell for, because that love you had together was a wonderful thing.

Now you are fortunate enough to celebrate the person your partner always hoped to be and for whatever reason didn't feel they could live authentically until now, here with you.

prelament

|\ˈprelə|ment|

v. to miss someone while you're still with them; to mourn the loss of something that is presently happening or someone who is still alive and exists in your life

Trigger Warning:

Read With Care

6. TRIGGER WARNINGS

I didn't realise that for months and even years to come I'd experience emotional outbursts, that clothing would no long just be clothing, they were memories; a memory that triggers that part of your brain that recalls all things you did that day, the plans you made for the future, the way they smelt and every small detail replayed in all its painful glory.

Simply for the foreseeable future, you aren't going to get a Trigger Warning, you just wont get one.

Anything and everything could potentially be a trigger and cause an emotional reaction. You know what? That is okay!

You are allowed to cry and think about those moments and "selfishly" relive them with joy, because they are yours to treasure.



15. YOU CAN'T FIX ANYTHING.

You will make things worse... unintentionally.

Your partner isn't a piece of broken china, you can't glue them back together and sit them somewhere gently out of harms way.

Ask them if you can help, if they say no, accept that in that moment there is simply nothing you can do and being near them is enough.

When they cry; pass a tissue, hug them, binge watch something tacky on Netflix.

When they laugh, embrace it and just remember that actions speak louder than words and in the quiet moments you being there, your love for your partner shouts volumes.



14. FAMILY ISN'T ALWAYS BLOOD.

I know we say that family is who we choose, but sometimes that blood is who we hope is going to love and support us unconditionally. During the course of your partners transition, you are going to likely have a rough time.

You are likely to be asked a million questions, If you don't like the idea of repeating yourself, find links and share articles for people to read. The hardest thing I ever watched was my partner read a response from a member of his family. I saw his heart shatter and there wasn't a single thing I could do.

On the upside some of the people he feared most to tell have been his strongest supporters and we are blessed with amazing friends and their love and support is something so amazing that our gratitude cant be expressed clearly with words.

7. YOUR PARTNER IS SELFISH.

And so they should be!

They were robbed of the simple things we took for granted growing up. There were taught to be one thing when their heart and soul screamed to be another. So once they begin their transition every single thing is HUGE.

Be patient, be understanding.

Also try and understand for a time you will feel alone and isolated even by your partner, it isn't their intention. They truly don't realise that often they are doing it.

Be excited for them even if it's the millionth time they've mentioned something because in that moment they are asking you to be a part of it.





8. IT ISN'T WHAT YOU SIGNED UP FOR

When I went on a picnic and saw a hungover, sorry for themselves person sitting there, no one told me that they were in fact my soulmate. That the things I found desirable in that person which assisted in the falling in love stage of our relationship would one day disappear.

I didn't that day sign up for chest hair, moustaches and a penis, but here we are! There is at times something overwhelming about looking at pictures of surgeries, binders and prosthetics. Just as it would be if you were looking at overseas surgeons, breast sizes and images of SRS (sex reassignment surgeries).

It's ok to say you need a breather from the images, documentaries and the articles.

13. SEX

The best thing about being an adult isn't sex, but it is pretty great or at least it can be. Like all sexual situations you have the right to say **yes** and **no**.

What might have worked for you and your partner might not any more.

The best thing about consent, sex and negotiations, it gives you room to discuss and try new things or even go back and revisit old things. Oh also...

NO ONE NEEDS TO KNOW WHAT YOU DO IN THE BEDROOM, EVER!

You'll likely get asked, like I have many many times and my best response so far, to the question "how do you have sex?" is quite simply "fantastically!"

**It's
not a
secret..
but it's not
your business
either •**

12. YOU WILL RAGE OUT

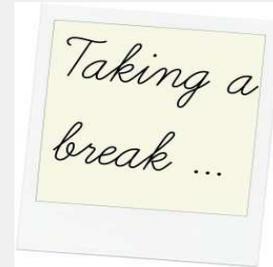
Be it someone outing your partner, outing your relationship or using the casual greeting “ladies” or “guys”. You’ll find you will likely be the one to jump to rage first.

Why?

Your partner has been misgendered and outed their entire life up until now and you’ve only just started to understand that.

While you will see their shoulders slump and they may even get to the stage of refusing to go out until they “pass” it’s not going to help anyone by getting angry. Trust me—I rage so hard and ultimately it made my partner less inclined to go out, because of my possible reaction.

Take your partners lead on this one, if they don’t enter the rage zone, then just stand strong beside them.



9. YOU’RE GOING TO GET “TRANSED OUT”

It’s a term I coined a while back.

For me the Trans community is something I am active with; in my home life, work life and activism.

Sometimes I don’t want to go to the rally or watch the documentary or attend the forum. I’m just “transed out” and need a break.

I don’t want to be the Ally, I just want to be the Partner.

Take me on a date where no one knows us and just be in each others company. It’s beautiful to just pause and take from the relationship to continue to flourish.



IO. COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Do not try and drop subtle hints about anything.

It's frustrating and hurtful for both of you. It's like that old joke "it's windy today", "no it's Thursday", "I'm thirsty too".

Be clear.

If you are unhappy or uncomfortable, talk it out. Why are you feeling that way? What is that made you feel that?

Sometimes you are just going to be sad. You don't want your partner to fix it but to just witness in that moment your pain or sadness, just as you have sat and witnessed their excitement and joy—sometimes they have to sit in the awkwardness for a moment to ensure you are going to be ok.



II. YOU ARE GOING TO STUFF UP AND MAKE MISTAKES

I still remember to this day the only time I ever misgendered my partner. I remember seeing the heartbreak on his face and the moment we were sharing was ruined. It was a habit the phrase that I had used and in that moment of my stuff up, I realised the importance of being vigilant. Use correct pronouns, use their name. Don't question it, don't make excuses about how you are use to saying one thing or another.

Stuff up, make your mistake but move on. The only way to move on is to make sure you don't ever do it again. Correct others. Also don't draw attention to your mistake. Just move on and don't make the situation more uncomfortable.