



To Pass or Not to Pass

Femmexstudios.com

So you want to pass as a girl? Or do you?

<http://www.femmexstudios.com>

This short guide is for all transgirls that are making choices about their image, where their journey in life is taking them and what they want in the future. This guide is meant to address the issue of passing, blending or not. It may be appropriate for some and not for others. The key is to be happy with who you are and where you are going not matter what path is right for you.

In no way am I making judgment about anyone's choices. I don't mean to implicate or imply one way is better than another. Just that there are some pros and cons to any choice you make in life.

Lastly, I use the term "transgirls" to refer to the greater community. Feel free to substitute it with a term that suits you.

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About The Author

I started my life as a transgirl as Michelle Johnson, I also have aliases as Nikkie Stallen and Nikkie Starr. These are all registered aliases of mine and are used for different reasons. I have lived full time as a female and was able to pass nearly 100% at one point in my life. Once I decided not to transition; I no longer put as much importance to pass as a female. But that was my choice. It did give me a wonderful insight into being female and living my life as a girl. However, it wasn't nearly the fantasy life I had imagined, since I didn't have strong gender issues, nor did I feel like I was a female with a defect; so it really didn't make much sense for me to get the final surgery.

I currently run Femme X Studios (<http://www.femmexstudios.com>) out of Dallas and I'm part of an all transgirl rock band called CHIX (<http://www.chix-rock.com>). I work virtually for my day job and have the opportunity to be en femme 24/7 if I wanted to be – but I choose not to. I just live each day and present my image how I feel that day. I have found a really good balance to channel my gender expression. I've also been involved in many organizations that range from transsexual, fetish, and cross-dressing. I'm very active in the Dallas community and I'm involved in scheduling many social events each year. With all the social events that I plan, I try to include many different communities outside of the transgirl communities.

My biography can be found in my communication document on the Femme X Studios Website so I won't repeat it here. But suffice to say, I don't have any licenses or certifications stating that I've had a lot of training in therapy or psychology – however, I have over 25 years experience in the community and hearing countless stories. I've also managed to get hundreds of girls out in public for their first time out over that span of time.

I do have a lot of insight based on personal observation and experiences. I try not to over generalize or form an opinion on anecdotal information. Also, I'm fairly neutral on the subject of passing, blending and stealth. I think that's a decision that one has to make for themselves – hopefully what you read here will help you solidify the direction that makes the most sense for you.

Introduction

So why write a document on passing? I think the reason I decided to write this document is because I see so many girls refuse to get out in public and interact with society because they either don't think they can pass or because they don't think they are pretty enough. I wanted to write on both of those issues and address them individually. Passing and beauty are two separate issues. Whether or not you want to pass or need to pass as a female also is important to answer. You'd be surprised but not everyone cares whether they pass as a female. The question about passing is the most difficult one to answer for oneself. The question around being pretty enough, well that's more about image consulting and other regimens to improve ourselves. There are some things that can't replace what you've been given – we all have to make the best of what we have. Even genetic girls have body issues; even the most beautiful girls don't think they are pretty enough.

But before we delve into the questions at hand; it's important to understand your own situation. It's also important to understand why you want to blend or pass. The bottom line – does it really matter? I think you may be surprised with the answer once we go through the analysis.

Granted that there are certain aspects of passing as a female that is appealing. I think though that if you separate fantasy from practical reality you may come up with a different answer than you would expect. If you are like me, you probably grew praying that by some miracle you would be transformed into a beautiful genetic girl. I hope that works for you, because even to this day it hasn't worked for me. But I still keep praying. In the meantime I'm going to take control of my own destiny make some decisions about what I want and then go for it.

To write on this subject of passing as a female came as an inspiration to me because I have received many letters and emails about *"how can I better pass as woman"*. As you can imagine that's why my Femme X Studios business has done so well is because my girls want desperately to pass as a girl and seek out whatever help they can find to achieve that goal. My first question I ask them is why do they want to pass? The second question I ask them is, what are they willing to do about it, and how much are they willing to change?

I think if you wanted to be accepted in public as a female before the 1990s it was pretty important to pass due to the misinformation around our community. However, with the changes in society in the last ten to twenty years in regards to transgirls, I'm not sure it's as necessary as it used to be. This change is partially due to many of the people who actively work to raise awareness, it's also a fact that social conditioning is starting to work in the transgirls favor for a change. So therefore the next generations are being brought up in a more liberal society as it relates to social interaction and trends.

Dispelling the Myth

I think the first thing to realize before thinking about any of this that if you have repressed feelings around your gender identity, then all of your feelings around this subject are magnified. Your dreams become very strong and tend to blur or block out some of the realities. I've also found that the more or longer these feelings have been repressed the more extreme the fantasies. For example, I had a Femme X Studios client in her 50s call me and asked me if I could help her pass as a female. The short answer is yes, but I then asked her what her goal was. She said she wanted to live full time as a girl. So the next logical question I asked her was about how frequently she went out or got dressed up. The answer was that she had never dressed up or gone out. So here is a person that has never dressed thinking she wants to live full time. I think this is a desire that many of us have, and this feeling is just amplified the longer it's been suppressed.

Maybe the ultimate answer is that it's perfect for this person in our example to live full time. But rationally speaking, I think someone should at least interact in society first. I've also heard a story of someone that won the state lottery and went and had surgery. Now she is afraid to walk out the door as a female because she's not comfortable with her image.

My theory is that the more you may have suppressed your feelings to express your identity as a female the stronger and more extreme your desires become. I'm not saying it's not the right thing to do – I'm just saying that suppressed feelings can skew or cloud the reality of what you truly desire.

To take this a little further, if you're like me you may have experienced one or more of the following:

- Pray about waking up the next day female
- Looking at women and wishing you were them
- Wanting to be accepted as a female in society
- Thinking about your feminine image constantly

These feelings are so strong within us that we begin behaving irrationally. Here are some characteristics I've seen in many suppressed girls. Nothing is wrong with any of these, unless they lead to self destructive behavior.

- We may go on shopping sprees because it fills a void – we may never wear what we purchase
- We engage in drug usage or alcohol
- We engage in promiscuous or unsafe sex because it makes us feel feminine to be with others as a female
- We tend to expect others to accept us unconditionally even though we can't explain ourselves

So what does any of this have to do with passing? Directly, not much, but indirectly it's related in the sense of understanding yourself and separating truth from reality. If you are experiencing any of these behaviors and have or are suppressing your feelings on any level then before you can figure out what you want you need to get out and live your life. Experience things, go slowly and then figure out how important blending or passing or living full time as a female is to you.

The one thing to realize as you read this document there is no magic pill, no amount of makeup, or skin care that's going to make you pass as a female tomorrow. Unless you are genetically blessed, and some are, then it's going to take a commitment, sacrifice and perseverance. You may not wake up tomorrow as a female – but you might wake up 2 or 3 years from now very convincing and passable.

Trans-Conservatism

Before delving into passing or not – I wanted to provide a little history around why passing is even an issue. Also to make a point that the source of information and advice to transgirls seems to be very one sided on this subject as well as many others. Typically, the transgirl discussions and philosophy has been primarily driven by two key factions in the larger t-community. Information has come from primarily the psychologists or those seeking to live their lives predominately as women. Not saying this is good or bad – just that it's a prevailing philosophy and much good has come out of it for our community. This stigma is changing in our community as more people are coming out of the closet and society is becoming more liberal on the phenomenon of the 3rd gender.

A lot of work was done by these groups to change the perception that transgirls were sexual deviants and were destructive to society. In order to do this they had to send a very proper and conservative message almost to an extreme. It had to carry this message in order to disassociate with anything that would be considered fetish, taboo or otherwise “not main stream”. They also had to condemn pornography or girls that wanted to dress more provocative. There is still room for continued growth in changing perceptions, but I think for the most part this goal has been achieved. Transgirls are now being depicted in television and film as productive and respectable members of the community, they are being elected to public offices, and many major companies have policies to assist transgirls in the workplace.

However, we do have to be very careful about activism because it can lead to “unintended consequences”. It is my contention that every activist has great intentions but sometimes their view or their stance is based on a utopian view point. Let me give you a quick example. The question on whether a transgirl can use the women's restroom or not. This has been debated back and forth and most places and states have laws and policies around this topic. Many of the activists would want it to be open for transgirls to use the women's restroom – which on the surface may seem like a good and safe stance to take for all of us. However, if you present yourself as female in today's society, maybe you even have a letter from a psychologist designating you as female – are you going to have an issue with the bathroom? Most likely, no you are not. I probably could find many instances/anecdotal situations to the contrary but stacked up against the positive; they are inconsequential in my view. Now let's take this a step further and make an assumption that this was protected. What if a law was passed allowing transgirls to use the women's restroom without restraint? Then those who normally wouldn't have taken those difficult steps to present themselves well or get letters written are now permitted as well. We have now unlocked the door to a man who says I'm a transgirl – puts on a pair of panties and is now allowed to venture in. This will cause many issues and create a little chaos. Even if this happens, is it a problem? I don't know – I can see some potential issues start to emerge very quickly. That may be an extreme example but trying to make a point that we need to consider all the angles before jumping on board with a cause.

The only reason I think it's good to have designated men's and women's bathrooms in the first place is that there is no security in there, it's isolated, no cameras and if a situation gets out of hand it can be

dangerous. It's for this reason I always use the women's restroom. Not because I feel like I'm entitled or because I think I'm a girl. But because going into a men's restroom dressed like a girl I deem even more unsafe than if a genetic girl decided to use the men's restroom. But in general and most cases it just shouldn't matter.

The point to all of this being is to make sure that when presented a point of view – even though it may benefit you – you may want to make sure it's going to deliver the results without these unintended consequences. This also applies to whether it's important to present your image a certain way, behave a certain way or even pass.

So hats off to everyone who has worked to make this possible for all of us in the community. At the very least they have enabled a dialogue on these subjects. However, I think the time has come where we can relax a little, let our hair down, discard the fears of being misjudged and have some fun. I also think it may be time to acknowledge some of the other members of the community that really don't seem to get involved in some of these discussions. These groups would include the casual crossdresser, fetish dressers, and those that enjoy other aspects of feminine expression. Many times their view points are not included in the discussions; not because they are purposely excluded, but because they tend to be more "in the closet".

An example of how far we have come is similar to the movie "refer madness". If you haven't seen it, this movie was a depiction on what the conservative views of smoking drugs. It is totally ridiculous and over done and today we have a much more realistic as to the effects of these substances. Whether you agree with the usage or not; is not what we're talking about – it's more about the information that we all have is much more reasonable and logical. Even those that are adamantly against drug use would usually agree that the movie "refer madness" is really a joke. I think the same is true for transgirls in that we have come so far since the 60s, 70s, 80s and even 90s thanks to the sacrifices and work of many of the activists. Society has so much information now that wasn't available in the mainstream. Some may disagree on some of the smaller points but even today most people would agree that transgirls are typically not sexual deviants. Although, I must say we have our kooks, I just chalk that up to the diversity of life.

There are some that are still fighting this battle that we've already won. That's fine as long as we are doing this to continue to perpetuate the message. However, in some ways it's being used as a philosophical argument to have transgirls fall into a socially conservative lifestyle. This may be perfectly fine for some or even most – but it doesn't fit everyone. The problem occurs when a few of the leaders in the community use it as a club to beat up others that don't necessarily agree with their point of view.

Some of these people are living in another world. I don't get it myself, but I don't fault them for it – I just don't understand this whole notion of "Trans-Conservatism". Seems like an oxymoron to me. I get on-line and I hear transgirls call each other dear, sweetie, hon etc. Girls don't talk that way anymore – that's how my grandmother used to talk to the grand-kids. On many occasions I'll see a genetic girl walk up to a group of girls and say – "hey guys, how are ya?". We have a different language today versus 50 years ago. I try to say hey girls or hi ladies but if someone says hey guys – it's not going to

upset me either. So I think it's time to start looking at how to look, act and behave in the new millennium. I'm not against "Trans-Conservatism" – I just think that we may have taken it to an extreme in some cases.

Before getting too far in this discussion, it's fair to say that there are very few that fall into this category of what I term as "**trans-conservatism**", but it's worth mentioning because they are the ones that are usually the loudest even though they are the minority. They use words like "family", "building bridges in the community", "support groups", and "not for profit" as a badge of honor to put their cause on a conservative social pedestal. Don't be confused on my point of view; these are all good causes except for when they are used to talk down to others if they choose to take a different path. Or, it's used as a fasad to promote an agenda that doesn't represent the majority. I'm not saying that there's this big conspiracy either, I think typically it's unintentional. However, it's ironic that what you find is that many of those bridges they talk about so honorably are one way; in that if you have an opposing view or lifestyle they aren't interested in having anything to do with you.

The other problem that occurs with those that fall into this minority of self proclaimed moral leaders in the transgirl community is when they have it wrong. There are many transgirls that are struggling with issues and their own lives who are giving unfounded advice and direction to those seeking real answers. These newer girls look up to these ill informed leaders and without any other information; begin to follow some of the outdated philosophies which further perpetuates and enforces "trans-conservatism". I'm just not sure why we give them a platform of credibility.

I'm fine with the trans-conservatives having an opinion and even sharing it as long as they have their facts straight, and they have had successful experiences and can properly guide. However, there is some direction I've heard that would curl your stomach. Again, this is a very small minority but they seem to be making the most noise.

Here is an anecdotal example. A very good friend of mine who was and is trying to figure out some of the questions around passing, image and transition was sent to a post op transsexual based on the referral of her counselor to get a true perspective. On the surface sounds like a reasonable exercise – and probably one anyone struggling with Gender Identity (GID) should probably consider. I'm sure the counselor had no idea what was going to transpire. The patient went to the transsexual to hopefully get some questions answered for herself and the things my friend was told made my jaw drop. When my friend asked the question to the transsexual: "Well, how did you know, I mean what made you think that you would be happier changing your gender". Her response was, "Well, I always identified as being a woman but there came a point I had to make a 'leap of faith'". A "leap of faith", for a major life changing decision – that's basically telling this person that you can't figure it out so you might as well choose transition. Again, this is an extreme example, and most stable well adjusted transsexuals I know would have a much different answer. Unfortunately they are either usually stealth or not participating in activist movements.

In this same conversation my friend asked, "...well, what about passing? Could you help me with makeup?" She responded that she wasn't licensed and really couldn't help. This is interesting because

there isn't a license required to do makeovers or provide makeup consultation. And further, they weren't quite sure how to get makeup on themselves properly. My point is that here is someone that clearly doesn't have the facts, advising other people on what they should do and encouraging them to take a leap of faith. Come to find out that this person had completely self destructed their entire lives in order to transition and is still not completely content with her life. So these are the people I'm referring to here – not those that have very happy and fulfilling lives after transition.

I understand many people are hurting and desire to be “complete” and on the surface it seems reasonable and even rational to sacrifice everything to satisfy that need. I just know so many that were unhappy because the cost was too much – and I'm not talking financial. For others, it was the perfect thing for them to do and everything went smoothly.

I'll make one last point about activism as a source of information. Every so often I'll get a facebook message or email asking me to support a transgender protest against something. I would just caution everyone to read and find out the facts from other sources for yourself and decide where you fall on the topic being protested. An example of this is was when Dr. Phil had a piece on transgendered kids. The activists said he was disparaging transgendered people, and he was clearly discriminating and needed to be fired. After looking into it briefly for myself I found out that he had made the statement that transgendered kids were confused. Well of course the activists wanted to protest Dr. Phil, try to get him fired or whatever. The problem for me on this was that, in my opinion, Dr. Phil was right. As a transgendered kid, a) I didn't know that I was transgendered and b) I was certainly confused. In fact, hats off to Dr. Phil for raising awareness. I can cite several more examples of where activists jump on everything and sometimes have a one sided or even warped opinion. Sometimes they are right on the money but not always. So like everything just consider the source of information and look into it for yourself. I would even say question and challenge this author. If someone isn't willing to have a healthy debate then they are not coming from a position of strength and would rather just make a lot of noise.

So my only point in this chapter is to consider the source. If someone is placing a heavy importance on passing, blending, transitioning or any behavior – just make sure you ask a lot of probing questions. You don't have to be mean or judgmental – just be aware.

The thing to remember is that people want you to be happy; they themselves want to be accepted. So many times they will tell you what you want to hear. So if you ask someone if they think you should live full time, or transition – just keep that in the back of your head. I have a very close circle of friends that I know will tell me when I'm wrong or I'm heading on a destructive path that's not good for me. I listen to them, I sometimes disagree – but I know they are telling me the truth. If you ask someone if they think you should pass or try to pass – I know very few that would tell you honestly what they think.

This leads to many people that are disillusioned that they pass well. This isn't good for anyone. If they thought they didn't pass well, then maybe they would work on the weaker areas and improve. If they have been told how pretty they are or that they pass and then they are unaware of their surroundings

and that people of gawking – then of course they will be disillusioned. I plan to tell you the good, the bad and the ugly – always.

So What Information is Relevant?

I will always be the first to say I don't have all the answers; however I would never advise someone that taking a leap of faith is a good way to go. So the important thing is to gather information, learn from experiences from others, and then make your own conclusions. We all have different experiences and view points, so it's important to know the person giving you any direction. Get to know the person first, understand their history and how they currently feel about their decisions. If they don't give a balanced summation of the good, the bad and the ugly then they are probably not giving you an accurate picture. There are pros and cons to any life decision; it's important to know both sides of any equation and then figure out weighting factors that are important for you.

I will point out some key considerations; however, what is really important, and even it is important is it relevant to you and your life situation.

I will also address the questions of should I pass based on different situations and cases. Questions like ... should I pass or blend? ...does it matter? ...what will happen if I don't pass? ...do I even care? And like many questions of this nature it will largely depend on what's important to you. Keep that in mind - what's important to you, your family, and your environment. No one's opinion matters in this case except yours. This includes what I have written here. It should be questioned and determine if there is a fit in your situation.

The answers to these questions are largely based on your own personal situation. I don't think there is a simple answer to any of them. You also have to decide what's important to you. Does it matter if people know? Does it bother you if people might give you a second look, point or even snicker? Is your area that you reside in safe for interacting as a transgirl? What about family and friends? I think much of the answers reside in your own personal goals and objectives as relates to being a transgirl.

So I've beat up these other transgirls on their opinions – what makes mine so right? How am I qualified to even address these questions? Well I would just say I'm not. I'm not any better than anyone else. Only you have the answers to these questions. All I can do is help you understand the pros and cons of decisions and then you can decide if that's important to you and what you're willing to do.

But most importantly on the subject of passing – the key here is to relieve some pressure and stress that you may be feeling. I hate when someone tells me that because they don't think they are pretty or because they don't think they pass as a female they are going to stay home. I just hurt for them and from my experience this seems to be a lot of people. It's not from a lack of desire or fear of society – it's more of a sense of self image that's an issue. Well, if this is you – get ready because after you read the rest of this document – you may have a different point of view. At a very minimum you'll have new awareness and new way of thinking that may just change the way you think.

The Journey – Do You Want to Live 24/7 as a female?

You may hear people talk about their journey in the transgirl lifestyle. This is usually referring to their progression as a transgirl and the impact it has on their life. In general they are referring to what they've been through to get to where they currently are and where they plan on going in the future. Many seem to have this all figured out, others are confused and are unsure, still others are confused and convey that they have the answers. The journey is your own and how you decide to live your life now and in the future. You may not know, many don't, and that's perfectly fine. People ask me about my journey, what am I? am I transsexual, transgendered, cross-dresser, fetish dresser? The answer for me is that I've been all of those labels, and each day brings something new – I think each day I feel different about what I am and so I just gave up trying to figure it out and decided to just live each day how it made sense.

I would argue that although we are not going to “take leaps of faith”, we can still determine how we want to live “today”. This idea of a journey originated as a progression that someone would make in working through their GID – a popular term in the 90s and early 00s. But if you're a person that is comfortable in your gender but you like to express yourself as a female then trying to figure out the bigger picture may not make sense.

If you feel like you would like to live full time as a female then maybe this concept of a journey might have more relevance to your progression. It really just depends on your situation. But the key is not to rush into anything. I've had others argue with me who may not quite have the experience or foresight. They will question in response to not rushing into things - why wait? The reason I can tell you from personal experience, what I thought living as a girl full time would be and what it was completely different. The fantasy life I had created in my head and the reality that hit me after just the first 3 months was vastly different. I'm so glad I have had those experiences. I do think that these feelings and desires we repress for so long begin to warp our rational thinking. So it's important to take things slow and enjoy each step of the way. There are of course exceptions to everything, but I think in general this is true.

I can't tell you how many people I get in my studio for a transformation that tell me they want to live full time as a female and they want to learn how to pass. I usually nod my head and say to them well that's a wonderful goal – but before I get too far in helping them down that path I begin asking them some basic questions. Are you married? Have you ever been married? Do you have children? How old are they? What do you do for a living? What do you think people at work would think if you started living full time? How often do you interact in public as a female? Do you just go out at night or do you also go out during the day? Have you done the grocery shopping as a female? Taken the care in for service? Etc.

The answer I usually get is that “well no I haven't, and I've had this all inside me for so many years and I just know I want to pass and be a girl all the time”. Many even admit they've never been in public as a female. I might first advise that they take that step first. Also, my question back to them is “well how

do you know, if you haven't even tried it"? I usually get a blank stare – then I realize it's time to lighten things up a bit and get back to having fun.

My point here is that people who are just starting out really aren't thinking clearly. I don't have any clinical proof on why – but it seems to be very common for those that have repressed their desire for gender expression to do everything next week. Once they get the door open a crack and see the possibilities they tend to throw caution to the wind and go forward without thinking through the long term effects of their decisions. Living full time may be right for them – but then again it may not. My only point is basically to consider that you are going to either destroy or significantly change the life you had as a male. It will be different, very different. Everyone you know will treat you differently; they may not even be honest with you about what they think because they love you or value your friendship. This is all too common with those that are just starting out, and I include myself in this category because I felt exactly the same way.

In fact I was so sure that changing my gender and living full time was going to help me feel complete that I just jumped in full force. I fortunately didn't get too far down the path before I realized that I was taking in this lifestyle for all the wrong reasons. Did I want to be a girl? More than anything in life! So here is how my journey played out for me.

I got involved in a local TriEss organization in the 1980s. It was like a whole world of possibilities opened up for me. I learned how to dress appropriately; I had some wonderful transsexuals that were able to guide me on the things to do. However, some were bragging that they knew what that psychological questions were and what the answers needed to be to pass the clinical tests so you could get approval to move forward with GRS (Gender Re-assignment Surgery). This struck me as odd because I thought the test was there to help you determine if it was right – and they were basically undermining it. I didn't think that sounded right but I didn't question it at the time.

I also met a guy that I liked and began living with him. Some of the members of TriEss thought this was inappropriate at the time and started distancing themselves from me. I really didn't understand. I was wondering if I was going to be a girl – shouldn't I want to be with men? I don't know, it made sense to me. So things began to unravel for me in the organization pretty quickly. One evening I was discussing this with my boyfriend and he finally just got frustrated with the conversation and had this to say. He said, "Look, if you want to be a girl, go be a girl – you don't need anyone's permission or a counselor to give you permission". This was foreign to everything I had been told so I was very confused. I asked him, "What do you mean"? He responded, "You're making this way too complicated, if you want to be a girl, go interview for a job as a girl and start living as one – who's going to stop you". Then if you want to schedule a surgery just do it; we can go out of the country or find a therapist that will be sympathetic if you can show you've already transitioned for all practical purposes". His comments actually made more sense to me than anything I had heard.

So I began working and living as a girl. Passing fairly well – not always 100% - a very small minority is able to pass 100% - but I was happy with how convincing I was as a female even for someone that was large statured. After about six months I was so done with it all. Why? Most of my friends even today

said – it's what I've always wanted why didn't you do it? There were many reasons but the most important one was that living every day – every waking moment as a girl – was boring. I wasn't getting the attention I wanted – I wasn't an above average looking girl so hanging out with other girls I even felt awkward sometimes. It just wasn't fun. That's when I realized I wasn't transsexual at all or maybe not transsexual enough – in any case I was something else. I did enjoy social settings as a girl –but I preferred to be a transgirl in social settings – I seemed to get much more attention from both men and women. I also preferred to express my inner gender as female – I still do.

So if you plan to go into deep stealth – which basically means you erase your male identity so people can't ever find out – then passing is essential. But why do you want to pass as a girl?

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Why Do YOU Want to Pass as a Girl?

This is the million dollar question and I bet your first answer is, “because I want to be accepted as a girl”. Or you might say “I’m mentally female”. But I think that’s not the whole answer. There’s much more to it than that. Why is passing as a girl really important to you? Even if you’re on a journey to transition, I contend there’s still more to the answer than being accepted or unlocking your inner girl. Understanding the real answer to this question may help you come to certain realizations about yourself. So let’s take this a step further – with the assumption that part of your answer was that you want to be accepted as a girl.

So if you wanted to be accepted as a female then you have to ask yourself why is it important for you to be accepted as a girl? I would be willing to guess it’s one or more of the following reasons:

If I’m accepted as a girl...

- a) I won’t be humiliated and I would avoid being ridiculed in public and made to feel ashamed.
- b) It validates that I can look and act feminine and makes all my effort seem worthwhile
- c) I wouldn’t have to always be explaining myself.
- d) I won’t be worried about my safety, I hear about transgirls getting hurt by others.
- e) I would be treated as a normal girl without having the stigma of being a transgirl in public.

There may be other reasons but most may fall into those categories. If you have something else that’s on your mind please send me an email – I’d love to hear about it. But think about those answers for a minute, do any resonate strongly? Maybe more than one applies to you? Let’s take on each of these one at a time.

I won’t be humiliated and I would avoid being ridiculed in public and made to feel ashamed.

I think the number one reason why transgirls want to pass as females is because they are ashamed that they were born male and consequently like to express their appearance as a female. Why are we ashamed of what we truly are? Well, I think this has to do with social conditioning. We were told “its wrong” – we also have been told that guys that dress in women’s clothes are weirdoes, perverts, sexual deviants or other derogatory terms. Or people associate those of us that like to express our feminine identity with the porn industry. Although, I do like the weirdoes and sexual deviants as long it’s with consenting adults and everyone knows the game. But even with that – is that what you are? Most likely not – at least in the extreme sense anyways. So why be ashamed of expressing who you are?

The answer I get back is that society doesn’t know what we are and they only know the information they have been given. And thanks to our media who tends to focus on the negatives of the world – the same is true for our community. So of course our society at large may not have a clear understanding. The only way to change it is for each of us to get out there and show the positive aspects of our community

by setting an example and communicating clearly with others. This is why it's important to have our activists fighting for change on Capitol Hill. However, in my opinion how you impact change is getting out there and being a positive example in society. So get out there and interact and show people that you are not ashamed and that you're very happy being who you are. It's easier said than done, I realize that. But you see the point. The only reason one would be ashamed is their own mental barriers and an unwillingness to get out and show people who you are truly.

People tell me that that's easy for me to say because in their opinion I pass as a female. First of all I don't necessarily pass all the time. I think I look pretty good for a transgirl, but looks and passing are mutually exclusive in my opinion. Secondly, if I think someone doesn't know that I'm a transgirl I make a point to tell them. Why? Because I feel like on some level gender is a very important identity trait in our society – not unlike being from another country where one might look a little different. If I'm not sure what someone's origin is – I usually make a point to ask. I don't see this any differently. Since transgenderism is NOT a sexual orientation as we have all argued – then I don't see why this wouldn't be relevant information to someone I'm interacting with. I may not discuss my sexual orientation because I do think that's personal. But gender plays a huge role in our society and I think it's important to be transparent about the fact that we are the 3rd gender. Maybe not physically a 3rd gender but mentally we are female, and physically we are male.

Here is the irony and probably not what you would expect. When I was passing as a woman but occasionally “read” by others – I was given horrible looks, looks of surprise and people that were cautious to interact with me. Why do you think that is? I'm not exactly sure but I can take a guess. It's because they felt I was trying to fool them, that I was concealing my identity from them for some covert reason, or that they were just surprised to find out that I was a different gender than they were lead on to believe. They were confused, surprised and unsure of what pronouns to use etc. However, when I'm up front with people about what I am, people embrace me for the most part – even if they have an issue with it they don't give me horrible looks. I can let them know how I prefer to be addressed and simply explain to treat me similar to any other girl.

Most of passing is simply just attitude and confidence. If you are generally a happy, courteous and honest person then all you need is just a little confidence and someone to give you permission to be who you are. Then does it matter if you pass as a female or not? What are we really so afraid of? It's much easier to be honest with ourselves and with others about who we are. To address transsexualism for a moment, I know many transsexuals who have come out of being stealth. Starting from living in fear of someone figuring out their past, to just being a transsexual woman and being honest with others about it. For most, it has been the most freeing experience of their lives. They continually lived in fear that someone would figure it out and it would jeopardize relationships etc. So even in those circumstances it seems that being upfront an honest about our gender identity is the best approach.

Keep in mind we are talking about interacting in society in the general public. So keep all this in that context. Whether you decide to “come out” and tell everyone is another discussion. I have a communication document on my website that addresses this topic at length.

I remember early on in my marriage my wife challenged me on this topic. I was always proponent of the “need to know” or “don’t ask don’t tell” policy. She basically said that it was a cop out and that if I wasn’t ashamed of it I would just tell people and wouldn’t hide it. Her contention was that I didn’t tell people because I was ashamed of it and I was ashamed of it because I knew deep down it was wrong. I definitely did not feel that way at all – I was more trying to protect everyone around me but I saw there was no convincing her. I’ll spare you the rest of the debate but suffice to say, I used all the reasoning you would imagine of why I thought that disclosing this fact about me was not necessarily a good idea. She wasn’t buying it. So I agreed to invite everyone over and tell them. So we did – I don’t think she thought I would go through with it. I became closer with more of my friends than I ever had that night – there were a few acquaintances who didn’t know me very well that weren’t quite sure – and they sort of parted ways – but nothing horrible came from it.

How public you want to be with this is up to you – my only point here is that there’s no reason in the world to be ashamed that you like to look and feel feminine.

Passing validates that I can look and act feminine

Okay, well... I sort of agree with this one. There is no greater compliment that someone can give me when they truly believe that I am a female. It sort of makes me feel complete and that all the work and effort I have put into my body image is being perceived the way I want it to.

However I will just say this. The trap that people fall into is they go out hoping to pass and then when someone “reads” them they get depressed and disillusioned. If you’re reading this document and you’ve been out in public before then I would be willing to bet this has happened to you. It used to happen to me all the time. It’s what motivated me to continually improve my image.

So let’s flip the rules around a little and see if this might work better. Why not go out in public EXPECTING everyone to know that you’re a transgirl and interact with them in that way. Then when someone does accidentally mistake you for a girl – take that as a compliment. You’ll be on cloud nine all night when that happens – trust me on this.

So instead of going out trying to pass and then being disappointed that you don’t; doesn’t it sound more fun to go out in public as a transgirl who’s not trying to pass? Then when you do it’s a wonderful compliment. Be careful, I just changed the mental rules of the game! I think if you play it that way it may be much more rewarding for you. I will also go so far to say that you will pass more often if you’re not even trying! Why is that? Well because you’ll be more relaxed, more natural and more confident.

At the end of the day the one thing I do know. Is I do pass 100% as a transgirl! And since I’m not ashamed of that – then I don’t feel like I need to pass as a girl. For some that doesn’t make sense, and that’s fine – but that’s what I am. I can and never will be completely female no matter what I do. So why try to be something I can’t ever be – I just decided to embrace this part of my identity and fit in society the best I that I know how.

I wouldn't have to always be explaining myself if I passed as a female

This is definitely true. This reason is also not the most prominent reason why you want to pass as a female; but still a valid concern for a few. What you need to keep in mind is that explaining ourselves in a positive way to others is how we change the current social view point. Being full of life, positive attitude and courteous to those around you is a great way to solicit people to “our team”.

I have had several encounters with people who have asked me, “why do you want to dress and look like a woman?” My answers are always short, sweet, very light and sometimes witty. Such as “I’m just trying to get in touch with my feminine side like my wife asked me to”, or “I do it for the free drinks”, or “I just love the attention and fan fair”. I have several one liners I use that seem to break the ice and put people at ease. Then we can engage in a very interesting conversation which centers around my favorite subject...”me”. This leads to new friends and a positive experience

So for the most part yes you’ll have to explain yourself more – but isn’t that part of the fun. If it’s done on your terms and people are interested in learning more about you. Even if people are rude you still can give a light and witty comment – if the group around you already knows and you’ve been honest with them from the beginning – they will also support and defend you.

I won't be worried about my safety, I hear about transgirls getting hurt by others.

It’s true that transgirls can be singled out and hurt – there’s way too much of this going on right now so it’s a valid concern. But of those instances, I would be willing to bet that (in general) most of those girls were out on their own. I’m sure someone could point to a case where there were multiple transgirls and there was still an instance where someone got hurt. But even though I don’t know, I would be willing to bet most cases came from a transgirl being stalked or caught unaware and alone.

But, isn’t this the same for real girls? Most girls know that if they are going out, to never go alone at night. If they find themselves at a place alone and they need to walk to get their car what do the smart ones do? They either ask someone at the place to escort them – or just take a cab home and deal with the car later. The key is going out alone is a bad idea. I can tell you I didn’t feel safe at night as a male on the streets of NYC.

So is the risk increased for transgirls versus girls or males? The answer, even though I don’t have research to support it, is probably yes. How much does passing as a girl reduce that risk? I would also venture to say that probably not a significant amount. The delta in safety for a single girl out alone versus a transgirl is probably not all that much different. The take away is just to be smart, know your surroundings and try to travel with at least one friend. If that’s impossible ask for an escort.

I would be treated as a normal girl without having the stigma of being a transgirl in public.

Probably true and if this is truly your answer to why you want to pass then probably going stealth is what you want to do. Because if you want to be able to totally avoid this, then you will have to pass 100% as a girl 24/7 which is difficult to do even for transsexuals after years of experience. I personally don’t see that being a transgirl is a social stigma – but I do know there are some that perceive it that

way. Transgirls are just such rare creatures and mostly to be admired by for our bravery and confidence to put ourselves in the spotlight.

The point of this chapter is for you to look a little deeper into the question – “why pass as a girl”. You may have different reasons, if so, just explore them more fully and get to the root of the reason then see if there is a way to address it directly.

Let me create a new society for a moment. Let’s assume that transgirls were 100% accepted in our society as the 3rd gender and treated as predominately as a female. If that were the case would you still try to pass as a girl? Changes the game a little – and may make you think hard of why you actually have placed so much importance on passing. Your answer may still be yes – but don’t confuse with passing as a girl with being a girl. None of us can be female even though we may identify as one mentally. That was the hardest concept for me to admit to myself – that I could never ever be a girl. I could change the way my body looked but it still didn’t make me female.

With all that said, is passing as a female a good thing? Well, it probably is validating and it also means you are dressing appropriately for the places you go and your behavior is good. So I would say yes it is for many reasons – maybe the most important one is that it just makes you feel good. But let’s say you agree that passing isn’t necessary; that doesn’t mean you don’t try. Just because you may not care about passing, I think it’s still important to dress appropriately for the venue you go to – I think this is just having pride about the way you present yourself. Do you want to be perceived as a freak or out of control or do you want people to take you seriously? I mean I’m all for someone wearing pink thigh high boots and a mini skirt to the mall, but don’t expect anyone to take you seriously. I mean if a girl did that – no one would take them seriously either and wonder what she was up to.

What is the Difference between Passing and Blending?

Most of the girls I know when they talk about the fact that they went to the mall and passed, really what they mean is that they blended in. What does that mean exactly? Passing to me is actual face to face interaction with someone where a conversation takes place between at least one other person and the transgirl. If you can pull off direct interaction then you can pass as a female in our society. If you are taking a stroll through the mall and no one notices – then that’s more blending. The truth of the matter is that most people are oblivious to what’s going on around them, so as long as things look generally in order they don’t bother to notice. This is a form of passing that most transgirls refer to as blending in.

Blending is really the first step if you want to eventually pass as a girl. Maybe your voice isn’t perfect yet and maybe your mannerisms aren’t as feminine as you would like. But your look and image may be very passable so that you can blend in different settings. There are also different levels of blending that is largely dependent on proximity and interaction.

Level 1: Take a stroll in the park or a place where the proximity of people is far away.

Level 2: Take a stroll in the mall – a little closer proximity, but still just passer buys

Level 3: Shopping in a crowded store – close proximity, but for a small amount of time.

Level 4: Going to see a play – sitting next to someone in a theater – very close proximity for a moderate amount of time.

Level 5: Traveling on an airplane – very close proximity for a long period of time

These are all different levels of blending. If you begin to truly interact and people don’t seem to know that you are genetically male, then you are now passing as a female.

For all you Type A personalities – this isn’t a score card you don’t have to get to level 5. Plus I just made those up to illustrate a point. Just do what is fun and interesting for you. I just wanted to show different levels of blending and the difference between that and actually passing as a female. Back to the question at hand - Why do you care about levels?– well maybe, if you want to be able to pass as a female – maybe it’s a good idea to see how well you do at different levels of blending first. Start slow and work your way into it.

Why even have different levels and talk about blending. Mainly, because the newer girls need to understand that when they hear from others transgirls about the escapades and how easily they “passed” at the mall or wherever, it can be discouraging. It also gives a roadmap to ease into things as you become more and more comfortable with your image. I know so many transgirls that talk about how they totally passed but many times one of the following will have occurred:

- a) They were just delusional and oblivious to their surroundings and the fact people were staring
- b) They never interacted with anyone, or hid in a corner

c) People may have noticed discretely and never said anything

The fact of the matter is that unfortunately very few of us pass as girls, many of us have learned to blend at one level or another. And even others, like myself, really don't care.

The point here is not to let other people either encourage you to do something that you're not ready for – or on the flip side make you think you're doing something wrong. You just may be more aware of your surroundings than your delusional friend who's bragging about their high "passing percentage".

I do remember a time when I was at a convention, and there were at least 30 of us in a lobby. One of the girls came up to me in all seriousness and made a comment that we were all passing as girls. I was confused at first and had her repeat what she had said. She was basically saying that no one was noticing 30 transgirls in the lobby speaking in deep voices. It made me wonder if this person was truly aware of her surroundings. Not that it matters but she was fairly well put together but there was no way she was passing and I would say unless she was sitting in a dark restaurant she probably wasn't going to be blending too well either. I really didn't know what to say. I just said, "Do you really think so?" She just nodded her head in affirmation. On the one hand I wanted to help her and make her see, but on the flip side she was so happy and having so much fun I didn't want to spoil it for her. Maybe I should have helped her, I don't know – if she was a good friend I definitely would have said something – but I had never met her before so I just sort of let it go.

So just be realistic about it all. It will help you work on improving your image to better achieve your goal whatever that may be.

Are You “Pretty” Enough to Pass?

I’ll save a lot of time here and just say – “yes you are pretty enough to pass”. I have had many transgirls comment to me, “Oh you’re so gorgeous, I could never pass because I’m not as pretty as you”. To this I usually say to them that being pretty has nothing to do with passing. I’ve seen gorgeous transgirls that can pass as females, and some gorgeous ones that can’t. I’ve also seen very homely transgirls that could pass and some that can’t. Beauty is not a requirement for passing or blending as the case may be.

So if you don’t think you’re pretty – then you can either get over it and accept yourself or see what you can do to improve it. However, before you get too worked up about it, consider the fact that there are some disadvantages to being a pretty transgirl. One of those disadvantages is that the prettier a transgirl is – the more difficult it is for her to pass or blend in my opinion.

Let’s use some real world examples. If you see a genetic girl walking down the street and she has long flowing blonde hair and wearing high heels – how long will you try to look at her or even do a double take? Versus looking at an overweight girl in sweats, glasses and maybe brown scraggly hair? So let’s assume for a moment you would look at the blonde bombshell at least 4-5 times longer than the other girl. Wouldn’t this give you more time identify any flaws?

So let’s extrapolate that logic to transgirls. If you see a gorgeous blonde as we described but after looking at her for a few minutes you tend to suspect something is not quite right. Maybe you see larger hands, Adams apple or maybe the way she moves isn’t quite on the mark. Because she has this beautiful hair or in some way caught your attention you’re going to spend more time looking her over - giving you more time to realize that she’s a transgirl or more time for her to make a mistake. On the other hand if you spend less time looking at the scraggly haired girl then there is less of a chance that you noticed something wasn’t feminine about her. Therefore, a more homely looking transgirl will most likely blend in society much better than a gorgeous transgirl.

This further demonstrates that being pretty doesn’t mean you can pass more easily. It just means what it is – you’re pretty. So if you don’t think you’re pretty and therefore don’t pass – well get that right out of your head; as long as you have yourself put together correctly then you’ll probably pass more easily than a pretty transgirl in most cases.

So if you are a pretty girl – we all feel very sorry for you – you’re just going to have to tough it out. Seriously, if you are on upper scale of attractiveness – it just means everything has to be put together with even more care and attention. Keep in mind there will be people looking at you longer so you may want to tone down some makeup, wear less flash, and keep the heels lower.

This is why when I want to blend I make sure to dress appropriately, but also try to keep my hair short, heels flat, and usually wear slacks/jeans and a pretty plain top. If I go to the mall dressed like this, I pretty much blend 90% of the time and sometimes more if I make an effort. It’s even allowed me to actually pass with a bad voice because people just aren’t expecting it and just assume I’m a woman with a deep voice.

So What Can I Do To Pass / Blend More Easily?

So finally we get to the subject of “how to pass” as a female. In order to blend in society as a female you have to master several aspects of being female. And in some ways you’ll have to be more knowledgeable than females and even be more careful in your preparation and behavior. Just like women have to assimilate into the business world by dressing and behaving with more masculine traits – we have to do the same in the women’s world. I think it is more difficult for women in business and they have to be twice as good as their men counterparts in order to be taken seriously. However, I also believe the same is true for transgirls in a women’s world. One example might be social settings where women typically have the power and are sizing up the competition. In this case we as transgirls have to be more conscious about how we dress and act than women do. So what areas do you need to focus on in order to pass or blend? Well at least let’s evaluate: Wardrobe, Deportment, Voice, Attitude, Dressing Down, Weight, Dental Hygiene, Depilatory, and Skin Care.

Wardrobe

The fundamental rule of them is simply to just dress appropriately for the venue. If you’re not sure what to wear to a venue – maybe visit it in “drab” and see how other women are dressed and make notes of what you think you could pull off. I have found that women, in general, are very careful to dress first for other women, then what they think their man will like. For example, she may know that her man likes her in high heels, mini-skirt and dark eye makeup; however, going to the mall she isn’t going to wear that outfit because she ...what?...doesn’t want to stand out or make a spectacle of herself.

Society judges each of us harshly on how we dress. How we dress ourselves shows a certain level of care, self-respect and dignity. Even if we’re going out in shorts and flip flops; there are shorts, and then there are nice shorts. There are nasty flip flops and very pretty flip flops. Not to say you can’t wear simple or you have to wear a Christian Dior dress everywhere you go. The point is to dress nice given the socially acceptable dress code for the venue you plan to visit. Make sure you have the proper accessories but you are not over accessorized. Make sure that your wardrobe “Goes” together. Everything doesn’t need to match, in fact it probably shouldn’t – it just needs to “Go” together.

Also, keep in mind that the style of clothes sends a message about you. If you are wearing your hair all wild, high heels and flashy makeup – you are saying – “I’m looking for attention, and you have yourself on display or you are advertising yourself”. Nothing wrong with that; just be conscious of it. Just like if you wear a drab dress and flats and stand in the corner – you’re making a statement that you are shy, and are trying to blend in with the rest of the crowd.

The way we dress says a lot about who we are – our piercings, tattoos, style of dress, the way we wear our hair. All of this is making a statement about our self expression of style which is usually based on our own sense of beauty. I think it’s so much fun to create different looks and styles; sometimes I choose not to follow the “social norms” and break the rules. But I do this knowing that I’m probably going to get more attention (both positive and negative), and that I’m probably not going to blend as well. It’s a conscious decision; I’m not just being oblivious to what is appropriate.

The other aspect to keep in mind is that your body type may not fit all styles of clothes. There is no single woman that can pull off every style of clothing. In fact I do hear women complain all the time how they can't wear one thing or another. The easiest way to figure this out is to stand naked in front of a mirror and figure out what a woman your age, with your body type would wear to look sexy.

The easiest way is to find a girl role model that has a similar body type as you and see how close you can mimic their style and dress. Also, keep in mind that if you are past your 20s – looking like a teenage girl is just not going to be possible for the majority of us. In fact I had a client once that I transformed, I thought she was gorgeous – but she was over weight even for a male. So I highlighted her strengths and down played the more problem areas. I get her in front of a mirror and I never saw a look of disappointment like on this poor girl. I had no idea what was wrong. So I asked her if she was okay. She sighed and said yes but admitted that she was disappointed. I was really amazed she had that reaction. So I asked her what I could do different or what did she want me to change. Her reponse was that she wanted to look like a teenage girl. She was in her late 40s, overweight and had never dressed before. I actually felt relieved with her answer. I just simply responded that most girls her age want to look like a teenage girl and if they can't pull it off it's probably not in the cards for us either.

The point is to understand your body, set realistic expectations. It's good to have lofty goals but also realize that some looks may just not be possible.

Deportment

Deportment is the art of behavior, mannerisms and how we carry ourselves. Women carry themselves differently than men. This is mostly because of the way their bodies are, but it's also some social conditioning that women learn or mimic certain mannerisms. This deportment can show signs of submissiveness, or maternal, or being in control. Also the ways women dress themselves, as well as their body shape create certain behaviors. I'm not going to go into all the different nuances but I will give a few examples.

I think one of the easiest things to notice with confident women is that they will be very good listeners. They will look you in the eye, nod their head, and acknowledge what you are saying vocally. They are laser focused on what you are saying if they are interested. If they are not, then they are looking off to the side or looking past you to see what else is going on. They may lean in even with their bodies or move closer towards you. Men don't normally do these things.

In addition, women usually spread out their hands, but men clutch their fingers in a fist. Women tend to touch things to get a sensation of feeling where men really don't care. Also, women seem to be more deliberate and careful when they go to pick something up. They may lean over, touch it gently and then lift it up moving their body back to an upright position. Men will typically grab it, look at it and toss it aside or cram it in their pocket. Rarely have I seen feminine women do this.

And you thought I was going to mention walking, and sitting? Well I just did – but I think there's enough discussion on those activities. I would challenge you to watch women for yourself and see how they behave – I think you will notice there is a natural difference. Whether it's, driven by body type or social

conditioning – it doesn't matter – we need to observe. I'm always watching women; they most likely don't even realize what they are doing because it's their natural behavior. We as transgirls need to re-learn and no one can really teach you – you have to be observant and mimic without over doing it.

So there is a point where deportment can be overdone. I've seen transgirls "flap" their hands about while they walk on their tip toes, give the cute head sideways with a smile, hold their hands close to their bodies. All I can say about this is that it just draws more attention, because women today typically don't behave that way. So just watch women and you'll see how they behave. I think watching women in a restaurant, a bar, or at a party are my favorite times. I think you can gather a lot of information on their behavior in these settings.

Hair

I think choosing the right hair is the most important choice you can make to help you pass as a female. There are a lot of considerations when selecting a wig but there are three that are key. First, your facial structure will determine the type of hair you can wear. Is your face oval, round, oblong, square or diamond. The next aspect is the color of the wig, does it match your skin tone? The easiest way to know what color will work for you is what your natural hair color was when you were in your teens. You can probably go a few shades lighter or darker – but it's a good rule of thumb. Sorry we all don't look good as platinum blonds. The final consideration besides style is length. The longer the hair or how hiked up it is on top, the more attention you will receive.

I also found that finding a hair piece that has a blend of colors 2, 3 or four different colors as highlights will make the hair appear more natural. But if you've never selected a wig or selected one that really works for you then really there is only one solution. Go to a wig salon and have them try them on you. If the person helping you is experienced they will be able to limit your choices based on your shape and skin tone. If you tell them you want one that looks natural, and tell them where you plan on going it will help them determine which one is right for you. Unfortunately there is no way around this – it's the only way to know for sure if the hair will work on you.

Also, wigs out of the box are horrible. The wig cap may need to be adjusted for your head, the bangs may need to be trimmed or the hair may need to be combed and conditioned properly. If you have not had experience with wigs I don't recommend buying one on the internet and trying to style it yourself. Even if you buy one on the internet take it into a wig salon and ask them to sit you down and style it for your head. This will typically cost you no more than a hair cut \$25-\$35 and totally worth the time. If you are nervous about showing up at a wig salon – then just call ahead and let them know what kind of help you need. Only a few wig salons have ever turned me away – the ones that did were more looking to help cancer patients and that is most of their business.

The other thing is to research wig care. It may be worth while having a few different wigs – maybe similar in style but maybe slightly different shades of color for the different seasons. It's also good to cycle through your wigs. Wearing the same one all the time will wear it out very quickly. Never wear it to bed and always keep it on a wig head for storage. Never ever wash it with hair shampoo and avoid too many sprays and conditioners. All of these things can damage your wigs permanently.

Also, look to replace it after 6 months to a year. Depending how often you go wear it and how hard you are on it. If you are going on a trip – pack it in the original boxes and pull it out as soon as you arrive. Keep it out of heat for storage. Just treat it like one of your nicest dresses and it will last longer for you.

A good wig stylist can give you all the care instructions and the does and donts. The key though is to select a hair that works. To me it makes all the difference in the world. It's more important than your makeup and clothes. There are some wigs I can put on and go out without any makeup and still blend pretty well. But it would be difficult for me to wear a bad wig and hope that makeup and clothes will make up the difference.

Also, how much should you spend on a wig? Well I typically spend between \$90 and \$250 on a synthetic wig. The difference in price usually has to do with length, color blends, fibers, and cap. But you don't have to spend a lot of money for a nice wig that works for you. You don't need human hair wigs. In fact for the novice, human hair wigs can even be more difficult to maintain. With the right synthetic wig people will not even think it's not your real hair. In some of the transgirl groups I have attended I've had people ask me up close if it's my own hair. Then when I say no they are amazed and immediately assume it's a human hair wig – then when I tell them it's synthetic they just don't believe it. And this is coming from other transgirls that are very experienced with recognizing a wig.

The point is find that finding the right wig is the key to looking fabulous.

Voice and Speech

There are several ways to work on your voice – it's not about pitch it's about tone – there are several methods on the internet and I won't go into details here. However, there are some other aspects of a woman's voice and speech that has nothing to do with the tone. It has to do with the pace of their speech and their vocabulary.

Women tend to use a broader vocabulary than men. A very simple example would be colors. How many different colors are there? Men might say the basic foundational colors red, green, blue, black, gray etc. But there is mauve, fuchsia, coral, aqua, salmon etc. We need to listen and learn from them because it's not about pulling out a dictionary or thesaurus. It's more about how women see the world and describe their surroundings. The adjectives that women use are much broader and more descriptive than those that men use.

The flip side is that many transgirls I know take this way too far. They start using words like honey, dear, sweetie and other outdated and somewhat offensive words. We don't live in the 40s and 50s and when someone calls me dear I feel like they are talking to me as if they were my grandmother and I was a 5 year old girl. Great if you're into age-play, but it sounds condescending and quite frankly just gay. So let's listen to how women speak in this millennium not how are grandmothers used to speak to their grandkids. I mean if it makes you feel more feminine to speak this way then by all means go for it – but don't expect to blend in to the conversation.

The last point I'll make is that girls tend to use intonation. When they want to appear sweet and submissive or if they feel cute they might use a "sweeter" sounding voice. They may even almost "sing"

the words they are saying. If they are telling a story they may use a speech vocal pattern with a particular cadence. I've found that women speak differently given the situation they find themselves. Their speech pattern with their boyfriend, versus their girl friends, versus work, versus their kids is all different. I think men have a work voice and one for with the guys; but it's really not that much different. Again, observation and paying close attention is the best way to find the patterns that work for you. Add that to practicing your tone – and you'll get a feminine voice in no time.

Attitude

Attitude in my opinion is one of the largest influences on blending and passing maybe next to appearance. The key here is that you have to have air of confidence about yourself. Looking people in the eye and walking with your head held high. I notice a lot of transgirls that will walk and look hunched over and looking at the ground as if they are trying to hide. It's having the opposite effect. It doesn't look natural, and people can sense your fear.

The next factor that helps with displaying a positive attitude is to always have a smile on your face. I know many transgirls who are the sweetest people you'll meet but they walk around with a frown or lack of expression. It's sending the wrong message. They look scared, angry or insane. Can you imagine even if a biological girl walks quickly down the street staring at the ground with a frown on their face; clomping along in high heels and a miniskirt. You would be very wary of her, so doesn't it make sense that if you did that as a transgirl people would be just as wary and cautious – if not more so?

So this is pretty simple. Don't look at the floor, and look straight ahead. If someone looks you in the eye look them back and smile. This will give you an air of confidence. You may have to fake it for a while – but after you fake it a few times eventually you'll see that it works and you'll do it sincerely after a time.

The last rule I will give you to help with your attitude is 99.9% of the time be nice. No matter what the situation is. There are definitely situations that may dictate otherwise. But in general be polite, courteous, appreciative, forgiving and pleasant. If someone mixes up a pronoun and it upsets you – just be nice. Remember you are an ambassador to the entire transgirl community and you may be setting a first impression not only of yourself but you may be helping formulate someone's initial opinion of transgirls.

Dress Down

Basically if you wear the clothes that are designed to attract attention, that's exactly what is going to happen. The more attention and the longer people look; the more opportunity they have to figure out what's going on. Not saying you have to wear sweats but remember the more things you wear that are designed to attract a man's attention, will do just that – attract attention. Here are just some things that will lure people to looking at you a little longer than the average passerby.

- a) **Bright Makeup** – Deep red lipstick, heavy eye makeup, and bright rouge will definitely have people look at you more carefully. I usually just wear eye liner, mascara, a touch of foundation for evenness and neutral tone lipstick and maybe a bronzer for cheeks.

- b) **High Heels/Boots** – High heels will definitely get the boys and girls looking at your shoes and then sizing you up. Most people are attracted to women in boots – the higher up the leg the boot goes the more attention they receive. Also the more ornate or “cool” factor the shoe has will demand a second look
- c) **Short Skirts** – the more leg you show the more people are going to want to look at it
- d) **Low cut tops** – if you show cleavage – well guess what. People will look at it
- e) **Long Hair** – the longer the hair, the curlier the hair the more people will watch you
- f) **Nails** – Long finger nails, bright colors, little painted flower or decals on the nails are all designed to attract attention.

So what do you do, just dress in jeans, flats, short hair and no makeup? Well, it will increase your chances of blending. But some would say – what’s the fun in that. Well the clothes may not be all that fun or interesting – but what’s the goal? If your goal is to blend/pass then it’s a sure formula to achieve it. If you just want to go out and experience life as a girl it may be a good start – call it a base line. Start with the most boring clothes, hair and makeup and go out and see if you blend any better.

Then depending on how you feel about your success then maybe spruce one thing up. Maybe you like shoes so you decide to wear more of a heel – but leave the jeans, high cut top, short hair and minimal makeup. If that works out then try something else next time and slowly build to the look you want. The key is to work out each step slowly and progress until you are comfortable with your look.

Makeup

You can check out my makeup 101 guide on my website for the details on applying makeup. The key is that less is more. When I go out in the day all I wear is a little mascara, eyeliner just on the outer corners, foundation, lipstick and a dash of bronzer. That’s it. Takes me all of ten minutes to put it on. The less time you spend with it and the simpler you make this process the more you’ll feel natural as a girl and it will build your confidence even more. Now if I’m on stage or going out clubbing I may get a little outrageous – but I never spend more than 45 min. on my face. I rarely spend the upper end of that unless I’m doing stage makeup.

If you are struggling in the area of makeup then you are not alone. Trust me most girls struggle with makeup and most don’t even know that have an issue. I saw a girl recently that had done an amazing job on her makeup – it was clear she had spent at least an hour or more on putting on her face. The problem is that she looked made up – didn’t look natural. It was well done but over done. So even girls that have been applying makeup all their lives seem to have issues.

Here recently my sister in law was struggling with finding the right products and routine that she could look good but keep it down to 10-15min. She has 4 kids and just didn’t have the time – but still wanted to highlight her best features and add some color to her face. I was able to spend 20min with her and show her different products that would work for her and which ones would not. I also put together a

routine with her that she could manage easily. She was amazed with how much I was able to show her and she really had no idea because no one had really helped her.

So those of you looking for a woman to help you with makeup, just realize you may not get the help you need. Also, even if a girl understands her face doesn't mean she can help you. The fact that you are also genetically male doesn't help either. She will have no idea on how to make your masculine features look more feminine.

Also, I know a lot of girls that seek help from Mary Kay sales ladies or a department store makeup counter like Mac, Clinique, Lancolm, or Elizabeth Arden. They are all wonderful – and many do want to help, but keep in mind they are there to sell you product. Now if they don't serve you and instead try to sell you they won't have a repeat customer. So most genuinely want to help – the problem is that many of these department store sales personnel may not have a lot of experience. The same is true for salon makeovers. You may enjoy the experience but rarely have I been completely satisfied. It's not they aren't experienced – it's just that it's very difficult to figure out how to best apply makeup on an unfamiliar face. Also, understanding someone's sense of style on top of that complicates it for the makeup artist even more.

So what am I saying? I'm saying that you need to figure it out. Go to these different resources and gather information and enjoy the experience. But at the end of the road you will be able to apply makeup to you better than anyone else can. See my makeup guide for general direction on application.

Physique

Your body and skin are extremely important if you are interested in blending and passing. You need to find the right proportion for your body type. It is possible to be too skinny as much as it is to be overweight. Since we are genetically male, we carry weight differently than women. The phenomenon is that the more weight you have the more masculine you will look. If you are overweight you may be able to glam up and become a beautiful drag queen – but what we are talking about is passing. I find that very few overweight transgirls can blend or pass as girls. Exceptions may occur if they've been on hormones long enough to redistribute the weight.

I'm not going to go into too much detail here but you have to make a decision to change your behavior and lifestyle. There is no magic pill that's going take the weight off; hormones certainly aren't the cure for it. Also, all the diet fads and exercise videos also don't work. Sure you may lose the weight you want – but once you do – I be willing to bet you gain it all back. The reason is because those programs are not sustainable. The only sustainable program that works is to eat “much” less than your basal metabolic rate (BMR) and burn 300-1000 calories each day working out.

When you sit and fantasize about being a beautiful girl, you have to ask yourself, what's that worth to you? I hear girls tell me all the time – I'd give anything. Yet they're not willing to stop eating and get on a treadmill.

Now I can say this because I fell in this category. I'm 5'11" and I let my weight get to 235 pounds – I had a 42" waist and a 40" chest. I could barely get into my size 18 dresses. It took me nearly 3 years of 6 months on and 6 months off this program to lose 60 pounds. How did I do it?

The first thing I did was I found a picture of a girl in a bikini that I wanted desperately to look like. If you are like me you may have pictures of girls that you pray every night that you would wake up and look like that girl in the morning. So I decided why not make that dream come true. I took that picture and I studied every line and every curve. Then I said to myself. Wouldn't it be amazing if I woke up in the morning 3 years from now and looked like that? Think about it – If you had started this program 3 years ago you would be waking up in the morning looking like that beautiful girl.

The next step is that every time I took a bite of food I would think about that picture. I didn't want to eat too much or the wrong things in order to ruin the possibility of looking like that. When I get on the treadmill and got tired or bored and wanted to quit; I would just think of myself looking like that girl running on the beach. And it would somehow give me more motivation and incentive to keep going.

The bottom line is there is no quick fix – it's not fun, it hurts, there's sacrificing one of the things most of us enjoy most – sweet or flavorful food. However, what I have noticed over time is that I now prefer fruits and vegetables over fried foods. I prefer to drink water or ice tea over sodas. I have changed my behavior and lifestyle so that I could look more feminine – it was that important to me. You have to decide to start right now and continue the program for 3 years. Trust me you'll wake up in the morning 3 years from now feeling just amazing.

On the flip side there is such a thing as being too skinny and looking like a stick figure. So if this fits your body type then you need to start increasing protein and lifting weights. Take supplements to increase body mass. As much as being overweight can add masculine characteristics; so can being too skinny. I hear all the time about a few transgirls bragging that they wear a size 2 or a size 6. That's great if it's proportional but many don't pass because they don't have any curves. They can certainly pad themselves – but my goal has always been to look good in lingerie or a bikini without the padding. That's more challenging.

Body Forms

If you haven't been on hormones for any length of time then you may want to consider body forms. This can include breast forms, corsets, cinchers, butt and hip forms. There are also other techniques for cleavage which we will address later.

These items are not cheap. A decent pair of breast forms can run \$75-\$250 depending on the different features included. A good metal boned corset will start around \$150, butt pads upwards of \$100 and cinchers upwards of \$50. So even though these are one shot purchase items they still can put a dent in your overall "girl" budget.

The other downside to these items with exception of the breast forms, is that they are hot, constraining and sometimes don't even look natural. You just need to understand your body and it's limitation. For example if you have a 40" waist, a corset isn't going to take you to a 30" waist – you may get to 36" if

you're lucky. The other problem is all that 4" inches have to go somewhere. So it will pop out the top or the bottom. The corset may lip around your pelvis area, causing other problems. I know one trick people use is that they'll put on a body form over the corset to help smooth things out. All I can say is that this is a lot of effort, discomfort for 4" that probably isn't going to make that much of a difference. It also can cause more problems than it solves. You might have a thinner waist line, but you now have more on your upper and lower body. Some people like this, personally I don't – but you need to figure out what works for you.

Instead of wearing a corset and forms – the better solution is to find clothes that may fit more loosely and great other illusions. For example a skirt that's full at the top and maybe a tapered blouse that's larger in the shoulders will give you the same effect without having to add all these complications. So if you enjoy wearing these items – then be my guest. But if you are wearing them to achieve a more passable look then I would argue that there are better methods.

Although, the breast forms are probably the most important of these items that I mentioned. However, if you have extra skin or have been on hormones if you invest in a \$50 push up bra from Victoria's Secret then it may be all you need. I sometimes augment with some \$20 silicon forms you can find on amazon.com – between this, my skin and the push up bra – it's more than enough.

Creating Cleavage

There are several methods to creating cleavage. There are devices on line that you can purchase and they actually work. There are also taping methods which are time consuming and have mixed results. The method that I see that works is a very high quality push up bra that can pull together your natural skin. Then augment with some breast forms.

The other technique you can use is a little makeup in strategic areas. In the cleavage put dark brown eye shadow or bronzer. Shape it up through the cleavage and up and around your breasts. Then smudge and blend till it looks natural. Then take a lighter shade that you put on the breasts themselves. It's back to the fact that dark colors create the illusion of sinking things in and lighter colors bring things out in contrast.

Dental Hygiene

A beautiful smile is so very important. You need to smile and show teeth when you smile. This gives off an air of confidence, happiness and draws people to you. If you have perfect hair and makeup then you want a bright smile to pull it all together. Women in general tend to smile more than men. They will even use a smile as acknowledgement as they listen to a conversation. Men tend to grunt and not show teeth. You need to see your teeth as another accessory like earrings, necklace or hair decorations. It's that extra added sparkle that makes you more approachable.

Bad teeth can be a detractor to passing/blending. For one it attracts attention. I think most women have feminine mouths and structure. So keeping your teeth white, getting teeth capped, replaced or whatever to keep your smile looking pristine is so important. Also, if your teeth are yellow – stop drinking dark drinks, stop smoking and start using some teeth whitener.

Depilatory

One of the biggest problems that most of us have is trying to get rid of the hair. Some aren't able to spend the time, money or exposure of laser and electrolysis. Laser and Electrolysis are the only two methods that will remove hair permanently. Everyone has a preference on which one of these choices they like better. I think it largely depends on how much hair you have and what color it is which determines which method is best for you.

If you have a thick beard there are tips and tricks to cover it. However, you have to be careful because if you cake on too much foundation then it can have the opposite effect. There are makeup methods that can help you cover the shadow on your face and much has been written on that already. My makeup 101 has some tips and tricks on how to cover your beard shadow.

I think it's also a great idea to shave your body. Not only does it look more feminine, it also can make you feel more feminine. Also the process of shaving your body can be quite nice and relaxing. Not going to go into shaving methods – but if you have never shaved your body before I would suggest using a hair removal cream like Nair for the first time (but never on your face).

Skin Care

The other step that is so important is skin care on your face and body. On a side topic, but related having a light tan is always nice. I've been very white most of my life and recently started maintaining a light tan which I think has improved my overall image. Just have to be careful not to damage your skin. In general, skin care is fairly simple – it just takes a commitment to do it every day. I will start by saying that none of the creams or rejuvenation products work. They may feel nice and may also temporarily hydrate your skin but very few of these products actually work.

It's always good to keep your skin hydrated or moisturized. Also if you're going to be out in the sun for extended periods of time, use at least SPF 15 to block harmful rays. However I have found that using vitamin A and E directly on my skin will rejuvenate it. I apply the vitamin oils after my shower following my workout in the morning as well as in the evening. I also use a prescription cream called Retnae which can help with wrinkles – it's the only product that will actually make a difference.

There are a lot of very expensive products on the market but all most of them do is hydrate and apply the same vitamins that you can get for 1/10th of the cost at most drugstores.

Lastly, salons offer facials and special treatments. These will give you a temporary glow but aren't lasting. Although, the experience can be quite relaxing and most people view it as a way to pamper themselves and distress. So from that perspective they can be very enjoyable and effective.

Get Pictures

So a lot of transgirls get teased that they are always looking in the mirror or always in front of a camera. In one extreme it can appear very narcissistic. Maybe it is, but it's still not a bad idea. The thing about pictures is that they don't lie like your friends. You will see every flaw, every bad pose, outfits that don't

work, messed up hair, and poorly applied makeup. Sometimes you don't see this in the mirror while you are in the heat of things trying to get ready. Pictures can capture the moment and show you how well you are progressing.

When I started all this getting 35mm was the best or even Polaroid pictures. It was much more difficult because you had to get film developed, had to have someone to take your pictures and cameras were not as easy to carry around. Also figuring out settings, film speeds etc just becomes confusing. Now with digital cameras fire away and click off as many as you can.

Pictures have always pointed out areas I needed to improve in – even now. I can see an expression that doesn't work, or a pose that doesn't work for me. I also can try new poses and looks and see how they might work out for me. I find that pictures and even video are great ways to improve the way you look and behave to be more feminine.

I started taking pictures at a young age. I think because I always wanted to have a photographic historical chronology of my progression. I also wanted to have them for when I was 80 or 90 to sort of re-live my younger days. What I didn't realize is that how much they helped me improve my image and figure out what worked and what didn't.

Hormones

Hormones are not the “girl” pill that you think they are. They will change your behavior, your body, and sex drive. In some people it changes the way they think. Hormones can enhance your ability to pass and blend but not as much as some of the other techniques already mentioned. It's important to understand clearly what hormones can and can't do and then figure out if they are necessary. There are many sources on line – if you google transgender and hormones you'll find some excellent resources that can advise you on the pros and cons.

In the context of passing as a female – they're not necessary. They can help, but not always. All hormones do is unlock the genetic code already in your DNA. Also the older you are the less of an impact they will have on your overall appearance. So it's just important that you research this for yourself.

Cosmetic Surgery

Cosmetic surgery can definitely help enhance your appearance as long as what you select to have done is subtle. Those that do too much cosmetic surgery may end up appearing “over done”. So surgery can have a negative effect. It’s important to do your research on the right doctor and understand all the risks. The areas that most people look to change are breast implants, nose, and face. There are other surgeries you can get to remove the adams apple, ribs etc. The key is just to do a lot of research. The less you do and can get away with the better. Also some surgeries may be too extreme for your situation like breast augmentation. If you’re living your life on the fence between male and female this might be more difficult to balance – although a good friend of mine has done this and is balancing both lives very well.

Personal Regimen

This is a lot of information to consume. One suggestion might be to highlight the areas you want to improve then create a routine for you to follow each day. I have found that if I add a few things at a time, after a few weeks I’ve added several new changes to my lifestyle and they also become second nature. Your regimen should include aspects of: Skin Care, Dental Hygiene, Exercise, Diet, and optionally Hormones.

With any changes in personal behavior maybe with each of them start adding a little at a time. Once you get used to one and it feels like part of your every day routine then add another. I think adding too much is difficult to maintain. And we are talking about a regimen that you will have to follow the rest of your life.

Conclusion

So we started with considering the source of information and making sure that you are able to filter those sources that don’t speak to your heart and soul. It was also important to figure out why you think passing as a female is important and to what degree. Then we dispelled any myth about being pretty and lastly provided some insight on how to actually pass more easily.

The question you have to ask yourself is – is this all worth it? Unless you’ve been genetically blessed with a female physique you’ll have to apply most of these techniques. The question is how often you go out, when do you go out and what activities do you participate in. If you only go out once a month and usually at night – then maybe spending 30 days each month on a regimen may not be worth it. Although I would just point out many of the suggestions provided are probably a good idea even if you never dressed en femme.

So do you want to blend and pass? After reading all this information and thinking about it. Is that still important? Maybe, maybe not. However, here’s the other side of the coin. If you want to look like a girl the only person that can help you is you. So instead of praying about waking up and looking like the

girls of your dreams in the morning, why not get busy and plan to look like the girl in the morning 3 years from now. 3 years may seem like a long time and it may not take that long. But trust me 3 years will fly by. Wouldn't it be nice if in 3 years you look like you imagine you should look? If you do nothing, then nothing will happen.

With many of my girls at Femme X Studios – I can show them the way – but it's up to them to do the work. I can't make it happen for anyone, no one can. This is all in your control; you choose your path and your destiny. No matter what you decide to do – it is your choice. You may have barriers or challenges in your life – it's up to you to break through those barriers. Some of those barriers may be hard and strong – but it will be an indicator of how important all this is to you personally. I'll admit some of the barriers were stronger than my desire to take certain steps in my life. So saying that there is a barrier is something I'm having difficulty overcoming is not the end of the world. The only point here is that at the end of the day, even in my situation, they are choices. Obviously there are some barriers that can't be broken in the area of health, disability or other extreme circumstances. However, in most of our lives these are not barriers we struggle with. In this context we're talking more mental barriers to change.

I will leave you with some final thoughts.

1. No matter what you decide to do – never be ashamed or embarrassed about your feminine identity. Instead give yourself permission to be the person you want to be. You hold the key to unlock this.
2. Take every step judiciously, slowly, and carefully. There are pros and cons to every decision.
3. If you decide that you want to look more feminine and blend better – take control and establish a daily regimen that works for you. Set realistic goals and a schedule to add more pieces to get you to your goals.
4. Listen to yourself first, consider the information from other sources – but be clear on the credibility of the source and their agenda.
5. You are beautiful and pretty – you may have some work to do to unlock it. But like anything worth having it may take some work – more for some than others. That's just life.
6. Don't ever feel sorry or pity yourself – this is your destiny – NO one can help you like you can help you.

Now go be what it is you want to be!