



Why Do I Want to Look Like a Girl?

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There are so many more labels in today's world than there ever have been. This complicates trying to figure everything out and generates questions around "why do I want to express myself in a feminine way". I purposely don't say "why do I want to be a girl or why do I cross dress" – instead I want this piece to be more insightful and cover a broader range. Essentially the answer is the same regardless of how far you decide to go with your femininity.

I hope you find this insightful and interesting and I hope it helps you answer some questions. Although I must state up front that I'm not a licensed counselor or have any credentials other than I've been meeting with transgirls for over 30 years and because of my feminization service I have met many people and I've listened to what these girls have had to say. I can tell you it's taught me so much about humanity that I could have never learned otherwise.

Forward by Melanie Sky

Hi Nikkie, thanks for writing this. It's very well written. The open and honest style, from the true self, will help a lot of people understand who they are and why they do things; not just expressing themselves as feminine or masculine but in all the things they do in any area of their lives. After all, expressing our femininity/gender is only one of our desires and passions in life, although a fundamentally important one.

I think it was very helpful to point out that there is a difference between who you are, biologically and psychologically, and what you choose to do about expressing who you are. You can't help being who you are, regardless of the biology involved and what the root cause of that biology was, but the choices you make in life have consequences and what you choose to do can and does affect your life, sometimes in positive ways and sometimes in negative ways. We all do things because we have chosen to conform to what are considered societal norms, but in most cases this means that we are in fact creating a "false self" which can then be readily accepted by others. I'm not just talking about gender expression here. This is true for everything we do in life, whether it's our political beliefs, our belief in a God and attendance at church, our schooling or just pleasing our parents. We do a lot of things in our lives just to gain the acceptance of others.

I believe that understanding one's true self is at the core of understanding the truth of who and what we are, and to understanding the reality of the people around us and the organizational and societal structures that have been created as a result of the false self desire for conformity. The more we are able to break out of the mold of conformity to the false self, the more we will be truly free in our lives, in every aspect of our lives, including the freedom to express who we really are. The challenge is to educate others and help them break out of their false self prisons. This is not an easy task. I think it is true that you cannot "teach" someone anything; they have to "learn" it for themselves. And that requires the motivation on their part to do the learning. That's the challenge we face. We have to be able to entice or motivate others to learn more about themselves before they will be in a position to be able to understand others. And this includes an understanding about gender and its myriad of manifestations.

I think articles like this go a long way to furthering that understanding, and my hope is that this will help, even if only in a small way, to the freeing of others from their false self to a deeper understanding of themselves and the eventual eradication of the prejudices and hatred that have resulted from their conformity and enslavement to false self generated institutions in their lives. I believe that those of us who see this enslavement to false self conformity for what it is and have chosen to break away from it and express more openly who we are, are further ahead in our understanding of ourselves and freer than most of those who are still slaves to institutions of conformity.

In love and understanding,
Melanie

CONFIDENTIAL

Introduction

First I want to state that I use the term “feminine expression” to cover all aspects of gender. This is not meant to offend or say that for those that feel they are girls that this is just a form of self expression. There’s really no term or phrase that covers everyone. So I apologize for my language in advance but just know that it’s not done in the spirit of disrespect or an attempt to trivialize someone’s inner being. But I think we can all agree that if you are reading this then you either desire to express yourself as a female or you know someone who does.

There are a lot of terms that are used in this broader community of feminine expression and these are all terms that are used. Some of these terms are offensive to some people and not to others. I’m not advocating their use nor saying that you shouldn’t. I think terms help us understand more about where someone falls within the broader community. So I want to list the terms from an educational perspective, however, not so that you can try and label yourself.

One final note is that I know there are many trans-men out there that may be reading this. This will apply to them as well just substitute anything girly with something more masculine. So for example instead of “Feminine Expression” it may be “Masculine Expression”. So many times these handsome individuals get left out of the conversation and they are just as much a part of the community as those that are more feminine.

Terminology - May 2009

Source: NCTE Trans Terminology (National Center for Transgender Equality ▪ 1325 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005 (202) 903-0112 ▪ ncte@nctequality.org ▪ www.nctequality.org)

These terms originated from the NCTE Trans Terminology However, I have expanded and edited a few of the definitions to provide more clarity. I have also added other terms which were not included in the list. However I wanted to make sure that NCTE received credit for establishing the base line for this list. There are really 3 categories of terms. One category is about our gender identity, sexual orientation, and general terms used in the community. I have omitted the terms around sexual orientation and divided the other terms into their respective categories.

Gender Identity Terms

Transgender Woman: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman (see also “MTF”).

Transwoman or Transgirl: This is a general term describing someone that expresses themselves as a female but is genetically male. It’s used as a general term and is usually not offensive to most people.

Gender Identity: An individual’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Expression: How a person represents or expresses one’s gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics. The term I like to use that’s more specific is “**Feminine Expression**” which falls under this same definition.

Transsexual: A term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth. Often transsexual people alter or wish to alter their bodies through hormones or surgery in order to make it match their gender identity. Others also may identify themselves as **pre-op transsexual**, **post-op transsexual**, or **non-op transsexual**. Pre-op transsexual is someone that is typically scheduled for surgery, post-op transsexual is someone who has completed gender reassignment surgery, and non-op transsexual is someone that has not taken the step or may not plan on taking the step

Cross-dresser: A term for people who dress in clothing traditionally or stereotypically worn by the other sex. Depending on how technical you want to get anyone with male chromosomes dressing as a female is a crossdresser. However someone that is a post-op transsexual may take offense if you called them a crossdresser. Although still accurate in a very broad sense it’s not specific enough. If you look at the term crossdresser as very broad then everything else is used to further provide better context.

Transvestite: A term for a cross-dresser from the latin derivatives it translates to cross-clothes. This is an older term – some people find the term offensive because they think of stereo types generated by movies like Rocky Horror or Dressed to Kill. Where as crossdress would be more in line with a movie like “Some Like it Hot”.

Gender Non-conforming: A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

Bi-gendered: One who has a significant gender identity that encompasses both genders, male and female. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are there.

Two-Spirit: A contemporary term that references historical multiple-gender traditions in many First Nations cultures. Many Native/First Nations people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming identify as Two-Spirit; in many Nations, being Two-Spirit carries both great respect and additional commitments and responsibilities to one's community.

Male to Female (MTF): A person who transitions from "male-to-female," meaning a person who was assigned male at birth, but identifies and lives as a female. Also known as a "transgender woman."

Gurl: This is sometimes used to distinguish an MTF where you may not know where they fall in all of this confusing terminology. Gurl is obviously Girl with a U. To distinguish that this is an MTF that's being referred to.

Intersex also Hermaphrodite: A term used for people who are born with external genitalia, chromosomes, or internal reproductive systems that are not traditionally associated with either a "standard" male or female.

Shemale: A term that is used to describe those that have had top surgery but not bottom surgery. Some find this term derogatory because it's typically used in the porn industry.

Transgirl, Transwoman: This is also a general term to describe "Feminine Expression"

Drag Queen: generally used to accurately refer to men who dress as women (often celebrity women) for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events. It is also used as slang, sometimes in a derogatory manner, to refer to all transgender women.

Fetish-Cross-dresser: This is someone that may crossdress in more fetish clothing of the opposite sex. This includes leather, latex, elaborate costumes, gothic, punk rock etc. It's different than Drag Queen in that it's not necessarily for performance but they enjoy expressing themselves in these types of outfits. It can be very artistic and eclectic.

Other Gender Terms

Passing: A term used to describe that your behavior and image is viewed as others as to be the one that is opposite to that of birth. It means that people would not have any idea that the individual would be genetically the physical gender they are.

Sex Reassignment Surgery or Gender Reassignment Surgery: Surgical procedures that change one's body to make it conform to a person's gender identity. This may include "top surgery" (breast augmentation or removal) or "bottom surgery" (altering genitals). Contrary to popular belief, there is not one surgery; in fact there are many different surgeries. "Sex change surgery" is considered a derogatory term by many.

Transition: The period during which a person begins to live as their new gender. Transitioning may include changing one's name, taking hormones, having surgery, or changing legal documents (e.g. driver's license, Social Security record, birth certificate) to reflect their new gender.

HRT – Hormone Therapy: Used to describe a hormone regimen to alter the physical characteristics of one’s appearance. This is typically done under the recommendation of a therapist and under a doctors care.

Electrolysis/Laser: These are procedures used to permanently remove hair from the body.

Issue of Choice

Before I directly address the question around “Why?”, I think it’s important to understand one basic premise. I will state up front that many disagree with me on this point and you’ll have to determine for yourself what you think. However, I think that the people that can grasp this basic concept it opens up a world of possibilities and positive attitudes towards other people. The premise is this. “Who we are and what we are is not a choice; however, how we choose to behave is a choice”.

Think on that for a minute. You can’t change who or what you are inside but you do have a choice on how you want or can deal with your desires. For example, mentally, I’m a girl – always have been and that really wasn’t a choice. I may have conditioned myself a little to be more female than male mentally but the basic foundation was definitely a feminine gender identity for me. However, how I deal with that is a choice. For example, I may be a girl but my outward expression (how I behave, dress, interact with society) is a choice.

I had a conversation with a transgendered individual a few years back that I overheard say “I just have to dress as a girl I really have no choice”. I had to interrupt her to say, “excuse me, but I couldn’t help hear what you said about this not being a choice and I was curious to why you think that”. She responded “well I was always a girl and I just have to be a girl and dress this way”. I said, “Well, I have to say something here and I mean no offense, but you’re wrong - this is a choice for you”. She responded, “How can you say that you don’t even know me.” I said, “Well, just in the few minutes we’ve spoken I know this is a choice for you and I can prove it to you.” She looked intrigued and challenged me, “Okay Nikki prove to me this is a choice for me.” I said, “Excellent, well let me ask you a few questions and I think the answer will be clear to us both. First question is how long have you felt that identified mentally as a female.” She said, “Well, I’m 42 now so 42 years”. I responded, “Good, how long have you been expressing or dressing yourself as a female either part or full time.” She said, “Oh only the last 5 years have I been able to dress as a female even part time.” I looked at her with a raised eyebrow and said “so then for 37 years you have chosen NOT to express yourself as a female”. She looked at me sort of shocked and in her only defense said, “Well, Nikki it’s not that simple”. And looked back at her with a loving smile and said, “Honey yes it is – this doesn’t have to be difficult, but you have to start with being honest with yourself otherwise it’s very complicated.” She didn’t say much and a friend pulled me away so I’m not sure whatever became of her – I just hope that she found her way.

Here is another example of choice that’s not gender related but it changed how people perceived me. In high school I was a shy kid that had some friends but I was never viewed as life of the party. (Yeah I

know hard to even imagine for those that know me). I was never really invited to parties and I didn't have too many of my own. Also, girls liked me but never really dated a lot. This may sound familiar to a lot of people reading this. However, when I went off to college I remember the drive up there where I was thinking about my future and what I wanted to be.

I decided to try something and take some risks. I decided that I wanted to be the life of the party, outrageous, the person everyone wanted to invite. So when arrived on campus I made a point to go around and meet everyone on my dorm room hall. I then invited everyone over to my room to hang out later. Then I just came up with crazy ideas that probably could have got us all in trouble but it established me as the sort of "life of the party" type of person. I just took ownership of planning and finding people that were like minded that we could establish a fun click. I never joined a fraternity – didn't have to – all of my friends were members of fraternities and they all invited me to their parties. Was able to network and go to the parties and didn't have to be hazed or pay any dues. It worked out great. But this is an example where "who I am" is this shy kid but how I decided to behave was a choice contrary to my being.

Here is another example in regards to how we all behave differently than who we really are. As someone attracted to females, if I see a very hot looking woman I might have all kinds of thoughts of what I'd like to do with her – but I don't take actions that might be inappropriate. Even though inside I have these feelings and thoughts – I choose not to behave in the manner that I have fantasized about. One is who I am, the other is a choice.

So just because you may have been born female, like to be female – or wherever you fall – the desire to "express" your femininity is a choice. That choice may be driven by strong desires, but in the end it's a choice. Then to the degree you want to take your femininity is also a choice. From dressing at home in front of a mirror, going out in public as a female, or going through HRT and transition. These are all choices we make.

So if we can all agree with the premise that "who and what I am is not a choice but how I choose to behave is a choice" then I think you will be much better equipped mentally to deal with the issues. Let's not delude ourselves on any level whether it's having a choice or anything else.

Passion

When my kids asked me why do I want to dress as a female it was the really the first time I had to really consider my answer and explain it to them in a way they could understand. My kids were 13/14 at the time and it was a very impressionable time so I wanted to make sure that I was able to explain to them and answer the question in a way they could relate. Just as a side note, I do not recommend having any conversation with loved ones about your desire to express yourself as a female until you do fully understand it for yourself and can put things in your own words. Also you need to know what it is you want and why you are revealing this about yourself to them. I have a document on my website that discusses this in much more detail it's called communication and can be found on <http://www.femmexstudios.com>

So even though this is a document and a one way discussion, we can still do a quick little exercise together that might help you understand a very simple concept called Passion. Let's put feminine expression aside for just a second. I would like you to pick an activity that you are passionate about. Maybe its work, maybe a pastime, maybe hanging out with your friends, maybe you're an artist, musician, a traveler. I want you to pick something that is an activity. Not a thing or a loved one. Now with that in mind answer this question. "Why do you do that?" Let's say you picked an activity like Golf. Why do you play Golf? If you were to ask a golfer question like that they may say well I get exercise and I get out in the sun. I like my surroundings. When they say that I can then say – well you could go for a walk and do all that. Then they may talk about how they find it a challenge and a way to hone their skills. I said well you could go skeet shooting for that. You can see where this is leading – total frustration. And I ask them the question again. "So why do you play golf?". The simplest answer is "I like to play golf".

When I discussed this with my kids the way I explained it to them is that no one should ever have to give up anything they are passionate about so long as it wasn't destructive in a way that interfered with someone else's rights or freedoms. They didn't understand that statement so I took it to simpler terms. My daughter is passionate about the piano. So I looked at her and asked her if she could give it up if I asked her – she said no and then said - why would you ask me to give up something I loved. I looked back at her and said - exactly. The light bulb went on and she said - you know this is really okay. She continued, - I don't understand it but if you love it and you don't pick me up at school dressed that way then it's okay. Now if I was in transition or living full time this would have been a little trickier obviously.

In the case where you are not in transition then it's pretty simple. "Why should anyone have to explain why they like any activity". I will go so far to say that if Golf was socially unacceptable then can you imagine how many people would be in therapy about it, how many secret golf courses would exist etc

The Cure

So now I'm going to tell you that there is a cure for wanting to express yourself in a feminine way. There is a regimen and prescription that within two weeks you'll forget all about it and never ever want to dress up again as a female. I don't charge a dime for the cure and you can do it right where you are right now. Now are you going to sign up for the regimen?

The large majority of the people reading this document would say – no, I won't do it. There are some that think if they cured this that it would solve other issues in their life. So they would agree to it out of desperation but in their heart wouldn't want to move forward. And I do know that there is a very small percentage that would sincerely like it to go away. But I want to address the vast majority that fall into the first two categories. I have no scientific proof to any of this but I think it sort of makes logical sense.

First of all there is no cure. I apologize for those that feel duped at this point. Instead this was a simple test to get to the core of the fact that this is something you want to do. Also, that you just made a CHOICE as discussed before. You just made a choice to continue this path. So I love it when I can make two points with one simple example or exercise. The reality that you need to accept is not only is feminine expression a choice that it's something you love. You have to say out loud I love this and then give yourself permission to embrace it.

I was sitting next to a lovely transgirl at one of the social groups and she began to explain why she was the way she was. I of course am always interested in someone's perspective as well as learning about people in general. So this person went through a very lengthy and detailed medical explanation of how her mother was medicated when she was in her womb. In any case, she went into so many details I just got lost. But I listened to the entire story that went on for about 20 min. I asked probing questions and I was sincerely interested in hearing what she had to say.

At the end I think we were both mentally exhausted. But then she looked at me and said, "So Nikki, what are you and why are you doing this?". I looked at her and smiled and said, "I really don't know what I am; all I know is that I love this and I find it a lot of fun". She looked at me puzzled and almost disappointed. "I said I have no excuse, no shame, nor any bad upbringing, never subjected to any abuse, I never had any major issues or problems in my life. Essentially the only thing I know is I love expressing myself as a female." I went on to say that, "I really don't care if I pass or if people know that I'm genetically male, because I'm a transwoman and that's pretty special and I'm not ashamed of that." Then I smiled and said, "I just realized that I pass 100% as a trans-woman and somewhat less as a genetic girl". I do have another document on passing on my website that goes into more detail on this topic as well.

The Reason

So instead of a cure maybe there's a reason you like to express yourself as a female. And if you could find the reason then maybe you could work through that and figure it out. So let's address the possible reasons. Well maybe you were abused as a kid or forced to dress as female. Well I do know people that were subjected to this but today have no desire to dress up. Well, maybe you had a sexual encounter with the same sex and that's why. Well I know many straight transwomen so I'm not sure that would be the reason. Maybe you had an abusive environment growing up – well there were a lot of us in that situation but not all decided to dress as females.

Are we starting to get a better understanding? My grandfather told me a story of two brothers that grew up with an alcoholic father. One of the brothers ended up in prison and the other a successful businessman. They asked the brother in prison – so, how did you wind up here. The brother went on to explain how his father was an abusive alcoholic and it was difficult for him to cope. Then when the brother that was successful was asked that question he responded that his father was an alcoholic and a loser – so he decided he was never going to be like that.

I'm not trivializing abusive relationships but I am trying to make the point that we can choose to let these "reasons" or excuses rule our life or we can make a CHOICE to change our path. This takes a lot of strength and fortitude and not everyone can do it. But if you can then it will change your life for the better.

Now let's say you are able to pin point a reason. So if you found the answer to "why" you need to express your femininity, would it change how you feel or what you "choose to do about it? Maybe there was a medical explanation, maybe a psychological one, or maybe it turned out you were insane – what answer could you get that would change your desire to express your feminine side? If you were able to find comfort with an answer would that make anything any different? I think the only thing it might give you is a stronger sense of security or confidence. But you can find those two attributes much easier by exploring other aspects of your femininity.

Basically, you don't need an excuse to be what you want to be. Nor should you be ashamed of what you are or how you choose to express yourself. You don't need anyone's permission – you are an adult and capable of making your own choices. Also, you don't have to be one dimensional – it doesn't have to be all girl or none at all. You can balance it and be a girl when you can and a boy when you need to be. Everyone's distribution ratio of boy/girl is different. So seeking help from others to feel a sense of belonging isn't necessary. A good friend told me once, people should always be bold with their actions and be proud of who they are and just go be whatever it is they are.

Conclusion - Okay So What Now?

So I can just see everyone's frustration now. You've read 10 pages to get enlightenment in order to figure things out, just be told that it doesn't matter. Probably could have said that in the first paragraph and saved everyone a lot of time. However, I think there is some context and some real life examples that help make that point more easily accepted.

When people come to me and are asking to figure out why. My question is instead of asking why – why not ask “why not?”. Then when you can't think of any reason why not then you can just go get your girl on.

So basically that's the best way to find yourself is to explore the different aspects of your femininity. But by exploration I want you to consider the following 5 aspects of your femininity.

1. You don't have to transition to express your femininity
2. You don't have to do things out of desperation or do things unsafely
3. It's okay to cross-dress just because you like it. You don't have to be on a “journey”.
4. Enjoy today – don't worry about “where it's going” – just figure out what it is today for you and do that.
5. Give yourself permission to have fun and not worry about the fears.