

Passing Glances

A primer on passing and successful transition for the early-stage transwoman

By [Melinda Green](#) - © 2009

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Introduction

Key to my transition from man to woman has been collecting and using the many pearls of wisdom I've learned from the transgender community and some I've figured out the hard way. This book is my attempt to capture as much of that information as I can in the hope that it makes this seemingly monumental task easier and more fun for other transwomen. It may also be of use to cross-dressers with whom we have some commonality.

It is not the story of my transition, nor is it a story at all. Think of it as more of a how-to book. I could almost call it "Sex Change for Dummies" if it were not for the fact that transpeople tend to be the smartest people I know. My mother once wrote a book titled "First Time Out" which was a guide for children living away from home for the first time. I've been tempted to follow on that theme by calling this book "Second Time Out" since it very much is a guide for fledgling t-girls taking their first steps into entirely new lives.

Unlike other sex change guides, the focus of this book is on the subject of passing. This particular subject is often glossed over or even looked down upon for political reasons but there is no question that it is an extremely important issue for many transpeople, especially those just starting out or considering it. If you are one of those people, then you should know that it is perfectly OK to want whatever you want, and if a big part of what you want is to pass, then you deserve to know what it takes and how to get there. I have seen so many amazing transitions by now that I no longer assume that any particular person will never pass. I've seen football players over six feet tall transition into towering beauties who could impress supermodels. No matter how impossible you may feel that your situation is, I assure you that if you put in the effort, your goal is probably much more reachable than you imagine.

You may be wondering if this is about genital surgery. The answer is no. That's not because that's not an important subject for us but rather because it tends to not be nearly as important as the social aspects of sex change and has almost nothing to do with passing socially as a woman. You may be surprised to learn that most transsexuals never have genital surgery. While it is true that many more of us would do that if we could afford it, it is also true that many or most of us either do not want that particular surgery or feel ambivalent about it. What is between our legs is between us and our lovers. This book is about everything else which is between us and the rest of the world.

I encourage you to skip around in the book. Go directly to the topics which most interest you now. You can also read sections at random or just skim the outline to know what's in here and then come back to read particular topics when you confront them in your life. Most of all I simply hope you find the book useful.

So What Are You?

There are so many different kinds of sub-groups under the transgender blanket that perhaps nobody is familiar with them all. Still, some types can be collected into taxonomies that fit the mental categories in many of our minds. I believe it is impossible to ever create even the simplest high-level taxonomies that most people will agree with, but that is not a good reason to not try. There is a substantial group of people in the

transgendered community that believe it's a bad idea to even try to categorize ourselves at all as they believe this can lead to the same sorts of gender oppression we are trying to break out of.

I believe it is impossible not to attempt to mentally categorize any rich collection with many shared attributes and still be able to have meaningful conversations about them. In fact I believe that the act of categorizing is central to the way that all minds function. It's prudent to create stereotypes and prejudices but at the same time it's just as important to be ready to rethink them as we encounter conflicting information.

My first question upon discovering my gender status was "What am I?" I wanted to know how other people would likely label me because I knew I would find the most helpful information for me within those groups. For example, since I'm currently more attracted to women than men, it made sense for me to explore the lesbian communities. There I discovered I didn't have much additional commonality with lesbians but it made very good sense for me to look. On the other hand, I found that because I had a strong interest in taking female hormones, I was more likely a transsexual than a cross-dresser.

It's generally impossible to distinguish between cross-dressers and transsexuals by looking at them. The real difference appears to me to be that cross-dressers tend to feel like men inside but also feel they need to dress in woman's clothes part of the time. Some may dress only on certain days of the week whereas others may dress in various months. The one thing they all seem to have in common is the impossibility of never dressing en femme.

Transsexuals, on the other hand, seem to feel like women inside and feel they need to make their bodies conform to their gender. The one thing transsexuals seem to have in common is the ever-growing need to be dressed in public and to increasingly modify their bodies to match their minds.

Some people believe that cross-dressers are really just transsexuals who are trying to find an easier compromise path. A common riddle in the TG community is "What is the difference between a cross-dresser and a transsexual?" Answer: "Two years." While I'm sure that happens sometimes I'm also convinced that many cross-dressers really are men with a particular behavioral need. I still love them dearly too but I feel very different from how they do.

And then of course there are the drag queens who seem to identify as gay men but who need or simply enjoy pushing and parodying the feminine image. A general term which includes all these populations is "trannies". Some people find that term slightly derogatory. I don't mind it myself but safer might be "t-girls" or "transwomen".

Now if that isn't confusing enough there's always the issue of gender attraction in addition to gender identity. It's tempting to claim that these are two completely unconnected things but unfortunately they're not. While most t-girls begin by being attracted almost exclusively to women, a good deal of them find that over time they begin to find themselves attracted to men as well or even exclusively. People have claimed that transwomen are really just men who want to have sex with men but can't admit to being gay. While there may be some for which this is true, it's hard to imagine why anyone would think it's easier to be trans than to be gay. Other people have suggested that for some transsexuals their orientation is simply heterosexual and that when they change their sex, they are naturally still attracted to the opposite sex, which has now changed. I suspect that for some of use this is true as well. I tend to feel that one's gender is a deeper part of their identity than their sexual orientation, but who knows; some people identify more strongly with a particular sexual orientation than a sexual identity.

The labels are clearly confusing and ever changing but I find them to be useful and if you do too I encourage you to discover just which sub-communities you feel the most affinity for and the most comfortable in. And then of course seek them out, hang with them, and see what you can learn.

The most common types of local transgender (TG) organizations are social, health, legal, employment, and activist. All of them can be important for you but I suggest that you first seek out the TG social/support groups because they will be able to guide you through all the rest. While first impressions of these groups can be a little shocking and even depressing, I encourage you to give them a chance because once you scratch below the surface; you'll find some of the wisest and most open people you can ever meet. I wish that I had had the courage to do that much earlier.

Tranny Time

Different people move at different speeds but a surprising number of us seem to complete our transitions in roughly four years. This is so common that you can even make some reasonable life plans based on this expectation. What does it mean to have completed transition? It means that for the most part you are living, working, and generally being treated as a woman. It means the breakneck pace of change has calmed down and that you are getting on with your life.

If you are fortunate enough to live in a large city, it is most likely that your transitional years will include lots of time spent with other transsexuals, learning from them and supporting each other. You will make friends with some of the strongest yet open people you will ever meet. Still, it is also natural to eventually transition out of the TG fold and into the greater society.

In many ways, sexual transition is very much like a 4-year university program. In addition to sucking up huge amounts of information, it tends to be a socially intense time spent interacting and flirting with other students. There tend to be a few "graduate student" and "professor" types who teach and provide continuity; and students tend to graduate out into the greater community after roughly the same amount of time. Like with a university stint, you will probably make a lot of friends in the TG community but will only hang onto a couple of them in the long term. This is not a bad thing but rather a natural consequence of rapid personal change. As you change, it is natural that the people you surround yourself with also change.

The important thing is to take it at your own pace. Do not go faster or further than you are comfortable with. The agenda should be your own. At the same time beware of getting stuck. I've seen a number of t-girls who get off to a great start and then seem to get stall in a very uncomfortable half-way point. Maybe it's such a relief after making such great progress from such a great effort that it's nice to rest after finally getting generally accepted in their new gender. If you find yourself in an uncomfortable middle ground I highly recommend putting in the continuing effort in order to get all the way through to a truly comfortable place where you can pick up the life that should have had all along.

Rely on the kindness of strangers

This brings us squarely into what I believe is the true secret to happiness for everyone: Hang out with the sort of people you most want to be like, and avoid spending time with people you don't. I believe that if you follow this one simple rule, you cannot fail to become happier. Conversely, if you're hanging out with the wrong people, then no amount of therapy will fix you while you're still hanging out with them. We are social creatures and there's simply no way around that. The good news is that you can make this fact work for you

and with relatively little effort.

The magic behind this trick is called socialization. Although it's often considered a dirty word because it provides the power behind peer pressure, socialization has a very powerful, often overlooked positive side—especially for transsexuals. Socialization is the unconscious nudging that we give each other in an attempt to create a harmonious society. Every time we honk our car horns or shoot disapproving looks at other people we are really encouraging them to conform; and as much as we don't like to admit it, we all care deeply about such messages sent to us and we adjust our behaviors accordingly.

Here is how this affects transsexuals: When people perceive us as more male than female, they will attempt to guide us back into a purely male role but once they perceive us as more female than male, they will begin to push us into exactly the role we always wanted! The really magic part is that you don't even need to be passing before socialization begins to work in your favor. It generally doesn't matter what sex the other person believes you to be, you only need a presentation that is a little bit more feminine than masculine, and the world will begin to conspire to push you the rest of the way. Now you may often find yourself resenting this sort of manipulation, especially when it is attempting to make you subservient to men or to the more powerful or attractive women. I suggest that you do not fight this pressure—at least not initially. Just let it take you where it intends at least until you have had a good long time to experience the benefits that such acquiescence brings. In other words, I suggest that you work on becoming passable first and worry about the political implications later.

The hardest part is of course at the beginning when most of your efforts to transgress the gender boundaries are likely to meet with the strongest reactions to push you in the opposite direction. This book is intended to help you climb to that halfway point as quickly as possible and to help with the finishing touches you will need as you slide into your proper female role on the other side. Know too that even at the beginning it is not all bad. You will also meet lots of nice people who will notice your vulnerability and be very supportive to the extent that you are receptive. Be receptive.

Observe Genetic Girls

The most important skill you can develop to help with your transition is the ability to objectively observe the genetic girls (GGs). Don't hate them because they're beautiful; Learn from them! Notice how they move, how they speak, how they dress, how they interact with others; and then practice what you learn. That last part is particularly important. It's helpful to fill your head with information, but without practice it won't get you much closer to your goals. It's like the difference between studying a foreign culture compared to living in it. In fact female culture really is a foreign culture, so immerse yourself!

It's surprising just how differently women move and talk. For instance did you know that women use a very different vocabulary than men? Discover the differences and begin to adopt them.

Fun

The most important thing is to remember to have fun. It may seem like there is an overwhelming amount of work involved in becoming passable and making a successful transition. While that is definitely true, there is no reason why nearly all of it can't also be a hell of a lot of fun. Watching your body become more feminine, learning which clothes and makeup make you look sexy or natural or cute; developing a feminine voice and

learning to flirt shamelessly. All the simple pleasures that should have been your birthright begin to come within your reach. What could be more fun than that?

There will definitely be some tough times. Sometimes you might feel overwhelmed with the gravity of what you are doing or feel guilty for causing big changes in the lives of people that you love. You may doubt that you are really TS, throw away all your girl things, and try not to think about it. If you really are TS then you won't be able to do that forever. The need to transition only seems to get stronger with time. Just know that you don't need to do this according to anybody else's plan. You get to decide what you want to do and how to go about it. You deserve a complete life. When this brings you in conflict with others, look for compromise. If that seems impossible given promises you've made in the past, then you get to renegotiate those agreements. Just don't secretly break your promises. Enjoy yourself as a part-time girl if you like. If that turns out to not be enough in the future, you will deal with that then.

Just don't forget to enjoy yourself. This is the whole point after all. And of course be careful!

Chapter 1: Your Body

In this section I'll tell you about all the little tips I've learned about altering my physical presentation. Most of it is basic stuff that all girls learn but much of it is specifically important to transsexuals. For example one of the most important things to know at the beginning is that beard removal can take 3 or 4 years and should therefore be started immediately. See the electrolysis section under "Hair" for more on this important subject.

Hormones

Hormones provide an important piece of the transition puzzle but it's important to understand their function, risks and limitations as well as what transsexuals can hope to get from them.

Please note that I am not a doctor and while I will give you some medical information, I cannot give you medical advice. I strongly urge you to work with the most knowledgeable and respectful doctor you can find to help you find your way safely through this complex subject. Please read carefully the material on risks and risk reduction at the end of this section.

What to expect

Blocking your testosterone should reduce your muscle mass and body hair. Adding estrogen should enlarge your breasts, soften your skin, and give your face that feminine glow. These physical changes are generally permanent. Neither one will affect your facial hair which you will need to remove with laser and/or electrolysis treatments, nor will they raise your voice. If you are losing your hair on your head, blocking your testosterone should halt or at least greatly slow that process but you shouldn't expect lost hair to grow back. A little might come back naturally, and Rogaine and other drugs may help put back a little more.

Blocking your testosterone should also lower your sex drive. You can add estrogen without blocking testosterone if you like but estrogen in large enough amounts will also act as a testosterone blocker and vice

versa.

Testosterone blockers alone are fine for a year or so if you want to see what life is like without the influence of either hormone, but be aware that eventually the small amount of natural estrogen in your blood suddenly unimpeded can eventually cause substantial breast growth.

In the long term, your body needs at least one sex hormone in order to maintain good bone density unless you also take other drugs specifically for this purpose. Some people opt to have their testes removed before or instead of getting full sex reassignment surgery (SRS) in order to avoid having to take blockers. This is a reasonable choice but it means that you will need to take one of these other drugs for the rest of your life.

What not to expect

Hormones alone are not going to make you passable. They won't change your voice and will not make as big a difference in your appearance as your hair, dress, makeup and behavior, but they will soften and help unify your appearance. It may be best to think of them as a way to put the finishing touches on the rest of the work you are undertaking.

So what exactly are hormones anyway?

Hormones are simple signaling or regulatory molecules. They are not very chemically active and don't do much directly, however their power is in processes that they trigger. The level of a hormone in the blood is a signal to certain glands and tissues to do something or to stop doing something. They are not like other drugs that work in proportion to the amount that you take. They are more like switches: Take enough and the switch is thrown. Note that only the main effects are like switches. The side-effects are proportional. It is tempting to take more than you need in order to make up for lost time but that doesn't work and can definitely kill you, and that would be bad.

There are many types of hormones. For example melatonin is secreted when it's time for you to sleep. Melatonin is the only hormone available without a prescription and that is rather surprising because hormones are so powerful, and the long term effects of their use are mostly unknown. Taking any hormone is a serious business.

Of course the hormones we're interested in here are the sex hormones. Most people know that there are both male and female sex hormones. What is less well known is that all people produce both versions, just in differing degrees and ratios. The average woman makes roughly 10% of the testosterone of the average man and the average man makes about 10% of the female hormones of the average woman. There is a large variability from person to person. It is not unusual for someone to produce half or twice the normal amount of one or both sex hormones.

Testosterone

Testosterone builds stronger muscles and creates secondary sexual characteristics such as facial hair and a lower voice. It also has a strong effect on the sexual drive in both sexes.

From my experience it appears that testosterone is the most powerful of the sex hormones. In other words, the

addition or reduction of one's testosterone levels tends to cause more obvious changes compared to changing the levels of the female sex hormones.

Taking testosterone blocking drugs reduced my sex drive to the point that I could actually think about other things and they drastically reduced my thick, dark body hair.

I recommend taking testosterone blockers for as much as a year before adding female hormones so that you can sort out the differences in their effects.

Estrogens

There are at least 4 distinct female hormones: progesterone and three types of estrogen. Progesterone mainly regulates the menstrual cycle. It is unclear what if any benefit they offer to transsexual women. You can probably approximate many of the psychological effects of a normal menstrual cycle but do you really want to do that? Sure it brings you closer to a normal woman's experience but most women would gladly skip this "curse" if they could, all other things being equal. In this way you're luckier than normal women.

The major visible effect of female hormones is of course the redistribution of body fat. Over the course of 6 – 12 months fat will generally move from around your middle into your hips, legs, and breasts. It will take several years for the changes to mostly complete.

If you are overweight when you start and if you don't diet or increase your exercise, you will still have a large belly; you'll just look more like an overweight woman than an overweight man.

Unless you are very thin, you will still likely end up with a bit of a pot belly. That's normal for normal women, and it's also normal for them to not like that fact.

I highly recommend that you not try to rush the process. Many doctors seem to like to do this especially as their patients often feel that they're in a hurry. Remember that the normal woman begins puberty with slowly raising hormone levels, and it takes 5 to 10 years to complete her development.

Risks

Hormones are powerful drugs with many risks and side effects. For all drugs, not just hormones, my first motto is "Know Your Meds". You really can learn enough about various drugs to have very intelligent discussions with your medical professionals. Find and use a good doctor but never blindly take a doctor's recommendation. Do your own research and make sure that each choice you make also makes sense to you. Learn about dosages, possible side effects, interactions with other drugs, vitamins, herbs, etc. Talk about your findings and your thoughts with your doctor and make a plan that both of you are comfortable with. Remember that one of the best ways to find good doctors--and indeed any TG-related information--is to ask around within the nearest TG communities.

The main risk from female hormones seems to come from a greatly increased risk of blood clots from the legs. You are not likely to notice these unless they block an artery and cause pain or leg cramps. If this happens, have it checked out immediately because the danger is that blood clots can break off and drift around in your bloodstream and block any small artery. A blocked artery in the brain is a stroke whereas in

the heart it is a heart attack, and in the lungs it is an embolism. All of these are highly fatal.

Most transsexuals, especially in the beginning of transition, feel that the ability to pass is worth sacrificing just about everything else, including their health. While that is perfectly understandable it would be completely tragic to live half a normal lifespan in the wrong body, only to die prematurely in pursuit of the right one. For many of us it may sound acceptable to live only a few years longer if we can live them as we've always dreamed, but with care and a little luck we may be able to do much better.

Very little is known about the effects of hormones on transsexuals and because of the nearly complete lack of clinical data, even the best doctors are forced to rely on anecdotal evidence. It is therefore very possible that you will soon know a great deal more about this subject than your doctors. Take advantage of their broader knowledge of medicine and work with them as equals in order to come up with the best hormone plan for you. Note that some doctors will feel intimidated by a patient who knows more about a subject than they do or who insists on being treated as an equal. Avoid these doctors and seek out the ones mature enough to admit the limits of their knowledge.

Risk Reduction

My second motto is always aim for the "Minimum Effective Dose". The general motto in America seems to be "If a little bit is good, more is better", and this approach can lead to all sorts of problems especially regarding dangerous drugs such as hormones.

There is some evidence that estrogen is significantly safer when administered via transdermal patches. This may be because far less of the drug is needed to get the desired result. When taken in pill form for example, only about 1/10th of the drug ends up in your blood. The rest of it gets broken down into various other forms that your body is forced to deal with. When delivered via the patch, about half of the drug gets into your blood.

It's also easier to keep a constant estrogen level with the patch by avoiding the steep spikes you get right after taking a pill or getting an injection. If you end up using more than one patch at a time, for example two 1-week patches, you can smooth out your blood levels by not changing them both at the same time. Change one at the beginning of the week and the other at mid-week. If you do this, do be careful to change the right one at the right time as making a mistake can lead to some very unpleasant large mood swings.

Emotional Effects

People's experiences with the emotional effects of hormones vary greatly. Some people report very profound effects from the drugs and other people experience very little. From my perspective, people seem to feel what they expect to feel. I wanted to be cautious and so I began taking testosterone blockers long before I added estrogen, and in my experience, it was the blockers that caused the largest emotional changes, mostly due to a sudden decrease in my sex drive which I found very liberating. Adding estrogen was almost anticlimactic for me. I do think that estrogen has had important emotional effects on me but they have been very subtle. This becomes obvious whenever I miss a dose by a day or more which causes me to become oversensitive and easily angered or depressed. The world can look very bleak until my estrogen levels are balanced again.

It is important to know that hormone treatments come packaged with various mixes of the different individual hormones and that some mixtures may work much better for you than others. Remember, always know your

meds!

I've heard it said that if you are not really transsexual, you will know immediately that hormones are not right for you as soon as you try them. I don't know if this is generally true but it does make some sense and may be true much of the time. It is therefore something that is probably worth watching out for if and when you decide to start on hormones.

Beauty

The day I consciously began my transition was also the day I began to diet. Being more attractive is not going to make one more passable. Quite the reverse really; it draws extra attention which decreases your chances of passing. So why did I begin to diet when I started transition? Because beauty is the currency of femininity just like power is for masculinity and I think that we all understand this on some level. Because it is likely that beauty will suddenly become a much more important part of your life, this entire section is devoted to helping you maximize it.

When I used to fantasize about becoming a girl I would sometimes think about what I would be willing to give up for it. I knew I would be willing to give up my friends and family and money for a chance to live part of my life as a girl. I was even ready to risk my health and perhaps even live in a wheelchair if that were somehow the tradeoff. But the one condition I balked at was the prospect of being an extremely fat or ugly woman. I knew even then that femininity and beauty were inextricably linked. In fact, as I would walk down the street I felt that I could see the same sort of pain in the eyes of obese women that I felt about my body; a special pain that I have yet to see anywhere else.

My wish then became a desire to be passable as a woman and to not be completely unattractive. On a scale of 1 to 10, I would have been satisfied to achieve a 4. As I got further into my transition I realized that being attractive was at least as important to me as passing. By then I was already being treated as a woman even though nearly everyone read me, and I learned that this was the thing that I had really wanted most of all. I still desperately wanted to pass all of the time but I found that it had become even more important for me to feel attractive than passable.

Luckily there are lots of great sources of beauty tips in general and I encourage you to explore them. I'll include here a number of tips that I've found useful along with some information that relates to transsexuals in particular.

Femininity versus Beauty

Maximizing your femininity will not maximize your beauty. Example: Renée Zellweger vs. Elizabeth Hurley. Renée Zellweger is about as feminine a woman as you will find but she's not incredibly pretty whereas Elizabeth Hurley is clearly hot. What's going on here? The key to raw beauty is the inclusion of a few masculine features: height, strong jaw, husky voice, etc. For example, I had some facial feminization surgery which included getting a chin implant to make my chin jut out slightly. This worked against my goal of a very feminine face but I believe it made a big difference in my attractiveness as a woman. I've known several transwomen taller than six feet who ended up being exquisitely beautiful women with their height being one of their hottest assets. The point is that you don't want to overreact in your attempt to look feminine by doing extreme cosmetic surgery, at least before you really know how to use what you already have.

Dieting

All diets will likely work in the short run but the trick is to find one that you can stay with for the long term.

The diet that worked for me was basically the Slimfast model based on protein shakes. There are lots of products besides Slimfast that all work by combining sugars and protein in a roughly 200 calorie drink. The sugar hits your blood quickly and turns off your immediate appetite while the protein does the same basic thing but kicks in much later and lasts much longer. It's really quite amazing that a single 200 calorie drink can kill your appetite for four hours or more. There have been times when I was really hungry and one shake would kill my hunger within 5 minutes. Sometimes I would hesitate because it seemed that it would be much more satisfying to have a big meal but five minutes later I would find myself very happily full. The one thing you don't want to do is to eat anything else during the time it takes for the sugar to kick in!

You can easily replace one of three meals a day with a shake and lose weight. If you want to jumpstart this diet, you can replace two meals a day for the first week or two and then drop to one. Eventually you will hopefully be able to replace the shakes with a healthy low-calorie food and only reintroduce the shakes when your weight occasionally wanders higher than you like.

Another thing to be careful about is to choose a shake that is cheap and nutritious. The canned drinks are expensive but powdered drinks that you mix with milk or water are easily found for much less. The powdered versions generally don't taste as good unless you prepare them well. The key I've found is to mix them in a blender and to run the blender for several minutes. This tends to froth them somewhat and to eliminate their often chalky taste.

Another advantage of powdered over canned is that you can more easily fine-tune your portions by adding more or less powder or by mixing with milk or water or some combination of both. You can also throw in a banana or frozen fruit to make it a real treat.

As to nutrition, you need to be careful not to buy body-building formulas and to only buy a protein shake explicitly labeled as a "Meal Replacement" as these will contain the vitamins and minerals that would otherwise be missing. The main difference between brands is that some are milk based while others are based on soy. Both are fine. Different brands contain different mixes of sugars but nutritionally they are all the same and should be equally effective as diet aids.

Anorexia

You may think that you are so far from being thin that anorexia couldn't possibly become a problem for you but I have to warn you that may not be the case. One reason is because a hallmark of the disease is that the sufferers appear fat to themselves even as they are dying of starvation. Perhaps a more important reason is because transsexuals often develop incredible drives to change themselves out of fear and desperation. If you are just beginning transition, I suggest that you pick your dream weight carefully. Also choose a minimum weight and promise yourself never to dip below that. You may just find yourself near that weight someday. Find out the weights of some women your height who you feel are perfectly proportioned and choose your goals appropriately.

Be careful not to adjust your weight goal downward. It is exciting to watch your weight begin to drop off and it is then tempting to keep sliding your goal such that you tend never to meet it. That can easily happen if

your target weight is the same as your minimum weight. Don't do that.

Try not to focus on particular body parts such as your belly. Even the most beautiful fashion models have little rounded bellies that they hate very much and try hard to hide. To be truly beautiful you want to be properly proportioned rather than simply skinny. If you did manage to diet your way to a completely flat stomach, your breasts and hips may become so small as to make you begin to look boyish. Develop the ability to look at your body and others as a whole in order to be able to notice which elements are contributing to what you wish to project or detracting from it.

Body obsession is a normal part of being a woman but we are particularly susceptible to this problem because we didn't grow up with all the support that normal girls get. Making friends with other t-girls, learning together and giving each other feedback is incredibly helpful. Maybe nobody is going to raise us but we can raise ourselves and help each other.

Diet and Breast Development

If you get too thin your body will shut down "non essential" processes such as breast development, so if the health warnings above don't convince you, remember that your beauty and femininity will also suffer if you allow yourself to get too thin.

Hormones and Weight

Blocking your testosterone will allow you to drop much of your male muscle tone and lose weight as a result; however taking high doses of female hormones can cause you to put on a lot of weight, especially in your legs and thighs. High doses of hormones are very dangerous and not terribly helpful for feminization so if you were considering doing that anyway, this is another reason that might convince you not to.

Feminization Surgery

Inside-out t-girls

T-girls seem to come in two varieties I call inside-out and outside-in. the inside-out t-girls want genital surgery as soon as possible in the hope that being as close to biologically female as possible will make them feel like a real woman. They figure they will work on their presentations later. Outside-in t-girls want to change their outer presentation first because they hope that this will cause people to treat them as a woman, and that will make them feel like one.

This goes to the heart of what it means to be a woman and the difference between sex and gender. My belief is that what we really care about are our social roles.

I highly suggest that you start with the more visible surgeries, and save SRS for last. This is not because there's a chance you might change your mind—you probably won't—but because it is much likelier to make you happy. I've heard of t-girls who rushed into SRS only to be emotionally crushed when people didn't magically start seeing them as women, and now they have the much more difficult job ahead of building a feminine presentation. They probably didn't consciously expect magic. They may have thought that they were only trying to change the way that they felt about their own bodies but there are a couple problems with

this idea. The first is that while SRS will make a visible difference it's still unlikely to make the person see a woman in the mirror. The other problem is that it's definitely not going to make any visible difference to anyone else except for the very few that see them naked.

I will not go into the details of SRS here as that has very little to do with the subject of passing, even in bikinis or locker rooms (see sections below). If and when you decide you are ready for this step, be sure to pick up all the wisdom you can get from the wonderful people in the trans community.

When deciding the order in which to have various surgeries, please consider facial feminization first, breast implants second, and save SRS for last. Even if you are quite sure that you will want SRS, you may discover that once you are being treated as a woman and living in your new role that you begin to feel differently. I don't want to talk you out of getting SRS but if you simply leave it for last I expect that you will have much more realistic expectations of what it will do for you and that you will be much happier as a result.

Facial feminization surgery

Nothing makes such an important difference in some t-girl's appearance as facial feminization surgery, or FFS. Well, ok beard removal may make a bigger difference, but nothing will give you as large of a quick boost as FFS. Chances are that you feel that your face might need more extensive changes than it really does. You want to be very careful here and not go overboard. If your only criterion is whether this or that procedure will make you appear more feminine, you can easily get into trouble. The reason is that not every procedure that makes your more feminine will make you more attractive or even more passable. If you end up with an overly feminine face compared with the rest of your body you may end up drawing attention to the contrast. It may be helpful to evaluate the point on the spectrum from cute to hot that is most attainable for your particular face and then aim for that point.

It may surprise you to learn that researchers are discovering that there appears to be a single standard for basic facial beauty for both men and women that is common to all cultures of the world. Symmetry is very important, as are high cheekbones and with a flatish profile that puts the tip of the chin in line with the eyes and the base of the nose. These beauty standards are really just involving the "hot" end of the cute-hot spectrum described above. You can be perfectly beautiful even if you're not classically beautiful. The important thing is to accurately assess your particular beauty strengths and weaknesses and work to emphasize and deemphasize them to move towards the most naturally beautiful place for you.

There are also serious health risks involved with the more invasive procedures especially involving bone work, not to mention increased pain and expense, so just because a particular attractive goal might be technically attainable, that doesn't mean that it's the best goal for you.

In general, those procedures involving bone work will take the longest to heal, possibly months compared to weeks for purely soft tissue work. The amount of pain you experience during recovery is often related to the sizes of the incisions since that's where most of the nerves are.

In addition to nose jobs, common FFS procedures include

- Eyebrow lift to widen your eyes
- Brow reduction/contouring for extremely sunken eyes
- Eyelid tucks for a youthful, healthy appearance

- Cheek implants for a more striking look
- Lip lift to show more teeth and lip vermillion
- Collagen injections to fill in wrinkles
- Chin implant/advancement for recessed chins

Skin treatments such as laser, botox, and chemical peels can also give nice results. For transwomen over 60, a standard face lift can be a big help.

There is a strong temptation to do as much as possible in a single session to reduce both the cost and pain. In part this is a practical thing to consider but transwomen are especially likely to opt for too much work out of a sense of urgency and desperation. Try to strike a middle ground. Do the easiest and most important things first and consider another round later.

You may be surprised what a big improvement can be had from a very little change to your face. Some t-girls get excellent results from just a simple nose job. On the other hand, procedures such as forehead recontouring are major surgery which cuts into delicate sinus tissues and exposes you to brain infections. And all that for sometimes unnatural looking results. Choose carefully and enjoy. This is great stuff if you find a good surgeon that you can afford.

Breast implants

Breast implants are great for achieving a very feminine form. They're relatively cheap and simple and recovery times can be short. Of course they are not required to become passable since you can easily get good results from breast forms. Their main advantages are that they are simple and give great results and are a hell of a lot of fun.

Tracheal shave

The tracheal shave is a simple procedure to reduce the size of your Adam's apple. It is very useful for transwomen with large Adam's apples. It is extremely safe though I have heard that if it is done too aggressively that it can cause your voice to drop. As long as your surgeon is experienced and will approach it conservatively, I highly recommend a tracheal shave.

Liposuction

Some recent studies have shown that a large hip-to-waist ratio is the biggest visual feminine attractiveness key. (For men it's height as well as shoulder-to-waist ratio.) Transsexual women tend to have very small hip-to-waist ratios so even a small improvement there probably helps a lot. Certainly we are often attracted to corsets, waist cinchers and the like, and our admirers love these things too. If, like most of us, you have a small potbelly, you may want to consider liposuction for your tummy. You can't make large changes this way, and the procedure is only recommended for people who are already relatively thin but can't seem to remove that last bit of tummy fat. Even then you should not expect a big change and all the fat may just come back on its own. Still, if you are a good candidate, it's a relatively cheap and low-risk procedure, so why not?

Choosing a Surgeon

Once you know what you want, this is obviously the most important choice you need to make. Take your time and choose well.

Critically examine the results of others. Aspects of their results that you don't like are likely to be things that you also won't like about your own results. Ask what they like and don't like about their results and get their recommendations. Be careful here however as people will tend to recommend whatever they have done. This is natural, as we all want to believe that we've made the right choices. It is therefore especially valuable to listen when people recommend against a procedure they had.

Many TG information web sites will talk about popular surgeons. This is helpful though that information is often very incomplete and out of date. It is much more important to ask around within the TG community but the web sites can introduce you to a couple of possible surgeons to explore.

Here is a sneaky trick. Facial surgeons all seem to have the same software system that lets them import digital snapshots of you and then modify them so that you can get a rough idea of the results to expect. I've noticed some surgeons never seem to quite learn how to deftly use these tools. This to me is a very bad sign. Choose a surgeon who seems to be in control of his craft.

Ask to talk with one or two of his happy TG customers. If he won't offer one then perhaps he simply has no happy TG customers. Don't accept the "privacy" excuse. If you were a happy customer, wouldn't you gladly tell that to one of your fellow sisters?

Look through each surgeon's book of before-and-after photos and discuss what you see. If they do not have such a book, do not use them. If you do not see any results that you like then you probably won't like the results you would get from that surgeon either. Ask which photos are of transsexuals. Look for those whose bodies that appear similar to yours. Insist on understanding the procedures and options. It's tempting to simply trust the confident man in the lab coat to make all the decisions but your chances of being happy with your results are much higher if you are an active participant in the planning. Trust your ability to understand the options as well as your gut feelings.

It is natural for westerners to assume that the surgical and medical care quality is better at home than elsewhere. Certainly it is more comforting to work with and be cared for by people in our own cultures. It is often surprising to westerners when they learn that the quality is often better in the east and especially in Thailand these days. There are several popular and excellent Thai surgeons. Thailand now has a thriving cosmetic surgery industry catering to travelers. The process from arrival at the airport, hospital and recovery stay, all the way to the return flight has become very streamlined and comfortable. All of these costs together are often less than just the surgery costs in the west and the results are often better. It's always a good idea to keep an open mind and to shop around.

Even if you have lots of money, it's a bad idea to take a "money is no object" stance. Money always matters. In this case it matters less than many other aspects, but it's still important to weigh against all your other considerations.

Every medical field has what I call "Star Doctors". Once a doctor begins to get such a reputation, their egos and their prices tend to grow in proportion, regardless of their actual skill.

Almost nobody can afford to pay top dollar for every surgery they might want. If you don't spend all your

money on facial surgery, for example, then you may have enough left over for electrolysis, breast implants or other surgeries.

Also, doctors with the most experience have been practicing longer and typically performing the same procedures whereas the younger, less experienced doctors often have been learning the very latest techniques. So while more money can generally buy you better service in most things, the connection between cost and quality of cosmetic surgery is tenuous.

Many—if not most—doctors have terrible people skills. They tend to know a few phrases that sell well but don't try very hard to listen well. It's easy to discount these lacks if we feel that they are capable of doing an excellent job physically, but this is not good enough. If you and your surgeon are not communicating well then the likelihood of you getting results you will be happy with goes way down. This is so important that I recommend going to a somewhat less skilled or experienced surgeon if that's what it takes to find one you communicate well with. Make sure that you get all your questions answered, no matter how trivial. A large part of your surgical costs go into the time spent on these sorts of discussions. If your surgeon is curt with you before you've paid them, just imagine how they'll be afterwards!

Less is more

There is always a strong temptation to do as much as possible and be as extreme as possible. While it's important to do enough, it's more important to achieve as natural a look as possible. You are more likely to see your physical problems as far worse than they really are. Try to err on the conservative side.

There's also usually a temptation to simply let the surgeon "do his thing" without you attempting to fully understand the procedures. It's extremely important that you understand and select the particular procedures, risks and approaches that are best for you. Your idea of beauty can be very different from your surgeon's. They can teach you a lot about what makes for beautiful and feminine forms but you must make the final choices. Research well and act conservatively.

Clothes

Age appropriate

Your choice of dress makes a statement about who you are. It is impossible to not make a statement. Even going naked won't get you out of this game because that is a very strong statement in itself! So given that you have to make a statement, what do you want it say? Here is an excellent opportunity as there are an unlimited number of possible statements. As always, observe natural women of similar age for ideas. Deconstruct their styles, try to emulate some of the elements, and even ask them where they found stuff or how they do various things. Unlike men who can't even ask for directions, women share this sort of information constantly. Just gather your courage, and in the best feminine voice you can muster, compliment the thing you like, and respectfully ask your question. You can even ask whether you can ask, as in "Excuse me; I love your <item>. Could I ask where you found it?" Who could fail to react positively to such a nice question?

Hide in Plain Sight

Here is some good news: Your shoulders are not as broad as you probably think they are. Wax or shave them

and then wear tanks and other sleeveless tops. This makes your visual lines taller rather than broader and also doesn't make people wonder what you're hiding. Conversely the worst thing you can probably wear is a tight sweater. They will make you look like a giant who can't find large enough clothes and will make your exact shape completely visible. If you feel like hiding, sweaters are great but choose really big ones that almost make you seem lost inside.

Make only inexpensive mistakes

It takes a good bit of experience before you learn to guess which clothes will probably look good on your particular body. Although transsexuals tend to have some of the same problems (and advantages) in dressing, women's bodies and clothes come in so many styles that it takes everyone a long time figure out what works best for them. There are also lots of different clothing styles, and any single person's body is probably well suited for only a few of them. You need to learn which ones suit you well. Hopefully you will like one or two of those. Remember: very few women can look good wearing the super-sexy stuff you see the runway models wearing. Don't be afraid to have some fun with your attire but it's a very good idea to get as realistic as possible here.

One really helpful resource for early stage t-girls are all the discount clothing stores where you can often find very useful items for next to nothing. You can often buy 10 or 20 items for the same amount of money it would take to buy one at a boutique. The quality will be generally low but that doesn't matter very much as it is unlikely that you will wear an item from either source in a year or two. Only after you have gained a lot of confidence that a particular item is really going to work for you should you consider paying full price. Until then just try a lot of inexpensive things, keep the stuff that works and give the rest away.

Expect body changes

Another reason not to initially invest too much in an expensive wardrobe is because you can expect your body to change quite a bit due to diet, hormones, surgery and such. Your weight could go up or down though you can probably expect to lose muscle tone and therefore some weight even if your proportion of body fat goes up a bit especially if you go on high doses of estrogen—which I don't recommend. Surprisingly I discovered that I even lost close to one entire shoe size in the process! I doubt that my foot bones shrank but perhaps the loss of muscle tone in my feet was enough to get me into smaller shoes.

Shoes

Ah, yes, shoes! As a boy I never understood the attraction. I would dutifully accompany girlfriends into shoe stores and try to seem interested as they tried on a dozen different pairs but I really didn't get it. Well I get it now! Nothing changes the overall impression of an outfit than the choice of shoes. Everyone responds to the effect they cause but generally only women with style will understand the huge impact shoes contribute to the result. This is because appearance is more important to them and causes them to learn to quickly deconstruct their looks and that of others.

Having trouble finding anything nice or anything at all in your size? This can definitely be a big problem for many t-girls. Most shoe manufacturers make shoes in sizes up to a US woman's 10, so if you can wear a 10 or smaller, you are very lucky. Many manufacturers will offer up to an 11, and a fraction of those will offer a 12. If you are in the upper end of this scale, you will have a lot of trouble but it will not be impossible to find

nice shoes in your size. Just pay a lot of attention to the brands that tend to have shoes that fit you and follow their lines closely. If you are one of the unfortunate t-girls who require something larger than a 12, you can still find shoes in your size but you may need to do most of your shopping from specialty stores on-line. Many but not all of these mail-order shops will specialize in fetish shoes but some really do carry tasteful models in all sizes. And if all else fails, you may be able to find web sites where you can order shoes custom made for you. It's sad but the good news is that you can definitely find women's shoes that fit you regardless of your size.

But what about comfort? Is it possible to find sexy shoes that are actually comfortable? Well, basically, no, it's not. Of course if a shoe is excruciating to wear at all, there will be no way you can wear them for hours. There are compromises you can make however. The Aerosole brand is particularly known for making generally comfortable shoes as attractive as they can within that restraint. They are also surprisingly cheap and can be found in relatively large sizes, making this brand heaven for transwomen. Still, if you want to look really good, you may need to simply accept that your shoes will be uncomfortable. Just remember how fabulous you look and you should feel somewhat better. You knew there would be sacrifices, so welcome to womanhood!

Bikinis

Can non post-op transsexuals actually get away with wearing bikinis? The surprising answer is yes. To start with, bikinis are not for every woman, TS or otherwise. You will need to be thin enough to pull it off. You will also need to have all your visible body hair closely shaved or otherwise under control, especially your bikini line. And finally, you will probably need to have been on hormones for at least a year so that it will be possible to hide your bulge.

The first trick is selecting the proper bikini. It will probably need to be a two-piece bikini as our torsos tend to be too tall for a one-piece. You can try a one-piece but give it up if you have to struggle into it. Be sure to select a size that is suitably snug in order to hold a secure tuck.

The next thing is to understand that you won't be able to completely hide your bulge but you can disguise it well enough. So just how does one do that? It takes a combination of tricks. The most important trick is to choose a bikini with an intricate and complicated pattern—the more irregular the better. This acts as camouflage so that the eye can't easily tell your actual shape from the way the shadows and patterns change. Choose bottoms with belts, tassels or other distracting elements. Some models come with tiny built-in skirts which are obviously helpful. Try on about a billion different pairs to learn what works and what doesn't. All you need is to find one good pair that works and you'll be happy.

Just as important as a camouflaging bikini is simply not letting people get a really good look at your crotch. Lying on your stomach and spending time in the water are helpful but my favorite trick is to simply spend most of my beach time wearing a skirt or with a sarong wrapped around my waist and tied at my hip. This actually looks much sexier for all women than just a plain bikini bottom. Don't be so shy about being seen without bottom covering that you draw attention with your attempts to hide. When you need to move your towel or walk to or from the water, just hold your head up and give the most natural feminine walk you can muster.

OK, what about bikini tops? Just how do I pad a bikini? If you do not have breast implants or substantial breast growth, the trick is to choose a bikini with a halter-style top. These are great for securely holding

breast forms in place. Silicone breast forms have a nice, natural weight to them and won't soak up water. You might need to tie up your top uncomfortably tight in order to keep your breast forms from showing or shifting. Some halter tops even have pockets that you can slide your breast forms into so that they cannot possibly be seen or fall out. It's also camouflaging as well as fun to throw a sexy tee-shirt or other thin top over your bikini top when indoors or while walking or driving. Again, watch how the GGs pull this off and make it look natural. I assure you that they all work hard to make it look natural.

Accessories

Accessories add a great way to spice up an outfit, though as with everything else, you don't want to overdo it. How to know how much is too much? One rule of thumb is to add items one-by-one, checking the mirror each time, and when you can suddenly see that you may have too many, just remove one and you should be OK. Or as my friend Lannie suggests, when you see you have too many, add one more and you're done!

Seriously, there is no hard-and-fast rule. You just need to develop an eye for style.

Jewelry

Jewelry is just plain fun. It is OK to wear several items, but just a pair of tasteful earrings, a bracelet, a couple rings, and perhaps a simple necklace is more than enough to be styling. Do, however, try not to wear too many different sizes, materials, or styles at once. For example, try to wear either silver or gold metals but not both. As with the one-center-of-focus overall rule, if you must wear a very flashy piece of jewelry, don't wear more than one at a time.

To pierce or not to pierce?

I recommend getting your ears pierced even if you are only a part-time girl. People will definitely notice it when you are in boy mode but pierced ears on men are so common these days that it shouldn't be a big deal. It can even make you seem very hip if you can muster the strength to own it.

Clip-on earrings are mostly just annoying. They are uncomfortable to wear and usually don't look very good anyway, but if they really are your only choice, then sometimes a girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do!

I recommend that you avoid the shopping-mall-drive-through-piercing-gun thing. Instead, find a popular high-end piercing shop. These are usually paired with tattooing services. Select a shop that takes their time with you and puts a lot of obvious care into using sterile techniques. I also suggest that you follow all of their after-care suggestions closely though I recommend that you wear your starter studs for much longer than the minimum requirement before beginning to wear your pretty earrings. That will make it easier to use your tight new holes and reduce the chances that they will close back up.

Scarves

A scarf is a great way to add a touch of class and can also be used to hide a large Adam's apple. I prefer long thin silk scarves. As you are about to head out the door, just flip the middle part over your head, and then with one end hanging longer than the other, simply throw the long end over your other shoulder and you're good to go.

Hats, gloves, and neckerchiefs

It is very rare to see anyone wearing hats, gloves, or neckerchiefs these days, and when you do it is always eye catching. I find it very sad that these things aren't common anymore since they are incredibly classy. If you really want to wear them then go right ahead. One important thing to realize is that they will not help you to hide. It's because they are uncommon that they will attract attention which can easily lead to people reading you because you gave them a reason to think consciously about your appearance. Gloves may only make your hands look larger, and although a scarf or neckerchief will hide a prominent Adam's apple, it can also make people wonder if that is what you are trying to do.

Bags

Handbags can be very stylish accessories. They are also very useful because women need to carry all sorts of things. Unlike men who only seem to need a wallet, keys, and perhaps a pair of sunglasses, women also need to bring makeup. Even if we only needed a wallet and keys, women's clothes usually don't provide pockets for these things. Even the clothes that do have pockets usually aren't meant for those pockets to be used because anything beyond a single key and perhaps a driver's license & some cash can ruin an otherwise elegant look. Occasionally when I really don't want to bring a purse I sometimes get away with putting a small wallet, my keys (with pepper spray key ring of course!), and some lip gloss in the pockets of a large coat but even that is annoying as I often forget to put them back in my bag when I'm done. It's just easy to grab your bag and know that everything you need is in there. And besides, a nice bag really does make a great accessory. Just try to avoid stuffing them to overflowing. Bringing too much stuff just makes it hard to find the common items when you need them. They also tend to collect trash so empty and clean them every couple weeks and replace only those items that really need to be in there.

Makeup

Makeup is simply wonderful stuff for nearly every woman and can be a godsend for transwomen. You may see makeup as an opportunity to hide a beard shadow or as a way to be dazzling. While there is some truth to this, these are not the really important things for us about makeup. The most important thing that makeup offers is the ability to make subtle apparent changes in the shape and general appearance of our faces. Careful use of shading creates the illusion of light interacting with a somewhat different shape allowing us to accentuate or deaccentuate facial features while careful use of texture and color can give the illusion of a healthy feminine face.

Rule #1: Less is more. This rule applies to so many things but nowhere more so than with makeup. The goal is to appear naturally beautiful and feminine. This means that ideally you won't appear to be wearing makeup at all. We've all seen women wearing too much makeup giving a frighteningly clownlike effect. Avoid this state at all costs. If you require that much makeup to cover a beard shadow then you are much better off looking like a non-passing transwoman than a non-passing clown. You can get rid of your beard in time, and until then you can still live and be treated as a woman if the rest of your presentation is good enough.

Another good tip is to put on your makeup in a very well lit place. The more light the better. Natural light is best so the ideal arrangement would be a mirror right next to a window that lets direct sun onto your face. If you can't arrange direct sunlight, then the next best is to get as much indirect sunlight as possible. Of course you'll also need to be able to put on makeup at night, so try to get as much soft white light as you can. Be aware that all this light will make all your flaws appear much worse than others will generally see. Try not to

get too depressed by this fact and remember that if you can get yourself looking halfway decent under these conditions, you'll look fabulous under normal and subdued lighting conditions.

Buying Strategies: Drugstores vs. Boutiques - prices, assistance, & obligations.

There are huge differences between makeup prices in drugstores versus boutiques. Is there a correspondingly large quality difference? In my opinion no but there are still some good reasons to shop at both. There may be a marginal quality difference but some important things worth paying for in boutiques are advice and service. The sales people in boutiques generally earn commissions on their sales. This tends to make them eager to help you though of course they also want to sell you as much as possible. They will often try to get you to sit and try out various products on you. You are under no obligation to buy anything from them however it is probably good etiquette to buy at least one item for every 15 minutes or so that someone fusses over you.

You can learn a lot this way, especially in the beginning when you may know very little about using makeup. Unless you are very rich and can afford to use boutiques for all of your makeup needs, you will need a good strategy to get the most for your money. I recommend experimenting with drugstore makeup that is cheap enough that most of us can afford to simply throw or give away anything we don't like or can't figure out how to use. While experimenting with drugstore items, get occasional help from the friendlier boutiques in your area. Of course that only works if you have the courage to do it. Remember that money talks very clearly and you should expect good service from any full-priced boutique regardless of how obviously non-passing you are. Most busy boutiques in larger cities are very used to the occasional early stage t-girl customer and the more experienced clerks will know a fair bit about our special needs. One particularly good brand for us is Mac. Not only do they have excellent products but all of the feedback I have heard is that they are always friendly to transgendered women. Perhaps they get some special sensitivity training; I don't know; but we should always patronize businesses that are helpful to us and avoid those that are not.

It may be best to only buy only one or two items at any one time in a boutique, not just to save money but also to simplify the learning process. Try getting used to one new thing at a time and get advice anytime you are confused. The complexity and terminology of this space is overwhelming and no women master all of it. Try not to feel badly while you are learning. Many natural women feel just as overwhelmed as any transwoman and lots of women simply refuse to use makeup at all even when there's a chance that it could make their lives a lot more satisfying.

My personal strategy is to buy all of my foundational products at drugstores and all of my colored items at boutiques. You will need to find good foundation color matches for your skin tone but with a little experimentation you should be able to find a cheap base, powder, and blush that work well for you. If you can afford it, you can even start with boutique foundations just to learn what you should be looking for and then find discount drugstore brands to replace them when they run out. You can even begin to phase out many of your expensive boutique glosses, eye shadows, and other colored items over time but even the full-priced items turn out to be relatively cheap over time when you become a smart shopper.

Note also that you can typically return or exchange any boutique item that you are not happy with for any reason. This is part of the high price you pay for boutique makeup. Nobody will mind and you should not feel bad returning or exchanging any item that you are not happy with. You may even be able to do this in discount drugstores, but their products are so cheap that it may not be worth the effort.

Basic Makeup Instructions

Here are some instructions on the basic techniques and how to learn them. I will also include the reasons for each tip because it is more important to understand why each thing is important so that you can make adjustments and continue to learn on your own. I highly recommend experimenting and swapping tips with friends, and these tips should get you started.

The following instructions are for a complete makeup job. You can always just put on a little make-up or touch-up existing make-up when you're in a hurry, but when you want to look your best it is good to take the time and start from scratch. At first it might take you 90 minutes or more to do a careful job but with practice you should be able to cut that down to 10 minutes or less. You'd be surprised just how much you can even do in 2 minutes when forced so don't get depressed by the amount of work involved at first. Just take your time and even start over completely if you mess up badly. In time you'll develop a sure hand.

Try to follow the instructions in order. I'll try to explain why each step is in its particular order since those things will be important to understand when you begin to make your own adjustments and shortcuts.

1) Clean-up

Shower, shave, wash your hair, brush your teeth, etc. You want to start with a clean canvas. You definitely want to brush your teeth before doing your makeup so as not to spoil anything. You also want to end up feeling fresh which is one of the reasons that grooming is considered to be a feminine activity.

Shaving in the shower can help to get you an extra close shave and to make it easier for people with sensitive skin.

If you are not trying to hide your activities, be sure to also shave your legs and armpits if these will be visible. If you can't get away with shaving other body parts, don't worry; look around. Lots of women have quite a bit of body hair. If you can and need to shave some body parts, I recommend a triple blade razor for your body and a twin blade for your face.

2) Contact Lenses

If you wear contact lenses, it is a good idea to put them in immediately after showering and before getting makeup or anything else on your hands.

Colored contact lenses can help to make your eyes very dramatic. The ideal makeup job sends all the attention to your eyes and this is a great way to knock people out. Eye color seems to be one place where it doesn't seem to matter if they appear natural so long as they look good. I think of contacts more like clothing and have even worn different colors on different days or to compliment an outfit. I encourage you to have fun with colored contacts.

Even if you don't need contacts, you can still consider wearing non-prescription lenses. They can include UV protection and can therefore even be good for you. Try out the free samples at any optometrist office. You can even freely experiment with contacts in boy-mode since no colors are off-limits for either sex so have fun!

3) Moisturize

Moisturizer will help to protect your facial skin from daily make-up use by allowing less makeup to clog your pores. Many people claim that you need an expensive moisturizer especially made for your face. That is an easy sell because no woman wants to take chances with her face but I don't believe that there is much real difference between moisturizers. I think that nearly all moisturizers are good and that a good basic body moisturizer is also just fine for your face so long as it doesn't contain strong fragrances or other chemical vapors that sting your eyes.

You don't need a lot of moisturizer on your face; just a couple of drops are fine. Your skin needs to absorb it all before you begin applying makeup, so be sure to wait the 30 to 60 seconds or so needed before continuing. It could take a little longer if you used too much or if you are still steamy from the shower. Just wipe off any excess with tissue.

Just pick a cheap one that smells nice and leaves your skin feeling good. I like to unscrew the caps in the stores just to smell them and even test a little on the back of my hand.

The subject of skincare is huge but way outside the scope of this book. This is all you should need to know for now so don't let sales people pressure you into spending lots of money on expensive skincare. You can always wait to deal with that later.

4) Sunscreen (Optional)

It is important to use sun protection if you plan to be outdoors for long. Some foundations contain sunscreen, usually around SPF 15 which is great though you might also need some protection on your arms, legs or other exposed parts. It's also easier to apply sunscreen while you're still naked and reduces the risk that you'll get sunscreen on your pretty clothes.

5) Foundation

The term "foundation" is a little bit ambiguous and therefore confusing. One meaning is a single skin-toned product and the other meaning is such a product paired with a powder that together provide a sort of base canvas on which you apply various colored effects. It might be helpful to use the phrase "a foundation" to mean the product, and "your foundation" to mean the pair but in general you'll just need to figure out the difference from the context.

The purpose of foundation is to even out the variations in your skin tone in order to create a smooth, even surface to build on. Younger skin tends to be smoother and have fewer blemishes so the goal is to mimic this effect. Of course younger people without acne problems will require less makeup than older people.

This is not to say that you should apply however much foundation is required to achieve a smooth, even tone! There is only so much that foundation can do and going beyond that point always looks bad.

Some makeup professionals recommend transwomen to use theater makeup to cover up beard shadow. This is really a terrible idea unless you are about to perform on stage.

Foundation brands come in both solid and liquid types. Both work fine; just choose the type you feel most comfortable using. The next most important thing is to choose one that matches your skin tone as closely as possible. Tone is not just darkness but also hue. Be sure to choose a foundation that matches

both qualities of your skin. This two-dimensional color space allows for a bewildering number of different products but it's worth the effort to find a good match.

Both solid and liquid foundations can be spread with makeup sponges or just your fingers. Start applying a little wherever your blemishes are the worst and spread it out from there. Stop adding foundation before it becomes obvious that you are wearing it even if it means that you do not completely cover a beard shadow. It's easier to notice makeup during the day. That means you can wear more at night but it is always better to err on the conservative side.

You only need to cover the parts of your face that need it. If you notice that you've used too much, just use some toilet tissue to wipe off the excess. Be careful about taking it too far down your neck since that can make ugly messes on your collars. Even the tiniest amount of visible foundation on a light collar looks terrible.

6) Powder

The solid or liquid foundation used in the previous step will leave your face too shiny. Face powder is used to eliminate the shine and to give your foundation an even, matte finish on which to apply your colors.

As with foundation, you want to choose a powder that closely matches your skin tone. The color should be as perfect a match as you can find though it is OK if it is slightly lighter than your skin.

Use a large brush or the fluffy little pillow that comes with it to pick up some power and then pat it all over your face. Powder can be applied to a somewhat larger area than your foundation but should also not be allowed to rub into the edge of your collar and stain it. If you didn't use too much foundation, you won't need to worry about using too much power because any excess will simply fall off. In fact it's easiest to just apply a lot of power all over and then use a large, soft brush to dust off the extra or just gently clap it off with your hands. Do not try to rub the power in. Just pat or lightly brush it.

This can make a bit of a mess if it gets on your clothes but it is easily brushed from your clothes with the back of your hand before it gets a chance to work itself into the fabric. Leaning forward while applying powder helps avoid having it settle on your clothes in the first place.

7) Colors

Now that your foundation is in place it is time to paint upon this fresh canvas. Blush, eye shadow, lip-gloss; this is the fun stuff in which you get to be both the artist and the artwork. I'll give a simple introduction to this huge space but truth is that I'm not at all expert in it and you won't need to be either unless you want to. The most important things to aim for are to choose the right amount of make-up for the situation and to choose colors that complement your outfit and your personal style.

You may like to work from the top-down so that if anything falls onto a lower part of your face will be fixed as you work your way down.

Eye Shadow

Eye shadows come in both solid and liquid forms. They both work fine. Try a few and see which style

you feel the most comfortable with.

It is a good idea to select a color that matches your top so it is a good idea to have several different colors on hand that you like. You can even use more than one color at a time but that is an advanced subject that you do not need to worry about. Avoiding eye shadow colors similar to your eye color will create contrast and draw more attention to your eyes which is a main goal of makeup.

Start by applying a small amount of eye shadow directly to your closed eyelid, a little above and to the outside of the center of your eye. The idea here is to make your eyes appear slightly wider than they are and to give that sort of oval cat's eye shape. Blend the color outward in all directions, especially to the outside.

Blushes & Bronzers

Blushes and bronzers provide subtle colors that can be used to fool the eye into thinking that the contours of your face are slightly different than they really are. Most commonly they're used to make cheekbones more prominent and to add depth to your face. Your foundation created a flat canvas. Next, blushes and bronzers add shape. Blushes and bronzers are similar in this way but different too. I suggest using only one of these, and probably just the one that works best for you. As always, keep this stuff to a minimum. You don't want to make a statement this way. Let your eye shadow do that job. You just want to give a subtle nudge to your overall appearance.

Bronzers mimic the effects of some healthy suntan on your face. You apply a highlighting bronzer to the areas that the sun would hit the hardest which are your forehead, the bridge of your nose, the tops of your cheekbones, and perhaps a touch on the tip of your chin. Of course skip this step if you've already gotten sun or if you want to de-emphasize strong features. You can apply a darker bronzer below your cheekbones, accentuating the natural hollow and giving the illusion of higher, more prominent cheekbones.

Blush is fascinating stuff. It can both affect the appearance of your face's shape but can also make it seem like you're blushing a little. Why would you want to look like you're blushing? Blushing is a social signal that you're feeling vulnerable and people naturally respond by being softer and more protective towards you. That is a lovely feeling, so using blush makeup is useful when you want that effect though sometimes when you need to be very forceful and persuasive, you'll want to avoid it.

Blush is generally applied to the apple of your cheeks and naturally smoothed out so that no lines show. Choose a color and darkness that best compliments your skin tone.

Lipstick & Lip Gloss

Lip makeup comes in solid and liquid varieties just like foundations and eye makeup. Lipstick is simply the name for the solid kind whereas lip gloss is a liquid that you brush on.

Lip and eye makeup are the things that you want people to notice. All the rest is meant to support these top notes. It is fine to use dramatic lip makeup in the right situation but it should always be secondary to enhancing your eyes and should definitely be complementary to them. That is not to say that your eye and lip colors should match because generally they should not but they should work together.

Your lip color choices should be based more on your skin and hair color than on your outfit. Bright red only seems to work for blonds whereas dark red looks best with dark hair and skin. Also, the amount and glossiness of your lip makeup should depend upon the situation. Nude/neutral colors are best for work and daytime wear whereas the brightest, fullest, glossiest treatments should be reserved for glamorous evenings.

The acceptable colors will change with the fashions, so watch what other women of similar age and styles are wearing.

I recommend that you avoid all use of lip liners (I.E. pencils) altogether. Unless you're about to perform on stage, lip liner usually looks awful to me and is certainly not needed.

Lipstick/gloss is the only makeup that you should definitely carry in your purse so that you can reapply as needed, especially after eating or drinking. Here's a great tip for drinking without leaving a lot of lipstick on the glass: First lick the outside of the glass where you will be drinking.

Eyeliners

Eyeliner pencils can add a subtle or dramatic effect to your eyes. Lots of colors are available but I recommend sticking with coal black for all uses unless you want to experiment. You can use them to add an extremely thin outline at your eyelash line or smudge it out for a thicker, smokier look. Look for a pencil with a little "smudger" attached. They look like little rounded erasers and are great for blending out the color when appropriate. Of course reserve the more dramatic looks for the evenings, and avoid going over-the-top otherwise you could look like a raccoon. Most of the time a very thin line is all you need.

Eyeliner also comes in liquid form meant to be painted on with a thin brush and a very steady hand, but it is so difficult to learn that I recommend staying away from it unless you have a great deal of patience and are a skilled painter.

You can erase small mistakes using a bit of make-up remover on the end of a cotton swab. Larger mistakes require removing entirely and starting over. Practice the more difficult techniques in isolation so that you can remove and repeat several times without needing to reapply previous steps.

8) Mascara

Mascara will darken and clump your eyelashes. A little bit can make your eyes look amazing but too much can make you look like a tramp. Just like with eyeliner, I recommend sticking with a jet black color. The waterproof versions stay put better but are harder to remove. Both are fine.

It is a good idea to apply mascara and lip gloss at the very end of your routine so that you don't get any powder stuck to them, dulling their shine.

Unless your eyelashes naturally curl back, you will need to first use an eyelash curler. These frightening looking devices are really quite safe and easy to use. Just open them like a pair of scissors and fit them over your top lashes and squeeze down gently and hold for a few seconds. You want to position it as far down towards the base of your eyelashes that you can without pinching the skin. You

can get extra curling if you first crimp them about halfway down and then finish by crimping again at the base of the hairs.

Don't overdo this or the hairs will kink. You just want to bend them back away from your eyes.

Applying the mascara takes a little practice but it's not difficult. Rather than try to brush it on, it may be easier to hold the brush against your lashes and then close your eye to sort of brush your lashes against the brush.

A bit of clumsiness in the mascara may be unavoidable. This gets worse as the makeup gets older and drier, so be sure to replace it when it doesn't go on well anymore.

With your eyelashes curled back and freshly painted, it's often easy to transfer some little black dots from your lashes onto your eyelids. Even a tiny amount of this looks terrible and must be removed. Of course that means touching up or redoing your eye shadow but there's no way around that other than being careful to let your mascara dry before opening your eyes all the way.

Don't borrow anyone else's mascara and don't lend yours because you can transfer eye infections that way. Be sure to clean off old mascara because it can clog your pores which can also promote eye infections. The same goes for eyeliner.

Put on your clothes before or after makeup?

When your clothes will be easy to put on it is usually better to do your makeup first so as not to get it on your clothes, however if you are going to wear a turtleneck top or other difficult or expensive clothing it may be better to dress first and then to be very careful when applying your makeup. Likewise it may be safer to remove some or all of your makeup before removing your clothing at the end of the evening.

Be careful using powders that can easily fall onto your clothes during application. You can avoid a lot of that risk by leaning far forward during those applications. Be sure to lean extra far because you may not be completely used to having breasts sticking out. Also be careful not to transfer makeup from your hands to your clothes.

I tend to use a compromise approach where I put on my underwear and some other items before applying my foundation. Then I put on the rest of my clothes and finish with my colored makeup so that I can see how the colors work with my outfit. Once you find a regimen that works for you, you'll breeze through it without needing to think about much beyond the general look you are trying to achieve.

Makeup can be used for more than just faces.

A good, neutral colored blush is most effective at giving the illusion of more prominent cheekbones by enhancing your natural shadows. You can use the same trick to make your cleavage appear deeper and your collarbones more delicate. Just pick up a bit of blush on a medium sized brush and lightly brush over the natural shadows that you see in those areas in order to make those shadows slightly longer and darker.

It is ok to use a product meant for one part of your face or body on another. Don't be afraid to experiment. Once you get comfortable with the basic products and techniques, you'll naturally start coming up with great makeup tips of your own!

Breasts

Hormones and implants are of course wonderful but except for those daring fashions showing a lot of cleavage, there's no reason that you can't have the appearance of great looking breasts just by padding. In addition to creating a great shape you will also want a solution that lets you dance and move freely enough to not worry about things shifting around. You'll be nervous enough without having to worry about embarrassing wardrobe malfunctions. People can tell when you are nervous and it hurts your chances of passing when you cause people try to figure out why you are uncomfortable. Here are some practical tips and tricks for achieving shapely breasts you can feel comfortable with.

Nearly all t-girls initially want huge breasts and find that over time their idea of the perfect breast size moves gradually downward. Having really large breasts will make you stand out in a way that will reduce your chances of passing but I believe that if you feel that you want huge breasts now then go for it and have fun. Just try to avoid spending a lot of money on really expensive clothing or breast forms early in your transition now that you know that it is likely that your preferred breast size will likely change.

I don't believe that there's much reason to resort to taping or other extreme measures to create artificial cleavage, especially as the results don't look all that great anyway. Instead, just aim for smooth curves and a great shape under full-coverage tops. Even with little or no actual breast growth you can actually hint at a moderate amount cleavage by applying a little neutral colored blush to your sternum area. Aim to enhance the slight natural shadow created by the slight concavity there but of course don't overdo it.

Luckily there's no need to resort to adhesives or other complicated measures to hold breast forms in place when a good bra will do the job just as well. Save the frilly, lacy, delicate types until you have implants or enough natural breast growth. Until then you'll want to look for soft, smooth "shaper" style bras that come with a fair amount of padding. It's amazing how good the right shaper bra can look under a t-shirt compared with the saggy, lumpy look you can get from expensive frilly lingerie. Experiment with different bra sizes and adjustments to find the perfect combination that holds everything in place without causing ugly fat creases in your back. If you are not comfortable trying on bras in stores, just try them out at home and return the ones that don't work. You can even shop in guy-mode as lots of men buy underwear as gifts and for themselves. The sales people are very used to this so try not to worry too much about it.

I have seen all sorts of different materials used to pad bras including tissue, foam, silicone pads, and even bags of water or birdseed. The idea behind the heavier solutions is to create a natural bounciness when you move. Unfortunately the effect is rather small and doesn't really improve your ability to pass in my opinion. Even worse, the heavier solutions are far more likely to lead to disasters. I feel that simple foam rubber breast forms are the best for nearly all occasions. The one exception is in swimwear where waterproof silicone pads work well but only with a bikini top that includes pockets that can hold them very securely.

Good foam breast forms will probably cost you \$50 or so but are comfortable and well worth the cost. Don't bother looking for ones with realistic textures or nipples. You are just trying to fill a bra smoothly. They don't need fancy surfaces or coverings. In fact, the rough surface of the raw foam rubber can grip so securely

that the light pads can often be worn braless under some snug, similarly rough fabric tops and dresses.

Once you have learned how to present a lovely chest, don't make the mistake of trying to hide them with sweaters and hunched shoulders. Remember that you wanted them to look great, so learn to stick them out there proudly and don't be surprised when people stare at them. It's natural to think that people are staring because they can tell that you are cross-dressing but when you've done a good job of padding it is just as likely that they are looking longingly at your great rack! Besides, you can't hide by hunching your shoulders so just sit up straight with your shoulders pulled back and enjoy being the show! Isn't this what you wanted after all? If after several tries you find that you just can't enjoy it, you may want to consider going smaller. It's natural for genetic women with large breasts to feel similarly uncomfortable but you have the advantage of being able to experiment with finding the perfect size for you and changing it at your whim.

Hips

Hormones will certainly put a little "junk in your trunk" which is of course wonderful. It won't add width to your hips however since that's mostly due to your hipbones. Women's hips are turned out quite a bit compared with men's in order to create a large enough birth canal. This is also why women walk differently from men, as they have to swing their legs around in order to place their feet in front of themselves. You can learn to walk with the same motions and I highly encourage working hard on this, as the result can be amazing.

Padding your hips in order to achieve a larger hip-to-waist ratio is a reasonable thing to do but most transwomen simply stop doing this in time. Lots of women have narrow hips and lots of people find this to be very sexy.

I've heard of possible hipbone extension surgery but I've never known of anyone to get it. Even if your hips are extremely narrow I would instead recommend wearing clothing that gives the illusion of wider hips and just sucking in your gut like everyone else. It's not fun but even the top fashion models do it!

Hair

Removal

The subject of hair removal for transsexual women breaks neatly into the separate issues of beard and body hair. Body hair can be handled well with hormone therapy but beard hair does not respond much to hormones and must be removed with more direct methods. For permanent results this means using laser or some form of electrolysis or both.

One of the biggest differences between laser and electrolysis is that electrolysis is applied to one hair at a time while a given laser pulse can affect dozens. This makes laser a very attractive choice on dense areas near the beginning of the beard removal process but becomes overkill when used on sparser hair towards the end. This suggests that for good laser candidates, the ideal plan may be to begin with a few laser treatments and then switch to electrolysis to pick off the remaining stray hairs.

No hair removal techniques are completely permanent. Each time a hair follicle is treated there is certain finite chance that it will be killed. For example, if a certain hair in a particular area of a person with their

particular genetics has a 25% chance of being killed with a single zap of laser or electrolysis, then it will take on average four treatments to kill it permanently. Sometimes you will be lucky and kill a hair with the first treatment and other times it will evade treatment for much longer. What this amounts to is that while you may never be 100% finished with beard removal, you can expect to get to the point where you only need a short touch-up once or twice a year, and that's nearly the same thing as being completely finished.

Aftercare

Applying aloe vera gel or a mild moisturizer afterwards may also promote healing. Mainly anything that you find soothing afterwards is probably a good idea. Ice packs are another excellent aftercare that can reduce pain and swelling.

Arrive for your treatments with completely clean skin and do not use makeup for at least 24 hours after, even if you feel that that means that you have to hide yourself indoors. This is one of the reasons to start beard removal as early as possible. If you are still living part-time in boy mode, just schedule your treatments for these times and you should have very little trouble when people see you with red, inflamed skin. They'll just assume you have skin or shaving problems.

It is very important to keep direct sunshine off of your treated skin for the first 24 hours otherwise your risk of damaging your skin is much higher and you can easily cause hyperpigmentation which can give your skin a blotchy, mottled look for many months.

Laser

Laser hair removal works by applying intense pulses of light that penetrate the skin but are absorbed by underlying hair similar to the way that a microwave oven sends light through packaging and containers to heat the water molecules in your food. Your hair must be shaved as closely as possible because only the heated hair near the bottom of your follicles will do the work of killing the follicles.

This technique only works for frequencies of light that are absorbed well by your hairs and poorly by your skin. This typically does not work on dark skinned or light haired people and can be very damaging for them. New types of lasers that can either penetrate darker skin or be absorbed by light hair may be coming on the market but for the most part, you may only be a good laser candidate if you have light skin and mostly dark hair.

Do not use laser hair removal if the clinics that you visit are even slightly worried about your particular situation. Even if you seem like a good candidate, I suggest that you have an initial treatment of a small area under your chin or in some other inconspicuous area just to see how well your skin will respond to a particular treatment. It is simply too important to take chances with your face just to save a little time or money.

Electrolysis

Electrolysis works by sliding a fine needle alongside individual hairs and delivering a short burst of either electricity or heat or both in order to kill the rapidly growing area at the base of the follicle. The needle does not penetrate the skin. If pure heat is delivered, this is actually called "thermolysis". If both heat and electricity are delivered it is called the "blend" method. The goal of each is to kill just the growing part of the

follicle and to damage the surrounding skin as little as possible.

Beard removal can take 3 or 4 years to complete, and I'm talking about weekly electrolysis sessions over that entire time. Some people prefer to get a much smaller number of much more intense sessions that aim to completely clear their face in each session. That can involve two clinicians working in tandem for 8 or more hours in a day to accomplish. The patient's face needs to be completely numbed using dozens of shots of anesthetic delivered by a doctor and obviously the treatments are brutal and expensive. Still, this method seems to work well for some people.

Regardless of how you schedule your treatments, transsexuals who begin transition before age 30 will have a much easier time than the ones that begin after 40, but regardless of your age it's important to begin the process of beard removal immediately. It can easily be the most difficult part of your physical transition, not to mention painful and expensive, but the worst part is the sheer time involved. I therefore can't emphasize enough the importance of beginning beard removal immediately even if you do nothing else.

Most transsexuals spend a good bit of their transition time living a dual life: one as a guy for work and family functions, and another as a girl on weekends or whenever that can be arranged. It's much easier to walk around as a guy with facial stubble growing out for the electrolysist to remove, as well as with a red and lumpy face for a few days after treatment, than it is for a full-time transwoman to suffer these things. In other words, do as much beard removal as you can during the times while you're still dressing as a man because it will be much harder to deal with later when you may very well not be able to stand dressing as a man very much or even at all.

One good thing about beard removal compared with the other permanent bodily changes is that you're extremely unlikely to regret doing this even if you should later decide to not transition. The fact that you're even thinking about transitioning probably means that even if you decide to live as a man, you're very unlikely to ever want to grow a beard anyway. That means that you will probably enjoy not having to shave anymore regardless of your final gender status, so get started now!

From my experience and from everything I've learned from the experiences of others, thermolysis appears to give the most effective results in the shortest time and with the least skin damage compared with blend or pure electrolysis. Even if someone using the blend method charges half of what someone using thermolysis does, it can still be cheaper to use thermolysis because the technician needs to spend less time in each follicle and can therefore treat the same number of hairs in a much shorter session.

Of course you should start by asking around in the nearest TG communities. Local TG web sites may have some endorsements or paid listings. As a last resort, search within your local area at local.google.com or check the yellow pages under electrolysis. Call all of the nearby technicians and find out

- What sorts of techniques they use
- How long they have been using them
- The cleanliness of their space
- Their prices
- Their availability
- The amount of privacy they can provide (if that is important for you)
- Whether they have performed any complete beard removals on transwomen.

If they have performed full beard removals, ask if any of their past happy customers will agree to meet you so that you can see their results.

Perhaps most important of all, find out if you like the person. If you do use them you can easily end up spending hundreds of hours together in an intimate setting and you will each end up knowing just about everything about the other so it will be best if you can start off by liking each other.

Pain

All forms of hair removal hurts a lot but it's very much worth it. Yet another reason to start beard removal immediately is that men experience pain less acutely than women. I don't know if it is due to neurochemical changes or simply thinning skin but as a man I was initially able to tolerate up to three-hour electrolysis sessions with little or no drugs, but after I had my Testosterone well blocked and had started using Estrogen, painkillers became an absolute requirement.

Drugs are a big help. Your doctor will very likely prescribe Vicoden or other similar painkiller for your treatments. You cannot eliminate the pain this way but you can definitely take the edge off it. Experiment with timing and dosages in order to find the optimal result during your sessions. I've found it best for myself to take between 2 and 3 pills on a not-quite empty stomach, almost exactly one hour before treatment but you will need to find the ideal regimen for yourself.

One way to deal with the pain is to keep reminding yourself that each zap is bringing you closer to your goal of passing. In this way you can even learn to enjoy the pain just a little by associating it with progress. Or perhaps you can imagine that the pain is punishing your boyhood and allowing you to earn your girlhood. Still you're going to want to reduce the pain of treatment as much as possible and there are several good ways. During treatments of particularly sensitive areas I've found it helpful to practice a little self-hypnosis on myself. I tell my technician that I need to be quiet for a while and then I close my eyes and concentrate on relaxing all of my muscles. It is natural to tense up when anticipating pain. In some cases that may be a good idea but in this case it only makes it worse. Try to breathe slowly and deeply and to relax your muscles deeper with each exhalation. Just five minutes of this and I find that I feel much better and am ready to chat happily with my technician again.

It's also helpful to take a Benedryl tablet at the same time in order to reduce the resulting swelling and help reduce your recovery time.

For long sessions, some technicians recommend numbing creams that you apply yourself before arriving. These can be clumsy to apply and difficult to apply evenly but some people find them to be helpful.

For marathon sessions you may have to numb your face completely. That will require dozens of painful shots of anesthetic by a qualified physician. It's a bit frightening and more than a bit expensive but does work out well for some people.

Waxing and Tweezing

Waxing, tweezing, and other related hair removal techniques are really just temporary solutions. Waxing is great for leg hair but doesn't work with whiskers. Women will use waxing on their upper lips and other parts of their face but this is just to remove the fine, vellus (peach fuzz) hairs. These women will still pluck

whiskers that typically begin to show up as they age though the smart ones will get some electrolysis sessions to clear those up.

You can certainly wax and tweeze your eyebrows into feminine shapes like most women do. I highly recommend experimenting with different styles to find the one that works best for you. You can get professional eyebrow waxing for fairly cheap at most manicurists and you can then maintain it yourself. Try to only pluck the stray hairs and be very careful if you begin to cross the line into the thicker parts of your brows. Be aware that removing even a single hair near the edge of your eyebrows can have a dramatic effect and that it can be tempting to try to fix any such mistake by plucking other nearby hairs. It's better to live with a small mistake for a while than it is to risk creating a major one by removing too much.

While you are having any electrolysis sessions you can also have your technician zap a few eyebrow hairs. Remember that electrolysis is essentially permanent so be careful and start by having them only treat the stray hairs that you obviously will not need. Once you have a really good idea of the shape you want for your brows, you can have them do some more aggressive shaping but it is still a good idea to be very conservative here because unlike with waxing and tweezing, you will not be able to change with the fashions once you've made permanent changes with electrolysis.

Hair Augmentation

Ironically, male-pattern baldness is triggered by testosterone. It is a genetic condition in which certain hair follicles on the crown and front of some people's heads are sensitive to testosterone. That is why men are so much more affected by this condition than women. Women simply have far less testosterone. This is also why some older women slowly lose a fair bit of hair in the same pattern as men. That's because women do naturally produce some testosterone, just not as much as men.

People have been looking for hair-growing compounds for thousands of years, and although strong claims have often been made, none of the products worked. Rogaine and Propecia are the first products that have made a measurable difference, but their effectiveness is minimal. They won't actually regrow lost hair but is reasonably effective at helping you keep the hair that you do have. The problem is that you must continue to use them for as long as you have high levels of testosterone. Luckily, many of us who opt for SRS or an orchiectomy can then stop using these formulas.

Some transsexuals report some minimal regrowth of lost hair from these compounds but you should not expect that.

Hair transplantation may help a little, especially for filling in a couple corners in a hairline that is only beginning to recede, but it is unfortunately still not a solution for profound hair loss.

Certainly someday an effective treatment will be developed to restore a full head of hair. In the meantime your best bet is to make the best of what you already have. Just like many older women with male pattern baldness, many t-girls get very good at selecting hair styles that hide much of the problem. While this is unfortunate, it is still preferable to depending upon wigs.

Styles

Nothing affects a person's overall appearance than their hair. If you do nothing else to feminize or beautify your appearance, you should put your effort into achieving a good hair style that suits your needs. Even if it costs you \$100 per month to maintain, isn't that worth it if it makes you significantly more passable and/or beautiful?

One particular trap that transwomen seem vulnerable to is the belief that the longer you can grow your hair the better. This is simply not true as overly long hair often looks thin, stringy, frizzy, and scraggly. It is such a common situation that it is even one giveaway for some transwomen who are otherwise close to passing.

I highly suggest that you seek out and consult some highly skilled hair stylists in your area. One good thing is that you don't need to worry very much about your special status as a transsexual. Any good stylist will be familiar with most of your problems because they will be shared by some of their normal female clients and your solutions will be the same.

If you live part time in male mode, you may have an extra problem that natural women will not have. Still, any good stylist should be able to give you good advice on this even if it is their first time dealing with it.

The key is to find a style that not only looks good on you but that you can reasonably maintain yourself. We all love carefree styles—and when it comes to subjects other than hair I fully agree—but please don't reject a difficult hair style out of hand. It may well be worth the trouble since the potential payback from a good hairstyle can be enormous.

Wigs

The good news is that while most transsexuals seem to begin by using wigs, most of us eventually end up wearing our natural hair. Although a few of us will need to wear wigs indefinitely, many of us who didn't initially think they would ever be able to wear our own hair end up figuring out how to do that.

Because nothing affects your appearance more than your hair, it makes sense to not scrimp on the time or money that you invest in your wigs. It also makes good sense to learn a lot about wigs including the different types, how to select them, wear them and care for them. It wasn't until I got my first really good wig with a current style and a color that suited me that I began to really pass. You may not be able to put your finger on exactly how you know when someone is wearing a wig but if they don't have a really good and suitable wig you'll simply know.

I highly suggest that you shop around a lot. Any good wig shop will be very used to transgender clients so don't worry if you have to go there in male mode. Just be open about your needs and concerns and you'll be much more likely to get what you need.

One thing to realize about the wig business is that it takes a fair while for a modern hairstyle to be copied in wigs and for those wigs to make it into the stores. Most wigs in most stores have been there for a long time and most are therefore out of date. You need a good, believable wig which means a current style. You therefore need either an older wig in one of the rare styles that tend to stay in fashion or one of the more expensive brands that cost more because they attempt to keep up with the fashions.

One good trick to know is that when you want to replace an expensive wig that has begun to look worn out, you can often save money by buying the exact model and color off the web. Just don't ever buy one this way

that you haven't worn before. Don't even risk ordering your current wig in an untried color because it easily may not look good on you. The wig shops provide a valuable service but you needn't become completely dependent upon them.

Human vs. Synthetic

If you could get the exact same style and price wig in both human hair and synthetic, which would you think you should buy? This may surprise you, but you are probably better off with a synthetic wig. That is because human hair is much more delicate and must be washed and styled just like natural hair, and unlike natural hair it will not grow out and will therefore need to be replaced sooner than the synthetic version.

Another difference is due to the fact that most of the available human hair comes from Asian women. Aside from any moral dilemmas you might feel buying hair from very poor selling one of the only things they own, Asian women tend to have thick, straight, dark hair, and unless that is similar to what you want, the hair will be bleached and colored and forced into unnatural styles for that hair type. So even though it may be 100% natural human hair, it still may not look natural in the styles that are best for you.

Adjustment

Wigs come with several adjustable elements inside which it will be important for you to understand. Turn your new wig inside out and examine it closely. There will likely be one or two adjustable straps going around part of the perimeter that you can use to adjust the tightness around your head. Too loose and you risk showing gaps or having it move around on your head. Too tight and it will be painful to wear for an extended period. You may only need to adjust this setting once so take your time and get it perfect.

Many wigs will also have some soft metal tabs sewn into the fringes over your temples and the nape of your neck. They will initially be flat but you should bend them in so that they grip snugly at those important points. It is normal for these to unbend in time so feel them each time you put on your wig and give them a little squeeze when needed to get that perfect fit.

Many or even most wig styles will have bangs to avoid a visible hairline that can be otherwise difficult to hide. It is typical for the manufacturer to make the bangs extra long so that you can trim them to exactly the right length for your face. It is much better to trim the bangs properly than to always have to fight with hair falling over your eyelashes and getting into your eyes. You can trim it yourself though it is best to let the salesperson or a hairstylist trim it the first few times so that you can learn how to get it exactly right. That's a quick and easy operation and nobody should charge you for that unless you also have them make any other changes to the style.

Wig Care

All wigs are extremely delicate but if you always treat them with great care, they can last up to nine months or more. The quickest way to destroy a wig is by combing or brushing it too hard. I recommend using a very wide toothed comb with no more than four or five teeth per inch. Do not attempt to pull a comb or brush along the entire length of the hair! Pulling even gently against a snag can kink the hairs, and all damage is permanent. Instead, always begin at the ends of the hair and gently comb out the last inch. Once the last inch is untangled all the way around, move up and untangle the next inch, and so on up to the root. I find it helpful to hold the comb loosely with only my thumb and index finger. If I can't gently comb out a tangle without

squeezing the comb tightly, then I will put the comb down and try to gently tease apart the tangle with my fingers. Even with the utmost care you are bound to kink some hairs from time to time. When enough hairs are kinked so that your style is beginning to look a little frizzy, it is time to replace the wig. Remember, you never want to be wearing bad looking hair, so always replace it before it begins to look bad.

You don't need to wash a synthetic wig more than once a week unless you get it very sweaty or dirty. You can shampoo it like natural hair though you must be careful not to rub in circles or otherwise tangle it. You can also soak it in the sink for 20 minutes or so in cold water with a little wig cleaner, shampoo, or body wash. Do not wring dry. Just rinse first and then grasp it at the top and shake out what you can into the tub. Then allow it to dry naturally on a Styrofoam wig block or stuff a towel into it and stand it in a warm dry place but not next to any heat source. You can very gently tease out some of the tangles before and after drying but more important is to handle it so that you don't create any tangles while cleaning it.

Once dry, I like to shake the wig a bit upside down to get some body into the style. I will often take that opportunity to spray some perfume between the strands so that I will smell as fresh as I look and to mask any unpleasant odor that any cleaning product may have left.

Unless you are about to take a hot date to bed, always place your wigs on wig blocks or other secure stands when going to sleep so that they will not get messed up or bent out of shape. The wig that is; not the hottie!

Security

A well adjusted wig will seldom shift or come off but those prospects are so unpleasant that it's naturally to worry a lot. Short of going to a semi-permanent solution, you can get a good deal of security by simply learning how to adjust your wig. You can certainly use clips and hairpins to attach it more securely to your natural hair, but I've found that a little double-sided tape just under your front hairline can give you a great deal of added security. Unfortunately the front of most wigs will not have surfaces that tape will stick to very well but that is easily rectified by sewing in a small plastic patch the size of a small band-aid will do the trick very nicely. Many wig shops will have tape and inserts made for exactly this purpose, so ask for this if you find yourself overly worried about the stability of your wig.

Hairpieces

These are called by different names. One brand that seems popular with transwomen is called "Cyberhair". What they all have in common is that they consist of a single wig-like piece that is attached semi-permanently to your head. Usually they're meant to blend in with your natural hair but can also be made to replace it completely. The sizes, shapes, styles, type of hair, method of attachment, and costs can vary a lot but essentially these are meant to be worn for several weeks at a time.

Obviously it's a nice thing to be able to swim and sleep in confidence and without having to see yourself in the mirror without hair. Those benefits are worth a lot, but there are downsides too. They can be hot and itchy to wear and require a lot of care from both yourself and a skilled professional. Wigs are much cheaper and easier, and it is much easier to experiment with different styles, and of course are the only option if you need to live part-time in boy mode.

Color

One nice thing about artificial hair is that you can choose any colors you like. Ideally you'll want one that is not too out of place with your age, race, and other features, but this is one area in which it's a good idea to experiment a fair bit. This is especially helpful at first when you really don't know which color styles will look good on you. Women will suddenly change their hair color, which means there is no big risk when you do too. It's even fine to suddenly wear longer hair. Women can get hair extensions, so try not to worry about that. Just figure out which colors work best for you and refine your styles from there.

Extensions

If you're lucky enough to have a full head of hair but feel it is too short, you can always try hair extensions until it grows out enough. That can be an expensive proposition but you may not need to do that for as long as you might imagine because there's a good chance that the minimum length you'll feel that you need in the future is shorter than you feel that you need today.

Nail & Skin Health

Hormones will soften both your skin and your nails. This is both a good and a bad thing. The good news is that after 6 months or so estrogen will thin your facial skin giving you that natural feminine "glow". The bad news is that your skin and nails may require more attention in order to keep them healthy and looking good. Loofa scrubbers and moisturizers will help with your skin. Lots of products purport to strengthen nails but I've not yet found any that work. If you have trouble keeping long nails then your best bet are probably acrylic extensions. These look great but are traumatic to your natural nails. They also greatly increase your risk of nail fungus infection so find a good, clean shop using good sterile procedures and consider letting your natural nails grow out every 6 to 12 months or so.

Lots of women spend a lot of money on skin care creams that I believe are no more helpful than cheap drugstore moisturizers. If your skin begins to feel uncomfortably dry, I suggest just finding a good cheap moisturizer that feels good on your skin and has a nice smell.

Many women apply their moisturizers right after showering under the assumption that they are somehow locking the moisture into their skin. I think that this is a complete myth for a couple of reasons. First, moisturizers don't seal your skin. If they did, you would be in big trouble because your skin needs to be able to breathe, and if it can still breathe, then any underlying moisture would quickly evaporate. But the real reason I believe this is a myth is because the moistness that you really want in your skin doesn't come from water at all but from oil. Your skin and hair require a certain level of oil to be healthy, and too much or too little will cause problems. Soap is really good at cutting oil, so overly strong soap or too-frequent washing will strip away too much of your natural oil leaving your hair and skin looking and feeling dry. Shampoo is just another form of soap so the same applies to your hair. Hair conditioners will restore needed oil in your hair while moisturizers will do the same for your skin. They really shouldn't be called "moisturizers" at all. Instead, they should be called "oilizers", but that probably wouldn't sell very well! If you want a greater effect from your moisturizer I recommend waiting until your skin is completely dry before applying. That way your skin will soak up more of it.

Hands & Feet

Your hands and feet can be especially prone to drying and cracking. If frequent applications of your favorite

moisturizer do not solve the problem, you might try treating these problem areas with a moisturizer containing alpha-hydroxy. Lots of products purport to contain magic ingredients such as aloe, vitamin E, avocado, or whatever, but I don't think any of those things actually make any difference. Out of all of them, I think that Alpha-hydroxy is the only real medically active ingredient. Apply liberally to your hands and feet right before going to bed and you will probably find them to be much softer in the morning.

Manicures and pedicures can also help make your hands and feet look great, plus nothing makes you feel more pampered than a good mani-pedi! Pay attention to how the pros do it and you can quickly learn to save money by doing much of the work yourself. If you are not ready to be in public with feminine styled and painted nails, I still recommend that you go to a manicurist if only to learn the techniques. Lots of men get manicures, especially highly paid professionals, so try not to feel too shy about going.

Longer nails make your hands look thinner, which is probably one reason that t-girls so often love having long nails. The problem is that we will often overdo this. Do try to stay within age-appropriate bounds.

Applying nail polish is only the last step in a manicure/pedicure. Just like with house painting, nearly all the work is in the preparation while the actual painting step is relatively easy and fun. It's especially fun to try out all sorts of colors and to find the ones that work best for you and your various outfits. Removing nail polish is generally quick and easy. Once you have a decent manicure, you can quickly try out several different colors and then go back into boy-mode with very little risk of detection.

Nail polish should be applied in several thin layers allowing each to dry well before applying the next. If you intend to leave your nails painted for several days it is sometimes recommended to begin with a clear bottom coat to keep the colored polish from yellowing your nails but this is up to you. If you do that, just use any clear topcoat as the bottom coat. The disadvantage of the extra coat is that each coat increases the time needed for the entire job to dry and therefore increases the chances that you will accidentally mess it up.

When applying the first color coat, don't worry about getting an even coat or complete coverage because the second coat will fix that. Concentrate on getting a very thin, even layer, and try to spend the least amount of time on any one nail as possible. That's because the polish will try to begin drying within a couple of seconds of putting it on, and if you dawdle trying to get it perfect, you will likely end up with a lumpy effect. When you mess up a nail for any reason, do not try to cover up the problem with more polish! Instead, just remove all the polish from that nail and start over. That's not a disaster because the painting is the quick part.

After you finish painting your nails or having them painted, you will be unable to do just about anything for the first hour or so until they are mostly dry. Whenever I go to get my nails done I always get out my money and keys first so that I don't mess up my nails fishing around in my purse afterwards. When I paint them myself I try to make sure that I can watch TV or something where I don't plan to use my hands for a good while as my nails dry. Drugstores also sell some very fast drying single-coat polishes for teen-agers that typically don't have the patience to wait for normal polish to dry. Some of these can be great but the color options tend to only be appropriate for very young girls. Running cold water over your nails can help to make them dry faster, but note that they won't be completely dry until the next day. Even when they seem dry on the surface, they can still be quite soft underneath and easily dented. I've gotten good results by sometimes only applying one or two coats in a day and finishing them the next day.

Perfume

Perfume can give the perfect finishing touch for your feminine presentation. It should not make a strong statement in itself but ideally just ties it all up and makes your overall effect more complete and natural. When you get this one right, magic happens. On the other hand, when you get this one wrong, the results are disastrous. As always, try to notice what works and what doesn't work for other women. When someone wears an awful scent, the wrong scent, or simply too much, their nose will quickly become used to it and typically nobody else will tell them. You definitely don't want to be that person. When you do wear perfume, try to be especially aware of people coughing when they are near you as this can be a sign that you've made a poor choice or put on too much.

What you want is a scent that matches your overall personal style. But just what is your personal style, what sort of perfume will match it, and how will you know when and if it no longer does? Only you will be able to figure that out. The first thing to do is to figure out what general style or archetype you want to aim for. Some popular examples include the sexpot, the professional, the nature girl, the sophisticate, the supermom, and the exotic. Don't just choose your goal based on what you are the most sexually attracted to. This is a common and understandable mistake. It's perfectly fine to experiment with different styles until you know what really works best for you, but I don't recommend experimenting with perfume until that question is mostly settled.

Perfume is always optional. If you do choose to wear one be sure not to also use any shampoos, antiperspirants or other toiletries with strong scents that will compete with it.

Unlike several other aspects of your appearance, variety is not a good thing here. Your goal should be to find exactly the right perfume to match your personal style and then to stick with it for as long as it continues to work for you.

Another reason to not experiment with perfume is the cost. For the most part, all good perfumes are expensive, and all cheap perfumes are bad. Perhaps the perfume industry is a lot like the diamond industry that is able to keep the consumer costs artificially high. Whatever the reason, I don't recommend trying to scrimp here. I'll even go so far as to say that most perfumes are terrible, regardless of their cost.

By now you should know that the first place to start to make your choice is to find out which perfumes are used by women you pass whose smells you like. Try not to be afraid to compliment a woman's perfume and to ask what it is.

The next thing to do is to smell a lot of perfumes in the larger department stores. The good news is that you don't need to be the slightest bit embarrassed to do this as a man. If a sales clerk asks about whom you're shopping for, just describe the sort of woman you are trying to be because it is completely true and helpful. The bad news is that it is a difficult skill to learn to shop for perfumes.

The first thing to know about perfumes is that the scent they give off will normally change drastically over the day. Think of most perfumes as three different scents, or what the perfumers call "notes". The first or "top note" is the one you smell when you first dab or spray it on. The most volatile oils will be smelled first and will overshadow the others but these quickly evaporate away after a few minutes. The middle notes will smell different and might last an hour or so, while the bottom notes are what are left after that. You want a perfume that works well for you in all of its phases.

The next thing to know is that it's almost impossible to smell more than three different perfumes in one session before your nose becomes overloaded. One trick that perfumers use is to wear a wool sweater and to

stick their nose into a sleeve and take a deep whiff between tests. I have no idea why that works does indeed seem to help. Still, the lesson here should be to make lots of short trips through the perfume section rather than fewer long ones. Besides, this may very well be a lifetime choice that you are making so there is no hurry.

Another important thing to know is that each perfume smells different on each person's skin. Again I have no idea why this is so but it seems to be true. Of course you can't try more than one perfume on your own skin at a time without making an olfactory mess. The department stores will all have little containers of paper cards or strips placed near the tester bottles so that you can spray a little on the paper and then smell that.

Be careful not to spray your hand at the same time as a strip. After spraying, wave the card around a bit before sniffing in order to wave off a good bit of the top notes. If you want to get really scientific, you can even write the perfume names on the cards and take them with you in order to smell their bottom notes several hours later and also to see if your feelings change with subsequent smellings. It's easy to be fooled by a pretty bottle or name or by a scent that seems like fun at first but which would become annoying or even sickening in the long run. If you try this experiment, try resmelling the strips with the names facing down, and separate the ones you still like from the ones you don't. Only then turn them over. You might be surprised by what you learn this way.

You might also finish such a shopping session by spraying one wrist with your favorite one and then sniffing it every hour or two. Also, definitely accept and ask for samples of perfumes that you're interested in. The clerks understand this is not a choice that you want to make quickly and they should be only too happy to send you home with lots of samplers that you use for weeks in the hope of eventually selling you a perfume that you will buy for years. Unlike helpers at the makeup counter, there is no assumption that you will buy anything after getting even a lot of help from a clerk. Take as much time as you need to find the scent that is perfect for you.

Even once you find your perfect scent you should be careful about when you wear it and how much. As with make-up, less is more. It's even OK to wear so little perfume that people can't consciously smell it unless they are hugging you. A good perfume can still work its magical effect at levels below conscious attention. It's better that nobody notices that you're wearing perfume than for everyone to notice. This is nowhere more important than at events where people are confined to seats that they can't easily change such as in theaters and restaurants. It is as rude to wear any perfume at all in those situations as it would be to smoke.

Movement

As children we learn very early the "correct" way to cross our legs and to look at our fingernails or the bottoms of our feet. In order to unlearn those deep lessons we first need to remember all the sex-linked movements we learned so long ago and second, we need to begin doing the opposite of what we had been doing. Although this is a difficult task, it can also be extremely fun. Nothing makes me feel so feminine as when I get my walk working just right. Conversely, nothing seems to ruin an otherwise perfect presentation than recognizably masculine modes of movement.

Learning to walk and move in feminine ways is essential to passing. Femininity coach Denaë Doyle believes that feminine movement is perhaps the most important passing skill to learn. She believes that's true because this is what usually establishes the very first impression a person gets upon seeing you. The reason that the first impression is so important is because it is much easier to make a first impression than it is to change one.

The very first thing that essentially anyone wants to know about a stranger is their sex. We make this judgment unconsciously and extremely quickly and accurately. If you look at people who are extremely far away—essentially around the distance where you can barely tell a person from a tree—you will probably find that you will correctly guess their sex long before you discover their age or race. You do that by noticing subtle clues in their movement.

As you approach someone, they begin to gather information about your sex. First they will notice your movement, then your body and clothing, then your face, and lastly your voice. This process of information gathering and refinement will occur completely unconsciously unless they receive information at one stage that conflicts with their unconscious guesses at previous stages.

The important thing to know is that the further along you get in the process without giving them conflicting information, the more tolerant they will be about new conflicting information they pick up later in the process. Basically, people hate being wrong regardless of whether they do it consciously or unconsciously. The magic is that they hate it so much that if they have begun to guess that you are a natural woman due to your movement and clothing, they will be far more likely to overlook your masculine voice or facial features than vice versa. Conversely, if their initial guess was that you are a man due to your movement, there is very little chance that you will pass regardless of how good your voice is. And what good is it to have a perfectly feminine voice if you get read before you even get a chance to use it? Use this to your advantage by investing a large part of your initial effort in perfecting your feminine movement.

Sitting

Men and women sit very differently. You no doubt already know that men almost never cross their legs all the way and that women almost always do. Why do you think that is? There's the exposure issue for women in short skirts, but clearly there's much more to this. I believe that it's mostly about space. It is masculine to take up as much space as possible and feminine to take up as little as possible. Men will sometimes even accentuate this by throwing both arms over the back of a couch while women will almost never do this.

Taking up space while sitting is a territorial gesture. We all know about using a jacket to save a seat for a friend. We also know that it's fine to ask whether someone is sitting there but it is still an imposition to the person who placed it there. So try to keep your belongings close, be conscious and considerate of other people around you, and take up as little space as needed.

Try not to feel offended by the unfairness of this. Demanding your fair share of space is certainly your right but will alienate you from both men and women and reduce your chances of passing. These the territory is not the real issue here. That is merely a symbol for social role. You can always rebel later in your transition but in the beginning I highly suggest that you just go with the social flow and learn what that's all about first.

Standing

Stand with your feet together. A wide, manly stance can ruin an otherwise beautiful presentation. You don't want to emulate modeling poses because models will often take strong stances which seem to say "I'm so beautiful that even with a manly stance I still look fabulous". One thing that is helpful to notice about modeling stances is the way they tend to drop one hip. This is very sexy and feminine because it emphasizes the unhinging effect. Whenever you're standing and wondering how to feel more feminine, try simply

dropping one hip. It not only looks great but it can help you learn that mysterious unhinging effect while walking. Just put all your weight onto one leg and then drop the opposite hip until you feel it hit bottom.

It is perfectly fine and sexy to rest one or both hands on your hips while standing. It doesn't matter whether you place your fingers in front or in back. Fingers in front will help show off your perfect nails, whereas fingers in back will encourage you to pull your shoulders back. Either way, try to spread your fingers.

It is fine to cross your arms too if you like. Just be sure to spread your fingers here too. This is the one difference in the way that men and women tend to cross their arms. Men tend to tuck their fingers away and to keep fingers and thumbs together whereas women tend to splay their fingers and to grip their arms with their thumbs rather than keep them all together.

Walking

A good feminine walk consists of five important elements and is therefore difficult to master but I find it to be one of the most fun and interesting tasks. Each element is listed below along with detailed instructions on how to master it. It is a good idea to attempt to only consciously practice one element at a time so that you can really concentrate and begin to internalize it. First begin learning an element by giving it all your attention.

Start by trying it out in front of a mirror. Later when you're trying it in public, glance in any mirrors you encounter to check your form. You can even observe your shadow to decide how feminine the motion appears.

While concentrating on one element, don't worry about the others. Experiment with it and also observe how it works for natural women. When walking behind a woman it can be helpful to mentally project yourself into her body and attempt to match your movement to hers. Do not take a step during the day without trying to get that element correct. As you start to master one element and can begin to perform it unconsciously, you can pick up another one until you can perform them all simultaneously and unconsciously.

Note that at first it will feel like it takes a fair amount of physical energy to achieve a good feminine walk. This is normal when learning any new physical skill while your muscles adapt. With practice it will become natural and nearly effortless.

It is natural to forget or become lax about performing or perfecting one or more elements. Don't get discouraged when you notice that happening. Just go back to concentrating on a weak element until it begins to feel natural again, and then return to the new skill you were working on at the time. This is not a five-step program. Expect to bounce around a lot. This is natural; just keep up the effort and it will work.

1. Footsteps closer in line

You may have seen in movies when a woman or cross-dresser tries to learn to walk femininely with her steps in a straight line. I don't recommend making quite that extreme an adjustment, but choosing a narrower walk is a wonderfully simple feminizing change.

But won't that make me more likely to lose my balance? Actually, yes, and that's even part of the whole point. That point is not to actually lose your balance but to be a little more vulnerable and

therefore need to take more care with your steps. Try taking slightly shorter steps for the same reason. Also use handrails and be careful when crossing gratings and other tricky surfaces.

Perhaps the most important thing about walking in any sort of high heels is to keep your weight mostly on your toes and away from your heels. Not only do these things make you safer but they're also very feminine behaviors.

2. Hip action

Everyone knows about the sexy motion that women's hips can generate, but what exactly is going on and how can we do the same thing? That sexy hip motion is a very complicated thing. You don't need to fully understand it to emulate it. You mostly need to feel it, and I'll give you some exercises that will help you do that.

Because women's hips are wider than men's they have to swing their legs around in order to place their feet in front of themselves. One thing you can do is imagine a weight hanging from the outside of each hip and then try to "throw" that weight forward using your hips with each step. That throwing action will come from swinging your hips in small sideways arcs outward to the same side of each hip.

Another important part of the feminine hip action is what I can only call an "unhinging" effect that men do not normally feel. It happens right when weight is first placed on a leg. Perhaps the easiest way to practice this is to work up to it from a standing pose. As I described above in the section on standing, the trick is to put all your weight on one leg and immediately drop the opposite hip.

Start by simply standing in one place. You can try this in public just as easily as in private. Just shift your weight to one leg and drop the other hip. Wait a bit and then shift to the other leg and drop the opposite hip. Once you can easily shift back and forth, try taking a single step and immediately dropping the other hip. It's natural to take a single step while standing, so you can practice this often throughout your day. Just think to yourself "step—down". Getting that illusive hip action while walking is as simple as linking together a series of these single steps. In other words, think "step—down, step—down", etc. Well, OK, maybe it's not simple to keep it going, but once you can feel the proper action and make it happen for a single step, it's just a matter of time and concentration before it becomes natural.

You might also find it helpful to analyze that crazy-sexy power walk that fashion runway models use. Much of what they do is to exaggerate some normal aspects of a natural feminine walk and watching them may help you find some new things to try adding to your walk or to your standing poses. Just don't fully emulate those exaggerated motions in public unless you find yourself on an actual fashion runway! Instead, just try adding a tiny bit of something you see being exaggerated and see if you like the effect.

3. Wrists turned out

After dealing with the most difficult aspects of feminine walk, here is one of the easiest things you can do to get a nice effect. Stand and let your arms fall naturally to your sides. Notice how the inside creases of your elbows face partly forward and partly towards your body. Now simply rotate them outward slightly so that they face more forward. That's it. Women's elbows are shaped slightly differently from men's and this is just about all that's needed to emulate that effect. Try this while

facing a mirror and you will see how this makes your arms curve inwards at your elbows, creating a bit of an hourglass waist.

4. Hands swing left-to-right

While walking naturally, watch how your arms swing. The hardest part of this exercise is to learn to simply watch how your arms move naturally without also affecting what they're doing, but once you can do this, you'll notice that your arms swing mostly forward and back in the direction of your path. What you want to do in this exercise is learn to modify that slightly so that they both swing a bit to the right when you step with your right leg, and left when you step with your left.

You'll probably find that you just mess this one up if you think about it too hard. Remember that side-to-side hip throw above? If you've managed to get that action going then it may be easier to just think about throwing both arms a bit to the same side as your hips. So when stepping with your right foot your right hip sticks out to your right a bit and so do both arms. Runway models will do this like crazy and will even accentuate the effect by throwing their heads to the same side as their hips and arms. The thing that might help you here is that when stepping right, throw everything to the right, and when left, throw everything to the left.

5. Head up, chest out, suck in that gut!

This one is just like they teach in the military. But wait a second, doesn't that mean that this one is not sex linked? Not exactly. Sure, a lot of us are taught as children to stand up straight and square but it is the women who seem to learn that lesson more often than the men. Well, it's time for you to learn it too!

You may have feelings of childhood resentment about this one but this time it's different. Standing straight and tall and thin will help make you look beautiful as well as passable, so this time around try to mentally praise yourself each time you remember to straighten up. You think those runway models are naturally powerful and graceful? No way! They even call that "working it" because it takes work, but it sure looks fabulous, don't you think?

And what's the point of having breasts if you don't stick them out for everyone to admire? If you're embarrassed doing this then consider choosing smaller breasts. But whatever size you choose, stick them out there girl!

The best thing is that I don't need to teach you how to do these particular things. Just remember to do them as often as you can and they'll become natural and much easier in time.

Running

Unless you're exercising, I recommend that you try to not run at all. If you need to briefly dash to catch a bus or something, the easiest way to feminize your run is to take shorter steps than you otherwise would. If you're wearing heels, then double-don't do this, but if you need to scamper for a few steps in heels, it is possible to make this into a very cute thing. Just take even shorter steps and be sure to keep **all** your weight on the balls of your feet. Oh, and always remember to smile!

Dancing

Dancing is one of the best things about being a girl! I'm sure you've noticed that women love to dance and that men generally avoid it when possible? Although masculine dance styles do exist, the whole business just seems feminine at core. Dance is certainly a great way to be seductive but it's also just good exercise and a hell of a lot of fun. I certainly can't teach you to dance here but I can give you a few tips.

There are two main types of dancing: Free dance and partnered dance. Free dancing is the more common but can be intimidating because there are no rules. Partnered dancing is very structured and is an amazing microcosm of all of masculine/feminine social interaction and is amazingly flirty. Free dancing is flirty too but it is more of a personal thing which may be why it is more popular.

After a lifetime of male socialization you may naturally find yourself shy about stepping onto a dance floor, I highly encourage you to do that at every opportunity. It doesn't matter if you dance terribly at first because practice is the only way anyone gets good at anything. Just do it!

Now relax. Easy to say but difficult to do when you feel that everyone is watching you. When free dancing, try to turn your mind inward, even closing your eyes if needed. While partner dancing, concentrating on the steps, balance, and other technical details can help keep you from feeling self-conscious.

Listen to the music. It is deeply important to hear the beat and to move in synchronization with it. Ideally you want to internalize the music so that you feel that the music is moving you rather than you trying to move to the music. Even if you sit out every dance, you can still begin to learn this by trying to tap your toe or nod your head to the beat of the music. Believe it or not, this is actually a form of dancing.

What should you do if you lose the beat or suddenly feel overly self-conscious on the dance floor? You can certainly sit down if you need to but I encourage you to stay out there. Just stop, find the beat, and move one part of your body to that beat. That can be your foot or hip or head. It doesn't matter. Just find the beat in one part of your body, and once you have that, then add another body part and then another. Once you can do that without involving your head too much, you'll quickly be back in the groove and developing your own style.

Be conscientious of others around you.

Nothing ruins my enjoyment of dancing faster than other people bumping into each other and generally being inconsiderate in their use of space. On the other hand, it's an amazing feeling when I can tell that everyone is aware of everyone else and we all sort of meld into one moving body. Of course it's hard to be aware of everything while trying to focus inward, so I don't recommend staying inwardly focused for longer than needed to feel the music again. Just try to alternate moving your attention fluidly inward and outward as needed.

Put yourself in situations where there is dancing.

Even if you don't intend to dance, it's helpful to even just do the toe tapping thing. It's very important to seek out dancing in venues where the musical style moves you. For instance, swing dancing looks like a hell of a lot of fun to me but I'm just not moved by the big band music, whereas salsa music stirs my blood and makes me want to move. It's also important to choose venues where you feel the most comfortable in general.

Passing Tests

The botox test

Here is a great trick for guessing how passable you are to random strangers. I call it the "Botox Test" because it requires watching those little vertical creases between their eyebrows that people try to erase with botox. Try to catch people way in advance on the street and if their brows crease up as they approach then you may not have passed. If their brows stay relaxed then you did, and if their brows actually go up then they really like what they see! One important thing to know is that you might be passing even if they crease. They could crease because they don't like what you're wearing. They might also crease if subconsciously they're not completely sure of your gender but they may have decided to give you the benefit of the doubt. The neat thing is that you can read them reading you even if they're wearing sunglasses. Be aware too that half the time they'll see you before you see them, even when quite far away, so you often won't see their creases increase. Either way your goal is to maximize the percentage of people you leave with relaxed brows. Don't get discouraged if that percentage is extremely low. Even a single relaxed brow means that you totally passed. Unless they really did use botox of course!

Hot-Or-Not

Another fun and relatively risk-free test can be had with the HotOrNot.com and similar services. Hot-or-not lets you anonymously upload photos of yourself and let the world vote on how hot they think you appear. Hundreds of people vote on a scale of 1 to 10 and you get a complete histogram showing how many of each vote you got. The results can be brutal, but they're honest and therefore valuable. Women tend to give higher scores than men (because they're trying to be nicer), and lots of people will give extremely low scores to girls who are obviously TG. I figured out that last part because instead of a perfectly smooth histogram curve with a single high point, I would often see a second, smaller bump near the very low end. I'm pretty sure that that bump represented the people who read me as trans and were punishing me for it. The funny thing about that was that their scores were not all 1's which suggested that some guys were thinking things like "Oh, gross, a tranny, but her tits look nice."

I once even conducted a sort of scientific test using HotOrNot. At that point I was wearing a blond wig, and although I thought it looked rather unnatural given my olive skin color, I was having a lot of fun with it. I then had someone first fake a casual photo of me in club, taking several shots until I got one I was happy with. I uploaded that photo to HotOrNot and got a reasonable score. I then Photoshopped the image, selected just my hair, and darkened it until it was a perfectly middle brown color. I then replaced the first image on HotOrNot with this new one. The results for the new image were identical to the first but shifted down by almost exactly one point. I tried the first image again and it got similar results as the first time so I concluded that blonds really do have more fun because being blond is worth one whole point on a scale of 1 to 10. You could probably use similar methods to decide which clothes, poses, and activities the world finds you the most attractive in.

Just as importantly, you can work to reduce the size of that non-passing bump in your histograms to find the things that prove that you're passing, regardless of your overall score. It may also be interesting to discover just how differently you feel about passing versus beauty when you review your results. The results can be brutal, but when you're ready for it, it can be really useful to be able to get some truly accurate feedback on your presentation.

Chapter 2: Your Mind

You become what you pretend to be. It is therefore natural that the more feminine you act, the more feminine you will be. This means that you should expect your mind to change along with your outward presentation. This is a profound process and is hopefully exactly what you would want. Many t-girls begin with a mixture of masculine and feminine feelings and desires which often change during transition. For example it is common for early stage t-girls to find the very idea of dressing en femme to be very sexually exciting, and for these feelings to subside as they become the object of their original fantasies.

The human brain is amazingly plastic and will immediately begin to change itself in response to new experiences. Hormones will undoubtedly affect brain changes too though it is unclear which factor is the most profound or how they work together. In my case I began feeling profound mental changes as soon as I started my transition and long before I began to chemically alter my hormone levels. The bottom line is that your mind is not a static thing and therefore neither are you. It is not a question of your validity as a woman; I.E. whether or not you are a woman trapped in a man's body or something. Rather it is really a question of how deeply you simply want to be a woman. Riki Anne Wilchins in *Read My Lips* writes that "gender... is not a being but a doing." It is our performance of gender and having that performance correctly read that gives us gender rather than any particular set of physical characteristics. In other words, act enough like a woman and you are one.

Avoid arrested development

Many transwomen initially work very hard at transition and therefore progress quickly in their early developmental phases, only to settle into their new genders too early. Too early is of course a relative term because that can only be determined by the individual, however, if their resulting life involves frequent unpleasant misunderstandings and pressures regarding their new genders, they will need to exert additional effort to be comfortable. That effort can involve changing environments, and when that's relatively easy, is a great solution, but when life is difficult everywhere, personal change is the best solution. Continue work on your voice as well as everything else you've learned here and elsewhere and you can expect your environment and yourself to feel like they've changed for the better. And isn't this what we're really looking for in the first place?

Psychoactive Drugs

Just as various behaviors and hormones will affect our minds, psychoactive drugs can also play a helpful role. For example, alcohol and other inhibition-lowering drugs can help us overcome a natural initial terror of going out en femme. Of course you need to be careful when using any drugs legal or otherwise but you might find it useful to consider employing some drugs for their possible therapeutic effects.

Antidepressants

It seems as if everyone is taking an antidepressant these days. While much of that use might be unneeded, it's

clear that they've been helpful to a great many people. There may not be any direct link between transsexuals and antidepressants other than the fact that transsexuals obviously have a big problem to deal with.

The selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI's) such as Prozac and Paxil are fairly recent developments. Before them the pharmaceutical options for related problems were poor. Now that relatively safe and effective antidepressants are available, people are starting to realize how helpful they can be for many relatively normal people. Oftentimes these people are quite functional but only have enough emotional capacity to deal with the problems that are right in front of them. Larger, lurking problems may just seem too big to deal with. They can seem "stuck" in their lives, and discovering the right antidepressant can often help them get unstuck.

Transsexuals usually know from very early childhood that something is very different about them. Sometime in adulthood it starts to become clear what it is that they really need to do, but they'll often delay doing anything about it until they get the courage and emotional capacity. Antidepressants can often give them that capacity. It's therefore important to get professional therapy from someone you trust in order to sort out all your feelings and options.

Psychologists, sexologists, and other counselors can often give you that emotional help but often can't proscribe medication. Psychiatrists generally can prescribe medication but often don't make the best counselors. If you don't have any professional help, I recommend that you start by finding the counselor that you feel the most comfortable working with. If they feel that you would benefit from antidepressants, they will often be able to recommend someone who can write the prescriptions and then work closely with them to monitor your reactions to them.

Ecstasy

Did you know that Ecstasy (MDMA) was used for a while by psychologists in therapy settings as a way to reduce subject's inhibition and help them reach deeper levels of self-understanding? To me this sounds like an ideal way to use this drug to help transsexuals better deal with their often difficult gender issues. Of course lots of people take ecstasy purely for fun and it is easily abused but it may still be a useful tool to consider.

Alcohol

Alcohol is certainly the most popular inhibition-lowering drug, not because it is any better or safer than other drugs, but because it is legal and culturally accepted. Its dangers are well known, especially its dangers to others when driving is involved. I definitely do not recommend this drug to anyone with a history of alcohol or other drug dependency problems in themselves or their close genetic relatives. I come from a Jewish background, and since Jews rarely have alcohol problems, I found it useful to resolve to drink a little more socially for one year than I would otherwise have done. This definitely helped me during a crucial early transition period and just as clearly needed to end just as soon as I had become more comfortable being out en femme.

Tobacco

Tobacco is an anxiety-reducing drug. Smoking is often attractive to t-girls who feel that it might make them look more glamorous and also to ex-smokers who may feel like relapsing in order to make it through the

emotional strain of transition. Because it is so physically unhealthy and so powerfully addictive, I can't recommend it for anything.

Warning: Estrogen magnifies the health risks of tobacco incredibly and their combination is extremely deadly. Anyone taking estrogen absolutely may not use tobacco or nicotine in any form!

Marijuana

Marijuana is a very interesting drug which has been extremely useful during my transition. So many of my transgender friends report similarly interesting relationships with this drug that I suspect there may be some deep connection here but currently do not know what that connection might be.

I had never liked the drug because of the extremely uncomfortable feelings it usually causes in my body and especially because of the paranoia it causes me in social situations. I did however discover it to be extremely useful when used in very small amounts and only while alone in order to help me remember all sorts of long-buried thoughts about gender and related subjects. If you are interested in trying this for yourself, here is how I recommend doing it:

First, schedule a large block of time with no responsibilities. Then put yourself in as beautiful and natural a setting as you reasonably can in which you will be as unlikely as possible to need to interact with other people. Next, smoke a small amount of pot and take off walking. Let your thoughts wander where they will and I think there is a very good chance that you will be flooded with all sorts of interesting thoughts.

Here is perhaps the most important part: Take a notepad and pen with you! You will definitely want to remember many of the thoughts that surface and if you don't write them down you may forget a lot of them. When you read the list the next day you may discover that half of the things you initially thought were profound are really just silly, but you may well find that the other half really are deep and important realizations for you.

Early on, many of the realizations I came to this way caused me to feel incredible grief over the girlhood that I lost and will never recover. I began to realize just how deeply cheated I had felt and I cried rivers. Later on I tended to come up with all sorts of very creative ideas that have motivated me artistically and personally.

Depression & Suicide

Suicide is one of the major causes of death among transsexuals. Societal rejections plus unfamiliar hormone fluctuations can be a lethal combination.

You have some very real things to be depressed about.

Loss of status

Women really do have a lower status in our society, and transsexuals are automatically given an even lower status. The ability to pass will definitely improve this situation but can be a big shock for some people to go from being a 1st class citizen to 3rd class or lower. The fact that we appear to have chosen our situations will get us even less sympathy. So while it is important for us to fight for our rights, it is also important to accept

the current reality of our lower status and not be as aggressive about it as we might once have been able to do as men.

Loss of friends

It is not unusual for transsexuals to lose most of our previous friends. It is easy to write these people off as being prejudiced against transgendered people but there is a better way to look at the situation. It is natural that when anybody grows or changes very much that their circle of friends changes with them. This fact says nothing about the worth of either party. It therefore makes sense that as we change something as huge as our gender expression that our circle of friends will go through an equally large change. Do try to hold onto the people that you love and who are good for you, but also take the opportunity to make new friends and to distance yourself from people who are unhealthy for you to continue to be around.

Body image problems

Essentially all women have love/hate relationships with their own bodies. This is not because women are naturally vain but because physical appearance is far more important to other aspects of life than it is for men. It is useless to try to convince ourselves that looks don't matter because that is simply not true. The trick is to work on improving the things we can and to not become obsessive in the process. Don't give up too early just because something looks all-important yet completely impossible to achieve. Even important body issues won't always appear to be life-or-death issues, and perhaps even more importantly for transsexuals, an issue that looks impossible today may be much more achievable than you think. I think it is safe to say that nearly every transsexual in time finds that they achieved more than one physical goal than they originally thought possible.

You are not crazy

The key thing to remember while in the grip of a major depression is that the things you are brooding over are probably real issues but your hormone fluctuations have probably magnified them out of proportion. While you will still have your problems later, they will almost certainly not feel nearly so dire if you just wait a day or two. The important thing to remember then is not to try to solve the problem at that moment but simply to do whatever you need to do to get through the next day or so. Nothing else needs to be done right now. There is an adage that says "When it is not important to make a decision, it is important to not make a decision". Wise words.

There is actually a positive aspect to this situation. Often the problems that we fixate on at these times are subtle but important issues that we may not fully appreciate otherwise. Make a big mental note to take definite action on the issue as soon as you have the emotional distance to make rational decisions. Depression can actually be a tool to help you get your life unstuck.

Know your meds

It is important for natural women to always know where they are in their menstrual cycle and to understand what is happening to their bodies due to menopause so that they can better handle the emotional effects. It is likewise important for transsexuals to understand how their bodies respond to hormones and other chemicals. Different mixtures of hormones can have very different emotional effects. It is therefore important to find the

right mix for you. Recognize that fluctuations in your hormone levels—especially sudden dips—can have huge effects on your emotions. Diet, temperature, and unknown factors can trigger unexpected changes; so don't assume that a sudden depression is not related to hormone fluctuations just because you have been very regular with your doses.

Antidepressants are powerful drugs that can have large positive and negative effects and should be approached similarly to hormones. Unlike hormones, many antidepressants will suddenly stop working and therefore require additional monitoring care, ideally from a trusted therapist.

Disease, Alcohol, recreational drugs, and even herbal supplements can further complicate the situation. Become your own consulting physician by learning everything you can about all of these factors and try to take a scientific approach towards the experiment that is your life.

Find support

None of us could make it through this alone and why would we want to? We are social creatures who cannot be healthy without making close connections with others. Part of what may have attracted you to being a woman may have been the especially close bonds that women can make with each other. One of the best things about transitioning is learning to make these sorts of connections. These connections happen when we reach out and allow ourselves to be open and vulnerable with each other. All people in subservient positions tend to do this naturally, so this is one particularly good consolation prize that comes with your sudden loss of social position.

Chapter 3: Your House

Cleaning Tips

For the ultimate in femininity, learn to love to clean your house! This is the secret pleasure of many women and as well as many gay men. And as a bonus, you end up with a comfy, clean house!

It's interesting to notice that as a rough generalization, boys tend to have messy houses & clean cars while girls have just the opposite. A hot car for a guy is a way to impress, whereas for girls, cars tend to simply be transportation. A guy's apartment is a place to sleep, whereas for girls, it's often more of a sanctuary that reflects who they are. You may find it interesting to watch how your own feelings change on these subjects as you transition.

Dress for the event

Perhaps the easiest way to change your mood is to change your clothes. Put your hair up, wear a skirt or apron. Hell, wear a French maid's outfit if that works for you! Find ways to make cleaning fun.

Music sets the tone

I love to play the Gipsy Kings or other Latin music when I clean. This is not the time for Enya! Save that for bath time. For house cleaning, anything that gets you moving is good.

Incense and fresh air

Nothing is as oppressive as dank, stale air. Throw open your windows and try lighting some of your favorite incense while cleaning. Be sure to open windows or doors on both sides of your house to create a cross draft to remove all the dust you raise while cleaning. Do this even if it's cold outside and then heat the place back up when you're finished.

Getting down and dirty: Power cleaning

Try to go beyond just doing the dishes, laundry, and other obvious tasks. There's cleaning, and then there's power cleaning. Attack clutter, throw away or give away stuff you've saved but never use. Once in a blue moon, instead of just wiping down the stove, I'll also wrestle the whole thing away from the wall and clean behind and under it. Crazy? Maybe, but how can you argue when it feels so good just knowing that it's clean back there? I don't recommend doing that all the time but I definitely recommend exploring your inner clean freak once in a while.

A touch of pot can put you in the mood

I can't explain this one but I can definitely say that a little marijuana really helps me get into cleaning. It seems to allow me to notice clutter and other annoyances that I've otherwise tuned out, and it gives me great pleasure when I attack them. Yes, I am advocating the use of an illegal drug though I advocate even harder for legalizing it.

Feminizing your living space

No, you don't need to get yourself a white Persian cat, but those stacks of pizza boxes have definitely got to go! Here are some more things you can do to feminize your living space.

I like to keep my scarves on a rack near the door both so that I can select one when I need to at the last minute and also because they just look nice there. I hung them on a pretty red wooden coat hanger but you can also hang them on a coat rack or other suitable place.

I don't recommend having lots of visible stuffed animals or other nick-knacks displayed because having too many can give a very frightening effect. In fact, too much visual clutter of any sort is generally not a good idea. Strive for elegance and simplicity, but don't overdo that either.

Candles

Nothing says peace and serenity quite like a clean house with soft lighting and lighted candles. Add some nice incense and the right music, and it's positively seductive. This works especially well in bathrooms and bedrooms. Set yourself up with a hot bubble bath in a clean tub and you'll be in girl heaven.

Candles can be used in most any room but remember that candles, scarves and other fluffy, flammable things

do not mix. It's fine to burn several candles at once but only do it in one room at a time, and never leave burning candles unattended! Even if you don't burn the place down, you can still end up with an ugly mess when a dam full of hot wax spills all over everything.

Mirrors

You can just about never have too many mirrors around the house. You will definitely need a well-lit mirror where you do your makeup, as well as a large one in which to check your entire outfit at a glance. Full-length mirrors are great though they don't need to reach the floor as you can still see your shoes in a mirror that comes down to your knees. And anything much above your eye level is wasted.

Mirrors are also great to add to walls just to open up a room even when they have no other purpose.

Chapter 4: Your World

This chapter attempts to collect together all the items regarding how you interact with the rest of the world. Being perfectly feminine inside and out is wonderful but it is our social interactions that give it meaning. I would even argue that gender does not even exist outside of social interaction. This is what it is all about. This is why I go beyond the subject of passing and include all sorts of information that may help you to thrive and enjoy your new life.

Dangers

As much as I would love to begin by talking about the many fun aspects of getting out and interacting with the world, I feel I would be remiss if I didn't begin with strong words of caution. There definitely are some very serious threats out there that you need to be aware of and know how to handle. With care, you can make the process about as safe as you like but you need to understand the dangers.

Assault

The first time I went out en femme I felt as if I was going to die. I had this strong feeling that the first person that saw me would humiliate or attack me and that I would simply die. I knew it couldn't be that bad but that's how it felt at the time.

The truth is that even if you currently have no chance of passing, most people will simply ignore you. Of course people do exist who will say horrible things to you or may really attack you. The best thing you can do is to simply not put yourself in the sorts of places where the likelihood of this is higher. Travel with supportive friends when you can.

It might seem like a good idea to carry a weapon for protection but any weapon you bring can easily end up being used against you. Therefore any protection you bring should be nonlethal. Tazers and stun guns are bulky and impractical. I highly recommend carrying pepper spray. You always want to find a way to avoid confrontation but if confrontation becomes unavoidable, your goal is to find the quickest and safest way out

of the situation and a little pepper spray can buy you that option. The brand that I prefer is called “Spitfire” because it was designed especially for women. Every little aspect of its design came with us in mind. I especially like that it comes with an inactive practice canister. I was nervous when I first got it because I wasn’t sure what it would do but after I fired the practice canister I felt much more confident about how it would work in a real situation. I feel that I’ve gotten a lot of benefit from having pepper spray even though I’ve never had to use it. I felt much more confident than I would have felt in many situations just knowing that I had this back-up protection, and I expect that fact alone made me safer than if I would have been if people had otherwise been able to detect my fear.

Murder & Suicide

The saddest fact of all is that murder and suicide are among the leading causes of death within the TG population. Murder is mostly a result of transphobia, and suicide is an understandable result of severe depression caused by loss of family, friends, health, and social status. Hormonal swings can make any problem seem larger than it really is.

There is help available to you for each of these risks. Suicide risk is highest when they all seem to pile on at once and feel overwhelming. In those moments there is no need to try to solve your problems. Those are the moments when you want to reach out to the friendliest person you can find and make a human connection. If you don’t have anyone to call, then call a suicide hotline. These are staffed by the most wonderfully supportive people in the world who have usually been through the same feelings and survived.

Homicide

It is a disgusting fact that homicide is one of the leading causes of death among transsexuals. Most people are uncomfortable with our very existence, and even some of our most supportive friends will have difficulty introducing us to their friends and family. In some ways their prejudices are understandable. One can argue that there is no human characteristic that goes deeper than gender. It is the very first thing that people want to know about each other. If you tell someone “We just had a baby”, people will invariably ask if it is a boy or a girl before they even ask whether it is healthy. Why is that? It is because we categorize everything and we constantly refine our categories as we gain information. We typically don’t enjoy receiving information that doesn’t fit into our existing categories because that means we will have to work to recategorize some of our mental data to incorporate the new information. When someone learns that the sex of a person they know is not what they thought, it essentially means that they will need to recategorize everything they know about that person and may feel embarrassed about things they have said or done according to their previous assumptions. This threatens to force them to rethink their previously comfortable definitions of sex and gender.

Where this becomes physically dangerous is when such a confrontation brings into question a person’s own sexual orientation. Straight men can’t help but be attracted to clearly feminine features such as breasts and smooth legs. Men tend to fetishize various body parts and types of clothing, and the mere sight of these things provokes powerful emotional responses. When such a person knows or learns that those responses were triggered by what they perceive to be another man, part of them wonders whether they are gay. For some men this is a completely intolerable thought. Never mind the fact that their attraction to feminine signals in the first place is proof that they are not gay, just the mere hint of their having the slightest attraction to anything having to do with men can provoke a powerful panic response in some unstable men.

The severity of this reaction depends upon the person involved but is also in proportion to the amount of surprise involved. When a homophobe knows that a buddy of his is going to dress in drag, he probably won't like it but chances are that he can prepare himself enough to make jokes and hide his homophobia. On the other hand, the more time and interaction a homophobe has with someone they initially perceive to be an attractive female before deciding that they are not female, the more violent his reaction is likely to be. The worst possible case is when such a person has successfully seduced a transgendered woman and is about to have sex with her or actually succeeded in doing so.

I hope it is therefore obvious that you should never leave a public place with a man you've been flirting with unless you have made your transgender status absolutely clear to him. Even a perfectly passing post-op transsexual run a big risk in having sex with an oblivious man because he could always snap later and come hunt her down.

Even when you are arranging to have sex with a man who completely understands your gender status, you should be very cautious about the particularly dangerous first few minutes after he reaches orgasm. It is right then that some men will feel acutely ashamed by what they have done. When that happens, they will usually throw you out if you are at their place, or bolt if they are at yours. If that happens to you your best bet is to watch for it and to make it as easy as possible for him to be alone and for you to get somewhere safe as quickly as possible.

Abuse

We want to cultivate vulnerability since that is the essence of femininity, but one big downside to vulnerability is that it can lead to abuse. It is quite natural for feminine people of either sex to want to fantasize about being abused as part of sex play, but it is completely unacceptable when abuse is being forced upon us.

Abuse is usually not physical, and it's perfectly appropriate to get upset when someone is verbally abusing you or anyone else for that matter. There are two perfectly good choices you can make in these situations. The simplest is to just get the hell out of there as quickly as possible. Better safe than sorry. The other choice is to stand your ground. That's usually the riskier choice, so don't make it lightly. When you do, be sure to first access all the possible exits and all the other sources of support and risk in the area. Face your attacker directly and try to focus on the meaning of their words while choosing your own very carefully in response. Speak clearly. Do not raise your voice or call them names even if they do. Project self-confidence even if you don't feel it.

Perhaps the main reason that these situations become more common with transition is because we are putting ourselves into what most others perceive as an underclass, and just like with the bathroom police, some people who are particularly uncomfortable about our existence will take it upon themselves to enforce the class hierarchies. You will need to balance your own comfort and safety against the emotional and political needs to fight injustice. Always err on the side of safety but don't always just roll over either when you feel strong enough to confront it.

Choosing your new name

OK, now back to the fun stuff, the first one being that you get to choose your own name! While this can

definitely be fun it is also very serious because it affects the way people will relate to you and even the way you relate to yourself. Ideally you'll choose a girl name once and for all but that's pretty hard to do well right at the start. While it might be technically possible to change your name several times, my feeling is that for practical purposes you can count on being able to change your mind once but you really want that to be the last time. So choose whatever name you like to get started and then take your time figuring out what you really want to be called.

One funny thing about our community is that it seems like half of all t-girls initially name themselves Michelle. Go on; admit that you already thought of that, right? And why not, it's a very beautiful, perfectly feminine name. One question you really should ask yourself is whether you really want an extremely feminine name. Chances are you're not a 5'2" twig of a girl, so a name like "Kitty" may strike people as out of place and draw attention to the contrast between your appearance and your name. Remember, in order to pass, you don't want to give people reasons to consciously examine you. You ideally want a name that fits well with your actual overall presentation rather than what you might wish it to be.

In many ways, vowels are feminine while consonants are masculine. Names like Angela are hard to pull off unless you are highly feminine and angelic. Names that start with a consonant and end with a vowel are good compromises. It's surprising how many t-girls end up choosing names that start with the letter 'M' and end with 'a'. These are often good choices because the 'a' ending is beautiful but not overly feminine, and the 'M' beginning gives a good solid feeling, but again, choose what works best for you.

I highly suggest that you don't choose a name that most people have never heard of. You might want to take the name of a favorite great aunt or fictional character, but the amount of confusion that will cause and the explanations you will have to give can make that a poor choice. Ideally you will choose a common, easily remembered, unmistakably feminine name because that will work in your favor by giving people one more clue to your proper gender.

It's also helpful to not choose a name with more than three syllables. You can certainly do that but unless you also give people a simple nickname for you, it's a bit of an imposition to ask everyone to use so many syllables every time they say your name. Even three syllables can sometimes seem to be a bit of a burden for most Americans to deal with without shortening. Also, if you choose a long name and don't offer people a nickname then you risk having them choose nicknames for you which you might not like. You might also want to avoid single syllable names, not because they're a hindrance but simply because they're so plain. That suggests that two syllable names are pretty much perfect, at least for Americans. You can break any rules when you need to, but this should give you some good guidelines to consider while deciding on a permanent name.

Be sure to use your new name for a year or more before starting to change all your legal documents. This way you'll find out if there are any problems with it first and will have a chance to be sure you feel really comfortable with it. One useful trick is to test out different names when making reservations, placing food orders, etc. That way you get to see how easily people accept it and to find out how it feels when you give it to them.

Once you settle on a name you will want to start thinking about changing all your documentation. No matter how thorough you are, you'll probably keep seeing your old name forever. The most important document to change will be your driver's license since this is the one that is used most commonly and which associates your name with your image. The good news is that the DMVs are getting fairly familiar with the situation and

generally do not require court ordered name changes in order to get a new license with your new name and gender. They may well need a letter from a doctor or therapist. You should also know that the reception you get from one official at one location on one day can be very different from what you get on another official, location, or day. One thing that always helps is to have a good, feminine presentation. This is an unfortunate fact of human nature, so dress carefully and use your best feminine voice.

Bathrooms and Locker Rooms

The good news is that there is no reason for anybody to ever see your private parts in public bathrooms or even in locker rooms. The bad news is that certain people get very worked up about who should be using which bathroom. During my early days dressed in public I didn't use the women's restrooms for the first couple of years. There was also not a chance in hell that I'd use a men's room either, so it basically meant that I learned to hold it in a lot. This is of course a very sad situation made worse in my case by an early run-in with what I call "The Bathroom Police". These are people who take it upon themselves to try to enforce what they believe to be the proper restroom segregation. I believe there are seldom any laws stating exactly who may use which restroom and that even when such laws exist; they probably don't clarify exactly who is a woman and who is not. My biggest questions for these people are

- Who made you the bathroom police?
- If nobody elected you then shouldn't I have the same ability to decide whether I feel that you qualify to use a given restroom?
- If I tell you I am a woman and you don't like that answer, are you going to check inside my jeans?
- Do I get to check inside yours?

Actually holding such a dialog can easily devolve into discussions of the states of people's genitals which I don't recommend and seems to me to be completely beside the point because at least in women's rooms, nobody ever sees anybody else's genitals anyway. With the genitals issue dispensed with, the only argument that the bathroom police seem to be able to come up with is some vague worry about rapists lurking in bathrooms disguised as women; a situation that to my knowledge has never happened anywhere.

The bathroom issue is especially important for female-to-male transsexuals who run a far higher chance of experiencing physical violence in a restroom. Luckily, several FTM organizations are working hard to bring some clarity and common sense to bathroom designs, laws, policies, etc. The bottom line is that everyone should use the bathroom that they feel most comfortable in. Remember that you have just as much right to pee in peace as anyone else.

Perhaps my best advice about actually using a public restroom is to just go about your business and behave as if nothing unusual is going on. Nobody actually feels as if they are the bathroom police, but some people if made uncomfortable enough will decide that some sort of action is required of them. The easiest way to make someone uncomfortable is to appear uncomfortable yourself. Look at the other extreme: an obviously early-stage transwoman walks into a women's room looking as comfortable as if she's been doing it her entire life. For most or all of the women in there, this will be the first time they have been in such a situation and will need to quickly decide how or whether to respond. Most people in unfamiliar situations will look for clues from other people as to how to respond. In the case I described, the one person who will seem the most familiar with the situation will be transwoman herself, and if she seems to feel that this is a perfectly normal situation, then perhaps it is.

In the women's room, unlike in men's rooms, it's ok to look other people in the eye and even to chat a little. Don't be overly loud or friendly with strangers but don't be afraid to make eye contact either. Find an empty stall or wait in line and then do your business. Always pee sitting down. If previous occupants have wet the seat, then either wipe it off or squat like they did. Pee straight down and then use toilet paper when you're finished so as to make normal stall noises and to not soil your panties. Adjust your clothing, making especially sure that your skirt is not tucked into your panties and that you do not have toilet paper stuck to your shoe or anywhere else! These may be your only opportunities to privately adjust your tuck or to make any embarrassing adjustments to your wig, padding or clothing so double check everything and take full advantage of the situation if needed. Exit the stall and wash your hands well, being extra polite about sharing access to sinks and paper towels. Take the time to check the mirror and freshen up your hair, make-up, and general appearance, and then leave the restroom feeling confident, relieved and perky.

General Behavior

In Conversations

Most communication is non-verbal and the non-verbal aspects are more important for women than they are for men. It is just as important to understand and perform all the sex-linked non-verbal conversational behaviors as the verbal ones. Deborah Tannen wrote a popular book on this subject titled *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* which you may like to read if you want a deeper understanding of this important subject.

Once you have progressed to the point where you can sometimes get into a conversation without being read, how can you keep that going during a conversation? This is definitely difficult since it is such a complicated situation with lots of possible ways to fail. Perhaps the only way to really succeed is to truly feel yourself as a woman so that your actions will be natural. But then how to feel as a woman? Why, to act like one of course! We become what we practice. It's the only way that anyone becomes anything, so just keep trying all the ideas below and eventually it will become natural.

Your Presentation

It may be fun and exciting to get perfectly fully dressed and made-up, but in time it can become a big chore as well. Your behavior will get more natural in time but other parts of your presentation can lag when you start getting lazy. That's normal and not a bad thing but it is important to understand that when you give fewer obvious gender signs, that your chances of being read go up. If you start getting read more often, it doesn't say anything about you as a person; it will only mean that you're getting lazy. All you need to do is ramp up your effort a bit and all will be right again. One good trick you can use when you find yourself in that situation is to simply make plans to attend an event that will require you to get all dolled up. Even natural women occasionally need these sorts of reminders that they are feminine and desirable.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is a difficult subject for many men but it is essential for women. Perhaps this comes from women's traditionally subservient positions. A trapped animal will make strong eye contact so as to take in as much information as possible on its attacker. Whatever the reason, women tend to make strong eye contact with other people of both sexes, and to not do so can draw attention.

Women will also make eye contact with each other especially in tricky situations such as in restrooms or on the bus. I think this is so that they can assure themselves and each other that everything is OK. These glances seem to ask “Is it OK for me to be here/do this?” or “Are you OK?” People in crisis situations bond with each other, and several of these situations can be thought of as tiny crises.

Women also make eye contact with each other in comfortable situations for purely playful reasons seeming to say for example “Can you believe what he just did?” or “You go girl!”

I know how unnatural it can be for some transsexuals to make strong eye contact but please do try as the rewards can be huge; not just in becoming more passable but also in generating the important support you will need in for your transition and beyond.

Face the person you’re talking with

Turn your chair or shift your position in your chair and try to always directly face the person you are talking with. This is a strongly sex-linked trait and will make a big difference in the way you are perceived. Women tend to always face each other and men will often tend to look off in the same direction as they talk. This of course sets up a tricky situation when men and women talk with each other as each person attempts to do the opposite of the other, resulting in women feeling ignored and men feeling cross-examined.

Flirting

Not only is flirting a very feminine thing to do it is also a hell of a lot of fun! Here are some techniques to try when you want to ramp up the positive attention you are already getting from someone:

- Play with your hair a tiny bit. Playing with your hair is a very coy thing to do and attracts attention like crazy.
- Flash a quick smile immediately after making eye contact. Offering a smile is a great way to encourage an attractive but shy person to approach you. It takes courage for anybody to approach a stranger, especially one they find attractive, and an encouraging smile can really help the poor dears find the courage.
- Touch the other person. Even the briefest, most delicate touch is extremely flirtatious. Definitely do not overdo this unless you are getting strong indications that it is welcome.
- Touch yourself. It is much safer to touch yourself than another person and it can send the message that you are an extremely sensuous person. Don’t go overboard here either. Simply smoothing out your skirt or scratching your leg is plenty seductive.
- Bite your lip. Biting your lip can be especially precocious especially right after the other person says anything even slightly suggestive. It makes you look tempted.

Be Polite

Being polite is not just a good policy in general but it will help you to pass. That’s because women really are at a disadvantage compared with men in modern society. Women are therefore expected to be conciliatory towards men and supportive towards other women.

Mannerisms

Don't stare or point at strangers

It's perfectly fine to talk about other people nearby but it is considered rude to stare or point at others, so try to be subtle about observing or drawing attention to others. It is a particularly male thing to look directly at a stranger and to track their movements. That makes you look like some sort of hunter, and obviously gets men into a lot of trouble.

One good skill to develop is to take in a person's entire presentation in a single glance. Most women learn this trick and you can too.

Shut up and listen

You may not always be able to get an interesting point across. Just let it go. It's probably not a big deal if you don't make your point, whereas for a girl, insisting on making your point is. Not only is it very feminine and attractive to listen attentively but you may be amazed how much you learn in the process.

Make only indirect statements

You can offer any opinion you like but there are serious consequences depending upon the way you offer them. Men are encouraged to make direct statements such as "You should do this." That looks like leadership and the punishments for being wrong are often less than for being wishy-washy.

The situation for women is reversed. Appearing to give people directions implies that you're not being supportive or trying to foster cooperation. You can still communicate the same message but as a woman you'll simply need to say it differently, and the safest way is always to put it in the form of a question. So instead of saying, "You should do it this way", you might say, "What if it was done this way?" The message is the same but instead of wondering whether they should challenge your claim, everyone will be glad that you're trying to help. Words really matter!

Don't tell jokes

Do be clever, witty, and engage in all sorts of word play but don't tell prepared jokes. That is a very male behavior and is typically frowned upon in women.

Men's and Women's goals

Women judge the outcome of discussions differently than men. Men tend to come away from a discussion wondering who ended up on top whereas women tend to wonder whether a discussion brought them closer to the other person or further apart. So in order to increase your chances of passing, try not to argue with women and let men think they came out on top.

On The Street

Opening doors

Don't be sheepish when men open doors for you. They actually love doing this. Balking will make them embarrassed. Instead, give a big smile and a quick "Thank you!" Always hold the door for people behind

you.

Be nicer than you need to be

Cross at crosswalks; Wave cars and pedestrians through even when it is clearly your right of way. Likewise, smile and wave thanks for cars that let you pass, even when it was clearly your right of way.

There are a couple reasons for this. The first is that it is what people expect from women, so behaving differently draws attention. The other reason is that people will simply treat you better. These are not really different reasons because women tend to be nicer than men because their traditionally lower status required them to be less self-centered, at least outwardly.

Personal space

Try not to take up more space than you need. This is a highly sex-linked trait as men tend to sprawl and women tend to shrink. When sitting, men will spread their legs and extend their arms out over the backs of chairs in an unconscious effort to appear larger whereas women pull in their arms and legs in order to appear smaller and not be greedy. When using shared public seating, place your belongings under your seat or keep them in your lap rather than on adjacent seats. If you do use place things on adjacent seats, grab them quickly anytime anyone looks like someone might want to use the seat.

Avoid staring at people. Bringing something to read can be a good way to avoid uncomfortable eye contact but if you do read something, try to still stay very aware of everything going on around you, and don't miss your stop.

Try to ignore other people who stare at you. At first you will probably get this a lot. It's very rude but it's also understandable since transfolk are a rare sight for most people. You may continue to get stared at long after you are completely passing because you may actually become quite attractive. This is one of the prices of beauty that most of us would gladly pay. Still, it can be very uncomfortable for many t-girls and women in general, and if this bothers you a lot you might consider wearing sunglasses and large, concealing overcoats when appropriate.

On the bus

Riding on busses and other public transportation is a particularly tricky situation. You should make every effort to keep yourself safe as some people might attempt to take advantage of your vulnerability. Even when everyone on the bus is well behaved, it is usually a socially uncomfortable situation for most people, something like an extended elevator ride.

One reasonable exception to the "don't sprawl" rule is in public situations such as a bus where you might not be comfortable. In those situations it might be a good idea to use your belongings to defend against scary people setting next to you. It will be definitely be seen as a slightly aggressive act but everyone will also immediately understand it as a reasonably defensive thing for a woman to do.

Confronted by strangers

What should you do if someone suddenly talks to you? Well, that depends a lot on the person and the situation, but in general it is a good idea to look them directly in the eye and give them your full attention. It's easy to get flustered, so as another general rule it's a good idea to listen carefully and then take your time to think about what they actually said and to think through how you want to reply before doing so.

You'll probably know from their tone if this is going to be an unpleasant exchange, but if you can't tell, then it's best to give them the benefit of the doubt until they make their intentions clear. Who knows, they might be nervously trying to complement you on your stunning beauty, and you wouldn't want a suspicious look to stop someone from saying something nice. If they're being unpleasant, then it's fine to simply say "I don't want to talk with you" and then just walk away.

Confronted by police

Just the thought of talking with a cop might sound frightening to you but it's amazing to me just how much more comfortable I am when talking with police than I ever was as a boy. I think this has to do with the fact that men are usually trying to come out on top, but cops are almost always on top. Even if a man could make a cop feel inferior, that would not be a good idea because most cops would then feel threatened. For women, that stuff simply doesn't apply. The cop is an authority figure, so they get to be on top and that's the end of that.

After being pulled over as a girl once or twice I realized to my surprise that it was suddenly very easy to talk with cops because they generally communicate much more like assertive women than men. They will look you in the eye and talk clearly, formally, and to the point. They are always polite even when they mean to intimidate. It makes me feel good knowing that when I really need help that it will be easy to get them to listen to me and to focus on what is really important.

Of course there is always the chance that you will run into a cop that misbehaves, but even if that one hates transpeople and calls you sir, you should be able to say "please call me ma'am" and have them comply. You may feel afraid, but I suggest you do this anyway. When they treat you calmly and with formal language, it is generally simple to do the same and to focus on the real situation. I used to find their formality unnerving. Now I don't know whether I would ever want to date a cop but I definitely appreciate their formality and I'm sure that they appreciate my reciprocation. I've also never gotten a ticket for a moving violation since transitioning, for what that's worth!

Voice

Achieving a feminine voice is obviously one of the most important and difficult skills we need to learn but it may not be difficult for the reasons you might think. Most people believe that a feminine voice is mostly a matter of pitch but this is far from the truth. Think about the musical team of Sonny and Cher. What made the team so interesting was the fact that Cher's voice was much lower than Sonny's. In fact, her contralto voice is much lower than the average man's but you wouldn't mistake it for a man's voice for a moment. Why is that? It's useful to stop and think about that for a moment. The reason you never mistake Cher's voice for a man's is because all of the other gender cues her voice give are clearly feminine. This is good news for you because it means that you can definitely develop a perfectly feminine voice if you practice and master these other aspects listed below.

This will definitely take a lot of work and you should plan on continuing this effort indefinitely. Try not to

become complacent. It is common for t-girls to make good progress with an initial effort but then to stop working on their voices. That's ok if you're really happy with your results but many of these same girls continue to work very hard and make incredible progress with other aspects of their presentation and don't understand why they still have so much trouble passing. This shouldn't happen to you if you resolve to put a continuous effort into your voice. This is difficult for a lot of t-girls because it can be particularly embarrassing to attempt a conscious change to your voice. I promise you that your attempts will not sound nearly as odd to others as they do to you. Your effort doesn't need to be huge but it needs to be continuous.

Pitch

As mentioned above, this is far less important than you might think but it deserves a little attention since a higher pitch does contribute to a more feminine voice. The first thing to notice is that there is a huge variation in pitch in both the male and female populations such that the distribution curves overlap by a great deal. This means that no matter how low your natural voice is, there are almost certainly normal women with lower voices. It may not look that way because you will perceive those women as women and therefore might easily guess have higher pitches as you but if you measured them you would see your mistake. The following items will teach you how to cause people to make that same mistake with you.

Does this mean that you shouldn't try to adjust your pitch upwards? Not exactly. Each person's voice naturally varies in pitch by perhaps as much as an octave depending on their emotional state. Your pitch will naturally rise when you are nervous. When attempting to use a feminine voice it is ok to push your pitch to near the top of your normal range but please do not try to push it higher as that will sound artificial and will draw attention.

Vocabulary

If a group of men and women are speaking the same language, they're using the same vocabularies, right? Not really. When I began my transition and really started to listen to exactly what people say I was astounded to find how much of a difference there is. There are large collections of words that are used almost exclusively by one sex or the other. Avoid the masculine words and sprinkle your talk with several of the feminine words and you'll be making good progress. Here are some common examples:

Colors

Masculine	Feminine
Purple	Plum Lavender Mauve Eggplant
Pink	Fuchsia
Red	Scarlet Burgandy Maroon Cherry

	Candy Apple
Brown	Coffee Rust Tan/Beige
Light Blue	Turquoise Powder Blue Baby Blue Sky Blue

Desires

Masculine	Feminine
I Want/Need	I would Like/Love

Qualities

Masculine	Feminine
Good	Lovely Splendid
Bad	OK Not Great Not My Style
Great Awesome	Wonderful Fabulous
Ugly	Hideous Horrid Tacky Trashy Cheap
Cute Pretty	Lovely Darling
Tastes Good	Delicious Scrumptious Heavenly
Tastes Bad	Interesting Unusual

As you can see, you want to over-emphasize good qualities and underemphasize the bad. People will

understand what you mean. If you continue to use the masculine version of a word while en femme, people will assume you mean something worse than you intend.

Grammar and Punctuation.

Did you know that women have very different ways of putting together sentences than men? With practice, you can get very good at telling whether something was written by a man or a woman. This may not be so true of published writing because women tend to sound more like men when they compete with them, but in casual on-line chat and email it's very easy to tell the difference.

Here then is the perfect opportunity to try and pass. Pop into on-line chat rooms and try to make everyone believe that you are a natural woman. Since they're getting no physical clues about you, this should be easy, right? Once you get the hang of it, it is, and you'll be amazed what you learn in the process! For example, women use far more exclamation marks than men! Even two or three at a time!!! Try it!!

Create and dispose of as many profiles and personas as you like, and see how much further you can get each time before anyone gets even a hint that something might be up. This may be the one exercise you can do without the least bit of embarrassment so it's a great place to start and to invest effort.

If you're shy at first, try just reading other people's chat and see if you can tell which participants are women. When you find it easy to tell, look very closely and ask yourself exactly which cues made you decide that. Whatever the key was, try throwing in a bit of that into your own chat and also when speaking if applicable.

A great place to practice passing in a setting that is half way between text chat and real life is in the on-line virtual world of Second Life. SL is an immersive 3D world filled with real people who communicate either in text or in text plus voice. Everyone has a 3D representation of themselves that they can easily make to look like anything or anyone they like. Lots of men in SL will present themselves as female just for fun, so you needn't feel odd doing this. The service is free, so you can continue to create new accounts as often as you like. The first goal for you in SL should be to learn to adjust your appearance and behavior in addition to your text speech so that you can consistently pass. Once you can consistently pass in text chat, you can then try to pass using voice chat. The rest of your presentation will likely be perfect so you can concentrate on which aspects of your voice are causing you the most trouble.

Note that there are even TG support groups within SL which I encourage you to seek out. Just beware that SL can be an amazingly seductive place in which to live but it should not become a substitute for real life. Use it for fun and practice but keep making progress in real life too.

Inflection

Women often make their sentences into questions? Even when they are not sentences? You know, like valley girl talk? With lots of sentences ending on a rising note like a ski jump?

Sound silly? That's the first real question in this section. The fake ones are almost only used by women. Why is that? I believe it is because when women are speaking they are constantly looking for feedback that the other person is following them. When a woman poses a statement as a question such as "I was on my way to work this morning?" she will typically pause and wait for their listener to nod or arch her eyebrows or

otherwise confirm that she's following. Men like to orate or "talk to" people. Women prefer to connect or "talk with" people.

Perhaps another important reason women do this is to make their assertions less, well, assertive. A question such as "Maybe this truck is about to kill us?" is really just a more polite way of saying "Look out for that truck!" You get the idea.

This is one of the easiest techniques to master and it pays off really well. If you have trouble getting started with the other tips, maybe try this one first to build your confidence?

Emphasis

Women also tend to emphasize words more often than men. Just saying a few words more strongly than others is one way to add feminine color to your language. Try to hit one word in each sentence harder than the rest and linger on it a little longer. Pick out the most interesting or important word of course because you can easily change the meaning of what you're saying simply by emphasizing a different word.

Melodious Voices

Men tend to speak at a single pitch while women tend to make frequent pitch changes to their speech to the point that they almost seem to be singing. This is difficult to describe in writing. Listen closely to the pitch changes in women's speech and try to emulate the style. One simple exercise you can do is to watch TV and repeat everything that any woman says, as quickly as possible after she says it. The goal is to speak in your own pitch but to emulate her style as accurately as possible. This requires a bit of practice to listen and speak at the same time but can be very helpful. Try also emulating her gestures and facial expressions.

Coughing and Sneezing

At first it may seem impossible to cough or sneeze without sounding like a man but there are things you can do. The best thing is to cover up your outburst by ending with a high, falsetto pitched sound. For a cough, add on a high pitched "hem!" sound whereas for a sneeze, try adding a high "shoo!" While it will be obvious that those are voluntary additions, that doesn't matter. It still sounds reasonable and it works!

Ee-NUN-Cee-Ate!

Fully pronounce each word and make sure there is a clear break between words. Don't leave out the little words, and avoid using contractions. I have a lot of trouble doing these things consistently. It is obvious (once you really pay attention) that even little boys and girls speak very differently in these ways with girls speaking much more clearly and correctly than boys. These things also make you easier to understand and will earn you more respect in general.

The Telephone: The acid test

The trouble with passing on the telephone is that you have simply no gender cues to lead with other than perhaps a feminine name. You may find yourself being called ma'am almost all the time in public (yea!) but

almost never over the phone. That can be very frustrating but there is a good side to this situation which is that anytime you do get a stranger choosing to call you ma'am over the phone, you know that you're doing really well.

The trick is to learn all the above skills and then push them to their very limits. In general you don't want to push anything too far but in this case you may need to push some elements past where they still sound natural. The nice thing is that you can do this all from the privacy of your home and nobody needs to know who you are.

You can practice by calling different businesses more often than you otherwise would need to, and unless you must correctly identify yourself, you can even use different names. That can also be a good way to test out different names when trying to decide on a permanent name since you get to see how well they are received before you make any final decision.

What should you do when someone calls you "sir" on the phone? Just correct them and move on. It is important to remember to not get mad when someone gets it wrong even after you've corrected them. This is your problem to correct, not theirs. Just accept the sting and resolve to make it work the next time.

Dining

While there are not huge gender differences in dining behavior, there are a few things worth noting. The main difference is that men will often attack their food while women tend to sit back and savor it. So sit up straight and don't hunker over your food. It's certainly harder to avoid making a mess when you drop food if it's not over your plate, but dropping any food looks particularly bad for women regardless of where it falls, so take your time and make sure every bite is very secure on your fork before lifting it. Make sure each forkful is small enough to place comfortably into your mouth without smudging your lipstick. Once you take a bite, savor it and chew it slowly and well you're your mouth completely closed before swallowing.

Here's a nice tip: Always find something nice to say about your dish or even other people's dishes when served, and especially be sure to say or indicate something good about your very first taste. Women generally expect these gestures from each other and are likely to notice if you don't perform them. This is especially important when someone has prepared the food for you in a non restaurant situation. It is always possible to find something honestly good to say about a dish's taste or presentation no matter how awful it is.

Assuming the food is good, you may be tempted to eagerly devour it but it is important to not do that. This may be difficult for a couple of reasons, the first being that boys are taught that attacking their food and eating lots of it is the best way to show that they like it. The other main reason you may find this difficult is that it's likely that you will be trying to lose weight and therefore be often hungry and want to attack your food and eat a lot of it. One good way to avoid doing those things is to simply not arrive famished. Eat a bit before you go out to dinner if you need to and you'll find it much easier to eat like a bird.

Sometimes it's really OK to eat until you're stuffed. One important thing to know is that if you eat slowly, you'll find yourself completely full after having eaten less than if you eat quickly. That's because the feeling of fullness comes more from your blood sugar levels than from the stretching of your stomach. It is it takes a while before the food you eat affects your blood sugar levels, so if you chew and eat your food more slowly, you'll naturally eat less and lose weight.

Whatever you do, it is crucial that you not develop eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. These disorders are surprisingly easy to develop and difficult to self-diagnose, so pay attention if your friends ever express worry about you in these ways.

Family

Coming out to family is often one of the most difficult and terrifying parts of transition. This is natural because the stakes are so high. It is common for a transwoman to feel that if she can't make a successful transition that it'd be better to not even try or even to just be dead. I promise you that the situation is not nearly so dire and I also want you to know that these feelings are perfectly normal.

Up until this point, this whole subject may seem like a bit of fun involving only you. This is certainly much more about you and your happiness than anything else, but there are other people to consider, and you won't be fully happy until you can integrate your family into the changes you are making in yourself.

I came out to several of my best friends before I ever came out to any family. It took a while before all of my family accepted my change but none of them wrote me off. Perhaps I was lucky, but even if a family member initially reacts badly and says that they're going to disown you, they'll often come around eventually once they've had a chance to remember that you really are still family, to see that this is not some whim of yours, and especially after they see other family members coming to accept and support your change.

Many transgendered people avoid the subject as much as possible and try to keep their activities very secret. This just creates another, even larger problem because trust is the backbone of any relationship. Spouses often know that something is up, and the mistrust that secrecy generates will destroy the core of most relationships. One of the worst things about this trap is that it tends to be self-reinforcing because the more time and deception that goes on, the more explanations and apologies will be needed when it comes out later.

Keeping your gender status secret from family and friends is also not fair to them. If you tell them what's happening then they can decide how they want to react, but if you don't tell them, they'll never have that chance. In effect, not telling them is a way of saying that you do not trust them or believe they will accept you. Since you want them to trust and take a chance in you, shouldn't you be willing to give them the same consideration? Also, many people close to you may embrace your changes and your relationships with them may actually deepen once you open yourself to them, but that cannot happen if you never give them the chance. And besides, do you really want to be around someone who cannot accept who you are at your core?

When you do come out to someone and ask them to accept your new identity, be sure to forgive them when they forget and use the wrong name and pronouns. They have known you for a long time and it is far more difficult for them to get it right than for people you just met. Don't get mad at them when they make mistakes. They will want to get it right but will often have a very difficult time of it. It will hurt you a great deal but try to just gently remind them each time and try to keep your disappointment out of your voice.

How to come out

There is no single right way for everyone to come out but there are definitely some wrong ways. It is always wrong to simply show up en femme and expect that to show them how serious or natural this is for you. The idea is a good one but the visual impact is simply too powerful and counterproductive. Chances are you won't be terribly passable by then and it will be shocking for them to see what appears to be a man they know

in drag. Even if you are 100% passable, you'd still lose because then they'll see a woman standing in the place of a man they knew and may feel that you killed the person they loved and will likely feel all sorts of other conflicting emotions. You don't want to make their heads explode so it is up to you to find the most gentle and respectful time and way to break it to each family member.

It's also a bad idea to come out in writing. You may feel that you need to write out your thoughts in order to organize your thoughts and craft your delivery, and I think that's a great idea, but you should definitely not send the results in a letter or email. It's really important to come out in person or at the very minimum by phone when absolutely constrained by time and distance. This will certainly be a big moment for you, but remember that it's also a big moment for them too, and in those moments, the human connection is crucial. You can do it one-on-one or in small groups; whichever seems best. Just do not put it off doing it any longer than needed.

Spouses and Partners

Spouses and partners have special status and deserve to know more than anyone about your situation. I encourage you to come out to them as early and fully as possible. You may be naturally reluctant to do that because the stakes are so high, but that's exactly the reason I feel it is important to do this. The quicker you come out to a spouse or partner, the less explaining you'll have to do about why you kept this from them. You don't need to be sure of gender status or have any definite plans. Honesty is the key to any relationship so just tell them as much as you know and answer all their questions as honestly as you can.

Children

Children are obviously also in a special category but are surprisingly easier to come out to than friends and other family. People are always worried about how the children are going to be affected but I think that's often an excuse used by people who are more worried about how this change will affect them. Kids seem to take this sort of news much better than anyone else. In fact, the older a person is, the harder it seems to be for them to accept someone's transition. Children often simply need to be told that daddy always felt like a woman inside and is now going to change his body to match his feelings. Older people pile all sorts of things on top of this simple fact, usually having to do with themselves. Parents sometimes want to know where they went wrong or why their child is trying to embarrass them. Partners and exes often worry whether the fact that they hooked up with a transperson says something about their own sexuality; but children are often surprisingly easy to deal with. Just give them the basics very clearly but don't load them up with details unless they ask for them. Then simply answer all their questions as honestly as you can.

Teenage children might see your transition as a big problem for them but only because life as a teenager is already a big problem and they don't need any more. In general though, all of your close family are in this with you and they deserve to know what's happening. If you have a spouse or partner, I encourage you to come out to them first and make plans together for when and how to come out to the rest of your family and friends.

Extended Family

It's much less crucial when and how you come out to extended family members. Most of them don't think about you every day and so this news will tend to be more like juicy gossip to them than the world-shifting

event it will be for closer family members. Still, I encourage you to put a lot of care into coming out to those who are the most important to you. For the rest it's not so important whether you tell them over the phone or if they just hear it from other family members. Just make sure that none of them first learn about this by seeing you at a family function en femme!

Friends

Coming out to old friends

Transition is certainly going to change your friendships, and many of them may change for the better. I've been able to get much closer to several of my friends as a result of transitioning. Other friends have drifted away. This is not really a bad thing. One's circle of friends always changes as we do. What's different here is that during transition we tend to change very quickly in a short amount of time. One good thing about this situation is that it serves as something of a litmus test in which you get to find out which are really your good friends and which you may be better off without.

The transgender community

I've said it before but it's worth repeating that the transgender community is the most consistently useful resource. The irony is that most individuals within the community at any particular time are only there for a few years. You can make some amazing friends within this transient community, and it can be very much of a supportive family for as long as you need it, even if its members come and go. Individually, the members of this community may seem to be struggling and vulnerable, but collectively, the community has unbelievable core strength and invaluable wisdom.

One sad reality is that it is far more difficult to pass while hanging out with other transpeople because it is so much easier for people to notice that something is definitely going on. This is one of the reasons that people tend to drift away from the transgender community as they begin to pass with any regularity. It's just so nice to fit in and be treated as just another woman. But of course we always knew that, didn't we? If we didn't know that we wouldn't have such a strong desire to pass in the first place.

When and if you begin to find yourself to be passable, I encourage you to not feel guilty if you feel like spending little or no time with other transpeople. You deserve to enjoy the feeling of acceptance as a woman in the greater society.

This doesn't mean that you need to leave the fold if you don't want to. I highly encourage you to stay as connected and active in the transgender community as you feel like. Just try to be understanding if some of your close trans friends begin to feel some reluctance to being out with you. That doesn't mean that they don't love you; just that it's time for them to begin polishing their passing skills and enjoying the success of all their hard work.

And what should we do when we encounter a relatively passing new t-girl on the street? This is of course tricky because we know that it is not polite or flattering to tell a strange transwoman that she is not completely passing, but at the same time we may want to give her encouragement or connect with kindred spirit. I don't think there is a good answer to this question. In some cases I have taken the liberty of talking with strange t-girls, and some of those times met with very positive reactions and sometimes not. You will

need to just go with what feel right for you.

To the extent that you take valuable strength and support from the TG community, I encourage you to pay it back by supporting the new t-girls coming up behind you. Some people do that by creating or serving in TG support groups; others through political works. This book is my contribution. Your contribution should be in whatever way seems best to you. How much is enough? There's no need to sacrifice your needs for the sake of others. I encourage people to give back to the community in rough proportion to the value that you take from it.

Love & Sex

People get worked up about the subject of sex in all contexts so it should be no wonder that they get especially worked up about a body-modifying group with the word "sex" imbedded in the name. That just makes it all the more natural to assume that transsexuality is somehow about sexual activity rather than sex roles. The truth is that we have the same needs for love and affection as everyone else but society dumps all sorts of extra meanings and expectations onto us. We are not alone in this. Every marginalized subgroup seems to get a bit of this treatment but it's probably just more common for us.

So what does that mean for the transsexual? It means that dating and mating get a lot trickier. Unlike the rest of the population that has no right to know anything about what's between your legs, potential lovers deserve to know a bit about what they might be getting themselves into. Even 100% passable post-op transsexuals are not free from the problem. They might reasonably feel that their past is nobody's business, but their potential lovers might reasonable feel they deserve to know about something so controversial before getting physically intimate. I have little specific advice to give on how to best negotiate this tricky issue beyond what I already said in the subject of safety.

It may be comforting to know that there is a large population of people who are specifically attracted to t-girls. Often called "tranny chasers", these tend to be men who fetishize us and generally just want sex, but a few of them are liberated enough to love us openly and seek long-term relationships.

Many if not most transsexual women that I know about seem to be mainly attracted to women. If you are one of them, this might seem to make you a lesbian, but while that may be true on paper, lesbianism is as much of a cultural identity as it is a sexual attraction. If you feel that you may be lesbian, then by all means check out the culture but don't expect to fully fit into that community.

Many transpeople find their most stable relationships with each other. Nobody understands us as well as other members of our community, and for transwomen who are attracted to women, it is natural to hook up with each other.

A surprising number of t-girls seem to be drawn to the BDSM scene and dom/sub relationships. From the outside it would be natural to guess that this is a dangerous situation, except that all of the people I seem to meet or hear about who participate in those activities seem to be the nicest, most respectful, safe and considerate people you could hope to meet.

Participation in all of these alternative lifestyles makes us even queerer than we already are just by being trans, which is why a lot of us keep these parts of our lives separate from the rest. Again there is no right or wrong here; only whatever makes you happy. Everything is negotiable and I encourage you to explore,

discuss and discover what works for you. Whatever that turns out to be, I assure you that there are people out there who exactly want to be your counterpart.

Work

Cuts in pay and status

You may be wondering whether you'll be employable after transitioning, and that is a very smart thing to wonder about. In the long run becoming the person you feel yourself to be certainly could help you become a better person and a better employee, but simply transitioning will almost certainly not improve your chances to get a job or a raise.

Even if you become perfectly passable, you'll likely find that the feminists are right when they complain that women have to work a bit harder and get paid a bit less than men. The degree to which you are not passable will also work against you. Everyone wants to feel comfortable with their coworkers. Put this together with the fact that people are uncomfortable with people who are very different from themselves and you can see why this is a liability. It's not the end of the world either because most transpeople do find work. If you have valuable skills and you are smart about this, you should be OK.

I do need to warn you that unemployment rates among transpeople are extremely high, with one recent estimate as high as twice the general population. This is of course a deplorable situation but it's not simply the result of being trans. It's almost certainly the result of being trans in addition to other issues such as race, economic background, legal, medical and emotional problems. Another way to understand this is to look at the vulnerability that comes with being trans. If you have all the other advantages such as good looks, a good education, lots of experience, etc., your employability will be at greater risk of negative life events than non-transpeople.

You may be wondering whether you can work as a man but otherwise live as a woman in order to escape many of these problems. The answer is yes. I transitioned different parts of my life at different times as I felt prepared, and working was the last one. That worked fine as a way to ease myself into transition. I found it easy to hide my transition from my coworkers. The problem was that the more I enjoyed the parts of my life I was beginning to live as a woman, the more I began to resent working as a man. I found it more and more distasteful to pull on male clothing in the morning, and I couldn't rip it off fast enough when I got home in the evening. It was very useful to me to be able to take this cautious approach but in the end I knew that for better or worse I had to transition all parts of my life.

At that point I found that I needed to leave a job that I was not happy with anyway. I then went through a couple of years where I didn't work and I concentrated on becoming as passable and content as possible. Like a caterpillar emerging from its cocoon, the early stages of transition are particularly vulnerable. It is natural and important to take your first steps as carefully as you are able.

I was lucky to have enough money saved to get through those first couple of years. You may feel a need to change careers along with your sex. Initially I didn't feel emotionally able to continue in my previous field but in the end I was fortunate to find that I could still enjoy it. Still, I needed to make big changes in the ways that I found jobs as well as how I functioned on those jobs. The rest of this section contains tips that you might find helpful to towards making a successful transition in your work life.

Transitioning on the job

You may also be wondering whether you can transition on the job. The answer again is “yes”. It is certainly tricky to pull off but I’ve known several transwomen who have done it well. It’s tricky because you have to put a lot of thought and care into making everyone around you comfortable at a time when you naturally want to just focus on yourself. Here are some tips that you may find helpful.

It’s fine if you have already come out to some of your friends at work, but the first people you should officially come out to are the folks in your human resources department. If you work for a large company, they will hopefully already understand a lot of the ramifications and the legal implications. If you work for a smaller company, then you might have to help educate them on your needs and situation. Find the highest person in the HR department that you feel comfortable discussing this with and make an appointment to talk with them about something sensitive and important.

Understand that they will be more concerned with the effect this will have on the company than on you, and that’s fine because that’s their job, but they will also want to keep you happy as well because they’ve already invested a lot in you and want to get a good return on that investment. Don’t just show up en-femme! Be sensitive to their tricky situation and they will be much more likely to want to be helpful to you. Remember that they are people too and could still react badly but a big part of their job is to deal with tricky employee issues and it would therefore be very unprofessional of them to display any negative feelings they may have about the situation.

Be as open with them as you are comfortable with but try not to go into more gritty detail than they ask for. For example, they don’t have any need to know about surgical details but they definitely will need to know if and when you plan to take any medical leave. They will mainly need to worry about how your transition will affect everyone else. It is a good idea to discuss the subject of which bathrooms to use since this is likely to be one of the things your coworkers will worry about the most. If you have the option of using a single-use bathroom, I recommend that you agree to use it exclusively for a long time.

Work with HR to create a plan for your transition at work that you are both comfortable with. There is no right formula for this. Some people opt for big company announcements and others choose more quiet transitions. The mere fact that you show a great willingness to make it work for them will be crucial. Just don’t agree to anything that you are not comfortable with. For example, they may want you to delay your work transition for a lot longer than you will be comfortable with.

The laws regarding your trans employment rights currently vary from state to state, and while you may live in an area with very strong trans protections, employers can always find ways to get rid of you if they don’t want you. You don’t really want to work somewhere where you’re not wanted anyway, so regardless of the laws, your best option is to do everything you can to make everyone as comfortable as possible.

Looking for work as a woman

Even if you make a successful transition on the job, it’s unlikely that this will be your last job and that means that at some point you’re going to have to find work as a woman. While this thought may sound frightening, the good news is that getting someone to hire you over everyone else gives you comforting proof of your economic value as a woman. When I started looking for work as a woman, I had a lot of trouble getting any traction at first. This was very frightening to me but I relaxed a lot after getting my first job.

I have had exchanges with potential employers in which the subject of my transition came up (raised either by me or by them), and exchanges in which it was never brought up. Unless the position has contains something directly related to transgender issues, I recommend not talking about the subject at all, regardless of how obvious it might be due to your work history, voice, or other aspects of your presentation.

The Resume

The first thing you will need to do is to polish your resume. It doesn't matter if you haven't yet changed your name on a single legal document. Just put your new name on your old resume and read it carefully many times to make sure it reads OK for a woman.

You may be wondering whether you should remove references to past jobs that might be extremely unusual or impossible for women to hold. If you feel proud of that work, then I encourage you to leave it in. When asked about such a position, answer as you would have previously. Simply ignore any seeming contradictions and chances are they will too.

Interviewing tips

First let's start with the telephone chats and screening interviews which nearly always precede face-to-face interviews. The first thing to do is to make sure that you don't use your male name in your outgoing answering machine message. Use your best feminine voice and name, or if you are not ready for that, at least avoid leaving your first name at all.

Once you manage to get to a face-to-face interview, you will want to prepare. Be sure to have at least one outfit that is perfectly suited for a female candidate for the sort of positions you are trying to get. Examine what other women your age wear in those jobs. Aim to dress up slightly from that baseline in terms of price and style, but present more conservatively than you probably will once you are on the job. If the appropriate clothes don't fit you perfectly, consider having them tailored. Make sure that all of your clothes are clean and pressed and that your nails are well manicured.

Attractiveness helps too. Everything else being equal, attractive people are more successful and make more money than less attractive people. Give special attention to your hair, making it look as healthy and properly styled as possible.

Learn everybody's name as quickly as you can, and repeat those names back to them in conversation. Everyone loves to hear their own name, so be sure to use them even if you feel that you are being obvious about it. Listen attentively to what everyone there tells you, not just the folks you are interviewing with; and of course be friendly and respectful to everyone.

It's natural to be frightened in any interview, so expect to be positively terrified during your first few interviews en femme. Try to hide your nervousness as much as you are able and remember that as with everything, it will quickly get easier with practice.

Professional references

What's a girl to do when asked for references from previous employers who only knew her as a boy? Well, ideally you would contact some of your past bosses and coworkers that you had good relationships with and get them to agree to act as references for you. That means coming out to them of course and asking them to be prepared to use your new name and pronouns when talking about you. That may seem like a lot to dump on someone out of the blue. It will certainly be surprising to them but it's really not that big of a request. The most important thing will be to not use someone as a professional reference unless they will clearly only say 100% positive things about you because even a hint of a problem from such a reference is worse than no reference at all. You can include blanket letters of recommendation if you have them but know that they carry very little weight compared to direct contact.

Don't offer references before specifically asked, and don't provide one until that person knows about who might be calling them. It's perfectly fine to decline to give references before having a face-to-face interview with the excuse of not wanting to bother your contacts before an offer appears to be a definite possibility. Follow up with your references after each contact between them and a potential employer to find out how the conversation went and to find out what the employer asked about.

Troublesome coworkers

It's not uncommon that despite your best efforts, one or two coworkers will react badly to your gender status. Sometimes that manifests in overtly poor behavior, but more often such people will badmouth you in private or otherwise make it difficult for you to accomplish your job. If this happens to you it is important to remember that they are the ones creating a workplace problem and not you. In these situations is important to deal with them entirely by-the-book. Quietly document all the problems and troublesome interactions that you have with them even if you don't intend to ever do anything about it. Save all related email and phone messages. Create email and other records of your attempts to deal with the difficulties they are causing. Reports of interactions you had face-to-face is just your recollection against theirs, but email messages are hard evidence. If problems persist, you will need to do something about it because this sort of behavior is toxic to a workplace and easily ends badly. You will need to try to get the person to deal with you professionally before you complain to anyone. Most importantly, don't ever be unprofessional yourself even once otherwise you risk being seen to be as much a part of the problem as they are.

If, after two or three attempts, you are not able to resolve the problems yourself, it is time to take it to your boss, or to HR. If the problem person reports to the same person you do, then take it to your boss. If not, take it directly to HR. Try not to get emotional and just explain the situation and give them all of your evidence of the problem and your attempts to deal with it. I've had two or three such situations that have ended in those people quietly disappearing and leaving a much healthier workplace as a result. Maybe we can act as catalysts for clearing out the bad actors. If so, then there is a good reason why we can come to be seen as actual assets to companies and not just a source of issues to be dealt with. Being on your best behavior can have all sorts of positive effects for yourself and everyone else.

Self employment

Many talented transwomen simply find it impossible to get a job for one reason or another, or find that they must take enormous pay cuts just to find work. Oftentimes the best solution for them is to stop trying to get other people to hire them and simply go into business for themselves. These people can often end up being far more happy and successful than they ever could by working for other people. Most people are most

comfortable when given a secure job and a simple tax situation, but that tends not to be the best way to fame and fortune. When you work for someone else, you must do what is best for them and hope that it will also be helpful in furthering your career. Your employer may be generally good to their employees but increasing your value in the marketplace will not be your boss' first priority. In fact, your increasing value often works against their desires. So even though you might get a steady paycheck from a traditional job, you're still completely responsible for guiding your own career. On the other hand, when you work for yourself, there is no such tension because it is all about you and what you want.

Even if you are able to hold down a job as a woman, you might still find that you are treated worse than other women. It can be very hard to know when to let go of a job that is a known quantity in exchange for an uncertain self employment, and it can be even harder to actually do it. If you feel like this option sounds like it might be the right idea for you but you are not certain enough to take the plunge, there are ways to hedge your bets. For example if going it alone means becoming a contractor, you could try to see how easy it will be to find one small contract before ever leaving your day job. If you do get a contract, you can scramble to rent the space or equipment needed to do the work. You can even test the waters if you have no ability to immediately act on it by simply advertizing for the products or services that you hope to do, just to see what kind of response you might expect if and when you really do take the plunge. If you get little or no response, then you're no worse than before, but if you get a good response, then you can either jump on it or start planning the switch with more confidence.

Passing On (purpose & death)

No, this section is not about how to die like a lady; it is about the big picture: Why are you doing this? What would you do with your life if all your transitional wishes were granted? What do you want your life to mean?

At this point you may be mostly concerned with surviving your transition, or if you already feel that you will survive, you may be mostly concerned with how to have the most fun. These are exactly the right things to be concerned with early on. Emotionally you may feel very childlike, and children's major concerns should be about play and fun since this is how we begin to learn a lot of important life skills. Unlike children we also need to think about adult things and come to terms with the fact that we may need to squeeze more living into our new lives. We also have to think about mundane things that children do not have to deal with such as money, spouses, and our own children. I therefore think it is a very good idea to also ask ourselves at the very start what we hope to get out of our new lives and to make plans for achieving those things.

Perhaps you want to explore new kinds of sex with different people but you are already in a long-term, monogamous relationship. This is a natural and common desire in t-girls which is usually at odds with a traditional relationship. That does not mean that there are not ways that you can still experience much of what you want within the bounds of a traditional relationship. It does mean that you will probably need to openly discuss these desires with your partner and look together for creative solutions. Although this may be a frightening thought, it can also bring you much closer. If you don't want to leave your partner, then be sure to make that very clear. Some clever solutions include playing out fantasies together and engaging in sexual role-playing. Some couples agree to always sharing any new partners, or to require them to first be approved, or to be kept secret, or to place strict limits on the things that can be done with them. Whatever you do, be very safe and do not cheat on your partner. Having unsafe sex with others puts your partner at risk, and cheating is probably the fastest way to ruin a good relationship regardless of whether you ever get caught. Keeping secrets from your partner puts distance between you and destroys the very things we create

relationships for in the first place; I.E. companionship and intimacy. The more honest and open you are about the things you want, the more likely you are to get them.

Chapter 5: Passing Thoughts

If you have studied this book and put much of it into daily practice, you may find that you are generally passing. Congratulations!! So now what? There is a good chance that you may have become a bit obsessive about this subject and are easily crushed anytime someone reads you. If so, my suggestion is that you now relax a bit. You have probably achieved what you initially set out to do, and if you fall into this category than chances are that you far exceeded your initial goals and you deserve to relax and lower your guard.

If you took my advice at the beginning of this book and set some reasonable goals for what you then felt would make you happy, you may find that you're now surpassed all of those goals. If so, you owe it to your past self to try to be as happy with the results as you had hoped. I am not suggesting that you give up trying to become more passable and attractive but instead I'm suggesting that this may be a good time to reevaluate your goals. Who do you now want to be?

Style & Grace

Style

Style is a way of putting together a bunch of parts such that the whole makes a unified statement. This applies to people as much as other works of art. The first impression that you get when you see someone will contain a clear message of their personal style.

Now that you have remade your life and learned a great many useful techniques and behaviors, you might want to stand back and ask yourself what general impression you want to give. That is, what you would like people to say when describing you. Blond bombshell? Rocker chick? Professional woman?

These labels are not just about appearance. Your behavioral traits are just as important to creating your personal style as your physical traits. For example, if you want to cultivate a professional style, you will want to adopt a clear voice and a no-nonsense tone; at least when you are dressed for the part.

Do you need to have a style at all? Definitely not but I think you will be happier if you figure out what it is that you want your life to say about you and then find ways to achieve that.

Consistency is an important factor in creating a clear style but like with anything you don't want to overdo it. Ever see a woman wearing only a single color, right down to matching bag, shoes, and jewelry? There is something nice about it but it may also be distracting from the together look she was probably aiming for. The message she might be inadvertently sending is that she is prissy.

Hairstyle is by far the most important single factor in one's personal style. I highly recommend that you get advice from lots of different hair stylists about what sorts of interesting things can be done with your hair and

then allocate a large share of your beauty budget on getting a style that works for you.

One useful rule is to never have more than one eye-catching element in your appearance. Such elements tend to compete rather than compliment each other and can make you appear tacky even if each item alone is beautiful, elegant and tasteful. Sometimes it's difficult to realize which items are so eye-catching. It could simply be a bright top or a short skirt. It could even be a complicated belt or scarf or hairstyle. The trick is to figure out which of your items tend to grab attention, and to only wear one of them at a time. One useful way to which these are is to make a careful note of which items get complimented, as these will almost always be the flashy ones.

As always, observe genetic women closely. It is natural when you see a beautiful woman to think that it came easily for her. The truth is that in most cases, those women are putting a lot of work into making it look easy. Look closely and try to deconstruct her style. Figure out which elements are working for her and how exactly they're doing that.

Another useful technique is to pay attention to women who don't look so put together and try to figure out why their style is not working. Many of these women may be naturally more beautiful than the ones that catch your eye but they may not know how or have the energy to pull off a style or they simply may not want the attention that would generate. Deconstruct their looks and see if you can find the elements that are working against them. Almost nobody is naturally beautiful but with work and attention almost everyone can look like they are—including you!

Most importantly, learn to deconstruct your own presentation. Sometimes you will look in the mirror and think “Yuck, I'm ugly”. All women do this, and far more frequently than you might think. The trick is to not conclude that you are somehow fundamentally unattractive but to instead to puzzle out which parts of your presentation are working for and against the style that you want to project and then try a few things that might improve it. Sometimes something as simple as trying on a different pair of shoes can turn an otherwise drab outfit into something fresh and exciting.

Grace

Grace is beauty and elegance in one's movement and actions. It can be found in all the non physical aspects of one's personal style and is very much worth cultivating both to improve your ability to pass as well as to improve the quality of your interaction with the world and therefore your overall happiness. Being friendly, generous, open, patient, and nurturing are all common aspects of grace. This is not to suggest that you should become a nun, but simple acts of generosity and respect can go a long way. For example try not to be greedy or aggressive when it comes to small things such as eating or personal space. Make sure that everyone else is served and comfortable before taking care of yourself.

Choosing Not To Pass

Although most transsexuals simply want to pass well enough to blend back into society and get on with their lives in their new gender, some find that being a transsexual becomes an important part of their identity and that they generally want people to know that fact. We are very lucky to have a lot of attractive “out” transsexuals to represent our community; otherwise the general public's image of us come from the small segment of our population that is currently in transition. Although you do owe it to your community to give back in proportion to what it has given you, it is not your responsibility to remain out if that's not what you

really want.

But what should you do if you are generally passable yet want people to know that you are trans? You can't very well say "Hello, I'm a transsexual" to everyone you meet. Not only would that make you sound like a total dork but many people are offended when they feel that you are rubbing your agenda in their faces. Of course many of those same people will also feel deceived when they learn of your past after being allowed to believe that you are a natural woman. And of course pointing out this apparent hypocrisy is not going to win you any friends either.

This dilemma is not unique to transsexuals. Many gays, lesbians, bisexuals and other marginalized identity group members face similar problems. Many of these people choose to give hints of their identities by wearing particular earrings, hairstyles, or shoe brands associated with their groups. Some go so far as to wear group lapel pins or to talk openly about their partners with the same matter-of-factness that heterosexuals use. Just know that whatever strategy you choose to tell or to avoid telling strangers about your gender status is perfectly fine and that you should never have to apologize for simply being who you are and enjoying the same liberties as any other good citizen. Life is short for everyone, and since we got a much later start than most people, it's doubly short for us, so go and have some fun!