

Speaking of Crossdressing

Here's one critical piece of advice; **honesty really is the best policy**. Don't 'shade' the facts to support your contentions. You won't get away with it. Your body language and other nonverbal cues will betray you every time. You'll always have skeptical minds in your audience to begin with; lose the trust of just a few and you're toast. If you don't know, don't guess.

To the extent that you are comfortable, your answers should be open, direct, and informative. That doesn't mean that you have to reveal every secret, intimacy, or activity in full detail. If the question is too personal, simply say so and move on. I always tell my audiences that no subject is "out of bounds"; they have the freedom to ask any question they wish. Likewise, I have the option of answering any question with a simple smile.

Be **passionate** about your subject matter. Your audience deserves no less. Allow them to see for themselves the depth of emotion you feel; let it all out. No holds barred. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Use language which builds a picture in their "mind's eye". I start every presentation with something similar to this:



"Imagine, for a moment, that you grew up having to hide a deep, dark secret. One so terrible that, if revealed, people will call you a 'pervert', a 'freak', or an 'abomination'. If you're lucky you'll only be called names; reveal your secret to the wrong people and you'll get harassed, beat up, perhaps even murdered. How would you feel if you couldn't even talk to anyone about it? Every representation society provides about what you feel inside is negative. If you suppress it until you are married, you can never tell your spouse for fear of divorce, losing your job, being legally denied visitation with your children. You're in for a lifetime of shame and guilt and denial. How would you deal with it?"

With an opening like that, I guarantee you'll hold their attention. It's up to you to deliver the rest.

Following are some of my replies to the most common questions.

Define "crossdresser" - For the most part, a crossdresser is an individual who wears the clothing normally associated with those of the opposite sex. Although people of both sexes crossdress, for the purposes of this discussion, primarily I am speaking about men who feel a need to wear women's clothing. Often it's done in private, sometimes beneath their masculine outerwear, and occasionally as the primary attire. Crossdressers do not always affect a full, feminine presentation; many are quite happy to combine a full beard and a frilly blouse. I'll draw other distinctions as our conversation progresses.

Why do people crossdress? - Darned if I know for sure. It's largely an outer expression of an inner feeling - the feminine aspect of my personality yearning to be acknowledged. The most recent science suggests that this drive is a combination of nature and nurture. As you may know, all human embryos start off with a female destiny. Then, at a critical point in early development, the gestating baby is given a hormone cocktail which directs it either to continue its progression as female or to reprogram growth to become male. Current thought implies that perhaps the occasional hormone dose is a little early, late, under strength, of varied proportions, and so forth, such as to allow parts of the brain to retain certain attributes associated with one sex while developing the majority of its characteristics in congruity with the opposite sex. After the child is born, unknown environmental conditions complete the "circuit" and a transgendered personality develops. Speaking for myself, I don't spend a lot of time worrying about the "why". I've accepted who I am and prefer to invest my efforts toward enjoying my gender gift. A paraphrase from a '60s Joni Mitchell song comes to mind, "I've looked at life from both sides now..."

Are crossdressers gay? - This is usually the first question or assumption. That notion is reinforced by the most visible crossdressers (until now), Drag Queens - entertainers who are almost always homosexual and present an overstated parody of the feminine. It may surprise you to learn the incidence of homosexuality among crossdressers is approximately the same as in the population at large. An overwhelming majority of CDs (crossdressers) are heterosexual. Most are, or have been married, have children, and quite often are in professions which are thought of as "macho" in character. I know of policemen, firefighters, Navy SEALs, Marines, Green Berets, Teamsters, rocket scientists (really), and myriad others who are transgendered. Speaking for myself, I'm a pilot, military ordnance specialist, and small arms expert marksman. Many of us believe that we gravitated toward these professions in large part out of denial or in an effort to compensate for or repress our feminine expression. Growing up as a boy and being called "sissy" or "faggot" tends to steer us toward some interesting career choices by way of reaction.

Do you dress to attract men? - Clothing serves purposes other than protection from the elements. It denotes social standing, advises of occupational status, serves as decoration, and highlights sexual attractiveness. People seem to lock onto that last definition and forget the others. While at some level one's attire can signal sexual attractiveness, that

isn't the only reason to dress nicely. I wear what I do to please and express myself, to illustrate to others how I wish them to relate and interact with me, and because men's clothing is just so...yucky and boring.

Will you get a sex change operation? - For the overwhelming majority of crossdressers, the answer is "no". Only about three percent of transgendered individuals identify so strongly with the opposite sex that surgery is the only alternative to make them feel whole. They are known as "transsexuals". Some transsexuals will initially self-define as a crossdresser, either out of denial or lack of knowledge however eventually it becomes clear that they are on a different path - one which only intersects that of crossdressers. It is my belief that once society no longer stigmatizes gender expression or opposes people living in the role they know is right for themselves, even fewer will consider "the operation" as critical to gaining acceptance, both social and personal.



What's all this "transgender" stuff? - Although many use the terms interchangeably, there is a difference between sex and gender and sexual orientation. Sex is the plumbing. When the doctor spansk the baby and checks out the dangly bits, he writes either "male" or "female" on the birth certificate. Gender is in the brain; a social construct usually closely aligned with sex, but as we've learned lately, not always. We only have to look at other cultures to realize that much of what we think is "normal" or "natural" about being a man or woman in Western society is actually conditioned behavior. "Outies" are socialized in one way, "innies" in another. As it turns out, surprisingly few people exist at either extreme of the gender scale, 100% "masculine" or 100% "feminine"; most share attributes of both genders. Those near the middle of that scale are often noted as "androgynous"; those whose gender is not fully congruent with their sex are referred to as "transgendered" (or, sometimes, "pangendered"). Although it's difficult to get accurate figures through surveys, it's conservatively estimated that between 3% and 5% of men crossdress. Just ask anyone who works in a hospital emergency room. So look around, fellas. If you see nine other men whom you're certain are not crossdressers...

Sexual orientation is manifested in how and with whom one shares intimacy. Usually, it's "male/masculine/heterosexual" (anatomical sex/gender/sexual orientation) or "female/feminine/heterosexual". Life has shown us, however, that "female/feminine/homosexual" (ie: lesbian) is not uncommon, nor is the "male/masculine/homosexual" counterpart. It starts getting complicated when we talk about transgendered individuals, though. Because I am attracted to females but strongly identify as feminine, I am "male/feminine/heterosexual". Fascinating, isn't it?

Crossdresser, transsexual, drag queen, transvestite; what's the difference? - All are technically crossdressers, but much of the difference is in their motivation or goals. Transsexual candidates, those on the track for sexual reassignment surgery who consider themselves as "a woman in a man's body", must live in the female role for at least a year as dictated by accepted medical/psychological standards. That's a requirement designed to weed out those whose fantasies have overruled their common sense. Better to learn you can't resocialize as a woman *before* the irreversible nip and tuck. Drag Queens are most often entertainers, usually gay, and are always "over the top", almost a parody of the feminine. Some of the most beautiful women I know are DQs. For the purposes of this discussion, crossdressers are men who express the feminine components of their personalities through an external presentation. Most are quite happy to "graze in both pastures", so to speak. Crossdressing a few times a week (month - or year - for some) serves to vent the pressure and brings things back into balance for them. "Transvestite" is a colder, more clinical term for "crossdresser", one which carries more semantic baggage although the colloquialized versions "trannie", "tranny", or "transie" are currently acceptable when used within the transgendered community.

Is crossdressing a mental illness? - Hardly. Some well meaning (but mistaken) psychologists would paint all crossdressers with the broad brush of "Gender Dysphoria", however that term is more correctly applied to those who are having difficulty in adjusting to being transgendered. The heavy price society extracts from crossdressers - the pressure for secrecy, denial, and the incessant negative images from the media (I'll talk about that later) - is often evidenced by stress, depression, or anxiety which are genuine causes for concern. Once the crossdresser has a better perspective about being transgendered, those symptoms usually disappear. Although crossdressing was regarded as a mental condition in early psychology texts, modern revisions are slowly removing that stigma as we learn more about the subject. For example, crossdressing is no longer an impediment to obtaining a national security clearance. Remember, at one time, homosexuality was considered a mental illness, too. People were confined, subjected to electroshock "cures", lobotomies, aversion therapy, "deprogramming", and worse in an effort to make them "normal". Crossdressers haven't been victimized to that extent, however we're still one of the last minorities it seems socially permissible to ridicule.

In short, most of the "dysphoria" a few crossdressers may develop is due, not to the crossdressing itself, but because of the pressures of social ostracism and disapproval. Left handed ("sinister") people used to suffer a similar outcast status - until baseball was invented, that is.

A friend of mine wields her Occam's Razor in this manner:

"Our unwritten cultural rules tell us only some things are OK for both genders. The Women's Movement of the 1960's saw genetic females break those taboos supporting

male privilege to make their marks as jet pilots, television news anchors, and in myriad other pursuits previously prohibited for women. What about genetic males who happen to enjoy stuff heretofore exclusively 'female'? There is no 'illness'."

Crossdressing is really a fetish, isn't it? - Another generality which comes from overlapping of psychological sets. There is indeed a condition known as "transvestic fetishism" - a sexual fetish for which the object of focus is clothing normally associated with the opposite sex. But there is also a sexual fetish for rubber wading boots. Is every fisherman afflicted with a psychiatric disorder? While some fetishists are crossdressers, most crossdressers are not fetishists. While some serial rapists are Baptists, most Baptists are not serial rapists. Get the idea?



Everything I've heard about crossdressers is negative. - Gee, I wonder why. That's the media influence I was talking about earlier. "Psycho", "Dressed to Kill", "Silence of the Lambs" and other films such as those have defined crossdressers as deviant killers and sadists. If those weren't bad enough, let's recall the infamous, gender-bending Dr.

Frankenfurter of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show"; there's a pretty picture.

Other movies or television series like "Tootsie", "Bosom Buddies", "Mrs. Doubtfire", "M*A*S*H" and "Some Like it Hot" have shown that the only socially approved purpose for crossdressing is as a desperate,



temporary measure to an end - getting a job, finding an apartment, seeing one's children, seeking a discharge from the Army, or escaping the mob. Even then, it's played for a laugh.

We're all familiar with the Drag Queen images, "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert", "La Cage Au Folles", or "To Wong Fu, Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar". Should you dare venture into an adult book store, you'll find images of males presenting as women which are never flattering. All of these abundant stereotypes create less than a positive, accepting view of the crossdresser. No large release films have been made about those who crossdress simply to more fully express themselves. I guess the subject matter would be rather boring.

Why are most crossdressers men? - They aren't. However most of the women who crossdress do so under the acceptable umbrella of "fashion" or "comfort". These days, it's no big deal to see a woman in slacks and a T-shirt. However our society has still not learned to be as open minded with a man in a skirt or a ruffled blouse. Those of you who are old enough will remember the furor when women first started wearing pant suits. Many were denied admission to theatres, restaurants, and the workplace because of "inappropriate attire". Thank goodness that's changed. Now, men are beginning to demand equal treatment under the law and social custom.

When did you discover this? - Long before I knew there were two sexes - about 5 years of age or so. Most crossdressers recall experiencing the same feelings somewhere between 4 and 9 years old. I have always been more comfortable in the company of women and have self-identified with the feminine since my earliest memory. My parents and society had other ideas, of course. It has only been recently, primarily due to the explosion of information available on the Internet, that I have come to realize how many of us share similar histories and experiences.

Why can't you just stop? - Can you stop being left handed? Did some of you decide to have a good sense of direction? Of course not. The "hard wiring" in the brain which has given me feminine attributes is equally as impossible to change. Believe me, all of us have tried. Do you think we would choose to be scorned, ridiculed, jeered at, even possibly assaulted? Do you think we prefer to have kept such an important part of our personalities a deep, dark secret even from our closest loved ones? Among crossdressers there is a common "Binge and Purge" cycle. We buy clothing because we enjoy and relate to these nice things. Then society's shadows of guilt and shame and personal disgust darken us and we toss our treasures in the trash, promising ourselves never, never again to yield to the temptation. Until the next time. All the while berating ourselves for not being strong enough to resist. It isn't a pretty picture. Universally, closeted crossdressers (those who are in deep denial to themselves and others) share low self esteem.

You can't fool me; you crossdress to get attention. - A frequent criticism of those who dare to be different from the crowd is that they "do it for the attention", as if getting attention were a bad thing, making self expression illegitimate. You might ask yourself why those who fear the attention of their peers appear to resent others who are not so afflicted? To lead a symphony you must occasionally turn your back on the crowd.

So you're an activist for special transgender "rights"? - As far as demanding our rights to freedom, we don't have to demand anything. That freedom has always been there for us to exercise. The greatest limits we face have been in our own minds. Recently national attention has been brought to a number of cases in which long term employees with excellent work records have been summarily dismissed because it was learned that they crossdress during their non-working hours. This is totally wrong. I would like to believe that outreach such as this will change enough minds to make divisive legislation unnecessary.

Does your family know? - They do now. My wife of 35 years has known I crossdress

from the first year of our marriage, although neither of us had a clue what it was really all about for a good long time. Out of a desire to project the image of a "good parent" (and a lot of that guilt and shame I mentioned) I kept it from the kids. Once they were grown and out of the house, I allowed myself much more freedom of expression. Then my 21 year old daughter needed to move back home. So we sat her down and told her the works. To her credit, she didn't bat an eye and is far more accepting than I might have hoped. When I came out to my son, now 28 and 9 years into a Naval career, he shrugged and said with a wry smile, "I'm going out for a hamburger. Want to come along...looks?" If I have one regret, it's that I didn't tell the kids when they were young. I've come to believe that if we, as parents, don't make a big deal out of it, neither will the children.

Has crossdressing affected your marriage or relationship? - We would have had an easier time of it were I not transgendered. When I first addressed the reality and "came out" to my wife, I - like many others - went a little overboard. Sort of like a kid in a candy store. Or a teenage girl at the makeup counter, to be more precise. In fact, many emerging crossdressers go through the same sort of prepubescent behavior; experimenting with hair, makeup, suggestive attire, etc. The clothing, actually the money I spent on clothing (the average 'out' CD invests about \$3,000 in wardrobe), was becoming an issue. My "stuff" was a lot nicer than hers and, the two of us being different sizes, she couldn't borrow any of it. Now that I've given myself permission to dress nicely, she's done the same for herself and we both have higher quality wardrobes.

One day my wife referred to me not as her husband but as her "roommate"! Yikes. It was her way of telling me she was willing to accept me in all my modes of display, but that she had married a husband and wanted some "man time" every now and then. So, as in all good relationships, we found a balance. She's still my favorite fashion consultant and is always the "final check" before I head out the door.

Not all couples are so fortunate. Some wives can't deal with it at all, packing up the kids and heading home to the parents. Others attempt to force their husbands to stop - but eventually it comes back, regardless of promises or the best of intentions, and the troubles begin anew. A few spouses tell their crossdressing husbands that the divorce lawyer's number is set on the telephone speed-dial and use the situation as a basis for extortion. Some women say, "Just don't do it anywhere but in the bedroom" while a few more might demand the opposite, "Do what you wish when you go out with your friends, just don't bring it home."

It can get very complicated. Sociologists have shown us that while men define themselves by what they do, women often seek personal definition through their relationships. Following a husband's revelation of crossdressing, a wife may ask of herself, "If I'm not a man's spouse, what does that make me?"

One advantage to being transgendered is that I've become a better listener, more empathic, and less inclined to lose my temper when angry. I've learned to acknowledge my feelings and have lost much of my testosterone driven urge to be competitive. I'm a nicer person now.

Where do you go when crossdressed? - Well, there's Dillard's, Nordstrom's, Neiman-Marcus, Saks, Macy's... I also have stood in line at the grocery store, the bank, and the post office; I've taken the car to Jiffy Lube; gone to the movies; and have flown to distant cities. I have walked, in a slinky ball gown, across Times Square, ridden the Market Street Cable Car in a sweater and jeans, and have dined in some of the nicer restaurants in cities across the country. In every one of these venues I have always been treated like a lady. The only places I don't go are establishments with motorcycles out front, "gentlemen's clubs", places with lots of sports memorabilia on display, or bars named after the noisies owls make.

The more timid crossdressers often limit themselves to a midnight drive around the city. Their first baby steps out of the closet might be a trip to the ATM machine or a MacDonald's drive-through. The gay community is generally quite tolerant of crossdressers (although often as misinformed as the general public), so many CDs will seek safe haven in "drag bars", nightclubs or lounges which feature shows by Drag Queens.

In some cities, "Transformation" services are popping up, offering complete makeovers from head to toe - often for a substantial fee - and do a brisk business with emerging CDs. The client is given the opportunity to dress fully en femme, perhaps for the first time, and is escorted to "CD friendly" stores or restaurants. Sadly, many of these services are merely capitalizing on the CD's lack of self-acceptance and charge inflated prices or offer products of inferior quality.

There are organizations such as Tri-Ess (a national support group for heterosexual crossdressers) which offer additional secure opportunities for these folks to gather and socialize. Once they discover that they are not alone, that there are thousands of otherwise "normal" people who crossdress, many become much more self-accepting. They loosen up and begin to explore their gender gifts and develop more integrated personalities. These organizations also offer support for wives or "significant others", too. The idea is to help everyone learn that crossdressing is an expression of inner gender, not some sexual perversion. Most Tri-Ess Chapters have monthly programs featuring topics of interest to their members. Presenters may be image consultants, police community outreach officers, gourmet chefs, cosmetics experts, sociologists, community activists, etc. Tri-Ess also has an annual conference, the "Holiday En Femme" which is a weekend getaway at major hotels and conference centers during

which members may - as the title implies - remain crossdressed the entire weekend. There are even crossdressing ocean cruises available!

Why does Tri-Ess only address the needs of "straight" CDs - isn't that discriminatory?

- Defining a focus does not imply a negative attitude toward any group that may lie outside that self-definition. It is the nature of human beings to gather together into groups based on common identity and interests. Each group is free to define its own mission and purpose. Tri-Ess has chosen to focus its support programs on a relatively homogeneous group with common interests - heterosexual crossdressers and their spouses, partners, and families.

The heterosexual crossdresser has distinct needs which cannot be addressed using the same solutions that apply for other transgendered people or gays. Most crossdressers are married; a wife's first question, based on social stereotypes with which she likely was raised, is whether she will lose her husband to a gay lover or sexual reassignment. They are concerned for their husbands and their marriages, and fear the impact crossdressing might have on them. Tri-Ess provides a warm, nurturing environment in which these couples can sort out their feelings, educate themselves about crossdressing, and reach a mutual accommodation.

It is easier to convince people to join a support group when they are comfortable with its mission. Once they accept themselves, they are able to expand their horizons and relate to other elements of the GLBT community. In Phoenix AZ, Houston TX, Chicago IL, and many other places, the Tri-Ess chapter works hand-in-hand with the gay and lesbian community, realizing that each has a part to play in addressing common goals. But it all works because everyone has a group that meets their particular needs. There is unity here, not division; cooperation, not discrimination.

Do you dress this way all the time, then? - Nope. Just as my gender is not 100% masculine, neither is it 100% feminine. Thus, I don't really feel the need to present one way or the other all the time. Because I work out of a home office - I'm a professional speaker/trainer - you can usually find me around the house in an androgynous sweatshirt. Indeed, there are times when it is to my advantage to be present as one gender or the other - for example when I take my car in for repair or when I dispute a transaction at the bank. That's when you'll see me in my Armani "power" suit, Brioni necktie, and Bally wingtips. I'm not above using a particular "uniform" favorably to influence others in their interactions with me. I get much better service in the department store ladies' section or at the nail salon when en femme.

What's with the female name? - Many of the crossdressing support groups understand that new members are very apprehensive and often prefer anonymity - at least for a while - so the use of a femme pseudonym is encouraged. Also, since many CDs first start emerging via the Internet, it's a good idea to use a nom de plume. Besides, it's pretty hard to self-identify as feminine when referring to oneself as "Harry" or "Phillip". There is an annoying trend among crossdressers to refer to themselves in the third person, or to speak of their feminine "side" or "persona", such as "When I'm Sally, I often prefer salads over heavy meals; she's more focused on nutrition than I am." I believe that it's not productive to use language which encourages others to infer the multiple personality paradigm. I am a person who is exploring additional facets of my sole personality, not two people in one body. As time passes, these various, formerly suppressed attributes become more fully integrated - the "guy" and "gal" are merging, making me a much more "whole" person.

How do you supplement your bust line? - Some T-girls use water balloons (a dangerous practice if you occasionally wear brooches or scarf pins) while others use stockings stuffed with rice or birdseed (the warm, humid environment may cause the latter to germinate, however). A common practice is to position the knot in the balloon or stocking facing forward to elicit comments like, "Is it too cold in here?" Those on a budget may use the foam rubber "falsies" from a Frederick's of Hollywood catalog (Have you noticed how many shoes they offer in sizes over 11? Ever wonder why?). Crossdressers with deeper purses may wear the same expensive, prosthetic external silicone breast forms designed for post-mastectomy patients. They can be selected according to size, they jiggle properly, and they warm up to body temperature after a bit. Some are even attachable, using surgical adhesive, to provide a "braless" look under certain fashions.

There's nothing like a little décolletage to deactivate someone's "gender alarm". A fascinating technique, called "taping" is employed to produce faux cleavage for those fashions with which it might be required. It's time consuming and potentially painful (blisters from adhesive tape pulled too tight) so I seldom go to the trouble these days. A niche market industry for crossdressers has blossomed, producing figure enhancing underwear, cleavage for the bosom and additional roundness for hips and buns. We can't narrow our masculine shoulders so we widen our bottoms a bit to get that nice 10:7 hip:waist ratio.

What do you do with "it"? - A firm panty girdle usually hides any unsightly bulges. For those who prefer to wear skintight shorts, leotards, etc., there is a procedure known as "tucking" which pretty much mimics the contour of female anatomy. My fashion preference is fairly modest so I've never felt the need to expend the effort. Besides, there have been some reports of unpleasant medical side effects due to prolonged tucking.

Do you take hormones? - Why? Hormones are not necessary for me. I'm a crossdresser, not a transsexual. There are some individuals who prefer to live as full-time women and, for one reason or another, eschew surgery but still desire the smoother skin and relocated soft tissue which occurs under a hormone regimen. One of the most notable is

Virginia Prince - one of the founders of Tri-Ess, a national sorority for crossdressers - who refers to herself as a "transgenderist", I believe. Others use the term "non-op" (no operation) transsexuals. While there is a growing underground market in synthetic or extracted hormones (as well as "herbal" hormones), self medicating is a bad idea. I always suggest to my transsexual-tracked sisters that they consult with an endocrinologist at least, in order to minimize life-threatening side effects.

Who does your makeup? - Three experts; Estee Lauder, MAC, and me. I often wonder why people assume that doing makeup is difficult for men. Most of Hollywood's leading makeup artists have been men - Bud Westmore, Ben Nye, and Max Factor are the first names to jump into mind. So it's not as if the presence of a Y chromosome is somehow disabling. Having a masculine face does present its share of problems, however - a wider nose, jaw, and forehead; that simian overhanging uni-brow; a greater distance from nose to upper lip, larger pores, beard, etc. I use specific makeup shading techniques, called "contouring", which help provide a more feminine aesthetic. My beard is light, sparse, and slow growing - I'm one of the lucky few. Those who have the swarthy, blue-black beard shadow must go to considerable lengths to cover it. The well-moaned among us often undergo laser or electrolysis treatments to remove facial hair.

Do you shave your legs? - Nope. I epilate. An epilator is an electric device which would have been at home in the basement interrogation rooms of the infamous Lubyanka Prison. It performs the same job as tweezing the hair only it accomplishes the task wholesale, yanking out dozens at a time as you run it over your legs. After the first session, you get used to the discomfort - sort of. As opposed to shaving - which leaves sharp stubble to emerge as the hair grows, or chemical depilatories which not only smell to high heaven but also irritate skin - the epilation process is a blessing. Think of it as mechanical waxing. When the hairs regrow, they are tiny tendrils as opposed to full, thick hairs; some follicles just seem to give up after a few multipluckings and never sprout hair again. Armpits and bikini area still get the razor and foam treatment, though - too sensitive.

Some really hirsute CDs also shave their arms and chests, especially if their natural hair color is dark. They may also bleach their arm hair as it regrows so as not to draw undue attention.



Which bathroom do you use? - The one which offers the least physical hazard. Think about it - in one you get screamed at, in the other you get beat up. Which would you choose? Generally, I enter the restroom which has a picture on the door of what I'm wearing at the time. I remain quite aware that women consider the restroom as "sacred space", a refuge from a world they perceive to be inhabited by predatory males. Although it should be obvious that a man bent on violence isn't likely to emulate his victims, some women will still respond emotionally to a man in the women's restroom, even if he is attired in Dana Buchman or Escada. So I go in quickly and quietly, enter a stall,

close the door, and take care of business (seated, of course). When ready to leave I quickly wash my hands and vamoose. No loitering to primp, talk, or gander.

You'll be interested to learn that in all but a few, rare places, public (ie: local, city, state, national government) restroom use is not a matter of law but of social convention. Still, a transphobic cop can always make a charge of "disturbing the peace" or "public indecency" (both likely to be thrown out of court, but who wants the hassle?). So it behooves us to behave ourselves and not create a scene. Private restroom use (in stores, malls, restaurants, etc.) is subject to other considerations - if the property owner or tenant asks you restrict your restroom use to one or the other you must comply or face the prospect of being charged with trespass. But only after you are so informed and fail to comply.

Here's another reality: many establishments offer the same capacity facilities for both men and women, but for understandable reasons women take more time and their lines are longer. There may be a certain amount of well-justified resentment among the women if a guy in a dress insists on extending their waiting time. In certain situations, women have been known to toss social custom to the winds and walk through the other door to answer their call of nature, so it wouldn't be the end of the world for a man en femme to (horrors!) enter the men's room. Basically, we try to use situational judgement and common sense.

OK, what if you are stopped by the police? - Understand this; cops deal with the worst sort of human detritus on a daily basis and therefore tend to infer the lowest common denominator. An unenlightened officer's first reaction may be that we are in a "disguise" for some reason. If a crossdresser is wearing provocative attire, the image of a "transvestite prostitute" may come into his mind. So it's important to project as relaxed an attitude as possible. Remember, it is not against the law to dress as we wish. Just supply your valid I.D. (yes officer, I'm wearing my hair differently) and don't worry. Cops are the good guys.

For a police officer, every traffic stop can be a potential life and death situation. So put them at ease by doing nothing to activate the reflexive "danger" response. Interior light on, ignition off, and hands clearly visible on the steering wheel. Once he (or she) is assured that this is a simple citizen encounter, you'll likely have no problems. Cops have greater concerns than guys in dresses. Due to the potential of litigation these days, the officer may call for backup, just to have a witness that no harassment is occurring.

In certain enforcement areas, during particular nighttime hours, it's standard operating procedure to have extra units participate. Some CDs have errantly interpreted this as "calling the squad over for a laugh". Heck, call the entire precinct for all I care; I'm an extrovert and don't mind the attention at all. I'll even use the event for a little outreach.

By the way, if you *are* arrested for some offense, you have the right to request segregated custody for your safety. In Arizona, when the dreaded pat-down is performed, you can insist it be done by an officer of the gender you are presenting. In Phoenix, we have a pretty good relationship with the police department; their public affairs officers speak to our groups and in return, representatives of the transgendered community work with the department through citizen panels.

Are you trying to pass as a female? "Passing" is a big deal in the crossdressing community and it shouldn't be. Many CDs sustain a fantasy about passing, I suspect it's because they imagine they won't be noticed and thereby held accountable for their actions. The makeup becomes a mask, providing anonymity. So they wear short skirts, fishnet hose, and 6" spike heels at the mall! Go figure. Those who have a brain in their heads will dress with a certain degree of age-appropriate style and panache, always looking nice; so even if they are "clocked" others will respect them for maintaining an aura of decorum. I want to project as nice an image as I can, so I go the extra mile with hair, makeup, figure enhancements, etc. Many people still see me as a man in a dress, but at least they see a stylish, fashionable man in a dress. In reality, most folks are just too self-absorbed in their own worlds to notice or care much at all about the people around them.

As far as I'm concerned, it's not passing I'm after - it's acceptance or, at least, tolerance. That puts the onus on others; if I get clocked and the observers still treat me with respect, they pass!

Has anyone "come on" to you; how do you react? - Unless they are clueless, myopic, or drunk, in my case none believe they are propositioning a genetic female. I may 'pass' from a distance or in a dimly lighted room, but up close I'm definitely a man in a dress. Assuming the offer is sincere, I accept it as flattering and say so, but also inform that I am 32 years happily married and that I respect my wedding vows.

There is a category of men we have come to know as "Tranny Chasers":

- Some want a homosexual encounter with plausible deniability.
- Some are looking for freak-sex.
- Some are just about horny enough to try it with a porcupine.
- Some are looking for casual oral sex.
- Some are lonely, don't want sex at all, and think CDs are lonely too.
- Some are into dom/sub stuff and think crossdressing is about submission.
- Some are crossdressers themselves and think sex is a way of making friends.
- Some - very few- have a genuine romantic attraction to trannies.

Doesn't the Bible say crossdressing is a sin? - According to Old Testament scripture, it's an "abomination", (somewhere between a "sin" and a "transgression"). However, if one is not a Jew the text doesn't apply - despite the efforts of the more zealous proselytizers who insist the rest of humanity conform to their beliefs. Students of the Bible who take the time (through cross-reference and research) to read and understand the context of those passages will realize that they refer to the garments worn by pagan priests and priestesses during certain religious rites. The classic reference is Deuteronomy 22:5, "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God." However, farther along in the chapter are such delightful tidbits as: 22:11, "You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together" and 22:12, "You shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself." Not to mention the classic in 22:21 in which a bride found not to be a virgin shall be stoned to death. Then there's that pesky reference in 22:30 to a "father's skirt"? So until those who are condemning crossdressing in the name of God begin wearing four tassels and single fiber garments, you can assume that they are simply using the Bible as a justification for their raw prejudice and bigotry.

If someone hits you with Deut. 22:5 in a class, simply point to the nearest woman wearing trousers and ask, "Is she an abomination?" "But those are women's jeans!" comes the reply. Interesting. Then it's permissible for a woman to wear pants if they're women's pants? Then, by analogous logic, God is OK with me wearing skirts and dresses which are tailored especially for me, a man?

The difference between a shirt and a blouse (other than dry-cleaning charges - a sore point with many women) is that the latter buttons right-over-left and might be a more colorful fabric. Is God so petty He would deny me entrance to heaven over button placement and fabric color?

In fact, you'll never convince the fervent hypocrite no matter how logical your retort, so I'd advise simply saying, "If my choice of clothing is indeed an abomination then I'll have some explaining to do in the hereafter. Until then, I'll assume as a practicing Christian you'll continue to love me as your neighbor and leave the judging to God?"

There's lots more info for study here: <http://www.engr.ucdavis.edu/~jsdevlin/nosin.html>

Other people may display overt hostility as well. You can usually spot them by their

body language; crossed arms and legs, scowls, and hunched down in their seats. Smile at them a lot, because they're hurting on the inside and need all the positive 'vibes' they can get. Usually these are the folks who are locked into the binary gender concept (you must be a male/man or a female/woman, period!) and still insist on linking sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Some of them may even be transgendered persons in deep denial. Once most of them realize you're none of the awful things they imagined, they'll loosen up. However some will never open their minds and will remain hostile to the end. Simply know that there will always be people who will never accept you; then get on with your life. It's too short to waste a moment of it on intemperate and pig-headed individuals.

In the rare instance when you have a group of these folks who are sitting together and being disruptive (whispering, chatting among themselves), the best thing you can do is to lower your voice or stop speaking entirely while looking at the group with a patient smile. They'll soon get the idea. If they insist on being a nuisance, in the absence of a teacher or professor you can say, "Since it's obvious you have little interest in the subject, I have your instructor's permission to permit you to leave the class. Just write down your names on this notepad so the school will know which students opted out."

I'll teach you how to leverage one presentation into multiple talks on the following page. [Click here.](#)

These pages will be edited and augmented from time to time as new information becomes available. Also, samples of contact letters and proposals to universities and colleges will be added when time permits.

Recommended reading:

<http://www.geocities.com/FashionAvenue/1258/> Shirley Ann Sometimes' pages on communicating with our wives, sweethearts, and significant others