

# I KEEP BELIEVING IN MYSELF!

by Wendy Cole

I was born transgender! It's not like people like myself never existed before. We've always existed in hiding. It's one of those things of nature that nothing is ever completely black and white. Nature doesn't necessarily follow societal norms imposed by man. The hetero societal norms and standards, called "socialization", begin with our parents, through school and into our adult and work life. Before we're born, the question family wants to know is, do we wrap it in a pink blanket or do we wrap it in a blue blanket? We're told certain ways of thinking and behaving. This socialization is generally based on your "sex" assigned at birth. Socialization is certain expectations you need to meet to be perceived as male or female. And it is initially based your physical anatomy at birth. Most of the time, doctors get it right. But "gender", male or female is between your ears not between your legs. And with me, they got it all wrong! I knew most of the things expected of me from early childhood were wrong for me. But I was without any other options having grown up in the fifties and sixties.

## I found ways to avoid change and what I NEED to do...

I realized in late 2014 it's now possible to do something about how I feel. As of 2012 it became possible to live authentically with therapeutic and medical care, that didn't exist before this century. Until then, I found ways to avoid change and what I NEED to do. It's so scary and such a significant change. I made excuses, believing I couldn't be myself. I received this from a listener following the airing of one of my podcast interviews.

*"I just heard your interview and really appreciate your story as an older transitioning woman. I will turn 60 in the next few weeks and am considering transitioning and see a lot in our experiences. I've kept my female desires hidden and repressed and now am feeling the dysphoria of years of suppression.*

*I keep telling myself that I was born as a man, married and had a family and made commitments, but I don't think I'll be able to keep that up. Someday and somehow, this will get me one way or another and have thought of all the things you have.*

*Thanks again and appreciate you sharing your story.*

*Hugs and all the best,"*

I'm always grateful to hear from listeners. Age is one of many typical excuses all people use to avoid any change and there are many more. But how old do you have to be to not be yourself?

Or do what you need or want to do? How old do you have to be before you decide to stop your suffering?

## Guilt for all the people I've let down by living a lie...

From age ten to twenty-two I tried to deal with how I was born and become who I knew myself to be. At twenty-two, I had a disastrous experience with a psychiatrist. I was miserable! I repressed myself as best I could, living with depression, anxiety, shame, fear, and guilt. Especially the guilt for all the people I've let down by living a lie.

## I was mentally never a man...

Forty-five years later, I hit a wall, like so many of us do. Transition or Die! So, yes, I totally understand the listener's comment and have heard so many similar comments. I was mentally never a man! The incongruence between my mind and body was a perpetual conflict. In fact, now in my coaching, I help my clients get past these conflicts and stop making excuses. I help them untangle their perplexing mindset from past abuse, trauma, and difficult life changes, which we all face in different situations. I work with transgender people and women going through significant life changes. So, how did I get to this point and finally become the woman I've always been?

## Especially around age 10 or so, I just knew I had to tell my mom...

Well, first of all, I was born this way. This is not a choice. I knew at a very, very young age, say around three or four that there was something different about me. I enjoyed playing with the other girls. A lot of my mother's friends had daughters. I would end up playing with the girls. And it felt perfectly natural, much more so than playing with boys. I didn't have words to put around all of that. I couldn't really define it. But as I got older, especially around age ten or so, I just knew I had to tell my parents. I was so hopeful for help especially from my mom!

## I tell my mom I'm a girl...first pivotal point in my life...

I used to enjoy dressing in my mother's clothes that would fit me. Then scramble and take everything off before my mom came home. One day, I decided I'm done. I'm getting dressed. I'm doing my nails. I'm putting on makeup as best I can. I'm waiting for my mom to come home. I'm going to tell her I'm a

girl. End of story! I repeated that several times. It didn't go well for me. This became the first of several pivotal points in my life.

### **Once he has a career, wife, house, family, he'll forget about being a girl...**

I grew up about fifty miles north of New York City in Fishkill, New York. My parents took me to a psychiatric center along the Hudson River between Beacon and Cold Spring New York called the Craig House. I was ten years old sitting with my parents in front of a psychiatrist. He was talking past me to my parents saying once he grows up, has a career, has a wife, has a house, has a family, he'll forget all about being a girl. I spoke up and said, "No, I'm a girl!" And that was particularly terrifying to me, but I couldn't hold back. I was in front of my father who was adamant that I was his son. Unknown to me at the time, he had gone to great lengths to have a son. And no son of his would be a girl. I had declared in front of him to the psychiatrist, "No, I'm a girl". After five sessions with the psychiatrist my parents told me, "Forget you are a girl. That's not going to happen. You get that out of your mind. You're a boy and that's how you're going to be. And if you don't stop behaving this way and insisting you're a girl, you're going to be committed and fixed at the psychiatric center." This was in the late 1950s and I was scared to death.

### **People like me are everywhere and this doesn't go away...!**

By today's standards this threat could be considered abuse! It's BS because this is not a choice! Gender doesn't work that way. And this never goes away. It is who I am! My brain developed as female. My body unfortunately developed as male and that's how I was stuck. I have talked with people coast to coast, blue state, red state, doesn't matter. People like me are everywhere and this doesn't go away! So I began my life of hiding and repression. I lived with complete inner turmoil knowing who I really was. And knowing that there was nothing I could do about it.

### **I forced myself to go to an all-male college trying to fit in...**

My teen years in high school were a struggle trying to fit in. Dating, forget it! I was afraid. I was afraid of girls because girls might figure me out and I had this big secret to hide. I'd forced myself to go to an all-male college. That way I could try and fit in. I did try dating in college which worked out for a time, until I felt I had to tell her. And yet another person I hurt by living a lie. The pressures and conflicts I felt were so powerful and intense. So that didn't work either. I was able to get through repressing

until my senior year of college. The pressure of graduating combined with not knowing how to deal with my feelings and life was overwhelming!

### **I knew at some point I needed to deal with this...**

Anything I had tried to do to fit in just did not work. It didn't feel right. I didn't feel good. And I had the big secret I had to hide. When I was about to graduate from college, which is another big life change, I knew at some point I needed to deal with this. I found a psychiatrist who agreed to help me. I started coming out to people in my local town, as he told me to do. I didn't come out to anybody on the all-male campus.

### **A quarterly meeting of about twenty area psychiatrists...**

I found a psychiatrist to help me during my senior year of college. This was my second major pivotal point really trying to transition. At age ten, the first pivotal point, I had told my parents how I felt. And now I was really reopening the whole situation trying to deal with it. My psychiatrist wanted to take me as his case study to a quarterly meeting of about twenty other psychiatrists from the area. We met in the hospital conference room in upstate New York. And keep in mind, at this point in New York State, and even New York City, I would be arrested for appearing in public as a girl. I would be heavily fined, arrested and thrown in jail. It was against the law. So, I was dressed as male attending the meeting.

### **"You're a freak! You should move to New York City..."**

I'm sitting in the hospital conference room talking with the psychiatrists about my life. One of the doctors stood up. He said, "Well I'll see you all next quarter. I've had enough today." He then looked at me and said, "You're a freak! You should move to New York City and turn tricks like the rest of them." I was devastated. That ended meeting and my trust or desire to get help from doctors. That ended everything for me! During my next appointment with my psychiatrist, he explained, "This is a psychological condition with no treatment or cure". This was 1970 the first time I had heard this. We didn't have the internet back then and very little available information. And I tried numerous libraries. It was called transsexualism then. The word transgender did not exist then.

### **I discovered my diagnosis from 1970 changed in 2012...**

1970 was the last time I attempted to transition. I repressed even thinking about it until 2015, forty-five years later. It was when I discovered my diagnosis changed in 2012 to a "condition

**"if you don't stop behaving this way and insisting you're a girl, you're going to be committed and fixed at the psychiatric center"**

I was born with, now treatable by therapy, hormones and any necessary surgeries”. January 2015 I began therapy with no idea where this will lead me, but I had to see. I am 67, I'm going to turn my entire life inside out, upside down, and everything about myself was going to change. I had no idea if I could even do this and there are no guarantees. But trying to authentically live as the woman that I always knew I was, or even just trying, had to be better than continuing to suffer the way I have been. I didn't know if I could ever blend into everyday life as any other woman.

### **I began deconstruction of all the male socialization...**

When I began to “transition”, the first thing I focused on was getting back into mindfulness. I began to overcome all the debilitating thoughts and emotions I had as a result of repressing myself for years. Socialization from childhood as someone that wasn't me is damaging at best. And the repression, shame and guilt was not easy to stop either. It had been my lifelong habit. I began deconstruction of all the male socialization I was forced to experience for over six decades. I came to believe that we all have possibilities in life. It's our beliefs, formed by our thoughts and emotions that block or mask our possibilities. The beliefs are enshrined in our brains. Those are the unhelpful thoughts that I had to change to see what was possible for me.

### **There is no looking back and no back button on this...**

I've been Wendy now for nine wonderful years. There is no looking back and no back button on this. All life changes begin and exist 80% between your ears. All the rest is just the physical aspects and the window dressing. Our society loves to put people in boxes. What I needed to do was just not acceptable to many. I found compassion for the part of me that was in pain. It's been absolutely amazing. Wonderful! And I love it. I wouldn't have it any other way. I'm now grateful to my male representative for not killing me. It has been an intense experience and one I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. But I survived and have personally grown. And now I thrive!

### **You're getting the benefit of somebody who has lived this...**

I found out through this experience I love helping other people overcome significant life changes. We all go through changes in life. A common belief is transition takes a long time and it's very difficult. Sure. If that's what you believe, it will be. But with my guidance, it doesn't have to be. The mentoring I provide is definitely not one size fits all. I provide the guidance my clients' need, based on experience and research. It will help you take necessary steps forward. Once moving forward, you start letting go of all the doubts and fears and begin shifting to more supportive beliefs. And you will continue to evolve. You're getting the benefit of somebody who has lived this and who knows what you're going through and thinking. I help you

overcome your fears, anxieties and your self-doubts by challenging your beliefs. The mental work involves changing your outlook, learning to become self-aware and self-accepting for who you really are. This is critical to living your new life confidently and to making it easy and exciting for you.

### **I let go of the stress of the baggage of someone I wasn't...**

I did not see or speak with my father after 1980. My relationship with my mom was strained at best. I have forgiven my parents for forcing me to repress this. They were products of their generation and time. The time wasn't right for me. Society wasn't right at that time. And my parents were trying to protect me from society! Now I don't carry resentment because that would really just be punishing myself. I embrace who I've always been. Carrying resentment would be a burden. I had found ways to get through the really horrible experiences. And I learned through all of this to embrace who I am, be authentic and be real. I have actually developed self-love to the point where I am taking care of myself. I hated myself before. And I let go of the stress of carrying around the baggage of somebody I wasn't meant to be.

### **I keep believing in myself!**

When facing the hard things a lots of us would just say, you know what? I've been living my life this long. I've missed my opportunity. I'm too old. I'm too whatever. I'm too tired, I'm too weary. But I said, “Hey, I have an opportunity here”. I could either embrace this change or I can just take my lumps and like it. I decided I'm going to change what I can. I'm going to change my perspective no matter how old I am. There are always opportunities for me if I keep my eyes open and I keep believing. What do I keep believing? I keep believing in myself!

It is NEVER TOO LATE!!!

Resources I offer:

#### **Schedule a conversation**

<https://calendly.com/wendycoletm/discovery-conversation>

#### **Coaching for Gender**

<https://wendycoletgm.net/gender-change/>

All those unhelpful messages from so many years of social conditioning and repression don't go away overnight. Learning to manage your thoughts and emotions is all important to your success; it permeates every aspect of your being and journey. With my guidance this can be an exciting experience.

#### **Coaching for Parents of Transgender**

<https://wendycoletgm.net/parents-of-transgender/>

My goal is to help you get comfortable with this significant change in your family and provide guidance, understanding and peace of mind.

**“I survived and have personally grown. And now I thrive!”**