



## Letter from Mum (with Male to Female child)

When our son told us he was going to transition to female, I thought my life would never be the same again. Initially, the future to me (his mother) looked very, very bleak. I wanted to live forever so I could always be there to protect her.

I thought my relationship with the world would change. Just as it had when I had children and was in the new position of having a stake in the world, having actively put new people into it, so I felt now my position would change as my perception of our family as just normal and ordinary would inevitably have to change.

I thought the impact of the transition on my daughter's life would be horrendously difficult, lonely and sad. Tragic wouldn't be too strong a word. That was my overwhelming thought, by far.

Initially, I didn't know where to start to look for answers and support. First, I went to see a counsellor who told me I was in denial and I should look on the internet for some information. I went home and found what I think must have been the PFLAG website and a flyer for the first meeting of the parents of transgender support group. Thank God for that!

My initial reactions came in two stages, before and after reading the article on the GIRES website.

First was absolute horror and disbelief, devastation, anger and a terrible sadness. I truly believed our son had got into the clutches of a bunch of irresponsible lesbians with a political agenda who were carelessly leading him astray. I must have been MAD! I also felt intense pain at the terrible anguish and emotional pain he was going through, and must have been going through for years.

After reading the articles I felt a mixture of relief and grief. I could no longer delude myself that what was happening to my child wasn't real. It was the beginning of coming to terms with our new reality, and letting her know she had our full support. The grief was HUGE. Much, much worse than when my mother died of cancer aged 68.

Someone said to me that grieving isn't a linear process, and they were right. I went round and round for months and months. I'm still going round and round, but it's less intense now.

As I have watched my child transition, I have felt shut out. I desperately wanted to be involved. It soon became apparent I wasn't really needed, once she had a partner. However, I did get involved initially, and she did seem to find it a relief and appreciated the support. I would still like to be involved. My initial fears were that my daughter would be unhappy, marginalised, humiliated which is putting all of my concerns mildly.

I did consider taking her to doctors and/or psychologists to get her "fixed". That was my complete focus until I read the GIRES article. Once I read that, my position changed completely. However, I wasn't quite sure where to start and I spent days on the internet not achieving very much.

As a parent, I initially thought her negative behaviour was due to her transitioning. However, I soon began to realise she had always had some of the negative behaviours and because she is still the same person those things don't change. But I do always wonder if the difficulties she's encountered earlier in her life have impacted on her development and behaviour. I wonder how she would have been during her adolescence if she hadn't had this to deal with.

We think our daughter's main fears about telling us would then make it real, that she is a trans\* woman. She was fearful we would reject her. Not her as a person, but the idea of her transitioning. And, initially she was right. I think she didn't want it to be true, either. She said she was scared when she first started taking oestrogen. It meant she would have to face the fact that she is trans\*.

Our daughter is vague about when she started to feel different. But we now know that she has known she was different since she was about 12.

As for the wrong body vs just different, we don't know what she thinks about this. We think her attitude has changed over the years. When she was a teenager she did once tell me she was a freak. I thought I was a freak when I was a teenager too. As a mother, I thought it was normal to think like that.

Our daughter is now 30 years old. We helped her financially and emotionally throughout her surgeries. She is now getting on with her life and my fears for her have greatly subsided. This is not an easy path, but my daughter lives life honestly and as a parent that's all we can ask of our children.