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My husband is now a woman? The experiences of transgender individuals in partner relationships

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2. Coming Out and Disclosure Decisions

Participants shared the challenges of disclosing to current and/or future partners about their transgender identity. Many shared stories of failed relationships and negative situations that arose because they are transgender. “Coming out” is a lifelong, daily decision.

“They like you, they think you’re funny, [...] then they’ll say, ‘Well, I want to come and meet’ and I’ll say, ‘Well, that’s fine, so long as you know that I’m transgender’ and without even saying, that’s not my thing, all of a sudden they just cut you off” -- MTF age 61

Safety is another concern.

“I’m always aware of safety concerns, especially in part of the country that I’m not super familiar with, or, in general, if there’s not a lot of visibility. I don’t want to become a statistic” -- FTM age 40

Almost all shared the struggle of finding supportive partners.

“The other person didn’t sign up for this” -- MTF age 49

3. The Gender Binary System is Oppressive

Most participants shared the challenges of fitting into simple social labels such as male-female or straight-gay. Most described how binary language did not capture their experiences.

“My wife felt that, ‘Okay, so I understand that you need to change your gender, that, in order to be authentic, that’s what you need to do. But that makes me inauthentic in terms of my sexual orientation, so how’s that fair?’” -- MTF age 59

Others also described how fluid sexual orientation language was a starting point to exploring the fluidity of their gender identity.

“The biggest challenges are trying to explain it to people. I’m not really a binary, straight trans guy. A lot of people are like ‘if you wanted to date boys why didn’t you just stay a girl’ but that’s two completely different things.” -- FTM age 22

4. “I am who I am”

Many discussed how living an authentic life in terms of gender identity is helpful in their partner relationships. Most expressed relief about being able to be genuine about their gender identity in relationship experiences now.

“I gave it the good college try, and nothing changed” - <when he was a female and was trying to like males> -- FTM age 48
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