

Head Over Heels: Wives Who Stay with Cross-Dressers and Transsexuals

Virginia Erhardt



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Candid, first-hand accounts of couples who stay together despite highly emotional gender issues.

Head Over Heels gives voice to thirty ordinary women who live extraordinary lives as partners to crossdressers, transgenderists, and male-to-female transsexuals. These unique women discuss, with honesty and great candor, how they first learned of their partners' gender issues, how they've coped with the emotions that followed, how they've dealt with concerns about privacy/secrecy, and how they've handled disclosure to children, friends, and family members. Far from a collection of "happily ever after" stories, these narratives are filled with pain, courage, curiosity, and joy as each woman struggles to redefine a relationship that includes intimacy, social acceptance, dignity, and respect.

The women whose stories are featured in Head Over Heels didn't know their partners were gender-variant when they first met. Some found out early on; others learned of their husbands' gender variance after decades of marriage. Some were told by their husbands—men they considered "regular guys;" others found out on their own, sometimes in shocking ways. Their stories represent a wide spectrum of women's life experiences with crossdressers, transgenderists, transsexuals who are nonoperative, pre-operative, and post-operative, families without children, families with children at home, and families with children who have left home. But these women share one thing in common: each has decided to stay in her relationship, exploring her new life with an open, yet cautious, heart.

Some of the voices heard in *Head Over Heels*:

- "While putting my clothes on, I found a sales receipt on the bureau from K-Mart for shoes, a bra, and stockings. My immediate thought was that my husband had a girlfriend."
- "He dressed for me one night and it was the worst experience of both our lives. I was shocked and he knew it and that hurt him."
- "My siblings had been aware of Trish's transsexualism for several years when she went full-time. They have told me that while I will always be welcome in their homes, Trish is not."
- "My husband may think differently, but I do have a sexual identity. Actually, I'm real clear about it—I am a woman and he is a man. I do not allow him to crossdress in the bedroom. I married a man; therefore, I will sleep with a man."

Head Over Heels also includes historical and current information about resources and support for wives of gender-variant people, and a substantive introduction that includes basic information about sexual and

gender identity and related issues.



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