

Another Closet

Once the crossdresser has come out of the closet, so to speak, to his significant other, many significant others report that they now are walking into a closet - a closet called SECRET.

The burden of secrecy, significant others say, has shifted. The secret kept so many years by the crossdresser (fearing he might lose his family, friends, etc.) now is OUT. The significant other now feels the burden (fearing she might lose family, friends, etc.)

The secret permeates her life! Does she tell her friends? Does she tell her co-workers? What about the children? What about parents, aunts and uncles? And let us not forget the neighbors, of course. Should she see a helping professional to make sense out of this? And where can she find a helping professional who has knowledge of gender issues! Simple things such as going out at night become complex when dealing with leaving the house without the babysitter noticing. Going to gender conventions may involve lying to friends and relatives about where they have been. "Oh, we went to a computer convention for a few days - i.e. California Dreamin' in SF."

The crossdresser in her life feeling relief may desire to tell everyone. After all the most important person in his life (his significant other) now knows! And wasn't that the main stumbling block? But his SO may not be ready for YEARS to tell others. She trying to understand crossdressing certainly does not understand the repercussions involved when telling others. Some wives make decisions on a need to know basis - does her colleague at work really need to know?? Others feel they need to share this part of their lives with friends and make decisions based on how they believe the friends would react.

I have told a few friends, all of whom have been supportive, but I knew they would be, and I did not tell them until I was comfortable about telling them.. But many significant others have told me they lost friends over this - perhaps they were not really friends, after all. And we all know horror stories of crossdressers who were OUTED by "friends" and lost promotions, even jobs!

What is important is that the crossdresser realize the burden now being put upon his significant other and help her deal with it. He needs to realize the importance of communicating on the issue of whom to tell. Both need to know whether the persons told will be understanding (to the best of their knowledge), whether they will be hurt by the knowledge (does an 85 year-old parent really need to know), whether they will be burdened by the knowledge (does an 8 year-old child need to worry about whom and whom not to tell), and whether they might use the knowledge in some negative way (a colleague who becomes disgruntled)..

Crossdressers do not like to lie or keep secrets but have been forced to. Now their families may also be forced into lying also simply because we are not yet living in a world where alternate lifestyles are accepted, instead a world of hate and aggression towards those who are different. We can only hope that there will come a day when NO ONE has to keep a secret. Until then both the crossdresser and his significant other have to communicate clearly on the issue of secrecy; it cannot be ignored unfortunately; it is a part of our world.