

Top 11 Misconceptions About Crossdressers

by Ellen Sherman

Every Fall, several hundred traditional husbands, fathers and businessmen come together in Provincetown for Fantasia Fair with parties, seminars and workshops exploring the thorny issue of how to buy the right wig and hide a 5 o'clock shadow with the foundation and blush-on. Heterosexual married men from suburbia with families who cross-dress? What's going on?

Apparently a much more common practice than most people would imagine. It's estimated that at least %1 of the male population crossdresses. And even as we approach the 21st Century, the idea of a heterosexual man in heels is still more than a little threatening. And confusing even for the crossdressers themselves. As JoAnn Roberts, founder of Renaissance, a Delaware Valley crossdressing support group of over 400 said" I knew growing up that I wasn't gay and I was heterosexual. I thought I might be crazy, but I knew I wasn't gay."

Crossdressing is a subject that's been universally misunderstood. While producing the first documentary on heterosexual crossdressing called All Dressed Up And No Place To Go, I found a host of misconceptions rampant in most people's thinking.

The following are the Top Eleven Misconceptions that abound:

1) Crossdressers Are Gay

More than likely not. As Dr. William Stayton, Head of the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Human Sexuality and himself a therapist for crossdressers, reported "People associate crossdressing with effeminacy and being gay and the fact is most of them are not gay. They are very definitely heterosexual. "In fact one of the most difficult areas for crossdressers was how to deal with the women with whom they wanted to be involved.

2) Crossdressers Don't Like Women

The truth is that rather than shying away from women, most crossdressers are as married or looking for a relationship as any cross section of men in America. "There is even some advantage to being a heterosexual crossdresser, " says Dr. Stayton. "When dressed they often become more sensitive and understanding to the women in their lives. Their wives tend to find them delightful and often it can become a real enhancement to marital relations." However that "enhancement" can only come if the woman feels comfortable with her husband's occasional dressing. Many don't.

As Florida lawyer Jeff/Jean reports, "What would happen was that as soon as women found out about "Jean" the relationship would end, so why did I have to keep banging myself in the head. I was married to a woman that didn't approve and it was painful. Now I tell the women and let them even see "Jean." If we're going to be involved then they'll have to accept all of me just like I have to accept all of them."

3) Women Who Love Crossdressers Must Be Lesbians

What's it like to love a man who's wearing a dress? Pam, the wife of a Bank V.P crossdresser recounts "I did feel funny at first. I love my husband as a man but when I saw him in a dress as "Barbara," I thought how can I love him? The answer was I didn't have to love him the same way. With "Barbara," we're friends like I would be with any girlfriend. When he's dressed as a man, I feel free to love him as a man."

4) Crossdressers Dress For Sexual Gratification

Most crossdressers reveal that relieving stress and relaxation were the feelings they most associated with their crossdressing. However many revealed that while teenagers there was a high degree of sexual excitement related to crossdressing mostly relieved through masturbation. As hormones calmed down and they reached adulthood the sexual element declined and the feelings the crossdressing elicited were very different." What you'll find," Dr. Stayton reported, "is that very early on they associate these clothes with relaxation and stress relief. They often use it to feel calmer. There is an erotic element to the crossdressing. Many will crossdress or fantasize about being CD to enhance sexual enjoyment, but its not necessary."

5) Crossdressers Always Wear Women's Clothes

In fact, most may only dress once a month or once every six months. Many men don't ever even reach the point of fully dressing but feel the same relaxed feeling by just wearing women's undies under their suits. "You can't imagine how many politicians can't give a speech in Congress without wearing women's panties," Dr. Stayton commented, adding he has first hand knowledge since many are his patients.

6) Crossdressers Have Weird Sexual Habits

No more than most. However crossdressers did report their sex lives were enhanced by crossdressing to some degree. "Dale" recounted that "Although many CDs will deny it, there is a degree of extra arousal that comes with being crossdressed when making love but many women are not comfortable with that and we men have to be sensitive to that and accept it."

7) Crossdressers Look Like RuPaul

In fact many crossdressers are most comfortable dressing their "femme" selves as

they would dress their male selves. Therefore most conventions of crossdressers find a roomful of men in dressed for success women's suits, low heels, tasteful makeup and coifed hair...much more Margaret Thatcher than RuPaul.

8) Crossdressing Develops in Adulthood

"We really find that crossdressing starts very young," reports Dr. Stayton. "Many remember that as preschoolers they got a certain feeling with Mom's clothing. It's very rarely something that develops in adulthood.

9) Crossdressers Are Made, Not Born

The current conventional wisdom seems to be that crossdressing is a result of both Nature and Nurture. "I certainly think there's a genetic influence just as for all of us there are things that happen that program us as to how we'll be sexual, whether we'll like redheads or thin women. We all have preferences, but the truth is there's no common thread and we really don't know why it happens," reports Dr. Stayton.

10) Crossdressers Are Schizophrenic

In reality crossdressers exhibit slight personality alterations in their "femme" role, but in general, their personalities only change to the extent that many people's do when assuming different roles in life, i.e. CEO, husband, father. One wife reports her husband likes to dance as his "femme" self where he wouldn't feel that free as a man. Other wives recount how their husbands will shop with them when otherwise they'd never have the patience.

11) Crossdressing Can Be Cured

"Truth is you can't change it," Dr. Stayton concludes. Most professionals now try to counsel the crossdresser to deal with his crossdressing rather than eradicate it. "When someone comes to me and feels it's sick behavior, then to me helping them to be healthy is to help them accept it and to be able to appropriately accept their own crossdressing feelings."

<http://www.selfhelpmagazine.com/articles/sex/xdress.html>

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For more information: All Dressed Up And No Place To Go, the first feature documentary on heterosexual crossdressing. Now Available in home video Contact: CAJUN FILMS-212-353-0500/FAX 212-533-071036 East 20th Street, NY, NY 10011