



**Spouses and significant others (inclusively SOs) of transgender persons can face a number of unique challenges and questions – especially if the transgender partner has come-out after a number of years living in their assigned gender during the relationship.**

Concerns about the future of the marriage, worry about effects on children, the impact on the relationship to family/friends as well as personal questions about the SO's own identity and beliefs are common.

A key to success is to have a willingness to communicate with honesty and openness. LV Renaissance strongly recommends that couples seek out the assistance of a licensed couples' counselor. You can find a list of counselors and therapists with gender experience on the LV Renaissance website.



### **Is My Spouse Mentally Ill?**

No. Transgender identity is not a mental illness that can be cured with treatment. Rather, transgender people often experience a persistent and authentic disconnect between the sex assigned to them at birth and their internal sense of who they are. This disconnect is referred to by medical professionals as “gender dysphoria” because it can cause undue pain and distress in the lives of transgender people.

### **Why Was I Unaware of My Partner's Transgender Status?**

Due to societal pressures and the stigma associated with being transgender, many trans people become adepts at hiding their status. In many cases they try to deny their true nature not only from others, but from themselves. In many cases, after years of hiding their status they eventually must live as per their true identity.

### **Is My Spouse/SO Gay or Lesbian?**

Probably not. The incidence of being gay or lesbian among transgender people is approximately the same as the general population. Due to the conflation between gender and sex it is possible that your SO has/may have had doubts about their sexual orientation, but it is important to remember that they actively decided to get into a relationship with you and they would not have done so if they were not attracted to you.



### **Does This Mean That I am Now a Gay or Lesbian Person?**

Sexual orientation is a complicated topic and how you choose to confront this issue is a personal matter. That being said, many couples manage to come up with a language that accurately describes their relationship. In some cases, the marriage survives with the couple remaining friends and partners in all but a sexual manner. In other cases, couples embrace the opportunity to explore new and exciting ways to express their sexuality.

### **How Will This Affect Our Children?**

Parents should always be concerned about the well-being of their children and there is the possibility that your children could be confused when one of their parents comes out as trans. There is also the concern of the child being teased about their trans parent. As society learns to be more accepting of trans people, these concerns are becoming less of an issue. In many cases – where there have been tensions in the family – learning the cause can actually come as a relief to the child. LV Renaissance also recommends that the children of trans parents speak to a licensed therapist about any issues they may be having.

### **How do We “Come Out” to Friends, Family and Neighbors?**

Coming out can be stressful for everyone and there is no perfect way to do so - but many families have done so successfully. In some cases, you and your spouse may want to have a one-on-one conversation with certain people while in others an announcement by email/social network will suffice. For many people writing a letter helps them to frame their thoughts. A great resource is your local transgender support group where you can learn from trans people (and their family members) and benefit from their experiences.

### **Will This Affect My SO’s Ability to Earn A Living?**

Maybe. In general, transgender people earn less than cisgender people and find it harder to attain employment as well. Additionally, only 19 US states have laws specifically protecting the employment rights of transgender people. However, more and more American companies are adding gender protections on their own. In addition, if your SO has been gainfully employed up until the time they have come out they will usually still have the same position once they have done so.

### **Is It Possible to Have a Happy and Healthy Relationship?**

Absolutely! When you got involved with your, SO you likely did so because they are loving, generous, supportive, understanding, willing to compromise, and willing to respect you. Those attributes do not change when a person comes out as transgender.