

# Transgender Identities Are Not Always Permanent

by [Walt Heyer](#)

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Transgenderism is based on feelings that can change over time.

All too abruptly, another bright life has ended. Alexis Arquette (formerly Robert Arquette), a transgender performer and activist, returned to living as a man before his death on September 11, 2016, at the age of 47. Arquette appeared in the movies *Pulp Fiction* and *The Wedding Singer* and was a force for transgender rights.

Although there were many media tributes after his death, few mention his decision to stop living as a woman. However, one piece in [The Hollywood Reporter](#) does speak of Arquette's struggles after transitioning. Clearly, even well-known and talented transgender individuals who are embraced and accepted in their chosen gender can continue to struggle and may decide to return to their birth sex.

In 2013, amid increasing health complications, Alexis ... began presenting herself as a man again, telling [her close friend] Ibrahim that “‘gender is bullshit.’ That ‘putting on a dress doesn’t biologically change anything. Nor does a sex-change.’ She said that ‘sex-reassignment is physically impossible. All you can do is adopt these superficial characteristics but the biology will never change.’” That realization, Ibrahim suspects, was the likely source of her deep wells of emotional torment.

The process of abandoning the transgender life and reverting back to one's innate gender/sex is called detransitioning. As someone who has

detransitioned myself, I only wish more would speak up about the reality of what life is like after transitioning to the other gender and why some people eventually decide to embrace their birth sex.

## **Why Would a Trans Person Detransition?**

People are not born transgender. The indisputable evidence that transgenderism is not innate is the existence of people who wholeheartedly believe that they need a sex change and then later—often many years later—change their mind and go back. People who have detransitioned, [as I have](#), write to me and [tell me their stories](#) and their struggles. They don't want too many people to know who they are and what they have lived through. They want to live quietly and keep a low profile because they are filled with shame and regret. They are unable to bring themselves to disclose publicly that the transgender life didn't work out as they had hoped. The shame, I can tell you, is unimaginable.

How do they get to the point of detransitioning?

Based on strongly held feelings, a transgender individual will take hormones and undergo surgery to align the appearance of the body with what is thought to be one's true gender. I did it myself. People, especially young people, think strong feelings will never change, but over time they can and do.

Many of us who have gone through this “transformation” realized too late that it was not a medical necessity or required treatment for our problems. Regret often comes years later when the realization sets in that falsely claiming to be an alternate gender persona did not resolve the deep issues with which we struggled. At best, transition was a short-lived reprieve from the agony of feeling that one's biological sex is incorrect.

## **Dave's Story**

A first-person example came in an email to me about a month ago. This young adult—I'll call him "Dave"—tells his heart-wrenching story in his own words, echoing the same words spoken by other regretful transgender individuals over many years:

I transitioned to female beginning in my late teens and changed my name in my early 20s, over ten years ago. But it wasn't right for me; I feel only discontent now in the female role. I was told that my transgender feelings were permanent, immutable, physically deep-seated in my brain and could NEVER change, and that the only way I would ever find peace was to become female. The problem is, I don't have those feelings anymore. When I began seeing a psychologist a few years ago to help overcome some childhood trauma issues, my depression and anxiety began to wane but so did my transgender feelings. So two years ago I began contemplating going back to my birth gender, and it feels right to do so. I have no doubts—I want to be male!

We learn from this man what I learned in my own life: the transgender feelings are not permanent, immutable, or deep-seated in the brain. Feelings, no matter how powerful, do not justify taking hormones and undergoing surgery.

Warnings have been sounded by doctors for nearly forty years, and yet the regret, unhappiness, suicide, and detransitioning continue. For me, like Dave, psychotherapy did what surgery could never do: it cured me of the desire to become someone I could never biologically be. The application of sound psychotherapy ended my transgender feelings.

When their products fail, auto companies are compelled to issue recalls and to pay for the repairs. Not so with the surgeons or psychologists who have popularized and enabled gender transitioning. They escape all consequences,

while ex-transgender people are left to foot the bill financially, emotionally, physically, and personally.

## **Physically Detransitioning**

The process to physically detransition depends on what steps the individual took to alter his or her appearance.

Some who transition do not undergo radical genital surgeries. A case in point is the former Olympic star Jenner. The highly public transition to female did not include genitalia surgery so his parts remain as he was born—male sex. Chaz Bono is another case of a highly publicized transition from female to male, and at this point Chaz's genitalia remain all innate female sex.

Women who transition to male typically take testosterone, the male hormone, which causes facial-hair growth, masculine-appearing muscle, and body-mass changes. They also undergo mastectomy to remove their breasts. As to changing the genitalia, the surgery to construct a male penis is costly and risky, and the result is often not worth the investment. The few who have contacted me did not alter their genitalia or undergo hysterectomies.

The major challenges for the female-to-male transgender person who detransitions back to female are electrolysis treatments to remove the facial hair, which can be expensive and painful, and considering what to do about the now-missing breasts. Reverting back to female may or may not include breast implants. In making that decision, like all detransition decisions, it is up to the individual to weigh the pros and cons.

For men who transitioned to women with full genitalia surgery, their original equipment is no longer available. When they wish to return to the male gender, one option is to have a phalloplasty procedure (the construction of a penis). But in practice, many men who detransition opt not to have it done

due to the high cost and risk. Besides, the resulting appendage often does not function at the level of the original male genitalia. Therefore, if detransition statistics include only those who have surgical phalloplasty, the number will be missing the majority of those who detransition.

Unfortunately, not all of what the surgeons do to change gender can be undone. Body parts that were sacrificed, reshaped, or removed will never function the same way again.

Like many of the nearly [20 percent](#) who report regret after surgical gender change, I first needed to come to terms with the truth that no amount of surgery or hormones can ever change innate, biological sex. Armed with the factual knowledge that my sex—male—had never changed, I started to take steps to detransition.

## **Reasons for Detransitioning**

The reasons for detransitioning are vast. Some people go back to their innate sex after a suicide attempt. Some simply conclude, “It just wasn’t for me.” Some have said it was too difficult to play dress-up as the opposite sex every day; it became too much trouble to keep the trans-life going. Some say they realized they were not real women and never would be. For others, medical problems caused by the surgery spark the desire to detransition.

For me, it was learning about the psychological factors that can cause someone to wrongly identify as a transgender. Early childhood sexual abuse is the leading cause reported to me, but there are often other factors. Studies have shown a multitude of other disorders coexist among transgender people and that experiences other than abuse can cause gender identity difficulty.

My eyes were opened when I entered a Certificate Study Program in the late 1980s that included courses in psychology relevant to destructive behaviors

and addictions. I started to realize the transgender condition could be a developmental disorder that evolved over time, not something innate at birth.

At that time, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) identified transgenderism as Gender Identity Disorder, a psychological disorder that caused a mismatch of one's gender identity. The latest edition, the DSM V, removed the word "disorder" and revised the name of transgenderism to Gender Dysphoria.

But the name change did not help reduce the number of people who have regrets or attempt suicide. The new name for the same condition has not resolved what causes the desire to identify as transgender.

The medical community does a major disservice to this population by failing to advocate improved diagnosis of the coexisting psychological disorders, and failing to provide treatment that could prevent unnecessary sex-reassignment surgeries.

## **The Silent Ones**

Transitioning is an attempt to escape into a surgically fabricated and hormonally induced transgender world. My transition was the result of years of cross-dressing starting at the hands of my grandmother at age four, after which I was molested by my uncle. Deep psychological pain caused me to want to be female. My transgenderism was a hiding place until I received proper psychotherapy, then set my sights on God. Slowly but steadily, God's love redeemed my life. I no longer needed a hiding place. I have been restored to a new life that is better and brighter than ever. Now, over twenty years after detransitioning, I'm living the dream—married and restored, unshackled by all the transgender madness.

It's important to understand that people of all walks of life, all ages, with or

without a faith-based foundation, detransition. We who detransition are the silent, mostly unaccounted-for, witnesses of the brevity of the reprieve.

I stayed silent long enough.

It is painful to watch advocacy groups try to refashion men and women with cosmetic sex-change surgery. The consequence, tragically, will be a trail of more broken lives. What we see in Dave's story and mine is that this grand experiment has not proven to be effective in treating everyone with gender identity issues. When someone says "I'm transgender" it is likely a day will come, perhaps years later, when he or she will also say, "The transgender life is not for me."

We need to understand: transgender feelings *can change* and detransition *does happen*. Gender persona can change, but biological sex remains.

*Walt Heyer is an author and public speaker with a passion to help others who regret gender change. Through his website, [SexChangeRegret.com](http://SexChangeRegret.com), and his blog, [WaltHeyer.com](http://WaltHeyer.com), Heyer raises public awareness about the incidence of regret and the tragic consequences suffered as a result. Heyer's story can be read in novel form in [Kid Dakota and the Secret at Grandma's House](#) and in his autobiography, [A Transgender's Faith](#). Heyer's other books include [Paper Genders](#) and [Gender, Lies and Suicide](#).*