

I'm not really ready to see my husband in a dress, let alone a whole room full of men in dresses. Is there some way my husband and I could meet another couple first, without crossdressing?

Chapter officers always interview potential new members before inviting them to a chapter meeting, and couples interview couples. When you are ready to meet other chapter members, you may have the option of attending a non-crossdressing gathering. There you can get to know other members before meeting them as crossdressers. Such meetings are wonderful icebreakers for new crossdressers and wives.

But isn't this a disorder that can be cured?

Crossdressing, according to Mental Health experts, is not considered to be a Mental Health Disorder. Therefore, this is not a "Disorder" to be cured. Unfortunately, lack of education and understanding has confused crossdressing as a Mental Health Disorder.

But what about me? I feel lost and betrayed!

The revelation that one's husband is a crossdresser can be a major shock. Feelings of betrayal, grief, rage, denial, bargaining, anxiety and depression are common and completely normal. This roller coaster ride of emotional response is comparable to other major life traumas. Fortunately, most wives are able to reach some degree of tolerance, if not acceptance, of crossdressing.

Our sex life has suffered, too. I suspected another woman, but could "she" really be him?

It's quite possible. Crossdressing can be highly erotic, especially during adolescence, and for some men, "she" remains a secret mistress. But no spouse is required to tolerate this selfish behavior. This is one area where crossdressers and spouses must negotiate mutually acceptable boundaries.

I love my husband. I don't want to lose him to this, but what can I do?

First, remember that he is still the man you fell in love with years ago, and he loves you, too. The keys to survival and growth are mutual love, education, communication and support.

I'm afraid once my husband starts crossdressing he will want to do it more and more!

Since it appears that he has already started to crossdress,

now is when the two of you must communicate and negotiate clear boundaries. It needs to be understood how much time, energy and money can be put into his crossdressing activities. Often therapists who are familiar with crossdressing can provide help and guidance for you.

But he keeps trampling the boundaries!

You may need to enlist the help of a therapist to sort out the issues. Your therapist should be familiar with crossdressing and provide a level playing field for both parties. It also helps to be a part of a Tri-Ess Chapter, where you can get the advice of other couples who have dealt with these issues.

What if he wants to take hormones?

Crossdressers are not transsexuals. Therefore, hormone therapy should not be part of the picture. The Medical and Psychological Standards of Care follow guidelines for hormone therapy in regard to a transsexual going through the transitioning process. Irreversible damage or body changes are possible when any hormones are taken.

What about our children? When or should we tell them?

Children's needs come first. Protecting them from possible gender confusion and the burden of secret keeping must be weighed against the effects of parental deceit and the odds of disastrous discovery. Adolescence can be a more difficult time to tell; earlier in childhood or in young adulthood may be better. You know your children. Consulting your therapist can aid in these important discussions and help determine what and when to tell your children. Where can I get more information? You may reach Tri-Ess through the contact information below.



Answers to your questions regarding crossdressing

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Help! My Husband Is a Crossdresser!

Answers to Your Questions

Presented as a public service by

**The Society for the
Second Self, Inc.
(Tri-Ess)**

A not for profit IRS 501(c)(3) corporation

**Tri-Ess is a support and
educational organization for
crossdressers, their spouses,
partners and family.**



Tri-Ess, your situation, and how we work together

"I just found a suitcase full of ladies' clothes in my husband's tool shed. At first I thought they belonged to an old girlfriend, but then I saw pictures of my husband wearing those clothes! Help! What's going on here?"

Your husband may be a crossdresser, a person who dresses in clothing traditionally worn by the opposite sex. Does that mean he is gay? He is probably not gay. Studies have shown that men who crossdress are no more likely to be gay than men in the general population.

Does he want a sex change?

While many crossdressers fantasize about being a woman, most do not feel they are a woman trapped in a man's body, and do not seek sexual reassignment.

Then why does he do it?

No one knows for sure. Some studies identify hormonal functions in early pregnancy, while others point to feminizing influences in childhood.

But he is very masculine!

Many crossdressers act very "macho" and even seek out high-risk professions to prove they are "real" men. Rigid social stereotypes set the standard for gender behavior for men, so much of the range of human emotions and personality potentials are arbitrarily labeled feminine and declared off limits. Others are just so secure in their masculinity that they feel free to explore their inner femininity. By dressing in women's clothes, he can not only access that "femininity," but he can integrate it into his personality, striking a healthy balance between his masculine and feminine components, becoming a happier, whole person.



But if crossdressing is so great, why did he keep it a secret from me all these years?

Until relatively recently, crossdressing was a subject about which little was known. Newly-developed knowledge and support resources have opened lines of communication between crossdressers and their spouses. Those who keep crossdressing a secret do so out of fear they will lose their life partner. Secretive behavior is driven by guilt and shame inculcated by social institutions. This is not an excuse for deception, but it may help you understand why some crossdressers act as they do.

But isn't this an obsessive-compulsive disorder that can be cured?

Crossdressing, according to mental health experts, is not considered to be a mental health disorder. Therefore, this is not a "disorder" to be cured. Unfortunately, lack of education and understanding has confused crossdressing as a mental health disorder.

Where can I get reliable information?

Some books that have been helpful to other partners of crossdressers are: *My Husband Wears My Clothes*, *Crossdressing With Dignity*, and *Who's really from Venus?*, all by Peggy Rudd; *Crossdressing, Sex and Gender* by Drs. Vern and Bonnie Bullough, and *Coping With Crossdressing* by JoAnn Roberts. These books can be found at major book stores or online at amazon.com. Please note that information on the Internet can be inaccurate.

Is there support for people like me?

The Society for the Second Self, Inc. commonly known as Tri-Ess, is the oldest and largest support organization for crossdressers and their spouses, partners and families. Tri-Ess uses a heterosexual family model, promotes crossdressing with dignity and decency, and treats spouses as equal members. The Tri-Ess website has many resources and documents that will help you and your spouse understand crossdressing.

What are the Tri-Ess Values?

Tri-Ess advocates a selfless approach to crossdressing and adjustment to it in an atmosphere of mutual giving. Tri-Ess supports the development of both the masculine and feminine sides of the personality while maintaining the integrity of interpersonal relationships.

How does Tri-Ess support crossdressers?

Crossdressers receive a quarterly magazine, *The Mirror*, which features articles and stories by and about crossdressing. There are several Internet discussion groups, and online Membership Directory and resource pages on the Tri-Ess Website. Tri-Ess produces *Holiday En Femme*, an annual convention usually in November. Through Tri-Ess Outreach programs, volunteers present informational seminars at colleges, universities, civic organizations and at conventions of professional or therapists who work with crossdressers. Tri-Ess regularly responds to inquiries from the public on issues regarding crossdressing and national advice personalities refer readers and listeners to Tri-Ess. This work has significantly impacted how society views crossdressers.

Are there programs for spouses as well?

Yes. Tri-Ess operates a moderated woman-only, peer-supportive e-list where more than 200 women talk over their issues in a secure, confidential environment. Details can be found at www.tri-ess.org. Spouses receive their own quarterly newsletter, the *Sweetheart Connection*, plus Internet-based resources, and the annual Spouses' and Partners' International Conference for Education (SPICE). Many local Tri-Ess Chapters have spouse and partner support meetings and activities separate from the crossdressers.

What support does our local Tri-Ess Chapter provide?

There are more than two dozen local chapters across the U.S. and several more forming. Chapters provide a safe, family-friendly atmosphere for social interactions where crossdressers, their spouses, and family members feel comfortable and accepted. Meeting programs include: how-tos, theme parties, peer support exercises, guest speakers, and shopping at accepting businesses. Some meetings may involve crossdressing, while others may not. Some chapters have social gatherings for spouses only, and/or for couples. More experienced members mentor newcomers, and chapters publish newsletters and operate e-lists and websites to foster communications among their members and to educate the public.