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**PARTNERS OF
CROSSDRESSERS**

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This booklet became the dream of a small group of caring partners at Fantasia Fair, Provincetown, Massachusetts. A year later it became a reality, with the help of others via questionnaire. Each partner, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is in a relationship with a Cross-Dresser, some in a marriages of 25 or more years. We are from different locations across the United States, come from varied backgrounds and religions, have been in various groups, including therapy with humanistic professionals, yet we all have something in common.

WHAT IS A CROSS-DRESSER?

An individual, usually heterosexual, who desires and needs to dress in the clothing of the opposite sex at different times throughout his or her life. This compulsive behavior generally starts at a young age and the individual struggles alone for many years with this closeted need. Cross-Dressing is not a sickness, but represents a person who enjoys expressing another aspect of his personality and gains both emotional and physical pleasure from this transition. It is not a hobby, but a necessity, and Cross-Dressing is for life.

There are many Cross-Dressers in the world today. We, the partners of Cross-Dressers, felt the need to put together this booklet and share our thoughts and feelings. And we want you to know:

"YOU ARE NOT ALONE!"

After first finding out that our spouses were Cross-Dressers, we experienced a multitude of emotions. We hope that this booklet will help you to understand and deal with the revelation that you are married to or involved with a Cross-Dresser.

Like most things in life that do not follow that straight and narrow way of thinking, when first informed of your spouse's Cross-Dressing, you experience shock and disbelief. The fact that a huge secret has been kept from you, even though you may have known this person for many years, has a profound emotional impact on you. From the start you may deny it, not only to yourself but also to your spouse, but inside you know it's true. You may continue to deny the fact and then begin to feel a certain sense of guilt, asking yourself, "Where did I go wrong?" or "What could I have done differently?" But, remember, you are not to blame! This is something your spouse has been dealing with for a long time.

At times, you may feel threatened by the fact that your spouse is now exposing a feminine side of himself and that he may not be the person you always thought he was. You also experience a great deal of fear and apprehension, the most fearful being the unknown and your naivete about Cross-Dressing. The quest to know and learn more is a long trek on which you travel many miles of rough road. And every once in awhile,

"You Cry!"

We first want to deal with emotions, listing many of the feelings that partners expressed about their spouse's Cross-Dressing, when answering our questionnaire: Stress, negativism, compulsion, love, fear, threatening, anger, acceptance, uncertainty, rejection, and understanding.

Marriages are affected in that you may feel alone...Cross-Dressing puts stress on the marriage, but when we can find other couples in the same circumstance and can share feelings with them, we begin to see we are not the only ones, and with help we can strengthen our relationship. Some partners do not and will never accept Cross-Dressing, and in these cases the marriage is destroyed.

Feelings are fairly divided on the question of telling our children. Some children accept it and others do not, which is typical of society in general. Most couples who have told their children have waited until the children were at an age when they could make an attempt at understanding the phenomena. There is concern, however, regarding post-mortem discovery when children do not know. One couple stated, "We've informed a very close friend where in the event of our demise, that friend will come into our home and dispose of that part of our life". Another suggestion might be to leave a letter, including reference materials for your family, explaining this lifestyle. Each individual couple will have to come to it's own conclusion on this question; each family presents a unique situation.

Most partners felt that Cross=Dressing does have an affect upon their sex lives. It weakens it; their sex life has become more inactive. It is a turn off, especially the shaven body or the lingerie...The Cross-Dresser spends time, thought, energy and money on his need and less of himself goes into their sex life. Some partners were not disturbed and felt he was a husband first and a Cross-Dresser second, that a decrease in sexual activity is part of the aging process and not a result of Cross-Dressing.

If you have confidence in yourself as a woman his Cross-Dressing may not be a threat to your femininity. You might be a role model for your spouse; not only with the clothes and the makeup but also with the gestures and mannerisms that help to create the image of the total woman. Usually you are not the role model he desires. "Threatened, no...But I sure would like to have some of his clothes!"

Discovery, exposure, becoming publically known! Not an easy situation to handle. Very few, if any, partners when presented with this question could give a positive answer. The majority of partners experienced feelings ranging from simple reluctance to mortification. The thought of family and friends discovering the secret is absolutely frightening. The fears of ridicule and rejection could become reality. This is something that should be thoroughly discussed between the Cross-Dresser and his partner and it is not to be taken lightly.

When questioned about their feelings and reactions to their spouse's Cross-Dressing, many partners seemed to answer in the same way. The majority of partners said they accepted it and were comfortable with it. However, no matter how much they feel they accept or how comfortable they may be, there is always another shock or surprise somewhere down the road. Some partners stated that though it bothered them, they knew that their spouse's were happy and content. This made it acceptable, although they would prefer he took up stamp collecting.

When partners were questioned if they felt their spouses would always want to do more, the general concensus was "yes". Whether your spouse is just out of the closet or has been out for a long time, this is quite unpredictable. Some partners felt that allowing their spouses to dress lessened the need, while others felt, given the opportunity, their spouses would dress more often.

Present feelings concerning their spouse's Cross-Dressing were

quite varied. One partner stated that she feels more understanding, more fulfillment and is sharing his entire life, while another blocks out stress and must deal with negative feelings. A majority of the questioned partners said it was something that would always be a part of their lives and something that must be dealt with if they are to remain together. One partner is annoyed by it, tired of it and in constant fear of discovery.

"Helps knowing you're not the only tin can in the dump." At first many partners are fearful of speaking with anyone other than their spouse, however, ninety-nine percent of the partners, in our survey, gave similar answers when questioned about communicating with other partners, Cross-Dressers, or couples, whether at group meetings, weekends away, trips, or in the privacy of one another's homes. Socializing is enlightening and very helpful, problems seem smaller and less stressful, a big plus is the friendship and the common bond formed with others. The release of tension from keeping the secret provides great relief.

Facing any new situation in life is always a learning and growing experience. We all have a built-in maturing feature, and the more we learn and the more we know the less we fear. Cross-Dressing is no different!

It is significant to note that a survey of the answers to questions concerning the conflicts that arise between Cross-Dressers and their partners indicates one solution. This theme repeats itself:

"Talk it out."

"Discuss"

"Talk, talk, listen, listen."

"Get priorities agreed upon."

"Negotiate."

"Respect each others feelings."

"Keep a communication line open."

"We talk, we argue, sometimes we yell, but we listen."

"Try to work out a compromise we can be reasonably happy with."

And they conclude:

"We need to keep working on it."

All agree that they do tell their spouses of the negative reactions to aspects of his Cross-Dressing, but they try to balance these with positive input. Much of the negativity occurred due to the partner's fear of the spouse losing control. The overwhelming fear is of careless self betrayal (perhaps deliberate with some), though loose talk or forgetting to remove the femme paraphernalia. This could be compounded with the increasing desire to dress or participate in Cross-Dressing activities. A need to expand horizons worries some. Others attributed their negative reactions to not wanting either of them to experience the possible ridicule and rejection that might follow discovery. Also touched upon was the hovering shadow of Transsexual yearnings. There were indications that these fears lessen with time and understanding, yet some of the partners deny ever having such concerns at all.

Most partners interviewed encouraged the socializing with other Cross-Dressers, although a few did not. Some invite Cross-Dressers to their homes, while others encourage spouses to attend meetings and go to weekend or week long events. One fear expressed was that the Cross-Dresser might want to become more public in their activities, thereby flirting with discovery, but almost all partners recognized the need of a Cross-Dresser to share and gain the support of others.

Many Cross-Dressers are considerate, sensitive people who realize that limits must exist. Most are very supportive and understanding of their partner's limits. Some become more sympathetic after meeting with other couples and will give up their wishes to accommodate their partner's requests, but are resentful in their disappointment. A few have not learned to manage their fantasies, but

stock up on "500 pairs of high heeled shoes" and "leave their nighties behind the bathroom door". One wife says, "It varies...sometimes I am more tolerant and sometimes he is less demanding".

When questioned as to how partners' can tactfully influence their spouse's wardrobe, many replied that they are consulted about wardrobe and ensemble choices and that the Cross-Dresser seems to be very receptive to suggestion. A tactful way to effect a change of taste is offered by one partner who suggests "pointing out fashion trends and complimenting him on his appearance". Another recommends, "Suggesting not criticizing". Although many Cross-Dressers have good taste, some lean toward the "vulgar and sexy", but will eventually learn by experiment or experience and are pleased with their partner's interest. A few report they have complete control over their spouse's wardrobe, while most say they have some input.

When asked if the partners shopped for their Cross-Dressing spouse or with him, we got an array of responses. "Shopping can be a great deal of fun for both of you". In some instances partners contribute by sewing, "thus insuring a good fit and keeping the cost of the compulsion down". Sometimes the Cross-Dresser becomes an excellent "seamstress" and can make his partner's clothes.

All partners who responded to the questionnaire agreed that who to tell, whether it be no one, the family, or a few friends, is an on-going process of evaluation, and it is a couple decision.

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Local Mental Health Centers in your area.

Suicide & Crisis Intervention Hotlines in your area.

**NOT ONE WORD OF THIS REPORT WAS CHANGED
AT THE REQUEST OF THE PARTNERS GROUP:**

"However, I feel strongly that if one word of what we presented to you, i.e. Outreach, is altered, it will lack credibility. It will become suspect. And, dear Betty Ann, please understand I'm saying this remembering vividly all the good material my husband gave me to read, written by TVs, that I found suspect. I wanted objective literature!"