

Your Local Support Group

THE ALPHA OMEGA SOCIETY

The Alpha Omega Society usually meets on the second Saturday of each month in a secure location on the east side of Cleveland. Our recent attendance has been around 30 with about 30% wives or significant others present. Our web site and e-mail addresses are one way to reach us:

<http://www.AOSOC.org>
info@AOSOC.org

Our web site features past and current newsletters, news items, links to other support groups, community resources both local and national, and email addresses to reach AO outreach volunteers.

We also have a snail mail address

Alpha Omega Society
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SHEFFIELD LAKE, OH 44054-0053



Is Someone You Know A Crossdresser?



Presented as a Public Service
by the
Alpha Omega Society

Is Someone You Know A Cross-Dresser?

We all know what a cross-dresser is, don't we? We see them on daytime TV and in Hollywood movies. From Billy Wilder's Jazz-Age carefree "Some Like it Hot" and Dustin Hoffman's liberated "Tootsie" to Robin William's poignant "Mrs. Doubtfire", the business of being or appearing to be the other sex enthralls and fascinates us. In each of these movies, it is clear that walking a mile in the other side's high heels has beneficial and positive effects on the character.

But that's the movies. What about real life and real people? Real life is what this brochure is about, to offer information, support and guidance for crossdressers and the important people in their lives, and to let you know about us, The Alpha Omega Society, an organization dedicated to providing community and support to heterosexual crossdressers and their families.

Gender Terminology...Who is and isn't a Crossdresser?

There are perhaps, several million crossdressers in the United States. There are many ways people wear the clothing of the opposite sex and many labels that are used to describe them. There isn't a strong consensus on useage for many of these terms. In Western Society the term **Transvestite** was originally coined to describe men who crossdressed strictly for sexual gratification and some people prefer to maintain this distinction between the terms transvestite and crossdresser. A new category, "**Tgirl**" has come into existence recently that describes crossdressers who prefer to express the role of women in sexually charged environments and contexts. Some people exclude **Drag Queens, Female Impersonators, Trangenderists** and **Transsexuals** from the category of crossdresser. **Drag Queens** are usually gay or bisexual males who done female clothing either to mock femininity and society's stereotypes of gays, or to find sex partners. **Female Impersonators** dress to entertain. **Transgenderists** live in the opposite of their physical birth sex. **Transsexuals** take this a step further, seeking to align the gender identity which is "between their legs" with the identity "between their ears", often taking hormones and having genital reconfiguration surgery. These days **Female to Male transsexuals** and "**Drag Kings**" are becoming increasingly visible, and demonstrating that it's not only men who cross gender lines.



Joining Your Local Group

You can expect that membership in your local chapter will provide a safe venue for cross-gender expression, experienced advice and support, friendship, fun, growth and the opportunity for service to others for both the crossdresser and his spouse.



Interviews

All new members must be screened by our interview committee for the safety and security of our other members. To arrange an interview you can contact us by any of the means listed on the back page. You can interview with or without your spouse. Your interviewer will be able to answer further questions about crossdressing, Alpha Omega, and depending on your needs, qualified experienced therapists and other support groups in the area.

Meetings, Confidentiality and Privacy, Department, Dues and Dress Code

- ✧ Local meetings are held on a monthly basis at a safe, friendly and private location known to members but not the general public. Meetings are usually held on a weekend evening and feature dinner and a topical program. Some programs are just for fun, others consider serious topics.
- ✧ We share your concern for confidentiality and privacy. All attendees at local meetings are screened by selected experienced members. Our policy is that people's names must not be disclosed outside the meeting, and no photos are to be taken without permission.
- ✧ We are a social and support group, not a contact or dating service, and all attendees are expected to comport themselves accordingly.
- ✧ Annual Membership dues are \$36 for an individual, \$48 for a couple. In addition, meeting fees are assessed to cover the cost of the meeting facility and refreshments. If you elect not to join the chapter, but have passed screening you may attend meetings while paying a higher meeting fee.
- ✧ You are encouraged to come dressed in good taste as your masculine or feminine self, but no half-and-half please. If you have concerns that your favorite attire might challenge community standards, please ask, we'll let you know. Changing rooms are provided free of additional charge.

Looking for Support?

Support should be based on the following principles: That there is no one-size fits all goal for support. Each person, crossdresser and spouse must be given equal support in achieving responsible, safe and considerate expression. The integration and balance of cross dressing in peoples lives is deeply personal and growth paths and resolutions will be different. The support organization should also have a public face working to ease the social stigma associated with crossdressing.

What Goes on at a Meeting?

Meetings offer the crossdresser, spouse and family a chance to safely and securely express themselves in the supportive presence of others with the same interests. A meeting generally consists of socializing, dinner, a short business meeting, a presentation on a topic of interest, more socializing and of course sharing the chores of cleaning up.

Meeting topics include the serious, such as legal aspects of crossdressing, improving martial communication, useful skills such as makeup, clothing and wigs, spiritual improvement sessions focusing on stress reduction and inner peace or simply fun, where skits and plays are put on or gender related videos are viewed. Several times a year, representatives from local friendly merchants will make presentations about their goods and services, often offering items for sale.

Above all, a meeting offers the opportunity to make friends. Because the phenomena of cross gendered expression knows no limits of race, religion, social class or income, a meeting affords us all a rare and precious opportunity to share ourselves with people who we'd not likely meet otherwise, providing great enrichment to our lives.

What Else Does a Local Support Organization Do?

Foremost among our jobs is public awareness. This brochure, a web site, donations to public libraries are part of our outreach efforts. We provide speakers to classes, religious and civic organizations. In this way we strive to make sure those who need us know about us, and to educate society that transgendered expression is a personal prerogative that poses no threat and offers benefits.

Members of Alpha Omega have access to a library of educational material accumulated over many years. Lists of counselors with experience in coping with gender issues, places to safely shop and eat, and otherwise expand horizons are kept and expanded. Our group also maintains ties with other organizations with similar interests in order to share wisdom and work for common goals. One such goal is legal protections for the right to gender expression outside of work, a simple matter of the right to privacy.

But Why do they Cross-Dress?

There is a lot of speculation on the origin of crossdressing, but not a great deal of solid fact. Recent medical information indicates that sometimes crossdressing can appear as side effect of psychoactive medications such as those used to treat Parkinsonism. When the medication isn't used, the desire disappears. There are also extraordinary cases where medication can treat hypersexuality, and some transvestites have been able to live more normal lives. Neither situation is typical.



For many men, there is an affinity for modes of expression that society has reserved for women. Clothing, interests, emotions, ways of talking and interacting are all sex-stereotyped. Many are aware of this affinity in early childhood. If the affinity for the modes of the opposite sex is strong enough, a social outlet becomes necessary. Clothing serves as a lens, making it easier to focus on and liberate those capacities and have them perceived and appreciated by others. Some eventually find ways to express their feminine modes in a male role, others find satisfaction in periodic visits to "women's country", and some do both. But many men would deny having any

affinity for the feminine, and for them the craft of impersonation and the chance to play a role other than their normal one is motivation enough. In these cases crossdressing is described as relaxing or releasing stress, much like any other hobby. No one answer appears to describe everyone. Some think genetic factors or pre-natal hormonal exposures have a role. Recent studies on trying to force gender-role reassignment on intersexed and accidentally mutilated infants show it to fail a significant fraction of the time. This suggests that one's sense of gender, and fitting into a given gender has deep origins which should be respected rather than suppressed.

What about Sexuality?

Human beings are sexual creatures. Early on many, but not all crossdressers find the activity sexually stimulating. However, crossdressing often starts long before puberty and sexual crossdressing may be a side effect of more fundamental issues. Later, the sexual factor appears to diminish. For the crossdressers and partners who do face issues of sexual expression, Alpha Omega maintains lists of competent counselors. Separate of sexual expression, crossdressing often exists as a matter of personality. Alpha Omega is here to support this expression of personality. It's not how crossdressing starts but the personal growth that it can lead to that is our concern.

What types of people Crossdress?

Crossdressers come from all walks of life, races, creeds and economic backgrounds. Crossdressing is known in contemporary and historical cultures around the world. In some societies the capacity for cross-gender expression was or is respected rather than being something shameful. Most crossdressers in the US are well-educated and come from conventional family backgrounds. The vast majority are heterosexual and most are or have been married. Most are happy in their masculinity, and only a small percentage opt to live as women full time. A few women are crossdressers, but they are much less numerous than their male counterparts. This may be due to the greater choices allowed women in matters of social role, self-expression and dress, or simply a social blind spot that doesn't recognize women as cross-dressing, even if they are. We are concerned that African-American, Hispanic, Asian and other minority communities have not been well served and Alpha Omega actively seeks to expand our visibility and services here.



Can Crossdressing be "Cured?"

When we ask "Can crossdressing be cured?" we must be clear about what we mean. The common meaning of the question is whether the desire to express traits that society reserves for the opposite gender can be removed by some kind of medical treatment or psychological therapy without harm to the individual. But another meaning is whether a crossdresser needs to feel unhappy and afraid because they pursue a harmless and often beneficial activity not sanctioned by society at this time.

We know that people can be brainwashed, that even the strongest individual can be forced to act and even believe in the fashion desired by his persecutors. But such treatment is not a cure for anything. Crossdressing can be driven underground, but it will likely resurface. Tormented by the threat of social disapproval or rejection by a spouse, some crossdressers dispose of their clothing. Later, the need becomes strong, and they start again. Some live lives shrouded in secrecy, worried about the possible consequences to families, jobs, and friends. Late in life some people may choose to stop for fear of being "caught dead in a dress", thus cutting themselves off from a reason to live. Living in repression is not a cure.



Some seek therapy as a cure, but many therapists know less about crossgender issues than the patient. The patient winds up paying to educate an ill-chosen therapist. And while anti-depressants can help with the depression which can affect a crossdresser who hasn't come to terms with this part of himself, only in rare cases can those drugs remove the desire to dress. In short, crossdressing can be suppressed or hidden at a great cost to the individual, but it cannot be "cured". Those who have embraced this aspect of themselves seek no cure. This is not to say that nothing can be done. Counseling and support groups can help people deal with shame, guilt, and depression. How to crossdress responsibly, considerately, safely, even how to make it a constructive, positive and cherished part of a person's life are frequent and expected examples of the growth possible in a secure and supportive environment.

Crossdressing and Marriage



Crossdressing doesn't need to harm a marriage. In fact, many couples have no difficulties. How a crossdresser's wife or partner accepts him depends on his own degree of insight, the duration and solidity of the relationship, the way in which she learns about his crossdressing and what type of crossdressing is involved. If crossdressing wasn't discussed prior to marriage, a therapist and/or crossdressing support group can provide help in coming out and maintaining the relationship afterwards. The husband who waits until after the wedding to disclose his crossdressing has most likely made the common error of expecting his need to crossdress to disappear after marriage. Generally, there was no intent to deceive.

Once her husband demonstrates that he has no desire to leave her for another man or for a new life as a woman, a common issue for a wife is "When is it my turn?" The husband is having an exciting adventure, what is in it for the wife? Wise and caring couples can seek equitable solutions allowing both partners opportunities to grow that suit their own unique circumstances. Contact with support organizations, other spouses and qualified therapists can be of help for those couples who have difficulties. When a crossdresser demonstrates that the manly traits his wife loves in him are supplemented rather than replaced or subordinated by his affinity for things called feminine another common issue for wives may be resolved. And like many other crises that can test a marriage, couples who come out the other side can have greater appreciation, love and respect for their partner, and forge a stronger, more enduring bond.

Families and Children

The decision to tell the children about one's crossgender expression is a highly personal one, to be arrived at jointly by the parents, with the needs of the child paramount. When a child is mature enough to be entrusted with confidential family information is also a concern. Crossdressers are usually torn between the desire to "protect" their children on the one hand, and the negative effects of deceit on the other. Telling the children at a time and under circumstances controlled by the parents forestalls the children finding out somehow at a time when they are least prepared to deal with it.



In our experience, timing **-when** the children are told- is more important than anything else. Adolescence, a time of struggle to establish social and sexual identity, is **not** the right time (especially with boys). If boys are not told earlier in childhood, it is generally best to wait until adulthood. On the other hand, children who are told in early childhood typically accept crossgender expression as "no big deal". What children are told must be age appropriate, just like discussions of sex and sexuality. Again, help from therapists and crossdressing support groups can be useful and support is available to the children of a crossdresser as well. Having parents who have resolved the issues created by crossdressing, and strengthened their bond, the children in turn can benefit from the growth, sensitivity and improved communications that their parents have achieved. It is comforting for all to know that a crossdresser's children don't appear at any greater risk of becoming crossdressers themselves.