

Presentation Keystone Conference -- March 23, 2023

Telling Your Story: The How, When, Why, Who and What of Telling Your Gender Journey Story



SPEAKER: Kathy Randall, *Founder Light in the Closet Ministry*

Minister Kathy Randall (she, her, they, them) Kathy identifies as gender fluid and expresses this through lifestyle choices and cross-dressing. As a commissioned Stephen Minister, Kathy provides counseling for those going through tough times focusing usually on gender issues. In 2008 Kathy founded *Light in the Closet Ministry*, an online support for Christian M2F cross-dressers.

Kathy has served in many ministry capacities over the past 35 years including as co-host and organizer of the Transgender Religious Leaders Summit, a three-day event at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California along with the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies (CLGS). Kathy has also participated in HRC's Clergy Call, in Washington DC, has spoken at Creating Change and Southern Comfort in Atlanta and Florida, and at the Philly Transgender Wellness Conference and Keystone Conferences in Philadelphia.

WORKSHEETS

Tell your story if you are able!

As a minister to the transgender community for over 20 years, I have seen how coming out as trans and attempting to maintain relationships can be difficult to navigate.

Although support for those who identify as transgender is gaining advocates, many in business and mainstream faith communities are just ignorant of transgender issues, and therefore unsupportive. Telling our stories can help to change that.

Person(s) who you plan to tell: _____

Relationship(s): _____

WHY COME OUT?

- We live in a mostly, polarized gender society. The way we interact with each other is primarily based on the genders male and female.
- It is important to define ourselves and help to educate others to the full gender spectrum.
- Being “known” and related to as our proper gender is a major part of being accepted and understood.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO COME OUT?

- Because I will finally get to be myself.
- It's just something I need to do, I think it's right and honest.
- I am looking for acceptance and want affirmation.
- I'm dreading it, but I am tired of hiding and hope it is okay.
- I don't feel like I have a choice, but need to let them know.
- I m looking for permission to express myself around them freely.

OTHER _____

What are you risking?: _____

Other concerns: _____

PRONOUNS ARE IMPORTANT!

- If you identify as “female” and are “sir-ed” ... it hurts.
- If you identify as “male” and are “mam-ed” ... it hurts.
- If you are “intersexed” and are “mis-nouned” ... it hurts.
- If you are gender-fluid and are not addressed as hoped ... it hurts.
- If you are non-binary and are “mam-ed or sir-ed” ... it hurts.
- If you’re agender, or pangender and mis-labeled ... it hurts

WHY SHARE?

Think about your reasons before you share.

- 1) Are you sharing for your benefit and for their benefit? _____
- 2) What do you want to accomplish? _____
- 3) Do you want to improve your relationship with the person or group you are sharing your gender-journey with, or do you just want to shock them? __ Shock __ Improve __ Neither
- 4) How do you see your life as a result of the sharing? __ Good __ Bad __ Same
Other: _____
- 5) Is it necessary to come out to this person? __Yes __No. __ Maybe __ Not sure.

The website, “Point of Pride” makes this statement concerning youth:

*“We understand how challenging it may be to live authentically by coming out to your loved ones and family members, especially if you live with them. However, if they’ve made prior remarks or showed attitudes about the trans/LGBTQ community that make you feel that they may react very badly or not allow you to live in their home, **we recommend waiting until you are independent before you come out.**”*

WHEN SHOULD YOU SHARE?

Timing has to do with your readiness to share and the receptibility of those you want to share with.

Consider:

1. Are you at a place of confidence and clarity, or are you desperate?
2. Have you taken the time to educate those what want to share with on transgender issues? If not, can you?
3. Can you wait to make sure your audience is ready and receptive as much as they can be?

When are you planning to tell: _____

How much effort and planning are you willing to put into coming out or sharing your transgender journey?

- I am patient and want to do this right. I want to plan it out.
- I want to educate them first.
- I need to do it and get it over with.
- I want it to just be a part of a conversation, “Oh and by the way...”
- I want someone else to tell them.

WITH WHOM SHOULD YOU SHARE?

You may think that sharing with your family would be your first step. - *This may or may not be true.*
It is best to share first with those you have identified as allies. Sharing with them will help you plan and clarify what you want to share and how to share it.

Once the information is shared, it cannot be unshared. Even so, it may be worth the risk. Our acceptance is not just a transgender inclusion issue, but is one that touches all humanity supporting the core value of self-determination.

Is the person you're sharing with informed about the transgender community?

- Yes, at least somewhat knowledgeable.
- I don't know.
- No, not really.

How excited are you to come out to this person?

- I CAN'T WAIT. It is time -- *the time is now.*
- I'm excited to let those who matter know this part of my life.
- It is the only way I can have the freedom I seek but am fearful.
- I'm not excited. But I need to "rip off the Band-Aid."
- I'm dreading it and want to avoid conflict.

WHAT SHOULD YOU SHARE?

Share only information that is relevant to the person with whom you plan to share. If you have family members, share with each person independently if possible and craft your sharing to align with their world view and focused primarily on the desired outcome you would like to see.

1. Do not over-share on highly personal items, sexual preferences, or unnecessary information that should be held onto for another time. Stay focused.
2. Allow time for comment.

What do you want to cover?: _____

How do you WANT to come out?

- I want to do it in the biggest way possible and make a statement.
- I'd like to have a little fun with it and treat it like it's no big deal.
- I'd rather just write a letter or text them.
- I want a one-on-one and share deeply about my journey.
- I really am not sure if I should come out, is it really worth it?
- My fear and or guilt makes me wonder if I ever will come out.

How do you plan to tell?: _____

Getting Past Guilt

We often judge ourselves before anyone else does. Being “out to ourselves,” being honest with ourselves, takes a toll emotionally.

It is an investment of our time and resources to face internal challenges, and at times it feels selfish. We may even feel guilty.

Guilt is especially prevalent in religious communities. Letting go of the guilt is an important step to self-acceptance.

Do you feel guilty because...

...you think others object to your gender journey?

...you think exploring your gender is wrong?

...you don't think you deserve joy, or happiness?

...you think God disapproves?

Does your guilt keep you from living honestly?

Does your guilt keep you from living abundantly?

It is time to live without guilt. – Think about how your guilt or fears might hold you back and what you can do to rid address them or rid yourself of them.

Rev. Dr Monica Joy Cross (Transwoman, She, Her)

- ▶ Rev Cross serves as Pastor at First Christian Church Disciples of Christ. She is an Associate Minister at Tapestry Ministries, and also the Northern California-Nevada Women's Ministries leader for the Christian Church Disciples of Christ. Monica is a long-term transgender activist, educator, writer, planner, social justice advocate, and public speaker.
- ▶ Monica has worked with the Human Rights Campaign as a writer for “Out In Season” as well as the National Center for Transgender Education (NCTE).
- ▶ Monica's published books include: Reflections of a Prophet Without Honor (Amazon) and Authenticity and Imagination in the Face of Oppression).

Contact: LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rev-dr-monica-joy-cross-a0236a8/>

Books: <https://wipfandstock.com/author/monica-joy-cross>

COMMUNICATE!

There is a difference between what we want to communicate, what we actually communicate, and how it is received. Everyone filters the world through their own world-view-lens. We receive and process information based on how it affects us first. Three aspects of communication are:

1. What we intend to say.
2. What we actually say
3. What others hear.

What comes to mind when you think of being out?

- Out and proud, very active in my new community!
- I just want to be myself.
- Not much will change. I see this as additional information.
- I don't think anything will change
- I would like to remove those from my life that are unsupportive.
- I want to make a statement and let the chips fall where they may.

Count the cost – Hope for the best, but be prepared to face worse-case scenario

Rabbi Dr. Levi Ethan Alter (Intersexed, He, Him)

- ▶ Rabbi Dr. Levi Ethan Alter is an Orthodox Jewish rabbi. He is the spiritual leader of his congregation of Holocaust survivors and the CEO of a healthcare corporation. His previous professional experiences include being on the clinical faculty of UCLA Medical Center and a university department chairman.
- ▶ He is the President of FTM International, spanning more than twenty countries and over thirty years building FTM lives, families and communities.
- ▶ He was honored with the Icon Award from Trans Unity Pride for lifetime service to the transgender community.

Contact to find out more: <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/profiles/levi-ethan-alter>

See him at: <http://transbodies.com/people/rabbi-levi-alter/>

ACCEPTANCE IS CRITICAL!

It is difficult to believe you are loved, if you are un-known by those who close to you.

Finding the words to come out to someone close to you can be hard, especially when it's a close family member or a person who you've known all of your life.

Being accepted by others as yourself is worth the risk – So think about your truth, and be truthful in the telling.

Coming out is not a one-and-done deal.

How many people already know? Do you have a supportive community you can turn to?

- Almost everyone in my life who matters knows and is supportive
- Some of my close friends know, some are supportive.
- No one knows.

How many supportive LGBTQ+ friends do you have?

- Practically everyone I know is trans, gender queer or part of the gender spectrum!
- Several
- One or two
- Zero. Everyone I know is cist-gender, straight or say they are.

MAKE CONNECTIONS!

Connect with others by partnering with them and supporting their stories. Do not be a rock and an island. Rejection often leads us to pull back and not trust. Try to:

1. Locate a gender support group
2. Locate a faith-based support group
3. Find a friend who is sympathetic and engage with them in a sharing relationship. Make it about “them” not just about you.

USE CONTEXT WHEN YOU TELL YOUR STORY

Understand the importance of context. Context is vital to communication and needs to address the listeners world view. You can help create context by:

1. Telling your backstory
2. Describing the why, when and what.
3. Use common language to engage
4. Warning: Don’t be overly dramatic

We are all products of our context.

Do you know if the person you want to come out to is accepting?

- Yes, I’m positive that they will accept and support me!
- They’ll be OK with it.
- I have no idea how they will react.
- They’ve said some homophobic/transphobic things in the past.
- I know they would definitely not accept or support me.

Practice what you want to say. Think about this and share this in the small group.

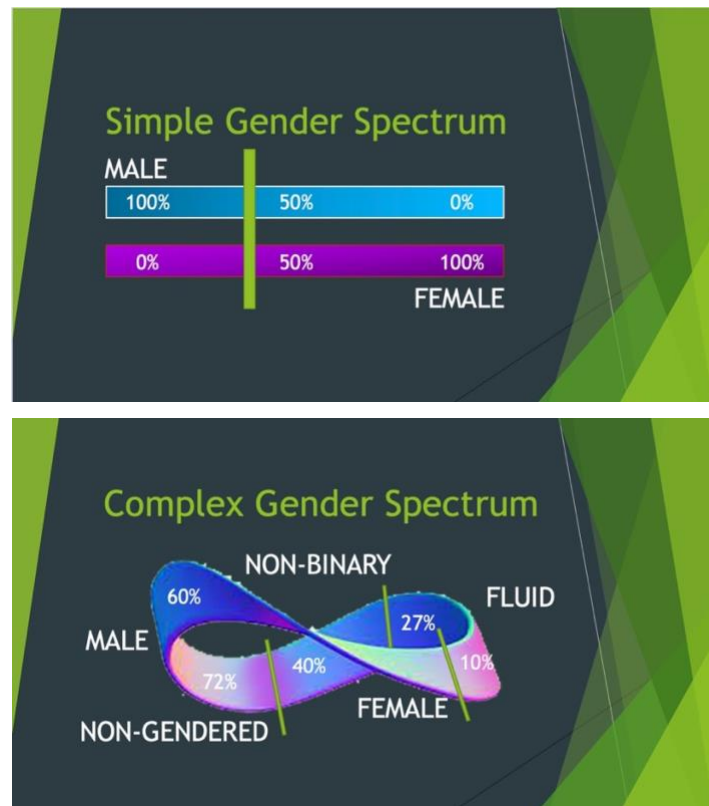
(Make additional notes below):

TELLING CHILDREN

Children can be difficult to tell, especially our own children. You may fear rejection or a loss of relationship. Most ages are both good and bad. There isn’t a right or wrong time to tell as long as the information is focused on the child and is age-specific.

1. Ask about their backstory and then relate yours.
2. Use common language to engage and consider using a gender spectrum 1-100%. 100-1%
3. Warning: Share, don’t scare!

Gender Spectrum Models:



Partners and Advocates

Supporting as an Ally

Acceptance is key. Tolerance is not enough. Tolerance is just a placeholder for rejection.

- Don't assume everyone knows your friend or relative is transgender.
- Don't make assumptions about a transgender person's sexual orientation.
- Use the correct pronouns.
- Encourage and defend.
- Not all transgender persons want to be outed so be careful about confidentiality.
- Learn the terminology used to describe their gender identity.
- Help make your company or group truly trans-inclusive.
- Use gender inclusive language whenever possible.

Transgender Acceptance in Mainstream Communities

1. Being trans or coming out as trans and attempting to maintain relationships can be difficult.
2. Although support for those who identify as transgender is gaining some advocates, many mainstream faith and social communities are just ignorant of transgender issues, or even hostile.
3. The trans community needs advocates and partners more than ever to promote acceptance.

Allies Test Your Knowledge - Take the quiz!

Possible items to share with your group.

Please choose a group moderator. As you share, try to give everyone in the group the opportunity to share their story, or their concerns they would like to ask the group about.

1. Who do you want to tell (relationship)? _____

2. What do you want to tell them? _____

3. How do you want to tell them? _____

4. When do you think will be a good time to tell them? _____

5. What kind of support do you have? _____

6. What are your fears, concerns or risks? _____

Thank you for attending!

Minister KATHY RANDALL KLEIN

Lightinthecloset.org | (+1 (925) 586-4651 | LITC.Kathy@gmail.com

Stay in touch / Group Contacts:

Name: _____ . Identifies: _____ Pronouns: _____

Contact info _____

Name: _____ . Identifies: _____ Pronouns: _____

Contact info _____

Name: _____ . Identifies: _____ Pronouns: _____

Contact info _____

Name: _____ . Identifies: _____ Pronouns: _____

Contact info _____

