

We never pass — even if we do

 Sarah H. · [Follow](#)
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A friend of mine started her transition in her twenties. She had always had narrow shoulders, small hands, a feminine face, full hair, and a slender body. She lives stealth, but although she passed by even the strictest norms of today's society, she wasn't happy with her face. So she had facial feminization surgery (FFS) last year. We chatted on the evening before her

FFS. Her last, her final surgery, before *finally* being able to feel complete. To enjoy life just as every woman would do.

Her FFS went well —she went from good looking to stunning. But she isn't happy yet. She is still feeling insecure and is now considering fat grafts and a surgery to her vocal chords (although she has already worked for several years at a company, and nobody knows she is trans).

To a certain extent, I see myself in her. Myself from 20 years ago, if I had completed my transition, had my FFS with Dr. Ousterhout and transitioned socially afterwards. I envy her, as she has every option to live stealth, but I also feel sympathy for her. Although she passes visually, she still is searching for *that final puzzle piece* that will make her whole. I am not sure whether she will ever be able to find that missing piece: self-acceptance.

Top highlight

The concept of passing usually describes how well a transgendered person is seen by others as their identified gender. I always strived for 100% passability. Why? First, because I don't want to see a guy when looking into the mirror. Second, because if others see me as a guy in a skirt, or a transgendered person, they will treat me socially as a guy, or a transgendered person. *But not as a woman.*

I've read numerous books on plastic surgery and books such as "proportions of the aesthetic face", which describe the ideal proportions of the hairline in relation to the glabella, subnasale and menton; the ideal interocular dimensions; the optimal dorsal angle and how the best dorsal radix-dome line should look like — just to give a few examples. It doesn't matter whether this all just sounds gibberish.

Once you have read these books to prepare for FFS, at least from an aesthetic perspective, you start to subconsciously analyze the faces around you. The cashier at the supermarket, the hairdresser, the colleague at work. You mentally calculate their ratios, upper lip to subnasale distance, nasolabial angle. Even with the most beautiful girl, you can find things that could be fixed, ratios that are slightly off, things that make her *unpassable*.

Wait? What did I just say? Unpassable? But she is cis? She can't be unpassable! She is cis after all.

I've seen cis women that by trans-standards were pretty much unpassable. But they didn't think of themselves as "not passing". That's an alien concept that wouldn't even cross their minds. So: Passing also has something to do with how someone perceives herself. No cis women would get up in the morning and question whether she passes.

When I decided to visit my therapist as Sarah, I was nervous. Although I had passed pretty well 20 years ago, I had aged, and T had taken a toll on me. Some of my beard shadow had come back. I was pretty sure I wouldn't pass.

But: Passing is not only about one's facial proportions. It's about everything. If you are 50, but dress like you are 15, something is off. *You will get noticed.* If you wear that light summer dress during daytime, but use evening makeup like you just want to go to a night-club, *you will get noticed.* If you walk like a man, you ... well, you get the concept. It's the concept of *gender cues*.

My first therapy session of 2022 took place during summer, with temperatures in their 90s (around 34 degrees Celsius). I was wearing a nice wig that wasn't recognizable as such (even when up close), a blue women's sun straw hat, a blue/white striped summer dress, and matching sandals that were also blue/white striped. I combined that outfit with a brown LV Dauphine bag that I was wearing cross-body and a matching watch. Although I was using concealer to hide my beard shadow, my makeup still wasn't thick or caky, and my eyeshadow had a gentle beige-brown blend with brown eyeliner. This outfit was an outfit that any 47 year old women would have worn that day. I felt confident.

When I had to take a long walk from the parking garage to the therapist's office, nobody turned their heads when I walked by, nobody shouted at me. Of course I didn't ask anyone whether he or she noticed that I am trans, so whether I really passed or just imagined to do so, I will never know. Still, I do think that passing that day was a combination of visual cues, but also the confidence I had that day.

While my confidence has grown, I still know that I don't pass *that* well. I know that I still want FFS, that my voice currently is a dead-giveaway and that I would feel more confident with my *own* hair instead of a wig.

But one thing *has* changed in all of these years: Self acceptance.

I know now that I pass well enough for casual situations e.g. running errands. But there will always be situations where I won't pass that well (yet — or maybe also in the future). The question really is: Am I okay with this?

When I had to go to my general practitioner to get a signoff on a document I needed in order to get therapy, I had to come out to her. We chatted about 20 minutes about me being trans, how I feel with it, etc. — after which she said: *“The way you are telling me all of this, I think you really have accepted yourself being trans.”*

I answered: “It's something that happens even in the best families.”

As long as we don't accept ourselves for what we are, we will always search for the next surgery to make our shoulders narrower (yeah, there is an experimental surgery described in a surgical publication from India), our voice more feminine or get the waist to hip ratio more in line with the target gender. There will always be just this *one* additional surgery to make us complete... and we will never find true happiness.

Accepting oneself is not the solution to passing, but a pretty important ingredient and the key to being able to just start living your life.

Please follow me if you'd like to learn more how things progress.

Passing

Transgender

Transition



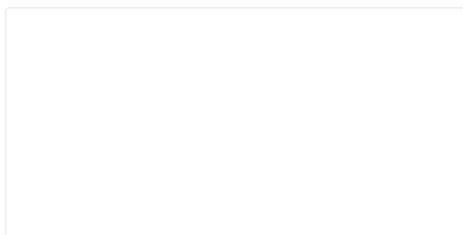
Written by Sarah H.



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Based in Germany, born 1975, transgendered, tried transition in 2003-05, detransitioned due to my parents. Restarted HRT 03/2023. CDO of a mid sized company.

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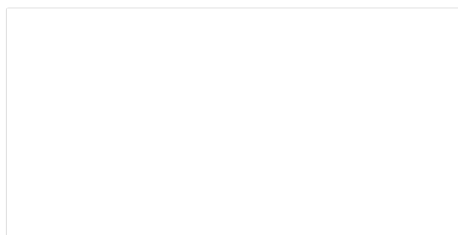
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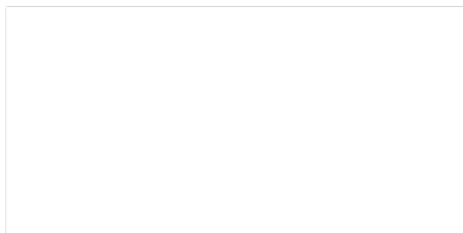
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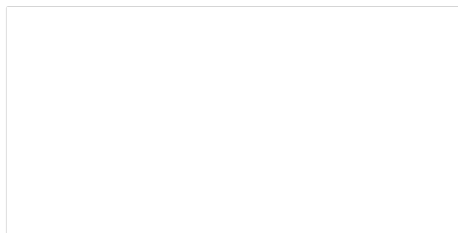
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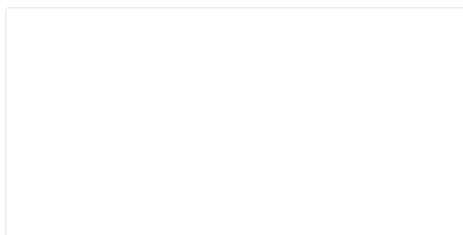
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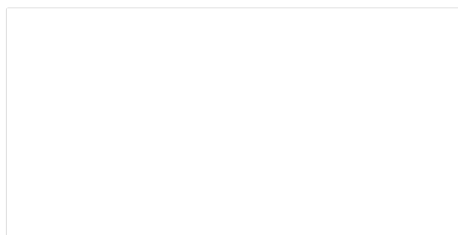
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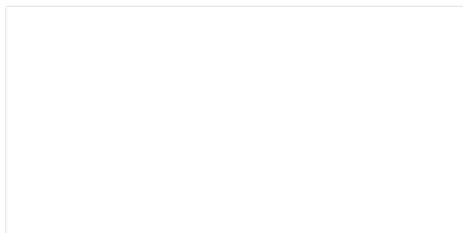
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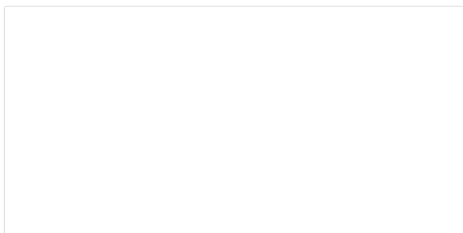
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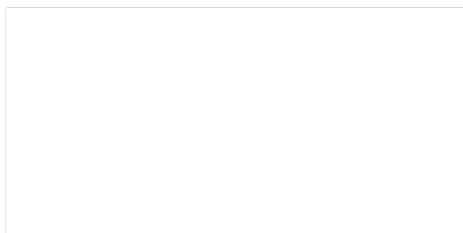
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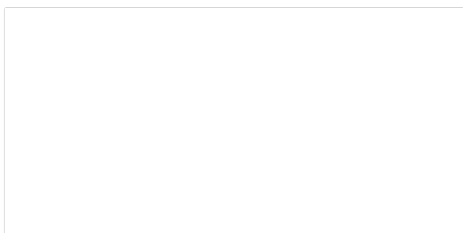
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