

# How Your Crossdressing Changes Your Wife's Opinion of You

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From time to time I've heard crossdressers express confusion and frustration over their wives or SOs using the term "male image" when explaining their feelings about crossdressing. "What does that mean?" they ask. "What exactly is 'male image'?"

Not too long ago I bumped into a passage in a book that reminded me of this question hanging over so many anguished discussions. What is this thing that women all seem to understand as "male image" that leaves genetic males looking puzzled?



*"He was slim and appeared to be in good shape, as if he bicycled to keep that way. Without being able to help it, she imagined him shaving his legs. Once she had gone out with a cyclist who did that because he said it cut down the wind friction . . . . The date had been a very short one. Chessie couldn't get the image out of her mind of him in the bathtub running a razor over his legs." (translated from p. 57, Los planes de la novia, by Kasey Michaels)*

Chessie's current date wasn't even the one who had told her he shaved his legs, but the image she had of someone similar to him having done it was enough to ruin him in her eyes.

Women internalize things in a way that most men don't, and all those internalized experiences and impressions have a strong impact on how women feel about any given situation. Something that may seem insignificant or like past history to men is very real to women. Their impressions are more cumulative than men's. Think about a couple who's been arguing for much of the day. If bedtime comes and the husband sees his wife in a sexy negligee, the afternoon's argument is the farthest thing from his mind. Any advance on his part, though, is likely to be met by a look that clearly asks, "What planet are you from?" The woman still acutely feels the distance that was there during the day and so doesn't feel intimate. Women don't compartmentalize things as well as men do, so the whole day's story comes along for the ride.

Now think about what this "whole picture" way of dealing with life can mean for a crossdresser and his wife. Even if the husband is willing to keep his dressing out of



sight, little awarenesses are going to creep into the wife's internal image of him. Women can swear that they're modern and aren't attracted to "macho", but there's a reason why 55% of paperback books sold are romance novels. Our brains tell us to move on and embrace a changing world, but our hard-wiring makes us weak-kneed in the face of the "all-male" image, the white-knight and fair-maiden tale, if you will. Publicly we eschew it, but privately we still swoon.

Nor is it just romanticism. Both men and women react physically and emotionally to the stimuli of the opposite gender, but there's a difference in what it is that impacts us. For a man it's heavily visual. Hot babe at 3 o'clock and the chances are he's "feeling". While women can also enjoy looking at a sexy guy, a pug-ugly one can also make us feel very feminine if he's strongly masculine in his behavior. For us it's about how we feel inside. For those old enough to remember Henry Kissinger, did you ever wonder how he managed to surround himself with tall beautiful women? He was short and homely, but he gave off an aura of masculine strength through control and power. His "male image" was fully intact.



So what happens when we know that our husband's assortment of cosmetics is bigger than our own or that he has more dresses than we do? Crossdressers contend that they're still the same person and they don't understand why their wives can't see that. Well, in a way they can see it. Of course it's still the same face, same body with the same joint recollections and the same love of family, and the important-person-in-my-life love is probably still there. The problem is that the cosmetic bag and dress collection information is

firmly entrenched in the "whole image" she has of you, and it may well keep her from experiencing fully the "you man, me woman" feeling that she needs.

Notice I said "may." Women are adept at accepting all kinds of things or even "settling", and there are even women for whom, because of their own backgrounds, a man with an openly female side feels safer or more reassuring for her. Every couple is different, but for those whose wife or SO says that her male image of him has changed, she's absolutely right. The massive collection of tiny impressions and experiences that she carries around inside her and that represents how she sees you now includes information that radically changes the sum. It's a concept that very difficult for men to understand, but it's the reality for the women in their lives. We're whole-package people.

It's like being at the optometrist's office when the doctor flips through different lenses and asks which is better. For women, new information changes the lens. When the woman in your life talks about a changed male image, even if she can't define it, the change is



very real and she can feel it. New information has changed the “whole image” she has of you, and that changed image has changed the lens through which she looks at you and the feelings that she brings to the relationship.

Internal images are not something that can be intentionally controlled. Once they’re changed, there’s no going back. If you’re to survive as a couple, a new relationship will have to be forged that incorporates this changed image she has of you. As many of you know, that’s a very difficult task and not even always possible, but that’s a whole different subject for another time.

For now, just know that your wife or SO isn’t “talking crazy” when she refers to your “male image.” She really does have such a thing, and it’s hugely important in how she sees you. If she tells you it’s changed, take her seriously. Your future together may depend on it.