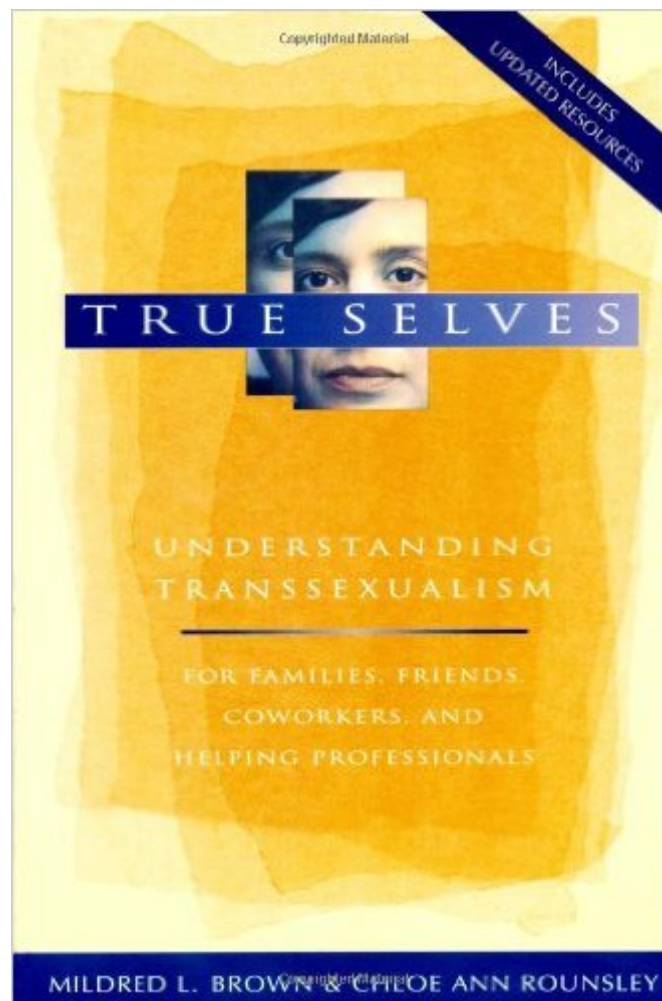


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# True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism--For Families, Friends, Coworkers, And Helping Professionals



## Synopsis

Combines authoritative information and humanitarian insight into the transsexual experience. Filled with wisdom and understanding, this groundbreaking book paints a vivid portrait of conflicts transsexuals face on a daily basis--and the courage they must summon as they struggle to reveal their true being to themselves and others. True Selves offers valuable guidance for those who are struggling to understand these people and their situations. Using real life stories, actual letters, and other compelling examples, the authors give a clear understanding of what it means to be transsexual. They also give other useful advice, including how to deal compassionately with these commonly misunderstood individuals--by keeping an open heart, communicating fears, pain and support, respecting choices.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a MTF Transsexual in the process of transitioning, I have found coming out to my family to be the most difficult hurdle to overcome. Especially my father. All the literature available to help family and friends understand the plight of the transsexual is very clinical. It does not get to the core of who I am, and the excruciating pain I've endured everyday of my life. I purchased this book hoping it would explain to the non-transsexual what it means to be me. This book meets that challenge head-on. I was particularly impressed by the chapters covering Childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood. I read those chapters and felt as though I was reading from my own journals. That someone had written my biography. If you are a transsexual trying to find a way to come out to family and friends, or you are the family and friends of a transsexual who just came out to you, I

highly recommend this book. I am going to have a copy of this book for my father to read the day I come out to him.

This is a very useful book to anyone just beginning to try to understand the concept of transsexualism. It is carefully written, without technical medical descriptions, and balances well between biographical/autobiographical material and factual information. It is neither sensationalist or syrupy, but does convey the difficulties faced by transsexual individuals in the various stages of their lives. For this reason, I would recommend it to anyone recently identifying as transsexual who needs an introductory text for those around them. The title states it is for "families, friends, co-workers and helping professionals" and indeed it is eminently suitable for these groups. As a transsexual man myself, I have two copies which I have lent to people including my father who found it very helpful, and my therapist and have purchased a further copy for my partner's family. Three copies must be a fair recommendation of a book! I find its layout logical and appropriate, beginning as it does with some basic facts about the subject, leading on to how it affects the individuals in various stages of their lives - childhood, teen years and adulthood. It then goes on to deal with the nuts and bolts of therapy, transition, surgical options and coming out and ends with some biographical text. It covers both male to female and female to male aspects well, where many other texts focus primarily on the male to female route. It is also relatively apolitical - many other texts on the subject tend to have their information tied up with a significant political element which can make them in my opinion difficult for those new to the subject to read. All in all it is one of the best books I have on transsexualism. The only one in my collection which is sufficiently similar to compare is *Trans-X-u-all* (O'Keefe and Fox) which, while it is a good book, is not such a good introductory text as this.

I've read a number of books describing transsexualism, hoping to find the right one to give to people as I tell them about my own transition. When I read this one, I knew this was it, and I told my parents about myself within the week. They have since told me that this book was essential to their understanding of my condition. I believe the authors have provided an invaluable resource for anyone whose life is touched by knowing a transsexual person.

The primacy of *True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism* is an unfortunate artifact of there existing no other good resource books for the non-trans person to understand the trans experience. It was written in the mid-1990s with an understanding of trans people and trans experiences that is

strongly based in the clinical data of that time... clinical data which was, unfortunately, corrupted by the fact that transgendered people at that time had to lie extensively to transition, reading from a "script" of a generic, transgendered past that seldom was truthful about their real selves, and lie pervasively after transition, creating a "gender consistent" (read: cissexual female) history. Particularly, transsexual women who were gay had to lie about feeling like heterosexual girls their entire lives, opening us up to accusations of "autogynephilia" - the ridiculous claim that trans women who are attracted to other women were "really" attracted to images of ourselves as women. It is not for nothing that one transsexual woman who transitioned in the early 1980s described the process as "lying to tyrannical fools to save [her] life." It is my hope that sometime soon, there will be published a modern book that talks openly and honestly about the transition and transgender experience, that is written with both clinical and real-world experience taken into account, that can finally put this tome on a dusty shelf where it belongs. Until then... it is what we have.

I've never had any personal encounters with transsexuals before and am not one myself, so my personal opinion of transsexualism was based on ignorance and second-hand opinions. I read this book out of pure curiosity. Reading this book opened my eyes to the plight of what transsexuals have to go through, all throughout their lives. It also helped me see things from a different perspective. The book is readable and sensitive, seeking for understanding rather than trying to defend. I thus recommend this book to anyone who cares enough to try to understand the fellow human being, even though that fellow human being may be "different".

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