

## Silvio: My Rebirth at Work\*

I am Silvio, although Silvia is still my name at the General Registry Office.

I am a young FtM man, that is a person who is transitioning from woman to man, literally Female to Male.

To tell my own working experience in a historical period of economic crisis, I think it is already an important issue in itself.

Furthermore, what is even more important is to tell of my experience within a social micro-context, such as the one related to a transitioning process. Especially, if we consider that the topic of transgender people is still largely unknown and that unfortunately there are many prejudices connected with it that often cause heavy discrimination against people who are about to undertake this life process.

Before telling of my experience concerning the work I am still doing – I am the supervisor of the administrative office of an online university – it is fair to say a few words about my life experience. Since I was a child, I have always felt that I was slightly different from the other girls. This brought me instinctively, in the first years of my life, even when I was two years old, to make friends more easily with boys and to feel more like them.

I perceived myself as a male until I was 16/17, when, due to various events, what I thought was normal, actually, for various reasons, became abnormal for others.

Even more so today. In the past, it was commonly believed that, if anatomically you are born female or male, automatically you should live and act as a female or male during your all existence.

If you are a girl, automatically you have to perceive yourself as a girl and later as a woman, as in my case.

I was a girl, and it was fair that I should live as a girl, with all that comes with being a girl.

Given that I knew nothing about what transgender people were, I began to repress and force myself to live as I had to live because that was how things went and because it would have been what would have made me feel better, since I felt so uneasy. I tried to feel like a girl and then a woman, by all means: I had a boyfriend – whose relationship didn't even last two months, I became the mother of a boy, who is now 21 years old.

Through thick and thin, when I was 40 years old, I reached a turning point in my life: to die inside, or to explode outside. I decided to explode outside, and I found the courage to ask for help, which arrived, especially from a person whom I now regard as my elder brother. In so doing, I undertook the transitioning process: now, at the moment, I am in the psychological phase.

Today, I can say that, already at this level, I am a person who is slowly being reborn, both in relationships with my family and with my son, who is the most beautiful gift that my experience of life as a woman has left me, and to whom I am both mum and dad and to whom I left my surname, since I never married, just like a good father.

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\* The following self-narrative account was translated into English by Arianna Marra.

Having said that, after various events, at the same time as when I carried out the first interviews at the center where I am being followed – the O.N.I.G. of Bari – I also went through the first selection processes for the institution where I currently work.

Starting from the previous year, I had changed my way of being, expressing myself for what I really felt and for what made me feel good.

In so doing, during my first interview with the selection manager, I went dressed in trousers, a jacket and a tie.

My very long hair had made way for a very short haircut.

I knew inside of me that I was attending a job interview and, for this reason, I would never have talked about myself, my past or my present, especially since, even though I wore a tie, nowadays it is common to see a woman with a tie.

Nevertheless, that day something incredible and extraordinary happened.

When the woman who dealt with job interviews called me, I heard her say:

“Please, Sir”.

For a minute, I wondered if I was dreaming!

We made jokes about the misunderstanding.

The selection was successful, and then I was provided with the relevant training in order to become the supervisor of the administrative office.

I started working.

As fate would have it, I started a job right next to the general hospital: the online university is located in the same square where there is also the entrance to the hospital.

As time went by, I had the courage to tell my colleagues about my experience, and I was surprised when I found out that they listened to me without any problems.

The only difficulty appeared when they addressed me, that is when they were supposed to use male references rather than the female ones. It is not easy, however, to get used to considering people with an opposite gender compared to their anatomical sex.

Currently, after two years of activity, to my great happiness, my colleagues – they are almost all girls and women – easily call me Silvio and they effectively think of me as a boy, or maybe I should say a young man, for my age.

This is extraordinary for me because I know that, when you undertake this process, even those who are next to you start a process of evolution of thought and they also start an evolution from the human point of view: I have found special people.

Maybe, I also am a little bit special for them, because they know me, they know that I am a biological mother, but also a dad as far as society is concerned.

I hope that everything always goes as nicely as it's going right now because I believe that in life – only when there is mutual respect – if you feel like a man rather than a woman (or vice versa), it does not damage anybody's experience.

Everyone is unique and special, and in that uniqueness, everyone gives a personal value that can be useful to others, both in life and at work.