

# A trans man finds ♥ LOVE ♥

**Transitioning can make dating  
even more complex**

"My therapist says I have White Knight Syndrome," says 24-year-old Stephen Jay Lewis. "I choose women who struggle with anxiety and depression, which I have, or women who have a bad father-daughter relationship. I don't do it consciously."

The impulse to rescue damsels in distress carried Lewis into a three-year, on-and-off relationship. In retrospect, he realized it was emotionally abusive. Although published studies remain extremely limited, experts say emotional abuse between intimate trans partners may include using offensive pronouns such as "it" to refer to the transgender person, ridiculing the trans person's body or appearance or being dismissive of the trans person's identity.

"She was waiting for me to have fewer expectations of her and I was expecting her to give me the love I deserve," explains Lewis.

By contrast, his new girlfriend tells him: "Dude, any other girl would want your love and would give love to you."



PHOTO COURTESY OF  
STEPHEN JAY LEWIS

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**Stephen Jay Lewis, 24**

Born female, Lewis began to transition at age 16. While confident in himself as a young man, potential girlfriends at his high school were less accepting. "A lot of girls just wanted to experiment or were curious about trans men. It's disrespectful."

The "Cool for the Summer" attitude of cisgendered people remains an issue in the trans community as a whole, he says.

"If the person they're with hasn't fully transitioned—from female to male for example—girls who are attracted will start questioning themselves: If my partner still has female anatomy, does this make me gay? Or does it not matter because I just really love this person?"

Lewis advocates seeking professional help. "When you're dating someone they shouldn't have to be your therapist and your partner. Go to therapy!"

Dubbing himself, "a long-term relationship kind of guy," Lewis likes dating and prefers commitment. He's very aware that his peers don't often share his attitude.

"Most millennials don't commit because they need constant stimulation ... They don't see how it creates jealousy and unhealthy power dynamics."

But he also accepts that true love is not fairy tale. "Love is seeing the best and worst side of someone and saying, 'I love you for all of that entirely. Not just your perfections, but your flaws.' You have to be willing to deal with your partner's flaws because if you can't, it won't last." □

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I am."**

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