

When Your Inside Matches Your Outside

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pic.twitter.com/X7FvYrEH2D

— Caitlyn Jenner (@Caitlyn_Jenner) June 1, 2015

One thing stuck with me after watching [Diane Sawyer interview](#) then-Bruce Jenner. Here was a person who had envied women all their lives for one simple reason: being able to be themselves. When you think of your self, your gender is such a deep part of that. It's rare that we even think about it at all, since it's such a central part of who we are. The Jenner interview underscored the deep pain transgender people feel with this mismatch at their core.

When I saw the [Vanity Fair cover](#) of Caitlyn Jenner, I saw a person living fully in her own skin. While the photographs are stunning, it was the excerpts from the [interview](#) that struck me most deeply. In it, Caitlin and interviewer Buzz Bissinger both comment that Caitlin is a much better person than Bruce was. Bruce was cheap. Caitlin is generous. Bruce ferreted out errant golf balls instead of buying new ones. Caitlin sent a private plane to bring her mother to visit.

Now that Caitlyn is comfortable in her skin, it's manifesting in her life in unexpected ways. She is perhaps now free to be the person she was meant to be. And that got me thinking about all the ways a mismatch can affect us.

I don't pretend to know or understand the challenge of being transgender.

I do intimately know the pain of having how I feel on the inside and how I appear on the outside to be in conflict.

Years ago, I came to therapy with the following story:

I was circulating a card I bought for Secretary's Day, even though I was not the boss of the department. As I handed it to a co-worker to sign she said to me, "You are so nice." Judging from her tone and the edge she sharpened on the word, nice wasn't a compliment. It suggested that something was off.

Maybe she could tell I was trying too hard. Maybe she could tell I didn't buy that card with a generous spirit. Maybe she sensed I didn't really care that much about the secretary.

I sat in my therapist's office and told the truth. I didn't feel nice inside. I felt hateful, angry, depressed, bitter, and ugly. I was exhausted by all the work I put into being nice: throwing the party, hosting the shower, hand-crafting holiday gifts. I put so much energy into seeming nice on the outside while feeling awful inside. And I wanted to stop. I wanted to finally match.

It took a long time and lots of work to unpack all my reasons for feeling so dissonant. But I can say now that my inside does match my outside. Sometimes I'm kind; sometimes I'm cranky. I'm often generous, and I swear under my breath a lot. I am real. I don't think I'm *nice* any longer.

I hope that Caitlyn's beautiful coming-out will inspire others to do the work that will liberate them from their personal dissonance, whatever it may be.

To Caitlyn I say, welcome to your true self. You will find untold power and beauty in being yourself. Thank you for inspiring me in 1976. And thank you for inspiring me now.