

Bio:

Dotti Berry, CEO of Training2Transform Global Communications, was “Born to Coach.”

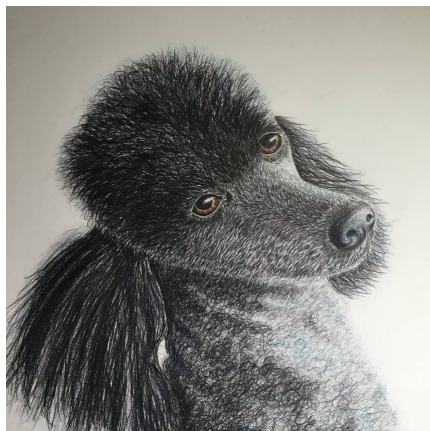
This is her 13th year as facilitator of the SO Program, working with significant others and couples.

She is a Consultant, Coach, Trainer/Facilitator & speaker. Her worked on her doctorate in Human Sexuality. She studied with Brian McNaught, called the "Godfather of Gay Sensitivity Training" by the New York Times, at the Thornfield Annual Conference on Sexuality, where she completed a special track on corporate diversity and gay and transgender issues in the workplace. She works passionately for the acceptance and inclusion of the transgender community, saying, "Not only should they not be left behind, we must invite them to lead the way."

Dotti counsels and coaches transgender couples and transgender persons one-on-one, keynotes, facilitates workshops, and has also facilitated groups for SO's (significant others) and transgender couples at various conferences such as Fantasia Fair, Southern Comfort, and IFGE (International Foundation for Gender Education), in addition to her ongoing work with Esprit.

She has authored various articles, and since 1985, has worked with both youth and adults one-on-one, as well as facilitated seminars and workshops for organizations, universities, corporations, religious institutions and Leadership classes. Sodexo, Info Quest Clinical, the Girl Scouts, NCCJ (National Conference of Community and Justice), the University of Kentucky, Women Out Front, and Soulforce are some of the diverse groups who have secured her services in the areas of executive coaching, personal transformation, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) issues, diversity, team-building, and non-violent process.

Two Women & a Poodle, Dotti Berry, her spouse, Robynne Sapp, and their standard poodle, Rylee Joy, completed a year long journey, www.GayIntoStraightAmerica.com, in 2006, with the intention of engaging hearts and minds, creating authentic connections, and transcending differences that separate us. They continue their ongoing quest through their organization, www.standUPspeakOUT.com. They traveled throughout the state of Washington in 2012, speaking about the importance of The Freedom to Marry for ALL. Rylee Joy, unfortunately, will miss Esprit 2016. Though in good overall health and walking every day, she has recently had some episodes in the car where she passes out, and this makes it impossible for her to travel. She will dearly miss her Esprit family and sends lots of hugs and kisses.



Message from Dotti Berry: The SO program at Esprit is invaluable for significant others, as well as couples who attend together. Whether you are attending for the first time or have attended multiple times, constantly creating your relationship in the “now” is essential to its success and its ability to thrive in the midst of whatever obstacles you encounter.

Facilitating the SO program isn’t about doing “presentations.” The descriptions below merely serve as the foundation for the particular session. I *facilitate* the process, and we work with what each of you brings into the group session. YOU are the reason the groups work because it is the information and insights you share about your own personal journey that are key as others witness your process and vice versa.

If you’ve participated in the past in as a SO or as a couple, please join us again. Each year is new because you are constantly re-inventing yourself if you are alive and growing. You are not the same people as you were last year. You are like any any person/couple in relationship. You have new issues/situations which come up on a daily basis.

And if you think you have “done that already” because you already participated in the SO/ Couples program at Esprit in the past, all the more reason to attend. Why? Because you haven’t. :) You could have “done it already” in a past year, but because you haven’t yet attended Esprit 2015, you haven’t addressed your relationship in the present...and that is what keeps it alive and vital.

The nuances of each relationship is different, adding texture and meaning to life in an expanded way as they are explored.

Refuse to succumb to the ordinary and simply “survive” as an individual or as a couple in your relationship. Commit to examining and bringing to light all that is and relish the opportunity to discover how to thrive, whatever it takes!

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WELCOME

2016 Esprit Theme for SO's and Couples

Life is just a bowl of cherries. We all know that is something that you say which means that life is very pleasant or carefree. I want to acknowledge that you may/may not feel that way right now, and it is understandable.

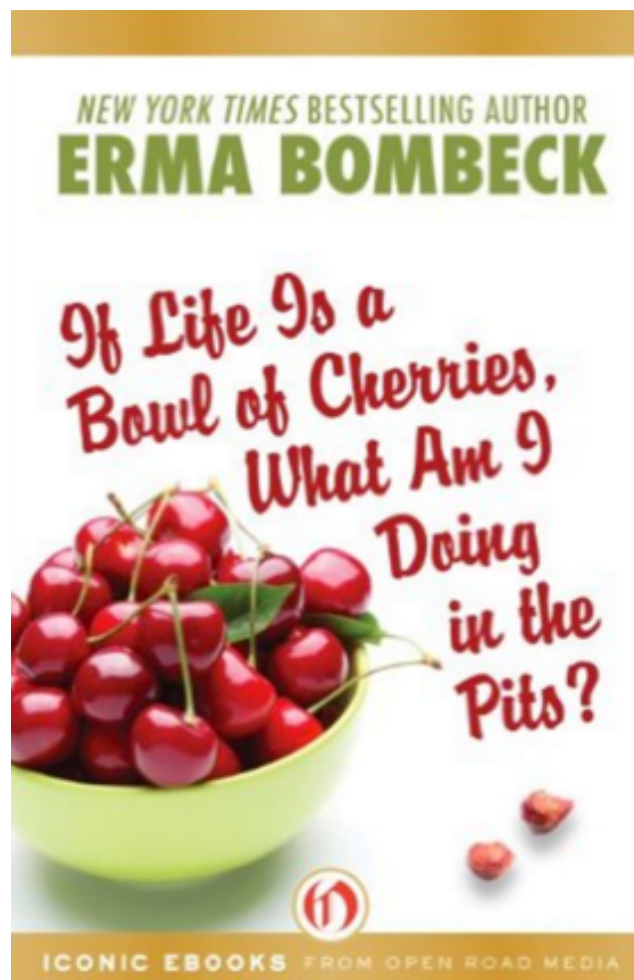


In fact, you might more easily identify with Erma Bombeck's line of thinking below. Perhaps the best thing to remember about what Bombeck offers is that if you are feeling any strain regarding the circumstances surrounding your attendance at Esprit, a little humor can go a long way. Keep this in mind if you have never attended Esprit and are feeling anxious about what to expect, or if you are totally OK with your transgender partner, or even if you all are "totally out" as a couple with your family and friends.

When "Life is just a bowl of cherries" is used "tongue in cheek," it might look more like this.

At the last meeting I attended with my transgender partner, they tried to convince me that life with a transgender person is just a bowl of cherries. Mary: Hi Sally. How are you? Sally: Well, I am going on a "vacation" (or so the family thinks), I've got more clothes packed for Ellie/Frank than I have for me, I found out that Ellie/Frank is taking hormones, and I am NOT a lesbian. Yes, Life is just a bowl of cherries. Really?

Attending Esprit usually offers many insights for SO's and Couples, whether you are a newbie or a long-timer. All I can say is "Let the good times roll" at Esprit 2016!



2016 Daily Groups:

Tuesday 9:00-11:00 am: Questions, Questions, Questions

For SO's ONLY. For the Significant Other of the transgender partner, whether you are male, female, or questioning.

In many cases, you can feel left in the dark and isolated as the non-transgender partner or spouse.

You might think,

What is happening right now?

Why is this happening right now

What will happen to me?

What will happen to us?

Where has the love of my life gone?

What will happen to our family?

What will happen with our friends?

First of all, even before any questions are answered, we want you to know that YOU ARE NOT ALONE in your journey. This is a safe haven for your exploration of what it means to be in relationship with a transgender person, whether they are FtM, MtF, crossdresser, transexual, or genderqueer. Your partner/spouse may be new at dealing with their feelings as well, and might not even know the answers to some of your questions. Your partner/spouse might still be on a journey to discover their own truth about being transgender. It's challenging to answer your questions when they aren't sure of the answers to their questions.

Our intention is that you feel heard, acknowledged, appreciated

Tuesday 11:30-1:00: SO Luncheon (for SO's only)

Tuesday 1:30-3:30 pm: Sharing your "Bowl of Cherries" stories with other couples.

For transgender couples (all parties must attend)

Sharing your stories can sometimes feel "too transparent" until there is a level of trust created.

Our commitment is to offer a safe and supportive environment for meeting and interacting with other couples as you give space to one another. Let this be the beginning of creating that trusting environment by week's ending.

You have a special opportunity. Hearing the stories of others gives you new perspective on your

own status as a couple. Though each relationship is unique, you will hear some common threads. No matter if you have had/not had opportunities to spend time with other couples, you can always discover something about yourself in the stories of others, and vice versa.

Wednesday 9:00-11:00 am: The pains/joy as a SO in the bowl of cherries.

For SO's ONLY. For the Significant Other of the transgender partner, whether you are male, female, or questioning.

No two cherries are alike. And neither are any two journeys alike, relative to your partner/spouse being transgender.

There are both pains and joy. They are both sides, however, of the same coin.

Explore in a safe place your feelings about the pains and the joys.

Wednesday 1:30-3:30: The pains/joy as a couple in the bowl of cherries.

For transgender couples (all parties must attend)

Once again, no two cherries are alike. Each couple is unique and wonderful...and yet different. Your pains/joys as a couple will be different than those of other couples...and sometimes, they will be similar. But...they are never the “same,” because they aren’t YOU, and YOU aren’t them.

Either way, let’s celebrate your being a couple and come share your pains/joy so that each partner/spouse can learn from one another and each couple can also learn from the other.

Thursday 9:00-11:00: The “Who am I?...Who is she/he?” bowl of cherries.

For SO's ONLY. For the Significant Other of the transgender partner, whether you are male, female, or questioning.

It can feel truly stressful. Who is she/he? Crossdresser? Transsexual? Genderqueer?
And depending on who she/he or he/she is, who am I?

When cross-dressers talk about coming “out of the closet,” the spouses often find themselves put into a closet of isolation as they don’t know whether to share with friends/family because it is “part-time.”

When a person decides to become MtF or FtM, you sometimes aren’t ready for that “full-time” status because that blows the door off your closet whether you like it or not. You are then faced with what is sometime a life-altering decision.

Genderqueer? What?

Let's discuss your fears and how you can best cope in a safe environment.

Thursday 11:30-1:00 Couples Luncheon (for couples)

Thursday 1:30-3:30: Speak the Unspoken Bowl of Cherries

For transgender couples (all must attend)

Speaking the unspoken feels challenging...for good reason. Change is something most people resist vs. embrace. But the resistance exacts its toll.

Keep in mind that gender identity, which you probably considered (like most of society) to be binary just "ain't necessarily so." Likewise, relationships aren't necessarily binary either.

You might keep your relationship exactly as it has always been...and then again, you might create a new identity in relationship that transforms the one you have. Only you as a couple can determine what works for you. If you've ever wanted to have this discussion, but were afraid of the outcome, this is a safe place to have it.

The advantages and the delta of various relationship forms will be considered.

Friday 9:00-11:00: The impact of the "guilt, fear, shame" bowl of cherries.

For SO's ONLY. For the Significant Other of the transgender partner, whether you are male, female, or questioning.

Many thoughts and questions can arise, causing you to feel choked by the triad...the one of guilt, fear and shame. This often brings on a entirely new set of questions.

What did I do wrong?

What could I have done differently?

Though these are normal questions, let's correct the "record" that is perhaps spinning in your head. You didn't do anything wrong and there's nothing you could have done differently (in terms of your partner being transgender since you didn't "cause" their transgender status).

Now, there might be things you can choose to do differently in the future if you don't like some of the results that are happening in your relationship. That is worth exploring. And there might be things you want to ask of your transgender partner in the future. That is worth exploring.

Most important is to look at the impact of negative emotions caused by “guilt, fear and shame.”

Friday 2:00–4:00: Diving into the “guilt, fear, shame” bowl of cherries as a couple

For transgender couples (all must attend)

It’s time to assess the damage from mis-guided information and emotions that harm the relationship. Let’s face it. We live in a transphobic society. And, yet, how we approach what society generally feels means facing “guilt, fear and shame” head on.

Some questions that might come up...

How do we manage our negative emotions (from each person) without abandoning the feelings of friends and loved ones as they make their own adjustments.

How do we own our fears/frustrations without damaging the other and our relationship as a couple?

Learning to take personal responsibility vs co-opting others is also important. Using others as an excuse for not living fully authentically, and blaming them when you cannot move through your own transphobia, will never give you the freedom you desire in life. Transphobia impacts all of us, and only you can change YOUR journey.

Take a cherri out of the bowl and see what happens.

Saturday 9:00-11:00: Endearment and Intimacy Cherries sitting in that damn bowl!

For transgender couples (all must attend)

Ok, tell it like it is. No matter if you discovered about your partner/spouse being transgender later than sooner or sooner than later, the dynamics of being a couple are forever changed.

Your “bowl of cherries” is looking and tasting different. You have to understand that challenges will arise, whether you are prepared for them or not. And when they do, you will have to handle them.

How do you do these situations that can potentially damage mutual trust, alter the “usual” ways you’ve become accustomed to for being intimate, change hopes, dreams and expectations, re-create needs for secrecy when you’ve always been open with one another and others, and open up competition between you when it’s never existed before?

If you are willing to embrace what happens so that you can move through it together into a better place, then you might find that you actually enjoy those “new and different” cherries. Come, listen, explore and be open with one another and with other couples.