Angelica, born 1939

As a name Angelica has been around since shortly after I came out, it was then that I realised you are supposed to be called something. So I started to use a first name and a surname. But I have known that I was transgender since I was about ten years old. It was really strange, I was convinced I was mad and the rest of the world normal. And I knew straight away that you are not supposed to be this way and it is shameful, so you can´t tell anyone. Of course, it was very difficult then – and still is. At the time there were no sources of knowledge, I couldn´t find a word to describe how I felt. Even if I had, I would not have found that word in a dictionary. And there was no internet and no one to talk to.

Then I met my wife, we found each other quite early on, she was 13 and I was 15; and when I was 16 I told her about this. For as long as she was alive this was a secret between the two of us. It was sort of unthinkable to… we both agreed that for social reasons we couldn´t divulge anything. But when she died I realised I couldn't cope with this on my own. I live in Gothenburg but I went to England to come out. You have such strange notions in the beginning; you believe that you are the centre of everyone's attention, that you are going to cause a scandal. But the bitter truth is people don't really care very much about other people, so in fact there is nothing much to worry about. But you don´t realise this until afterwards.

This is one of the reasons why many are so old before they come out – in my generation and those that are a little younger. It's quite common to think about it half your life

before daring to do it. But this is not something you do to provoke, but because you need to. If you can't be the person you really are then you are very unhappy – that's a well-known fact.

The person who has come up with the best description of life is Søren Kierkegaard who summed it up in one sentence: Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

Photo: Andreas Nilsson