

# Appendix:

# Further Reading

A mentor is not expected to be a therapist. The information contained in this section is meant to facilitate a deeper understanding and should not imply further responsibilities on the part of the mentor.



Elder Bruce C. Hafen Speaks on Same-Sex Attraction  
Of the Quorum of the Seventy – Given Sept 19, 2009

During a recent stake conference in Europe, I asked the stake president if Sister Hafen and I might visit one or two of his stake members who could use a little encouragement. As we visited one young man, a single returned missionary, we found that he cared deeply about the Church but was also very troubled. When we asked how he was doing, he began to cry and, with a look of real anguish he said, “I suffer from same-gender attraction.” My heart went out to him. The longer we talked, the more compassion I felt, as I learned that the operative word for him really was “suffer.”

He said he’d heard of an organization called Evergreen and he wondered if I thought they could assist him. I encouraged him to find their Web site, contact them, and follow their counsel. He then asked for a blessing, which I gladly gave him.

As I felt about him, I admire your righteous desires and your courage. You may not have consciously chosen to have same-gender attraction, but you are faithfully choosing to deal with it. Sometimes that attraction may make you feel sinful, even though the attraction alone is not a sin if you do not act on it. Sometimes you may feel frustration or anger or simply a deep sadness about yourself. But as hard as same-gender attraction is, your feeling that attraction does not mean that your nature is flawed. Whenever the adversary tries to convince you that you are hopelessly “that way,” so that acting out your feelings is inevitable, he is lying. He is the father of lies.

Remember President Hinckley’s confidence in you: “Our hearts reach out to [you]. We remember you before the Lord, we sympathize with you, we regard you as our brothers and sisters.” [i] And President Packer has echoed, “We do not reject you... We cannot reject you... We will not reject you, because we love you.” [ii] With that kind of leadership, I pray that all Church members are learning to be more compassionate and understanding.

Some may wonder how the Church’s leaders can empathize with you when they haven’t been in your shoes themselves. Some may even wonder how the Savior Himself can really understand you when He hasn’t been where you are. But remember: Christ not only descended TO our conditions, he has descended BELOW our conditions, whatever they are, because “The Son of Man hath descended below

[all things].” [iii] The Atonement was possible only because of that descent, which Elder Neal A. Maxwell called Christ’s “earned empathy.” He knows that every day may feel like a major battle for you.

Many other people also live heroically with uninvited daily struggles. The victims of childhood sexual abuse also live with agonizing daily battles that may echo the experiences of some who cope with same-gender attraction. A young woman I know has spent years trying to put her spiritual and emotional life back together, trying to regain her trust in men—and in God. She was devastated when a Church leader to whom she went for counsel told her, “Oh, get over it and get on with your life.” He simply didn’t grasp her condition. Another more seasoned priesthood leader said that many abuse victims are like emotional quadriplegics—yet they look so normal that other people have no idea what they are really dealing with. She went through an arduous recovery process, stretching her soul in faith almost to the breaking point; but she has developed a remarkable spiritual maturity.

Elder Maxwell once taught a group of people who lived with really hard daily challenges. He had been watching the Olympic diving competition, where he had learned that the judges grade a dive not just by how graceful it looks to the public, but by how difficult the dive is—which only the judges can understand enough to measure. Elder Maxwell told this group that the Lord will judge their lives by the difficulty of their dive, which He understands in every detail. And your own difficult dives are being made much harder these days by the increasing cultural confusion that now swirls around the topic of homosexuality.

Before discussing that confusion, I first want to draw on a few doctrines that apply to your concerns. The doctrinal foundation is in the nature of God and how he feels about you. He is the greatest being in the universe, and He knows and loves you. He wants you to find joy. His power is greater than all the powers of darkness combined.

You are literally God’s spirit child. Having same-gender attraction is NOT in your DNA, but being a child of God clearly IS in your spiritual DNA—only one generation removed from Him whom we call *Father* in Heaven. As the family proclamation states, “Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.” As part of an eternal plan, our Father placed us in this world subject to death, sin, sorrow, and misery—ALL of which serve the eternal purpose of letting us taste the bitter that we may learn to prize the sweet.

If you are faithful, on resurrection morning—and maybe even before then—you will rise with normal attractions for the opposite sex. Some of you may wonder if that doctrine is too good to be true. But Elder Dallin H. Oaks has said it **MUST** be true, because “there is no fullness of joy in the next life without a family unit, including a husband and wife, and posterity.” And “men (and women) are that they might have joy.” [v]

It’s true that the law of chastity forbids all sexual relations outside the bonds of a married heterosexual relationship. And while same-gender attraction is not a sin, you need to resist cultivating immoral, lustful thoughts toward those of either gender. It’s no sin if a bird lands in your tree, just don’t let him build a nest there. The adversary will tempt you by constantly “enticing” you to “do that which is evil,” because “there is an opposition in all things.” (2 Nephi 2:11) But God will also constantly “entice” you “to do good continually.” (see Moroni 7:12-13) No temptation is so strong that you can’t resist it, unless you have already given away some portion of your agency to a total addiction. So will you choose to “yield” to temptation, or will you “yield to the enticing of the Holy Spirit”? (Mosiah 3:19) It’s up to you.

There’s an old Native American parable, about a young brave is brought before the tribal elders, who are concerned about his aggressive tendencies. One of the tribal elders is assigned to teach this young man that his anger is understandable, but he needs help. So he tells the young brave all humans have within them two dogs. One dog is good and peaceable. The other dog is angry and evil. The two dogs are in a constant battle with one another, since neither is powerful enough to destroy the other. The young brave asks, “If they are of equal power, which dog will win?” The elder replies, “The dog you *feed* the most.”

You feed the angry dog when you cultivate lustful feelings, view pornography, label yourself as gay, or associate with activists who aggressively promote gay lifestyles. Those activists have an agenda, and it includes constantly feeding your angry dog.

You feed the peaceful dog when you seek the Lord’s Spirit. You feed the peaceful dog when you simply stop fighting the angry dog. Don’t let your challenge define your entire identity. As Dr. Jeff Robinson said, [vii] you can’t hate your way out of your attraction. Just walk away from fighting the angry dog and focus on all the good things you may have put on hold—your education, career plans, social experience, and Church service. Stop focusing so much on yourself, including hating yourself, and spend more energy caring about other people. Build good associations with people of

your own gender. Find a therapist who can help you identify the unmet emotional needs that you are tempted to satisfy in false sexual ways. As you do such things, the peaceful dog will grow stronger than the miserable, angry dog.

Now how does our most central doctrine, the Atonement, apply to same-gender attraction? If you have engaged in immoral behavior, you need to repent fully by confessing your sins and forsaking them. These actions unlock the door to the Savior's mercy, which allows your complete forgiveness. But if you feel an attraction you didn't seek and haven't acted on, you have nothing to repent of. So how can you qualify for the Atonement's power?

The Atonement means just what the word says: at-one-ment. Its purpose is to make us "at one" with God, or bring us into harmony with Him, after being separated from him by death, by sin, or any other force. In that sense, the Atonement can heal us not only from sin, but also from carelessness, imperfection, and all mortal bitterness — intended and unintended. Even though same-gender attraction is by itself not a sin, its presence can make us feel estranged from God. That sense of separation arises from our knowing that this attraction runs counter to our eternal nature as a son or daughter of God. These feelings can terribly damage a conscientious person's sense of both worth and worthiness in God's sight.

The blessings of the Atonement include its healing and compensating power when one has been separated from God by sin, by unintentional mistakes, or simply by adversity. I classify same-gender attraction within the category of "adversity," because typically you haven't brought it upon yourselves. It has consequences similar to being harmed by the sins of others, such as the separation from God felt so commonly by the victims of childhood sexual abuse.

The Savior described this part of His healing power to the Nephites: "Will ye not return unto me, and repent of your sins, and *be converted that I may heal you?*" Consider also Alma's description of Christ's broad healing power, which includes "afflictions," "infirmities," and "sicknesses," in addition to death and sin: "And he shall go forth suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy." [\[viii\]](#)

The Atonement's healing blessings are conditional, just as receiving the mercy that allows forgiveness is conditioned on our repentance. The conditions we must satisfy include repenting fully of any actual sins in our lives. Beyond that, Nephi teaches us this about the other conditions we must satisfy: "It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do." (2 Nephi 25:23) In other words, we must do "all we can do" within our own power, then his grace overcomes our separation from God as it heals us.

How much is "all we can do" for one who suffers same-gender attraction? I don't know. But I do know that "all we can do" is less than many of you think it is, because some of you are so conscientious that you think you have to do it all. Don't beat yourselves up needlessly. You don't have to do it all. Grace shall be "as your day" — whatever your particular dive requires.

To those challenged by same-gender attraction, the Atonement offers two healing blessings. First, Christ helps us draw on His strength to become more "at-one" with God even while still overcoming the attraction. He helps us bear the burden of our afflictions. In Alma's words, when our testimony of the Atonement grows within us like the tree of life, "then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son" (Alma 33:23) For example, when the king cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into that fiery furnace, their faith in the Lord's power saved them from being burned. Remember the story. As the astonished king looked into the furnace, he saw not just the three men but "four men walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Daniel 3:25) The Savior's presence in that fire symbolizes the way He is truly "with us" in our afflictions, not just passively observing us or waiting until our trial is completed. Think of that next time you partake of the sacrament. He will be with you.

As a second healing blessing, the Atonement enables the grace that assures us of this grand promise: No eternal blessing—including marriage and family life—will be withheld from those who suffer same-gender attraction, if they do "all they can do" to remain faithful always. That story from the book of Daniel applies to this blessing as well. You will remember that when the three men refused to worship the Babylonian idol, they weren't afraid of being thrown into the fiery furnace. They said, "Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us. *But if not*, we [still] will not worship the golden image" (Daniel 3:17-18).

Applied to you, what does "but if not" mean? It means that your faith in God must run

so deep that, first, you know, first of all that He has the power to remove your unwanted same-gender attraction—“he is able to deliver us from the furnace.” But, second, if He doesn’t deliver you right now (“but if not”), for whatever reason, you will not give up on Him or on yourself. There truly is light at the end of your tunnel, no matter how long it is. That light is the Light and the Life of the World.

Now let’s discuss how today’s cultural and legal climate is making your challenge much harder than it would otherwise be. First a little historical background. I began teaching family law in the early 1970s, during the U.S. civil rights movements that sought for much-needed racial and gender equality. During that period, almost no one considered people with homosexual attraction as a distinctive demographic group (like race or gender) who were the victims of discrimination. The main legal goal of gay activists then was to eliminate criminal penalties against homosexual acts, as a first step toward their goal of greater public acceptance.

Even though criminal laws against homosexual acts were seldom enforced, the Supreme Court considered those laws constitutional as recently as 2003. In the early 1970s, the public and most lawyers, doctors, and therapists saw homosexuality not as normal adult behavior but as a psychological disorder. As recently as 1982, the mayor of San Francisco vetoed a proposal to grant spousal-type benefits to both straight and gay unmarried couples. An editorial in a major San Francisco newspaper agreed with the mayor, saying: “The notion that an unmarried relationship is the equivalent of marriage is an attack upon social norms, the destruction of which concerns a great many people in the nation and ... in San Francisco.” [xi] Sounds pretty long ago now, doesn’t it? No country anywhere in the world recognized gay marriage until 2001, eight years ago. Since then, a few countries and six U.S. states now recognize same-gender marriages.

So what’s been going on during the last few years to cause the cultural earthquake we’re now feeling on this subject? We have witnessed primarily an aggressive political movement more than we’ve witnessed substantive change in the medical or legal evidence. In 1973, in response to increasing disruptions and protests by gay activists, the American Psychiatric and Psychological Associations removed homosexuality from their official lists of disorders. Significantly, they took this action by simply putting the issue to an open vote in their professional meetings—not because of any change in actual medical findings. As LDS psychologist Dean Byrd writes, “This was the first

time in the history of healthcare that a diagnosis was decided by popular vote rather than scientific evidence.” [\[xii\]](#)

The activists have used similar methods in the years since then, trying to prove that they are a legitimate demographic category with fixed and unchangeable characteristics. They must present themselves in this way in order to justify their demand for the same legal protections now given to race and gender. That is a crucial point in understanding both the agenda and the tactics of intimidation used by today’s activists. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks has said, in recent years “we have seen unrelenting pressure from advocates of [the homosexual] lifestyle to accept as normal what is not normal, and to characterize those who disagree with them as narrow-minded, bigoted and unreasonable. Such advocates are quick to demand freedom of speech and thought for themselves, but equally quick to criticize those with a different view and, if possible, to silence them by applying labels like ‘homophobic.’... This is more than a social issue — ultimately it may be a test of our most basic religious freedoms to teach what we know our Father in Heaven wants us to teach.” [\[xiii\]](#)

Consider now four misconceptions the activists seek to establish as facts in the minds of policymakers and the public. I share these here because these misconceptions, if believed, will seriously undermine the efforts of Latter-day Saints or others who desire to overcome their own same-gender attraction. First is the misconception that same-gender attraction is an inborn and unalterable orientation. This untrue assumption tries to persuade you to label yourselves and build your entire identity around a fixed sexual orientation or condition. How would that affect you? As President James E. Faust wrote, “The false belief of inborn homosexual orientation denies to repentant souls the opportunity to change and will ultimately lead to discouragement, disappointment, and despair.” [\[xiv\]](#)

However, the activists have almost convinced the American public about this point. A reliable 2009 poll asked U.S. adults what causes people to be gay or lesbian. In the two most common responses, 42% of this public sample said gay or lesbian people are born that way, and 36% said they choose to be that way. [\[xv\]](#) Both of those responses are factually wrong.

So much individual variation exists with so many possible explanations that there is simply no scientific consensus about what causes homosexual tendencies. As the

American Psychological Association has stated, “No findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any factor or set of factors. ... Nature and nurture both play complex roles.” [xvi] So, even though natural personality traits do influence one’s inclinations, the idea that there is a “gay gene” has little scientific support. As two Columbia University researchers put it, “The assertion that homosexuality is genetic ... must be dismissed out of hand as a general principle of psychology.” [xvii]

Now we do know that inherited susceptibilities, childhood experiences, and agency all influence a given person’s development. And even though no universal explanation exists, some patterns do fit many same-gender attraction cases. For example, we know from the research that among women, up to 80% who have same-gender attraction were abused in some way as children. [xviii] Among men, especially during the years just before and during puberty, as President Boyd K. Packer has said, “What would have only been a more or less normal passing phase in establishing [your] gender identity can become implanted and leave you confused, even disturbed.” [xix]

In other words, before puberty, boys are typically more interested in other boys than in girls. Then their interest gradually shifts to girls, but a few boys don’t make this transition. Often these boys are emotionally sensitive, introspective, and, especially among Church members, perfectionistic. When puberty hits this group, they can be sexually aroused by many factors. When these factors include other boys, they can become fixated on the fear that they are “gay,” especially if they have male sexual experiences, including male pornography. Then their fixation can block their normal emotional-sexual development. Adult men who have had such childhood experiences can often resume their normal development by identifying and addressing the sources of their emotional blockage, which usually includes restoring healthy, appropriate male relationships. [xx]

A second misconception the activists promote is that therapy cannot treat, let alone change, same-gender attraction. This false assumption is linked to the first one: if you’re born gay, there is no need to change; and since you have a permanent condition, you can’t change anyway. Evidence that people have indeed changed threatens the political agenda of the activists, because actual change disproves their claim that homosexuality is a fixed condition that deserves the same legal protections

as those fixed conditions like race and gender. So they don't want you, or anyone else, to change, or even to believe that change is possible.

But as President Packer said, “The angels of the devil convince some that they are born to a life from which they cannot change and are compelled to live in sin. The most wicked of lies is that they cannot change and repent and that they will not be forgiven.” [xxii] If you believe no change is possible, you have only two options, neither of which is acceptable to a believing Latter-day Saint — you must either give in or give up. Thankfully, you have other options.

Nonetheless, the American Psychiatric Association has considered making it unethical for a therapist to treat someone with same-gender attraction who wants to change. But in the year 2000, when such a proposal was pending before that organization, they were met with a very different form of activism than what they had seen earlier. Busloads of formerly gay men appeared at their national meeting, claiming their right to choose therapy for their unwanted attraction. In an ironic twist of history, the APA representative who met with them, Dr. Robert L. Spitzer, just happened to be the same man who had met with the gay activists nearly 30 years earlier, when the APA voted to remove homosexuality from its list of disorders.

Dr. Spitzer listened again, and he decided to study two hundred people who had changed to a heterosexual orientation that had lasted more than five years. Dr. Spitzer published his research findings, despite the objections of activists who thought his work threatened their political agenda. He concluded, “Like most psychiatrists, I thought that ... sexual orientation could not be changed. I now believe that is untrue — some people can and do change.” [xxiii]

Just last month the American Psychological Association adopted a resolution stating that there is insufficient evidence to prove conclusively whether sexual orientation can be changed. But in what the *Wall Street Journal* called “a striking departure” from that Association’s earlier hesitation about encouraging such therapy, the same resolution also stated that “it is ethical — and can be beneficial — for counselors to help some clients reject gay or lesbian attractions,” especially clients with a strong religious identity. [xxiv]

Now, to be sure, not everybody who seeks treatment succeeds. We have got to be realistic and honest about that. Not every experience with therapy is completely

positive. That is why responsible therapists can't promise particular outcomes. And, the Church does not endorse specific methods of treatment. Success rates vary, and "success" can be defined in various ways. The client's level of commitment to the treatment process is probably the most significant variable in successful outcomes. [xxv] The skill and attitude of the therapist also matters a great deal. But in general, well over half of those seeking treatment can be significantly helped by it. That is roughly the same success rate as treatments for clinical depression. One non-LDS therapist who has treated both men and women for years reports that 40% of his clients find full heterosexual resolution, another 40% achieve enough resolution to control their attraction and behavior, and 20% are unsuccessful. [xxvi]

The third misconception is that most Americans favor same-gender marriage, which means the Church is outside the mainstream in opposing it. For example, last June *Time* magazine carried a story that described the aftermath of California's Proposition 8 campaign as a "vicious backlash from gay-rights activists, some of whom accused Mormons of bigotry and blind religious obedience." This statement ignores the fact that aggressive intimidation has long been a primary political tactic of these activists against any group that opposed them — including their intimidation of professional associations in the early 1970s.

The *Time* writer went on to say that "Gay marriage...belongs to a class of behaviors increasingly tolerated in the broader society." It is true that six American states now permit same-gender marriage. But 40 states have already passed laws opposing such marriages. And the most recent national polls reinforce that large majority opinion, despite some modest recent gains by the activists.

For example, last June a CBS News/New York Times poll asked whether U.S. adults favored gay marriage, gay civil unions without marriage, or no legal recognition for same-gender couples. Only 33% preferred gay marriage; 30% favored civil unions; and 32% would give no legal recognition. When civil unions were not offered as an alternative, the percentage favoring same-gender marriage was higher. [xxvii] A recent USA Today/Gallup Poll also asked whether allowing people of the same gender to marry will improve society, have no effect, or will harm society. Only 13% thought gay marriage would make society better, while 48% thought it would make society worse, and 35% thought it would have no effect. [xxviii]

These poll numbers hardly put the Church on the public fringe with its view that same-

gender marriage is not a good idea. But let us finally consider the more important question — what’s wrong with same-gender marriage?

The fourth misconception is that there are no rational, non-religious reasons for opposing same-gender marriage. The *Time* magazine writer said the only “rational side” to the Church’s efforts in California was its fear of losing its tax-exempt status. He acknowledged no serious sociological or other argument for limiting marriage to a man and a woman. That description of the marriage debate is so limited that it invites a response. I therefore briefly offer a non-religious case against same-gender marriage.

First, the American public has always distinguished between what the law *tolerates* and what the law should *endorse* — a clear line between “passive toleration” and “active support” of homosexual conduct. [xxix] To tolerate behavior is to move it, legally, from being *prohibited* to being *permitted*, which we did in deciding not to prosecute homosexual behavior as criminal. However, we can tolerate or permit that behavior without also *endorsing* it — that is, promoting and encouraging that behavior, which we have historically done only when the behavior serves a significant public purpose. Our society and our laws have long endorsed man-woman marriage with an honored priority, not just to support happy lovers, but because marriage is our most significant social institution — not merely a private project. This “public interest” or “social interest” separates the marriage contract from every other contract in society. We don’t invite guests and have receptions when people sign a business deal; but we do celebrate marriage as a publicly significant event. Why? Because the children of that marriage are the future society and they clearly thrive best when reared in a formal family with their own father and mother.

The *New York Times*, a few years ago, reported a “powerful consensus” in the social science research [xxx] that children do best when they live with their own mom and dad. The research clearly shows that, by every measure of child well-being — such as health, emotional stability, education, and avoiding crime, drugs, and abuse — children do far better in a two-parent, married heterosexual family. That ideal child-rearing environment is not always possible because of deaths, unavoidable divorces, and births outside wedlock. But giving policy priority to the natural family establishes the social goal that, whenever possible, every child has a right to grow up with his or her own mother and father in a legal marriage. That goal binds the father and mother to

each other and to their children — and to society’s long-term interests. Civilization began when the culture required men to care about their women and their children. And society has the right to expect that kind of pattern from fathers and mothers — for the sake of the future society’s well being.

Recent experience in this country has threatened this pattern, not just because of same-gender marriage. The problem dates further back, because we have shifted, in America, from being a culture of marriage toward becoming a culture of divorce. Americans have more than doubled the divorce rate. We have the highest divorce rate in the world. We’ve also more than quintupled the rate of unwed births since the 1960s. Nearly 40% of all children born in the U.S. today are now born out of wedlock. [xxxix] These trends have inflicted untold damage upon the country’s children and families. That’s why President Hinckley said a few years ago, “The family is falling apart. Not only in America, but across the world.” [xxxix] He also said that family disintegration is “a matter of serious concern. I think it is my most serious concern.” [xxxix] Why the concern? Because single-parent families are, with rare and admirable exceptions, generally not as good for children. Damaged children create a damaged society; and when enough families are dysfunctional, society itself becomes dysfunctional.

The new culture of divorce began with no-fault divorce in California in the late 1960s. That concept essentially gave any married individual the right to just walk away from a marriage as a matter of personal freedom, regardless of fault or social consequences. Both no-fault divorce and same-gender marriage allow personal adult rights to trump the best interests of society and children. The radical personal freedom theory on which the Massachusetts same-gender marriage case is based is actually the logical extension of the same individualistic legal concept that created no-fault divorce. Think about it. When the law upholds an individual’s right to END a marriage, regardless of social consequences (as happened with no-fault divorce), that same legal principle can be used to justify the individual’s right to START a marriage, regardless of social consequences (as happens with same-gender marriage).

Gay rights do not claim to satisfy society’s enormous interest in its children. On the contrary, in a key early Supreme Court opinion in 1986, Justice Harry Blackmun argued that the Constitution should protect gay sexual rights “not because they contribute to the general public welfare but because they form so central a part of an individual’s life,” including one’s “right to differ as to things that touch the heart of the

existing order.” [\[xxxiv\]](#) The Court’s 2003 majority opinion striking down state criminal laws against same-gender sexual conduct accepted Justice Blackmun’s view, basing its rationale on the personal “autonomy” or freedom rights of consenting adults, not on any benefit of that conduct to society. [\[xxxv\]](#)

Now this contrast between adult rights and the rights of society and children introduces the most persuasive example I have seen of the secular case against same-gender marriage. France, which is not exactly the most conservative country in the world, rejected gay marriage in 2006, because its parliament concluded that these marriages run counter to the best interests of children and the future society. France was not ready, as a matter of conscious public policy choice, to throw out its babies with the bathwater of gay activism. They concluded that marriage should serve a child’s right to optimal personal development, rather than primarily serving adult interests that trump children’s interests.

The French parliament’s study of same-gender marriage centered on marriage as a social institution. Its report said marriage is inevitably built around children, and every country that has adopted same-gender marriage has soon afterward authorized adoption and surrogate gestation by same-gender couples. But, they concluded, France could “no longer systematically place [the] aspirations of adults ahead” of children’s needs and rights. [\[xxxvi\]](#) And if they allowed individual control of family forms to persist, France would “exhaust all possibility of expression of society’s stake in marriage.” I repeat, this was a secular argument, not a religious one. Indeed, in France, as Jacques Chirac said, secularism IS their religion.

Specifically, the French report focused on children’s need for identity and stability. Insofar as possible, it said, each child has the right to know and be cared for by — and be bonded to — his or her biological parents. Biological bonding combined with legal bonding inherently creates the most lasting and stable adult-child relationships, which provides the emotional and legal security required for optimal child development. Occasional adoptions may be necessary in exceptional cases, but there are plenty of stable heterosexual married couples who wish to adopt all available adoptive children. The French report said that to accept a public policy that consciously places children with homosexual adults increases the risks to children who are already at risk because they feel identity confusion and abandonment by their biological parents. To ignore this need is to discriminate against these children. Adoption is about a child’s right to a regular family, not merely about an adult’s right to a child.

So France rejected same-gender marriage so that children “do not suffer as a result of situations imposed on them by adults. The interest of the child must outweigh the exercise of freedom by adults, whatever life choices are made by the parents.” This view takes marriage away from the private, adults-only world of gay and lesbian lifestyles and returns it to its original place as society’s primary social institution.

I return now to where I started, to the admiration and empathy I feel for you. I feel especially tender toward you who honor your covenants and wholeheartedly desire the blessings of temple marriage and family life; and who have tried repeatedly — but not successfully yet — to diminish your same-gender feelings. I know people who feel that way. My heart goes out to them. They are waiting upon the Lord.

I was once living through a pretty difficult dive myself, though of a much different variety. One day in the Wyoming mountains I saw a bald eagle in a nearby tree. Something about that majestic creature reminded me to read these words from the 40<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah: “The Lord giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” [\[xxxvii\]](#)

I wondered what “waiting upon the Lord” meant. Then I read in Joseph Smith’s Translation of Matthew 3:24 that when young Jesus grew up, he “waxed strong, and *waited upon the Lord* for the time of his ministry to come.” I couldn’t imagine the boy Christ just standing around the carpenter shop “waiting” for something to happen. I came to understand that “waiting upon the Lord” is a special invitation to become an active, consecrated disciple of Christ. It isn’t to sit back passively and just wait on your hands. I was moved to make changes in my daily pattern so I could “wait” with much more intense spiritual initiative. As a result, I discovered for myself that, as Isaiah said, men have not heard, “neither hath any eye seen, O God, how great things thou hast prepared for him that waiteth for thee” (D&C 133:45). As the angel sang to Elijah, “O rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him, and he will give thee thy heart’s desire.”

An LDS medical doctor who has worked closely with many people who deal with same-gender attraction recently said to me, “This is a truly difficult problem, but in its very difficulty is something that allows those who meet the challenge to become amazingly purified and sanctified and thus qualified for special comfort and revelation from the Savior, who knows how to succor ‘all’ men and women in their infirmities.”

His words prompted a memory of Elder Maxwell’s insight: “If we are serious about our discipleship, Jesus will eventually request each of us to do those very things which are [the] most difficult to do.” The apostle Paul wrote, “All things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). Even same-gender attraction can work for your good IF you love God.

You are not simply a child of God. You are a *son* or a *daughter* of God, with all the masculine or feminine connotations of those words. That is your true, eternal identity. I urge you to seek a testimony, even a personal vision, of that identity. I ask you to take every possible step, every day, to align your physical and emotional life with the spiritual reality of who you really are. Even if you can open only a tiny space for God’s influence in your life now, open it up, all you can. Say “yes” to Him, over and over, and He will help you make ever more room for Him in your heart. Then your confidence will grow — not only in Him, but in yourself. I am describing a process, not an event, and it can sometimes seem hopelessly long and difficult. But I promise you that as you learn to connect your righteous desires with His love, His power will pull you home — eventually, all the way home.

Brigham Young’s words describe the promise and the fulfillment of that homeward journey: “Your spirits when they came to take [earthly] tabernacles were pure and holy. There is no spirit among the human family that was begotten in hell; none that were begotten by angels, or by any inferior being. They [are all the children of] our Father in heaven. He is the Father of our spirits; and if we could know, understand, and do His will, every soul would be prepared to return back into His presence. And when they get there, they would see that they had formerly lived there for ages, that they had previously been acquainted with every nook and corner, with the palaces, walks, and gardens; and they would embrace their Father, and He would embrace them and say, ‘My *son*, my *daughter*, I have you again;’ and the child would say, ‘O my Father, my Father, I am here again.’” [\[xxxviii\]](#)

[\[i\]](#) *Ensign*, Nov. 1995. 99.

[\[ii\]](#) *Ensign*, Nov. 2000.

[\[iii\]](#) D&C 122:8; D&C 88:6.

[\[iv\]](#) D&C 88:114.

[\[v\]](#) LDS.org Newsroom, interview transcript.

- [vi] Alma 37:36.
- [vii] [Theguardrail.com/transcript.htm](http://Theguardrail.com/transcript.htm).
- [viii] Alma 7:11-12.
- [ix] Carri P. Jenkins, "Toward the Light of Hope: Victims of Abuse," *Brigham Young Magazine*, May 1993, 35.
- [x] See note 7.
- [xi] *San Francisco Examiner*, Nov. 21, 1982, at B10, col. 1.
- [xii] Dean Byrd, *Mormons & Homosexuality* (2008), 22
- [xiii] Dallin H. Oaks and Lance B. Wickman, LDS.org Newsroom interview.
- [xiv] James E. Faust, *Ensign*, Sept. 1995.
- [xv] Quinnipiac University poll, April 21, 2009, in [PollingReport.com](http://PollingReport.com).
- [xvi] In Dean Byrd, *Mormons & Homosexuality*, 36.
- [xvii] Friedman and Downey, in Byrd, 34.
- [xviii] David C. Pruden, *Lead My People*, audio CD
- [xix] Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, November 2000.
- [xx] See generally Jeffrey Robinson, [Theguardrail.com](http://Theguardrail.com); see also Jason Park, *Understanding Male Homosexual Problems*.
- [xxi] *Ensign*, Aug. 1979, 51.
- [xxii] Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, May 2006.
- [xxiii] Spitzer. R.L. (2003). "Can some gay men and lesbians change their sexual orientation?" *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 32, 5 October, 403-417.
- [xxiv] Stephanie Simon, "A New Therapy on Faith and Sexual Identity," *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 6, 2009 [online.wsj.com/article/SB124950491516608883.html](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124950491516608883.html).
- [xxv] Jason Park, *Understanding Male Homosexual Problems*, 30.
- [xxvi] Park, 31.
- [xxvii] [PollingReport.com/civil.htm](http://PollingReport.com/civil.htm) (CBS/N.Y.Times poll June 12-16, 2009)
- [xxviii] [PollingReport.com/civil.htm](http://PollingReport.com/civil.htm) (USA Today/Gallup poll, May 7-10, 2009)
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- [xxx] Hardin, 2-Parent Families Rise After Change in Welfare Laws, quoted in What Next for the Marriage Movement? (New York: Institute for American Values), posted to [MarriageMovement.org](http://MarriageMovement.org), 12 Dec. 2004.
- [xxxi] "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in May that births to unmarried women have reached an astonishing 39.7%" of all U.S. births. Caitlin Flanagan, "Why Marriage Matters," *Time*, July 13, 2009, 45.
- [xxxii] "No Nation Can Rise Higher Than the Strength of Its Families," *Church News*, 3 Oct. 1998, 6.
- [xxxiii] "President Hinckley Notes His 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday." *Church News*, 24 June 1995, 6.

[xxxiv] *Bowers v. Hardwick*, \_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_ (1986)

[xxxv] *Lawrence v. Texas*, \_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_ (2003)

[xxxvi] Report of the Mission of Inquiry on the Family and the Rights of Children, a study commission appointed by the National Assembly of France, January 25, 2006, p. 32 (English translation of commission report).

[xxxvii] Isaiah 40:28-31

[xxxviii] Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:268 (italics added).



The men of Evergreen International and their stories of change:

**Alan Medinger's Story: Reflections on 25 Years of Healing**

Alan lived a secret double life for years before he took the classic "A.A. step" of totally surrendering his life to God. That surrender brought a dramatic change of heart. His attraction to men was miraculously de-eroticized, his sexual addiction was lifted, and he fell deeply in love with his wife. Still, he discovered he had much work to grow into full masculinity - a path that had been inadvertently derailed as a boy.

**Ben Newman's Story: A Change of Heart**

Ben was in a complete state of crisis as he entered reparative therapy for homosexual sex addiction. His wife had caught him in yet another lie that was supposed to cover up his double life. He had "hit bottom." Finding a therapist he could trust, and who had himself overcome unwanted same-sex attractions, Ben through himself into the deep emotional work he had been running from all his life. It changed his life.

**Bob's Story: Placing It On the Altar**

For 47 years, Bob struggled with unwanted homosexual attractions, alternating between years-long cycles of indulgence and white-knuckled resistance. Finally, he joined a support group and discovered from others who had been freed from homosexual desires the mistake he had been making: He had been trying to do it all himself. As millions of recovering alcoholics in AA had done before, Bob finally surrendered his life and will to God. Within weeks, Bob felt his homo-erotic desires lifted, and he began a new life of intimacy with and trust in God, his wife, and male friends.

**Dan's Story: My Journey to Peace**

After trying in vain for years to overcome his secret homosexual sex addiction, Dan finally "came out" enough to ask others for help. Work with a spiritual counselor, new friends, inner-child therapy, a Twelve Step group, the Evergreen support group and the New Warrior Training Adventure all brought together important pieces of healing. Today, Dan says the emptiness of past lust is filled with a far more satisfying sense of brotherhood and platonic but deep brotherly love.

**David Matheson's Story: Breaking Free**

Was the only way to find happiness to leave his faith, his young wife and their baby and join the gay community? David found reparative therapy instead, and discovered the truth about himself underlying his cravings for maleness.

**Frank's Story: Transformed**

Frank was in two five-year relationships with other men. He built a home in Mexico with his second lover. He had finally found what he was looking for! But soon a nagging feeling started to surface that there was still something missing in his life. "I had everything, yet my soul

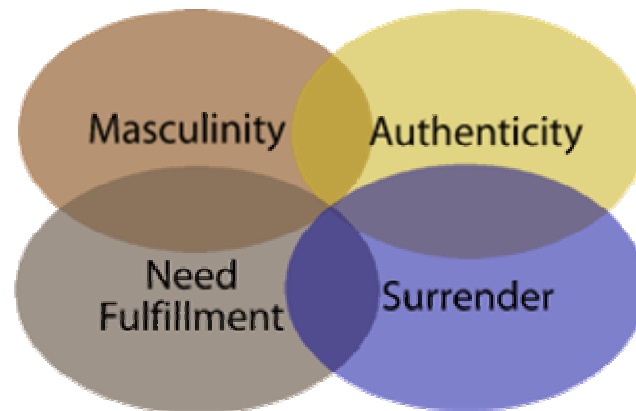
seemed empty.” He found books on the underlying causes of homosexuality and the path to change, and they spoke powerfully to him. “I could not stop seeking out the truth. Every book had my story in it.” He began working with a reparative therapist, and never looked back. “I have become transformed.”

### **Jason Park's Story: Resolving the Conflict**

Three weeks after meeting "Mr. Right," Jason was ready to leave his wife, children and life-long faith for a man he'd known for just days. In crisis, he found reparative therapy and a support group. As he faced the underlying emotional deficits in his life, he found his homoerotic attractions and sexual compulsions decreased. When he found non-sexual, legitimate brotherhood with men, he found his emotional needs met and he "didn't need to go to a bookstore and find something to look at or go find some guy to connect with." Once he fulfilled the underlying emotional needs, the homosexual desires disappeared.

What Worked For Us:  
**A M.A.N.S. Journey**

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Many people have sought to change unwanted homosexual feelings. Some have succeeded completely. Others have succeeded only in part, or not at all. Many, perhaps most, have become frustrated along the way at times when they did not see results as quickly or as completely as they would have liked. Some give up, apparently convinced that since whatever they have tried has not worked (yet), nothing will ever work.

### **Roadblocks**

In our own lives, we found that we hit roadblocks to change when our efforts were not as broad or as comprehensive as needed. This happened, for instance, when we focused all our efforts on just one aspect of healing - on spirituality, for example - but resisted necessary work on overcoming estrangement from men and masculinity, or on healing emotional wounds of the past, or on discovering and meeting our authentic needs.

We also hit roadblocks when we were unwilling to do whatever it takes, and everything it takes, to change. "I want to change, as long as no one ever finds out I have this struggle," some of us said. Or, "I want to change, but only if God does all the work," or "but only if I don't have to break out of my comfort zone," or "but only if... (fill in the blank)." As they say in the Twelve Step programs, "Half measures availed us nothing." Often it turned out that the very thing we were most resistant to changing was the most important thing about ourselves we had to change!

### **An Integrated Solution**

In his book, *Growth into Manhood* (Harold Shaw Publishers, 2000), Alan Medinger

writes (page 239) that homosexuality is not a single problem or conflict, but a group of problems that together produce homosexual attractions. Each of these problems must be dealt with individually, he writes. So it was that we found that reducing or eliminating homosexual feelings and causing heterosexual desires to develop required life changes in four broad, overlapping areas:

## What Worked for Us Masculinity

### Developing Male Identity: Internalizing Masculinity Claiming Our Place in the Circle of Men What We Did to Effect Change

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- *We developed our internal sense of manhood -- our identity as being a man like other men. We separated ourselves from the female perspective, surrendered whatever "gayness" we might have adopted, and rejected our old passivity. In their place, we fully embraced and welcomed a masculine identity and accessed a new sense of personal power, strength and courage.*
- *We connected with the wider world of heterosexual men. We overcame our prejudices against men, accepted them as our brothers, and claimed our rightful place in the circle of men. We grew in friendship and brotherhood with men, developing close and meaningful friendships and group associations that met our authentic needs for masculine connection and mutual support.*

For most of us, the longing that we came to identify as homosexual desire actually began long before we ever experienced it as an erotic attraction. It was the natural and necessary yearning that every little boy feels to be loved and wanted by his father, to feel like he belongs as "one of the guys," and to feel confident in his masculine identity. If a boy's longing for masculine connection remains unmet, it can grow into an open wound as he enters adolescence. Sometimes, with the hormonal surge of puberty, it can become inadvertently sexualized. So it was with us. Having felt insufficient love and masculine affirmation from father, father figures or male peers throughout our developmental years, we began to see men as the opposite from us -- masculine, mysterious and different -- while we too easily identified with women as our sisters. But sexualizing men - relating to them as lovers -- would only further the sense of estrangement we felt from men and from our own masculine identities. It could never fill the true need we felt to bond with men as our brothers and to experience brotherly love, as a man among men.

In our own journeys, we found that connecting deeply with our masculinity was a terribly significant area of healing that had to take place in two important realms: internally and interpersonally.

- Internally, we needed to connect with our own masculinity and masculine power, coming to see ourselves as masculine and capable-like the men we had admired, envied, and sexualized. We needed to separate ourselves internally from the female perspective so we could experience the world as men. We needed to yield to the genuine masculinity inside us, giving up all "gayness" and homosexual identity or homosexual ways of relating.
- Interpersonally, we needed to connect with the world of heterosexual men, overcoming our old sense of not being "man enough" and not fitting it. We needed to overcome our prejudices against men, especially heterosexual men, and learn to accept men as our brothers - with all their weaknesses. We needed to become comfortable being around men in a variety of situations.

We do not mean to suggest that a man cannot be both masculine and gay. Some gay men do exude a confident masculinity that other men, both gay and straight, admire and respect. Neither do we mean to suggest that heterosexual men do not struggle with insecurity about their masculinity. They frequently do. Insecurity over masculinity is a very common experience for men from all walks of life.

But in our own lives, we found that trying to build our connection to the masculine through homosexual thoughts and actions was like trying to quench thirst by drinking salt water. We longed for meaningful connections with (heterosexual) men and a stronger, more confident masculine identity. But turning to gay men, gay thoughts or a gay identity to meet these needs only caused us to feel more emasculated, isolated and different. Our thirst increased instead of being quenched.

In our case, extreme disconnection from and longing for masculinity created in us a great unmet need for closeness and connection with men -- a need we inadvertently eroticized and sought to meet sexually when we couldn't find a way -- or didn't dare -- to fill it in platonic, heterosexual ways. But ironically, the very thing we needed most was the thing we feared the most. Past experience had taught us not to trust men. We had come to believe that heterosexual men were unable to meet our needs for affection, compassion and attention. Tragically, we ran from what we most needed.

### **Developing Male Identity: Internalizing Masculinity**

In his book, *Growth Into Manhood*, Alan Medinger writes: "For many men, craving for the masculine is the central driving force in their homosexuality, as it once was for me" (*Growth Into Manhood*, Harold Shaw Publisher, 2000, page 82). In fact, he suggests

that if a man has an incomplete male identity, that can be the engine that drives homosexual behaviors and attractions.

"The alternative to having an identity as a man is to have some other identity," Alan Medinger writes. "What will it be?" He writes that, in his experience, men seeking to transition out of unwanted homosexual desires are often inclined to focus first and foremost on their behavior and attractions, for those are the areas that cause them the most distress. But, he says, it is generally more effective for a man to focus first and foremost on his identity, especially initially. This is true for two reasons, Medinger says: *"First, identity is more amenable to direct attack than behavior or attractions... (It) can be changed significantly through a program of conscious choices and specific actions.... Second, a man's incomplete male identity is what drives and directs homosexual behavior and attractions."* (Growth Into Manhood, page 16)

In other words, by placing more emphasis on identity than on behavior or attractions, a man addresses root causes, rather than resulting symptoms.

Identity may be defined as the way a man sees himself, especially the beliefs and judgments he holds about himself in relation to others, as well as the groups and types of individuals he identifies himself as belonging to or sharing common characteristics with. So if identity is based on adopted beliefs and chosen associations, consider, then, how malleable identity can be, and how susceptible it can be to deliberate manipulation.

One man who has overcome homosexuality writes:

*"Over the course of my life, I have embraced at various times the identities of 'the good little boy,' a rebel, an artist, a righteous man, an inadequate man, a powerful and courageous man, a sex addict, a gay man, a bisexual man, a straight man, an outdoorsman, an urbanite, a loner, a success, a miserable failure, and many others.*

*"When I think about all the ways I've viewed myself at different points of my life, I am amazed at how malleable my identity has been. Some of these identities have come and gone just by changing my circumstances and my attitudes toward those circumstances. Some have changed by changing whom I associated with and whom I saw myself as being like, or wanting to be like. Some identity changes I made quite consciously and deliberately, while others were more accidental and circumstantial."*

While some types of identity may have insignificant emotional consequences, if any, a man's (and before that, a boy's) gender identity is an absolutely core factor in how he feels about himself and how he relates to the world. It affects whether he sees himself as being like other men, or more like women, or something in between. It affects his

sense of isolation or belonging, his sense of wholeness or emptiness, his sense of connection or disconnection.

Most significantly, it affects which gender he sees as being his opposite. And that, perhaps more than anything, affects which gender he finds himself attracted to. Alan Medinger writes:

*"The essence of sexual attraction seems to be 'differences' or 'otherness'... What if a man does not have the inner sense that he is a man? Will he experience attraction to a woman? Will she be his 'other'? No, and this is critical. If he feels that he is not complete as a man, his first longing will be not for women but for complete manhood; he will be drawn to the masculine in other males. This will be his 'other.' This will be his missing rib... It follows, then, that the development of our manhood - finding completion in ourselves - will do great things both to decrease our same-sex attractions and to start drawing us sexually to women."*

Once we understood that our homosexual feelings stemmed from a little boy's lifelong hunger for normal connection to men and to his own masculinity, the path to healing became clear. Frightening, perhaps, but clear. We would have to go back and heal the little boy's wounds by learning to love, trust and identify with men as brothers. We would no longer resist these "reparative" urges, but rather, we would seek to fulfill our normal need for male affirmation and connection.

### **Claiming Our Place in the Circle of Men**

It is never to develop one's masculinity and claim one's rightful place in the circle of men. As Alan Medinger writes, testing and affirming manhood can take place at any time in a man's life, but it must be done in the same way that boys do it:

*"We must be affirmed by men; they are the ones we still see as having the authority to affirm manhood...Manhood is formed in the company of men, and so affirmation must be sought on their terms...And like it or not, affirmation must come from what we do." (Growth Into Manhood, pages 58-59)*

Medinger introduces two key principles relating to masculine development:

1. *"The first is that every man has to go through certain developmental stages; there is no real shortcut to growth. If we didn't go through those stages as boys, we will have to go through them now."*
2. *"The second principle is that manhood is to a great extent a matter of doing, and we will grow into manhood by doing the things that men do" (Growth Into Manhood, page xiii)*

Medinger writes that he found his homosexual struggle was largely a problem of undeveloped manhood, emotional neediness and an uncertain identity. He writes: *"Now, 15, 20 or 40 years later, if you want to resume your growth, you will have to venture back out into the world of men and boys. Essentially, you are going to have to develop your manhood in the same way that young boys do, through a process of learning, testing, failing, getting back up and testing again, and finally succeeding. We grow into the fullness of manhood by doing the things that men do.*

*"Once you are into this process and have had a few successes -- regardless of the failures in between -- a reinforcing process will start to set in... You will find that you are being affirmed by other men. You will start to conform to your own inner sense of what a man is. You will start to gain a sense that you are becoming the man God created you to be, and...that you are fulfilling his purpose for you as a man."* (Growth Into Manhood, page 8)

### **What We Did to Effect Change**

Here, then, are various changes that many of us made in order to build our personal sense of masculinity and belonging to the world of men:

1. We worked to recognize and overcome our prejudices against or fear of heterosexual men, on the one hand, and, at the other extreme, our idealization of certain types of men we envied and lusted after. We began consciously looking for the similarities and commonalities we shared with other men, and stopped emphasizing and exaggerating the supposed differences.

- *We made a conscious and deliberate effort to befriend men who embodied some of the traits we envied. In doing so, we came to see their weaknesses as well as their strengths, their struggles and fears as well as their talents and skills. And much to our surprise, we often discovered that they saw traits in us, too, that they admired.*
- *We worked to develop in ourselves more of the traits we admired in others (often such things as physical fitness, confidence and a friendly, outgoing nature), to discover traits in ourselves that other men admired (often such things as courage, compassion, and talents), and to accept things about ourselves that we could not change (such as height and basic body type, ethnicity and heritage).*
- *We stopped criticizing ourselves and comparing ourselves negatively to others. Instead, we started seeing and affirming the good in ourselves, our strengths and courage and our own manliness. The more we saw how much we were like other men, and discounted the differences, the more approachable they*

*seemed, and the more we began to see and respond to them as brothers, rather than as potential lovers.*

2. We separated ourselves from a gay identity, gay associations and gay culture; separated ourselves from activities and relationships that caused us to over-identify with women; and consciously adopted a new identity as a strong man developing his full heterosexual masculinity

- *Recognizing that, in many ways, one becomes what one thinks and how one acts, we replaced any homosexual attributes, appearance, speech, mannerisms and interests with more typically heterosexual male qualities and interests. We distanced ourselves from places, activities, events and people that might have kept us tied to a homosexual identity.*
- *We became aware of any thoughts, actions and relationships that caused us to feel like "one of the girls," as if we belonged in the circle of women instead of the circle of men. We broke away from those things and consciously worked to dis-identify with women as we worked to identify with men.*
- *For some of us, this also meant cutting the apron strings to Mom. If we were overly dependent on our relationship with Mom and too focused on her concerns and interests, we consciously diminished her presence in our lives.*
- *We embraced and nurtured in a new identity for ourselves that was not based on sexuality at all, nor on our struggles and weakness, but on our strengths and our growing confidence in our manhood.*

3. Finding that building our inner sense of masculinity was in many ways synonymous with developing our personal power and inner strength, we had to let go of a sense of helplessness, hopelessness and victimization. We replaced them with a renewed sense of responsibility and accountability for what we did with our lives.

4. We searched out and adopted a community of men (a church group, fraternal organization, Twelve Step group, service group or other men's organization -- see "Resources and Links") where we could learn to feel safe and at home among heterosexual men and receive affirmation for ourselves as men.

5. We stretched beyond our old comfort zones to make new friends with heterosexual men we admired and to spend more time in the company of men.

- *We made time and created opportunities to do some of the everyday "guy things" with them that we had missed out on earlier in life.*

- *We worked to look, act and -- most important, feel -- more like "one of the guys" -- and in so doing claimed our place in the circle of men.*

6. We learned to trust other men as we took the calculated risk of sharing our hidden selves with carefully chosen men who seemed especially compassionate and trustworthy, and secure in their own heterosexuality.

- *We opened up to them and asked for their support and understanding, and their active involvement in our lives in specific meaningful ways. (We had to tell them what we needed, and not expect them to read our minds!)*
- *In so doing, we created, one by one, a network of family members, friends, counselors, mentors and role models who believed in us and in our ability to change and our ability to do so.*

7. We sought out father figures, "elders," "coaches" and mentors to help "re-father" us in positive ways.

- *When possible, we worked to develop a healthier father-son relationship with Dad, spending time with him and learning to trust, forgive and open up.*
- *We also sought out other mentors and asked for their advice, feedback, perspective, wisdom, guidance and affirmation. We asked them to coach us in developing certain skills, spirituality, our confidence in dating women or in improving family relationships, or other ways that gave us a sense of being "re-fathered" and mentored. We freely asked them questions about how men think, act and feel.*
- *When mentors were agreeable, we made ourselves accountable to them as we worked toward specific goals, reporting back on our successes and missteps.*

8. Without denying our true interests or true selves, we challenged ourselves to do more of the things that most men do and fewer of the things that most men don't (see Alan Medinger's "Growth Into Manhood") -- or more of the things that made us feel connected to our masculinity. We earned the admiration and affirmation of men we respected by challenging ourselves in the world of men.

- *We explored the masculine world by participating in activities with other men we had once been too afraid to try. We became willing to laugh at ourselves and just feel the joy of exploring.*
- *We watched how men dressed, talked, acted and related to other men and to women. Increasingly, we modeled our own appearance, mannerisms, behavior*

*and relationships after theirs -- much as young boys model their peers and elders (a stage we missed out on in our boyhood!).*

- *We discovered that meaningful admiration and affirmation from other men are earned by facing and overcoming challenges. We found that men prove themselves to each other and earn the respect of other men in myriad ways, not just the stereotypical methods of sports or auto mechanics. They do it through success on the job, success with family, talents, physical prowess, physical projects -- or anything that takes guts, determination and skill.*
- *We sought out challenges that "stretched" us and proved our abilities within the world of men.*

9. We increased our physicality and our emotional connection to and appreciation for our male bodies, accepting their limitations while challenging them in new ways.

- *Some of us had felt cut off from our own bodies. Some of us saw our bodies as "the enemy," part of the problem. We worked to accept our bodies for the gifts they were, just as they were.*
- *At the same time, we increased our physicality in whatever ways we found most rewarding, and challenged our bodies in new ways. We developed our physical strength, health and skill, and enjoyed the masculine rush of pushing our male bodies to new limits.*

10. The more grounded we felt in our masculine identities, and the more powerful we felt as men, the more we began to feel attracted to the femininity of women.

- *As our attractions to men turned increasingly to a joyful sense of brotherhood and shared identity with them, our attractions to women turned increasingly romantic and sexual. Increasingly, women became our "other," with characteristics and traits that were clearly opposite from ours.*
- *From a place of masculine strength, we could begin to relate to women romantically and sexually in a way that further strengthened our sense of manliness, whereas before a woman's femininity had often seemed to engulf and emasculate us. We became increasingly ready to take on our masculine destiny as provider, protector, lover and life partner to a woman.*

## What Worked for Us

# Authenticity

### Authentic Core Emotions Counter Emotions or Inhibitory Feelings Defense Mechanisms and Distractions Rejecting Shame -- and Accepting Ourselves As We Are What We Did to Effect Change

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- *Rejecting shame, secrecy, isolation and a false front, we learned to love and accept ourselves just as we were, right then, unchanged.*
- *We learned to experience authentic connection to our feelings. We embarked on a courageous "inward journey" to uncover and heal long-buried pain that lay at the root of much of our homosexual feelings. We dug past defense mechanisms and inhibitory feelings to connect deeply and authentically with our core emotions, especially anger and grief.*
- *We learned to experience authentic connection with others - to stop living our lives for others, to speak our truth, and to be more genuine and authentic with others, undefended and without detachment.*

The journey out of homosexuality is a journey inward, a journey of self-discovery, authentic self-expression and renewal. It is not a journey of willpower. It is a journey of healing -- of uncovering and healing the underlying pain and emptiness that had caused so much of our homosexual yearning to begin with.

During the long years before we found a path out of homosexuality, many of us had been living a lie for so long, we no longer knew what it was to be authentic or to be connected with our true feelings. We had put on a false front and lied that everything was "fine." Many of us went out of our way to be especially "good boys," never getting into trouble, being moms' and teachers' favorites. But inside we were in pain, silently aching.

The lies we lived go back to well before we became aware of emerging homosexual desires. They were about buried pain that we couldn't understand and were sure that no one else could either -- pain about feeling different, not fitting in, feeling alienated from Dad, feeling more like one of the girls than one of the boys, being picked on by bullies, or being desperately lonely. Some of us carried secrets and shame about sex play with other boys or even sexual abuse by older boys or men. Some of us were taught when we were very young that our emotions -- especially anger, sadness (or tears, anyway) and fear -- were bad and wrong. Being sensitive and "good little boys," we tried to comply by shutting off our feelings altogether.

To avoid feeling the pain, we shut down emotionally. Feeling nothing at all was inordinately preferable to feeling the full weight of our fear, sadness, loneliness and hurt.

Reparative therapist David Matheson writes:

*"Emotional disconnection is ubiquitous among the men dealing with unwanted homosexuality with whom I've worked. This doesn't mean that these men are completely disconnected from feeling (although some are). Rather, it means they are disconnected from feelings about certain important aspects of their lives or history - some of them primal, pivotal or even traumatic life experiences about which they have shut off real feeling."*

Time alone would make the pain go away, if we could just keep it buried long enough - or so we hoped. But we were woefully wrong. Past hurts don't die. Buried pain becomes stronger, not weaker. It festers and rots and finds sneaky ways to express itself and be "heard" -- through addictions and obsessions, envy and lust, shame and helplessness, or other self-destructive forms that fed our homosexual yearnings. Eventually we learned that if we were ever to be freed from unwanted homosexual desires, we would have to free our hearts and reconnect with our core emotions, fully and authentically. We had to release our shame, and work through and heal long-buried anger and hurt. We had to rediscover ourselves.

But it would not be enough to feel authentically. We would also have to live authentically in our relationships with others. We had to stop living our lives for others or trying to be what we thought they wanted us to be. We needed to be genuine and authentic with others - undefended and without detachment. We had to let go of our defenses and facades and trust that we were good enough, just as we were, to be fully seen and heard.

### **Authentic Core Emotions**

In the Journey Into Manhood weekend retreats presented by People Can Change, the staff teaches that there are four core emotions, and that authentic connection to these feelings is essential in any kind of emotional healing. The four core emotions are:

- joy (which includes love and peace),
- sadness (which includes grief)
- fear (which includes frustration)
- and anger.

Core emotions create powerful sensations in the body, and with those sensations they create impulses to move or act or respond. Core emotions are those feelings that have

the capacity to move a person toward greater maturity and wholeness. They cause one to want to expand rather than contract, to open up rather than shut down. Sadness, for example, moves a man through the experience of loss by expanding him to encompass the loss. He becomes something more than he was before.

### **Counter Emotions or Inhibitory Feelings**

What happens, though, if a man's grief is too overwhelming, his anger too out of control, or his fear too shameful? What happens, in other words, if his authentic emotions are just too painful? He may learn to contain his authentic emotions, to hide them or box them in. He may protect himself from experiencing these authentic emotions by putting up a wall of "counter emotions" or inhibitory feelings.

So his authentic emotions may be subsumed by shame, depression, anxiety, lust, helplessness, passivity or other feelings that prevent him from feeling his core emotions. These are considered counter or inhibitory because, rather than impel a person to action, they inhibit action. Rather than bring about healing, they prolong hurt. Rather than increase self-understanding, they cloud it. Rather than tell him the truth, they tell him lies. They are feelings that cause him to shut down rather than to act, to go within rather than to move outside of himself and connect with others.

### **Defense Mechanisms and Distractions**

In addition, outside this layer of counter emotions a man may unconsciously add another layer of defense mechanisms or distractions. These are beliefs, judgments and behaviors designed to protect the man from feeling anything at all -- even false emotions or inhibitory feelings. They may include sexual addiction, overeating, or drug or alcohol abuse. They may also include intellectualizing away emotional situations, defensive humor, rigidity and false piety, and compulsive behaviors.

Our challenge, then, was to get through the layers of defenses and false emotions in order to experience life from our core emotions. Usually, our most significant work was to get fully in touch with our grief and anger, to "hear" these feelings, honor them, and release the sadness and anger that has been bottled up, usually for many years. And when it was time, to forgive and let go.

Admittedly, this could be terrifying. ***But a courageous man is not one who has no fears; a courageous man is one who does what he fears.*** Without fear, there can be no courage.

### **Rejecting Shame -- and Accepting Ourselves As We Are**

It's ironic but true: Until we could begin to love and accept ourselves just as we were, right then, unchanged, many of us found we could make little progress toward real

change. Acceptance of our goodness, our value and our true potential as men was a critical early step out of homosexuality.

Thus, we came to understand these two essential truths about ourselves:

1. Guilt and shame can NEVER motivate real change. A change effort motivated primarily by guilt and shame will always fail; we found, in our case, that shame FUELED our homosexual feelings and compulsive behaviors, NOT recovery.
2. Our homosexual yearnings resulted, in part, from our problems relating to the world of men. And, relationship problems can NEVER heal in isolation, without relating..

These two principles are closely inter-related. We found we could never break free of shame while keeping such a monumental part of ourselves hidden from the people whose love and acceptance we most craved. We couldn't begin to trust others if we feared they would reject us if they knew our secret. We couldn't open our hearts to receive love from others when we couldn't love ourselves.

Does accepting ourselves as we are, with all our weaknesses and limitations, block us from change? No, just the opposite! Imagine a college freshman who desires to be a medical doctor one day. Does he berate himself for not being an M.D. already? Does he compare himself to experienced surgeons and criticize himself for not being one of them? Does he try to "pass" as something he isn't (yet)? No. Accepting himself as he is right now, without self criticism, will actually HELP him reach his goal by putting him on the right path to learn what he needs to learn and gain the experience he needs to gain, at the right time in the right way. Anything else would cause him to fail before he has even begun.

And so, through trial and error -- and usually some divine intervention! -- we came to accept ourselves as we were. We began to see that God and most other people held us in much higher esteem than we did ourselves! We discovered that people didn't always reject us; that many were in fact capable of seeing past our struggle to our inner worth.

### **What We Did to Effect Change**

Here, then, are various changes that many of us had to make:

1. We began to love and accept ourselves just as we were, right then, unchanged. "
  - We turned our hearts to God (however we understood God) and sought his help in simply being able to feel our worth to him. Some of us prayed the Serenity

Prayer of the Twelve Step programs: "God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

- We read and learned about others who had been down this path before and discovered that we were not alone; our experience was not unique. We saw that, just as we would never see those men and women as vile and worthless, neither would we be considered vile and worthless in the eyes of others who truly understood our pain.
- We became more aware of the self-criticism "tapes" that played inside our heads and tried to identify their original source, as well as what kinds of feelings and events triggered them. We asked ourselves, "Who first told us we were worthless, before we came to believe it ourselves?" We worked to put the responsibility for the critical message back on whoever gave it to us in the first place. We replaced the critical messages with new "tapes" of our own choosing - messages about our authentic worth and goodness.
- We accepted that having unwanted same-sex attractions -- even if we would never be able to change them -- was not the worst thing that could ever happen to us, and that simply carrying on every day, even with a painful burden we didn't choose and didn't want, was in itself a victory.

2. In order to really release ourselves from the grips of shame, we realized we had to come out of secrecy and isolation and share our true selves with selected others whom we believed had the compassion and discretion to hear our pain and still accept us.

- We discovered that as long as our first priority was hiding our secret lives and feelings, and our second priority was healing, we would never be able to come out of the guilt, self-hate and isolation that had held us bound.
- We took the calculated risk of possible rejection and faced the deep fear of others finding out about us. We started with those who seemed safest -- such as a therapist, a pastor, priest or rabbi -- and over time learned to take greater risks in what we told to whom and how we asked for help and support.

3. We identified the defense mechanisms and distractions we had been using as coping mechanisms to avoid feeling, and we began to work a program of removing them from our lives.

- Those of us who had become subject to addictions had to surrender and overcome them so that we could experience the underlying emotions that we had been "medicating" and covering up with the addictive cycles.
- We read recovery and self-help literature to help us overcome our particular defenses and distractions -- anything from excessive television watching to active drug addiction. If appropriate, we joined Twelve Step groups or other support groups to help reinforce our efforts and build our support network.
- We enlisted our emerging support networks for help, making ourselves accountable to selected others as we sought to overcome our defensive patterns.

4. Digging still deeper, we identified and worked through the counter emotions or inhibitory feelings that had shut us down -- whether shame, depression, anxiety, helplessness, or others.

- Through a combination of individual or group therapy, support groups, self-help literature, or our own personal support networks, we worked to understand the "pay off" for indulging these incapacitating feelings.

5. As we continued doing deep inner work, we ultimately were able to access long buried, authentic core emotions -- especially anger and grief -- at the root of so much of our pain. No longer willing to stifle or deny these authentic feelings, we had to express them fully, honor them, work through them and then, when the time was right, release them.

- This work was best done with a skilled therapist or a group or facilitator trained in deep emotional catharsis and release work. Depending on the depth of the pain and how long we had been carrying it, we typically had to express, work through and release this many times, until it was truly healed.

6. We began to live more authentically in our relationships with others.

- We learned to stop living our lives for others or trying to be what we thought they wanted us to be.
- We learned to speak up for ourselves and to speak our truth -- without malice, certainly, but directly, clearly and without apology.
- We learned to let others be responsible for their own emotional responses and refused to carry the burden of feeling responsible for how others felt or what they thought.

- We learned to be more genuine and authentic with others -- undefended and without detachment. We came to know that we were good enough to be fully seen and heard, just as we were.

7. When the time was right, we forgave unconditionally those we felt had wronged us, and thus freed ourselves of years of bottled-up hurt and resentment.

8. When we were strong enough, we conducted our own inventory of ways we may have hurt others -- or our part in rejecting and judging others and creating empty, meaningless or even destructive relationships.

- If we felt prompted to so, and if we could do it without hurting others, we acknowledged our own wrongs to those we had harmed and made appropriate amends, without expecting anything in return.

9. As we came to know who we were and gained the ability to ask for what we wanted, we were in a place of strength to enter into a relationship with a woman, or develop an existing relationship.

- We now could be with a woman without losing ourselves in her, and without transferring old "mother" projections onto her.
- We became strong enough to be authentic with her, and authentically with her. And that enabled us to welcome her own world of hurts and pain and joy and life experience without threatening us or taking them upon ourselves.

10. As we attained greater inner healing and came to feel more connection to feeling, we became more in touch with our joy. We became more capable of healthy, mature relationships. We became less easily hurt, less moody and less codependent. We became more authentically ourselves.

### What Worked for Us

## Need Fulfillment

### Heart Power

#### What We Did to Effect Change

- *We began discovering our true needs and desires underlying our homosexual thoughts and desires and found ways to meet them in healing and constructive ways. We stopped focusing on resisting or controlling unwanted or self-destructive behaviors and thought patterns, and instead focused on replacing*

*and preempting unwanted desires by fulfilling rather than suppressing core needs.*

- *We began to envision a greater good or higher purpose for our lives, and began to put our energies into running toward the good rather than running from the bad*

We began to experience real change once we stopped trying to control our sexual desires and instead began to *fulfill* the core desires that lay underneath them -- for instance, the need every little boy feels to be affirmed, mentored and loved by fathers and brothers, men and boys. We learned that true change comes from fulfilling true needs, not just from resisting unwanted urges.

We found that, for us, lust for another man often had its roots in envy of traits that we felt lacking in ourselves. We also found that it was often a "sideways expression" of a legitimate need to connect platonically with other men. Since we were unwilling or unable to meet that need in authentic, direct ways, the unmet need would intensify, much as hunger and thirst intensify the longer they are ignored. It would then express itself "sideways," through a false emotion -- lust -- that feels more urgent and intense, making it far more difficult to ignore.

Think of the young child who doesn't get what he wants when he says "please," so he resorts to a tantrum. A man's "inner child" may respond the same way. Imagine a man's inner child quietly begging, "Please, I need buddies! I need healthy non-sexual touch with another guy! I need my father's love! I need time to just play, especially with friends, instead of working so hard! Will you take care of me?" And the adult self responds, "Don't be so childish. I'm a grown man. I can't ask other men for those things. Besides, no one wants to be my friend. So just keep quiet and go away." So what does the man's inner child do? He has a tantrum. He aligns with lust to get his own way. He insists, "I WILL connect with males and with my masculinity one way or another, whether you like it or not." Lust kicks in, and so the man gives in to the inner child's tantrum. The tyrant child gets his way because the adult self refuses to nurture him.

So it was with us. We eventually learned we had to take a completely different approach. Instead of trying to *stop* or *resist* unwanted behaviors and feelings, we had to preempt and replace them with something nurturing and satisfying. We had to start paying attention to the legitimate needs of the inner child.

For us, some of the most common authentic needs underlying homosexual desires were needs:

1. for male affirmation, attention and acceptance
2. for male association; for a male community or "tribe"
3. to feel like "one of the guys"
4. for healthy, platonic touch
5. for physical exertion and connection to the body
6. to play, especially in the company of other men
7. to connect authentically to feeling, and especially for a safe place to feel and express anger and grief
8. to connect authentically with others, especially men; being "real" with them; being fully seen and heard
9. to connect to Spirit
10. to find a higher purpose in life beyond serving only our own self and our own needs.

At first, we often resisted facing our fears and letting down our defenses. Our defensive detachment and other defense mechanisms existed, after all, to protect us from getting hurt. But they were no longer serving us. The walls we had built around us to keep us safe had become a prison rather than a protection. So we began to let down the defensive walls and to experiment with taking the actions of authentic need fulfillment. And soon enough, this began to be an immensely rewarding part of A M.A.N.S. Journey. A life of self-denial -- of failed attempts at willpower and self-control -- began to transform into a life of self actualization.

## **Heart Power**

In their powerful book, *"Willpower is Not Enough: Why We Don't Succeed At Change,"* authors Dean Byrd and Mark Chamberlain write that efforts at using willpower alone to change any unwanted human behavior do not work over the long term. This is because willpower is the power of the mind ("mind over matter"), while it is actually the heart that is the source of emotion and true motivation. The authors write:

*"We need rely on willpower (or mind-power) only to the extent that our hearts are not in what we're doing. Problems of self-control can be conceptualized as battles between the mind and the heart. The heart feels like doing one thing, but the mind thinks better of it" (page 23-24).*

In fact, the authors write, continued reliance on willpower alone can actually worsen the resistance/indulgence/resolution cycle and help keep it alive, thus actually fuelling unwanted desires (page 5-6). Instead, those who succeed at changing unwanted behaviors, addictions or self-destructive cycles of any type are those who learn to access the powerful, motivating power of the heart.

*"One way to bring (mind and heart) into agreement is to find another, higher motivation, something that will engage your heart so thoroughly it will supersede the bad habit or attitude you're trying to control...As counselors, we have seen many people change from fighting the problems in their life to earnestly, even passionately pursuing positive alternatives" (page 27).*

The authors quote Nazi concentration camp survivor Victor Frankl, who wrote in his moving book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, that those who survived the camps frequently relied on a vision of a greater meaning in life or higher purpose for their suffering. They quote from Frankl, who in the midst of unimaginable horrors, had a vision of his future:

*"Suddenly I saw myself standing on the platform of a well-lit, warm and pleasant lecture room. In front of me sat an attentive audience on comfortable upholstered seats. I was giving a lecture on the psychology of the concentration camp! All that oppressed me at that moment became objective, seen and described from the remote view of science. By this method I succeeded somehow in rising above the situation."*

Byrd and Chamberlain continue:

*"Incredibly, this kind of clarity of purpose provided Frankl and other prisoners with the fuel to live on" (page 35-36).*

*"The simplest of positive purposes can swell to displace what is destructive in our lives.... We are more fully ourselves when we are in the midst of doing good rather than evil. In essence, the process of gaining more self-control and increasing in righteousness is not one of changing from who we are. Rather, we are changing to who we are (page 34).*

*"We can find the power to change when we find a purpose outside ourselves...(and) displace bad in our lives with good (page 29). To find something to which we can devote ourselves wholeheartedly is to discover meaning that transcends our own existence - something outside ourselves (page 30). We each have numerous desires in our life. The key is not so much to squelch the bad ones as to nourish the good (page 36).*

*"It is possible to stay motivated, to keep our hearts engaged in our attempts to change. But to do so, we must have an alternative that is meaningful to us - and meaningful not only in an intellectual sense but in a deeply emotional one as well. Let your vision of that positive alternative be clearer than the temptation of your old life; then you will be well on the path to change. You can do anything when your heart is in it! (page 37)"*

## **What We Did to Effect Change**

Here, then, are various changes that many of us made:

1. We began discovering our true needs underlying our homosexual thoughts and desires.

- When we had homosexual thoughts or felt homosexual desires, we retraced our thoughts and emotions back to discover what had triggered them. Often, we found, they were feelings like feeling weak with other men (the revealed needs were to feel strong and to feel equal to other men) or feeling abandoned or threatened (the revealed need was to feel loved and accepted by men). These feelings often went back to a time early in life when we did not feel sufficient love, acceptance or affirmation from father, father figures, or other males in our lives.
- We began paying attention to our individual patterns of lust or other homosexual longing. Were there particular days of the week, times of the day, or situations that we were predictably triggered?
- We searched for the good desire at the core of even our most unwanted desires. Sometimes this is called the "gold inside the shadow." We found the core desire was often the desire to love and be loved, to feel accepted unconditionally, and to be protected and safe. The problem, we found, often was not the core desires themselves, but the inauthentic, "sideways" expression of them -- or the shadow approaches to meeting the core needs.
- We diluted some of the power of the unwanted sexual desires by bringing them out of secrecy and shame. We discussed the core needs we were discovering with willing mentors or others in our support network, who could sometimes see patterns or situations that were too close for us to see ourselves.

2. Based on our increased self-awareness of our true, core needs, we conducted a personal "needs inventory" and identified specific, fulfilling alternative ways we could consistently and proactively meet those authentic needs in constructive, healing ways.

- Our methods varied from man to man, but they often included developing our friendships and mentoring relationships, meaningful emotional connection with men, joining small-group or one-to-one activities with other men, developing our skills in a sport, exerting ourselves physically, especially in the company of supportive male friends, etc. ***We found that the actions we were now taking to develop our connection to masculinity and to other men were often the same actions that met our core needs.***
- We also found that praying for strength to resist unwanted desires, or praying for them to just be removed, was usually not particularly effective. We found it was

far more effective to pray for enlightenment to understand our true needs, and the courage and ability to break down our old barriers to meeting those needs.

3. We stopped putting our energies toward resisting unwanted or self-destructive behaviors and thought patterns, and instead began to put our energies toward replacing and preempting unwanted desires by meeting rather than suppressing core needs.

- No longer demonizing our unwanted desires, we came to recognize and respect our legitimate needs for physical and emotional bonding with other men and began to work proactively to fulfill these underlying needs rather than resist them.
- We developed a deliberate, proactive program to ensure this hunger for male connection was "fed" regularly with healthy "food," instead of suppressing it until we were so starved for male affection and affirmation that we would do anything to feed it.
- We had to schedule these healing activities into our day-to-day and week-to-week lives. Most of us found we could not wait for homosexual urges to arise and then count on our ability to meet the underlying need in a non-sexual way at that late moment; by then the "sideways expression" of our core need often was already overwhelming. A program of deliberate preemption was far more effective than resistance.

4. If we suffered from "touch deprivation," we learned to meet our need for platonic physical connection with men through physical activities, therapeutic massage, or by asking for and receiving non-sexual hugging, holding or other appropriate touch from heterosexual male friends, mentors and family members

5. We began to envision a greater good or higher purpose for our lives. We began to put our energies into running toward the good rather than running from the bad.

- We pondered the questions, "*When we are no longer putting our energies into overcoming homosexual desires, what will we do with our energies instead? What were we working toward that was more powerful and more motivating than what we were working against? What do we want even more than we want to be freed from homosexual feelings? What goal or what good are we pursuing beyond that?*" (See Willpower is Not Enough)

- We shifted our entire focus away from what we didn't want to be and toward becoming the men we did want to be, with the future in which we could do have the most powerful force for good in the world.

6. We developed and even rehearsed a specific "crisis intervention plan" for times when sexual desire or other longing would seem overwhelming.

- We identified men in our support network we could call for support at times of crisis (or better yet, at times when we anticipated a possible pending crisis) and even practiced calling them when we were not in crisis.
- We identified specific activities we could do, "safe" people we could spend time with and talk to, or other steps we could take that would feed our souls in healing, constructive ways at times when we experienced particularly intense need.

7. For a time (as long as it took), we made fulfillment of authentic core needs, and healing from unwanted sexual attractions generally, the absolute top priority in our lives.

- We stopped trying to squeeze healing and fulfillment into an already busy, over-obligated life, doing the minimum to effect change. We stopped placing any other priorities -- keeping our secrets, maintaining our defenses, remaining unwilling to take new risks, protecting old beliefs that no longer served us -- above healing and recovery.

8. As we established a pattern of consistently meeting our authentic, core needs and desires in healing, constructive ways, we began to find space in our hearts to care more for the needs and desires of others -- including current or prospective female partners. And that, we discovered, was an imperative component of the ability to love a woman romantically.

### What Worked for Us

#### **Surrender**

- *We became willing to yield our will and our lives to the care of God (or Spirit, or a Higher Power), and to submit to and trust in the Divine Will.*
- *We surrendered all forms of homosexual behavior and all associations with a homosexual life, taking the actions of withdrawal, surrender and escape.*
- *We uncovered and surrendered any defenses, obstacles or resistance to change that we had been holding onto, whether consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally.*

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Surrender is an integral part of every aspect of A M.A.N.S. Journey out of homosexuality. We found, for instance, that:

- In order to develop our masculine identity and our connection with the world of men, we had to surrender our fear of heterosexual men and our prejudices and defenses against them.
- In order to develop authenticity in our own emotional lives and in our relationships with others, we had to surrender shame, secrecy, isolation, passivity and a victim identity.
- In order to fulfill our true needs, we had to surrender our inability or refusal to meet our core needs for affirmation, attention, connection and affection in constructive, healing ways.

But surrender is more than a component of developing masculinity, developing emotional authenticity, and fulfilling true needs. Surrender is necessary, even vital, in and of itself for any man who seeks to be free from persistent homosexual attractions, for this reason: A man with homosexual attractions will usually maintain them unless he consciously surrenders them. The psyche can incorporate homosexuality into an otherwise emotionally healthy life. Without surrender, it is possible for a man to be emotionally mature, living the principles of masculinity, authenticity, and need fulfillment, and remain homosexual. With surrender, his heart begins to change.

What do we mean by surrender? Surrender may be understood first by what it is not. It is not resistance nor suppression. It is not willpower, nor self-control. It is not fighting, nor swearing that we will never do it again (whatever "it" is). It is not giving in, nor even giving up (unless one is giving up white-knuckled resistance, willpower and fighting).

Rather, surrender is letting go. It is choosing to release specific obstacles - whatever is holding you back and hurting you. It is a deliberate mental, emotional, and spiritual attitude of giving away these obstacles to God (or Spirit, or a Higher Power) in a spirit of humble trust in the wisdom, strength and goodness of the Divine Power.

When we talk of surrender, we mean, first and foremost, the yielding of our own self-will to a Higher Power or Higher Good. It is the essential experience of submitting to and trusting in the Divine Will -- living for something better or nobler than one's own selfish pleasure. A critical component of this type of surrender is the surrender of control (or the illusion of control, more accurately) while giving over the power to direct one's life into the hands of the Divine. To surrender is to replace resistance with acceptance, suppression with submission.

Surrender is the cornerstone principle of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, Sexaholics Anonymous, and other Anonymous programs. Of course, homosexuality is not addiction, and addiction is not homosexuality (although a great many people who start down the path of homosexual behavior do become addicted to the sexual "rush" of meeting needs in homosexual ways). But millions of people across the world have found that these principles of surrender, yielding and submission to the Divine Will apply to every type of struggle imaginable.

The Twelve Steps state:

- We admitted that we were powerless—that our lives had become unmanageable. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity (Steps One and Two).
- We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him (Step Three).
- We became entirely ready to have God remove all our defects of character. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings (Steps Six and Seven).
- We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out (Step Eleven).

True surrender requires us to release anything from our lives that prevents change from happening -- any place, person, relationship, group, practice, habit, defense, idea, belief, way of being, anything. To surrender is to let go of ideas, prejudices, defenses, old resentments, and behaviors that block change.

This attitude of release is illustrated with a native folk tale of how monkeys can be caught in the wild with a very simple trap. Fruit is placed in a trap with a hole just large enough for the monkey to insert his open palm. But once the monkey grasps the fruit, his fist is too large to remove without letting go of his prize. All that is needed to free himself is to release the fruit, and his hand will slip easily out of the trap. But determined and angry, he fights against the trap, trying harder and harder to have the fruit and his freedom too. In his stubbornness, he loses both (See Sexaholics Anonymous, page 85).

The book Alcoholics Anonymous explains:

*"Our whole trouble had been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us" (page 40).*

In the book *Breaking the Cycle of Compulsive Behavior*, authors Martha Nibley Beck and John C. Beck write: *"The very common phenomenon of berating an addict for not having enough willpower is...both incorrect and very destructive, for willpower is a coercive agent. As such, it intensifies the conflict" within the individual rather than freeing him from it " (p. 188).*

Authors Dean Byrd and Mark Chamberlain add in their book, *Willpower is Not Enough*: *"The first and most obvious problem with depending exclusively on willpower to resist temptation is that, all too often, it simply fails us. The second...is that it may actually serve to worsen the cycle of temptation, where we constantly vacillate between self-denial and self-indulgence...Ironically, our constantly renewed resolution can actually fuel the forbidden desire" (p. 5-6)*

The solution, then, is not willpower but surrender:

*"When we surrendered out of our own enlightened self-interest, it became the magic key that opened the prison door and set us free" (Sexaholics Anonymous, page 83).*

### **Surrendering Homosexual Behavior**

*"Everything begins with (sexual) sobriety. Without sobriety, there is no program of recovery" (Sexaholics Anonymous, p. 77).*

Critics and skeptics argue that, sure, anyone can stop engaging in outward homosexual behavior, but that hardly constitutes inward change when the man still has homosexual feelings and is simply suppressing them. Abstinence alone is not change, they say.

We disagree.

- First, in our experience, changing engrained behavior patterns was actually one of the most difficult challenges of the transition; it is not as easy nor as insignificant as some of the skeptics make it sound.
- Second, it is very often the outward homosexual behavior that is causing the great majority of a man's distress. He may have little trouble accepting and living with unwanted homosexual feelings in himself as long as they don't drive him to do things he later regrets.
- Third, and perhaps most important, when distressing outward behaviors are surrendered (as opposed to suppressed), inward changes follow. Behavior change drives attitude change. It effects identity change. It effects a man's feelings about himself, lifts guilt, and helps strengthen his connection to Spirit. And most critically, when a man consistently surrenders homosexual lust, our

experience is that over time, homosexual feelings lessen in both frequency and intensity.

In the book *Desires in Conflict*, Joe Dallas writes:

*"Some people argue that behavior change isn't really change at all. But they're wrong. When a person's behavior changes, his life changes. If a man has been a drunkard for 20 years, then joins Alcoholics Anonymous and stays sober, he has definitely changed. His sobriety will have an impact on all parts of his life, improving his attitude, relationships, and job performance. Will an occasional desire for a drink nullify his claim to have changed? Hardly. So it is with (you). If you've been homosexually active and reach a point of consistent sexual sobriety, you'll have changed. Conscience, confidence and self control will all have been affected by your abstinence. There's no area of your life that will not feel the impact of it" (p.46).*

Some of us found that discontinuing our homosexual relationships and behaviors was an important first step in our change, in order to begin to "dry out" from our sex "drug," discovering underlying needs that we had been meeting artificially through homosexual behavior, and become more sensitized to feeling God's love and guidance.

Others of us found we were not ready to break from those gay lovers, friends, places and habits until we had grown through at least some of the process of developing masculinity, developing authenticity, and finding alternative, meaningful ways to fulfill our underlying needs.

But whichever approach we took -- beginning to withdraw from homosexual relationships and behavior at the outset, or doing so later in the process -- one way or another the time came when we were ready to put our homosexual lives behind us. Many of us found it scary. Some of us experienced some real sadness about letting go of some of the relationships and activities we had, frankly, enjoyed. We had doubts about our ability to sustain change and even second thoughts about supposed "opportunities" we would miss....dreams of fantasy relationships that might someday finally feel right and bring us real joy at last (though they seldom if ever had before)....and concerns about our ability to cope with life without pornography, homosexual sex or other lust.

But universally, this we knew: A homosexual identity and life were not working for us, and we would never really change as long as we continued to identify as homosexual or engage in homosexual behaviors.

But we didn't give. We surrendered.

We found that we need to make two things happen at once. Instead of suppressing

and abstaining, we needed to submit and fulfill. When we felt homosexual lust kick in, we had to immediately surrender it up to our Higher Power, and at the same time we needed to discover the underlying, non-sexual core need and work to fulfill it in a non-sexual way, instead of through homosexual lust.

One man who has overcome homosexuality describes his own experience with surrender (as opposed to suppression) and need fulfillment:

*"When I was in the throes of withdrawal from my lust cycles, I had to learn a whole new way of responding to lust. Instead of gritting my teeth and clenching my fists, trying to force the feeling away, as I had always done before, I would close my eyes and imagine a channel of light going up from my body to the heavens. I would open my palms toward heaven and say something like, 'God, I release this feeling over to you. If I try to resist and fight it, I will lose, because it is stronger than I am. So I give it to you, and trust you to handle it for me instead.' In submitting my desires to God's greater power, the urgency and control they held over me lessened enough that I could make a phone call to a mentor or friend, and ask for support. I would immediately then make plans to meet my authentic needs for companionship and connection in a non-sexual, fulfilling way."*

Joe Dallas writes that, as long as a person continues to engage in homosexual acts, the needs they fulfill will remain repressed. The needs can't be identified as long as homosexual behavior covers them up and keeps them unconscious. And as long as they remain unidentified, they can't be recognized and fulfilled in more legitimate ways.

*"When homosexual behavior is removed, the needs behind it become more acute than ever. That's why many people have such a difficult time abstaining from it. It's not just sexual temptation that draws them back, but the desire to satisfy these needs in the old, tried-and-true way...."*

*"Suppose a man's homosexual behavior satisfied his need for a nurturing male to take care of him. He turns away from this behavior, only to find that he needs such a nurturer more than ever. But the only way he's gotten that nurturing in the past is through homosexuality. He hasn't yet learned nonsexual ways of getting what he needs, so he goes through a season of waiting while the need continues to throb away....But that's exactly how legitimate needs are eventually satisfied! First they make themselves known. Only then can a person plan legitimate, nonsexual ways to satisfy them" (Desires in Conflict, p. 119-121).*

Complicating this scenario even further is the fact that the man in transition out of homosexuality is often working a program of authenticity and overcoming his defense mechanisms (such as work-aholism or other forms of escapism) and "false emotions" or inhibitory feelings (like shame, depression or anxiety). He may be digging into his past to understand the source of some of these feelings and coping mechanisms in order to understand their origins and how they have served him. This kind of self-

exploration is sure to expose emotional pain -- pain that, in the past, he has covered up with homosexual behavior whenever it became too uncomfortable.

So it should not be surprising that some of us actually experienced an increase in homosexual feelings and lust when we stirred up our feelings and exposed long-suppressed pain. This could be distressing, and make us question whether our efforts were productive or counter-productive. But we came to see that it was a necessary part of the journey if we were to dig out our homosexual problems from the root, instead of dealing only with the surface behavior.

### **What We Did to Effect Change:**

Here, then, are some of the changes that many of us made:

1. We identified and then surrendered false beliefs that kept us stuck.

- We surrendered disbelief in the possibility of change.
- We surrendered disbelief in the power of God or a Higher Power to lead us to change.
- We surrendered our insistence on changing all by ourselves, through willpower alone, without God's intervention.
- On the other hand, we also surrendered our expectation that God do all the work of changing us, without our having to change anything about ourselves or to do anything different with our lives.
- We surrendered our belief in or acceptance of false, gay ideologies that said we were born gay and destined to engage in homosexual relationships. And we surrendered the gay fantasy of finding the perfect male partner who would save and heal us.

2. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God - to submit our own desires to his. We prayed at least daily for knowledge of his will for us and the desire and ability to carry it out.

- We opened our hearts to a willingness to do whatever it might take to make our lives right with God, and to do whatever he might guide us to do.
- When we struggled with pitting self-will against God's will, we learned to take a step back and only become willing to be willing one day. This helped us draw

closer to surrendering one day instead of fighting against it when we were not yet ready.

3. We made a decision to surrender all forms of homosexual behavior and all associations with a homosexual life. We took the actions of withdrawal, surrender and escape.

- We broke off ties to our homosexual pasts and told members of our support network of our intentions.
- We discontinued homosexual relationships and habits, threw away destructive books, magazines, videos and other materials, and took ourselves out of environments that could tempt us to return to them.
- Some of us mapped out our lust cycles on paper to help us recognize events, feelings and stresses in our lives that often triggered lust and longing for male comfort. We developed an "emergency escape plan" for times when we would be tempted to act on homosexual feelings. We shared this plan with mentors or others of our support network, and agreed to very practical steps we would take to interrupt the cycle of lust as soon as it started.
- We became willing to stop inputting new images of homosexual lust, fantasies and experience into our brains and memory banks.

4. When we felt homosexual urges or desires, we surrendered them up to God by saying a prayer of surrender or submission, giving away the thought or desire instead of fighting it, and asking God to take it away. We then sought to identify the core emotional need underneath the homosexual desire, and took immediate and deliberate steps to meet the need in non-sexual, emotionally fulfilling ways.

- We focused, too, on altering our thought life. We surrendered erotic fantasies and practiced redirecting erotic thoughts to other subjects rather than dwelling on them or fighting against them.

5. We explored any defenses or resistance to change that we might be holding onto, whether consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, and worked a program of surrender for each obstacle or barrier we could identify.

- Common barriers included unwillingness to trust, unwillingness to risk, unwillingness to forgive, resistance to giving up a victim identity, resistance to opening old wounds, or many others.

6. After we had fully experienced and worked through past hurts, we became willing to

forgive unconditionally those we felt had wronged us. We thereby freed ourselves from years of pent-up hurt and resentment.

7. We recognized our own weaknesses and took responsibility for our own part in creating problems in our lives. We became willing to have God remove all our personal defects and humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

8. We acknowledged our own wrongs to those we had harmed and made appropriate amends, without expecting anything in return.

9. We surrendered to being *in process*.

- We accepted that, as imperfect human beings, we were on a lifelong journey of growth and change.
- We made peace with ourselves *as we were, right now*, to whatever degree we were changed or unchanged. We made peace with the presence of unwanted attractions, even while working to diminish them.

10. We came to peace with an imperfect world.

- We accepted that there were some things about ourselves we could not change, some circumstances we could not change -- and absolutely nothing about another person that we could change.
- We accepted that there were some desires and needs that we could not and would not meet, at least not perfectly.

We discovered that we could be at peace with imperfection and happy in situations that were not our ideal.

**Healing Homosexuality (1993)**  
**by Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D.**

Book Excerpt: Chapter Ten  
**How Reparative Therapy Works**

Frequently I am asked the question, "How does reparative therapy work?" Like all forms of treatment rooted in psychoanalysis, reparative therapy proceeds from the assumption that some childhood developmental tasks were not completed. It is understood that when the client was a child, he experienced his parents as failing to assist him through these developmental phases.

One of the best definitions of psychotherapy is "the opportunity to give to ourselves what our parents did not give us." Nevertheless we still need help from others. Reparative therapy requires the active involvement of male therapists, male friends, and male psychotherapy group members.

The basic premise of reparative therapy is that the majority of clients (approximately 90%, in my experience) suffer from a syndrome of male gender-identity deficit. It is this internal sense of incompleteness in one's own maleness which is the essential foundation for homoerotic attraction. The causal rule of reparative therapy is "Gender identity determines sexual orientation." We eroticize what we are not identified with. The focus of treatment therefore is the full development of the client's masculine gender identity.

Reparative therapy works on issues of both the past and the present. Work on the past involves understanding early relationships with parents. The client often realizes that while his mother may have been very loving, she probably failed to accurately reflect his authentic masculine identity. Mother has often fostered in her son a false identity, namely that of the "good little boy," with an unrealistic over-intimacy where mother is confidante, soul-mate, or best friend. The client may also have had an over-identification with grandmother, aunts or older sisters.

Although the mother has more often been over-involved, the father is more often under-involved and emotionally withholding. He has typically failed to recognize the boy both as an autonomous individual and a masculine child. He was emotionally unable to reach out to the son to get the relationship on its proper course. The father was either unaware of what was happening in the relationship, or incapable of doing anything to rectify it. He was most likely what I call "the acquiescent father." Emotional neglect by the father is a particularly painful memory to be dealt with in treatment.

Other work on the past includes understanding hurtful childhood relationships with male peers, and often a hurtful relationship with a domineering older brother. Any early homosexual experiences with peers or older men need examination and interpretation. It is not unusual to uncover a history of victimization through sexual molestation in the client's childhood.

Work on the present includes understanding how the client has given up his sense of intrinsic power. Intrinsic power is one's view of self as separate and independent. Failure to fully claim one's gender identity always results in a loss of intrinsic power. As one client said:

"As a kid, I didn't go out and ask for what I wanted...I expected others to know what I wanted, so I just waited."

"And if you didn't get it?" I asked.

"I've held secrets all my life. I kept my power secret."

"What power?"

"My power of getting what I wanted indirectly...you know, manipulatively."

Central to reparative therapy is the client's understanding of how his masculine deficit becomes projected onto idealized males--"The other man has something I lack--therefore I need to be close to him [sexually]."

Reparative therapy is initiatory in nature. It requires not just a passive musing

over self-insights, but an active initiation of new behaviors. The client must struggle to break down old patterns of avoidance and defensive detachment from males in order to form close, intimate, non-sexual male friendships.

Therapy challenges the client to master gender-related tasks missed in early boyhood. His developmental path requires mastering of these tasks during adulthood.

He is called to "catch up" to what the heterosexual man achieved years before. Thus he may eventually arrive at a heterosexual place, but from a different direction.

Many early feelings toward the father and other significant male figures will be transferred onto the male therapist. Therapy will offer a valuable opportunity to work through these reactions. Feelings for the male therapist may include anticipation of rejection and criticism, a tendency toward dependency--including hostile dependency--and also sexual feelings and anger.

Like all psychotherapies, reparative therapy creates a meaning transformation. This meaning transformation is the result of the client's gains in insight. When he comes to see the true needs that lie behind his unwanted behavior, he gains a new understanding of this behavior. His unwanted romantic attractions are de-mystified. He begins to perceive them as expressions of legitimate love needs--attention, affection and approval from men--which were unmet in childhood. He learns that such needs indeed can be satisfied, but not erotically.

When this is understood, there is a meaning transformation--"I do not really want to have sex with a man. Rather, what I really desire is to heal my masculinity." This healing will occur when the legitimate love needs of male attention, affection and approval are satisfied.

Meaning transformation includes not just intellectual understanding (insight) but also the experience of the self in the doing of new behaviors.

Embodied experience--that is, the experience of the body in the world in a

new way--transforms personal identity. Transformation in personal identity occurs through repeatedly feeling different about oneself in relationship to others. In the case of gender deficit and homosexuality, increased ownership of one's maleness diminishes erotic attraction toward other men. The gradual internalization of the sense of "masculinity as me" distances previously distressing temptations.

### **Gay Affirmative Therapy vs. Reparative Therapy**

In recent years, Gay Affirmative Therapy (GAT) has emerged to help homosexuals accept and affirm their sexual orientations. GAT presumes that dissatisfied homosexuals would be "satisfied" if they could only be free of the internalized prejudices of society. GAT sees reparative therapy as playing on a man's self-deception, guilt and low self-esteem. It makes the arbitrary assumption that "coming out" is the answer to every homosexual client's problems.

Reparative therapy, on the other hand, sees homosexuality as a developmental deficit. According to reparative theory, Gay Affirmative Therapy is expecting the client to identify with his pathology in the name of health.

William Aaron, in his biographical book, *Straight*, says: "To persuade someone that he will make a workable adjustment to society and himself by lowering his sights and settling for something that he inwardly despises (homosexuality) is not the answer."

GAT presumes that homosexuality is a natural and healthy sexual variation. It then proceeds to attribute every personal and inter-personal problem of the gay man to social or internalized homophobia. Its theoretical model frames the life experiences of the client in the context of victimization, inevitably setting him against conventional society.

One cannot help but wonder how GAT would explain the obvious benefits of reparative therapy---increased self-esteem, with a diminishing of distress, anxiety and depression. Better relationships with others and freedom from

distressing distractions are typically reported by men in reparative therapy.

Interestingly, GAT and reparative therapy agree on what the homosexual man needs and desires: To give himself permission to love other men. But GAT works within the gay ideology of eroticization of these relationships, while reparative therapy sees sex between men as sabotaging the mutuality necessary for growth toward maturity. Reparative therapy frees the homosexual man to love other men--not as sex partners, but as equals and as brothers.

### **Group Therapy**

Group therapy poses a special challenge to each man. The group must decide who will speak, for how long, about what, and for what purpose. Each man must decide for himself how he will use the group's assistance. Every member is expected to take responsibility for speaking up and making a place for himself in the flow of verbal expression.

Group therapy challenges the men to give up the old habit of passive listening. This is a removed, self-centered way of hearing that stimulates private associations, rather than an active response to the speaker's expression. The habit of passive listening--a consequence of defensive detachment--perpetuates emotional isolationism.

Active listening, in contrast, means forgetting oneself in order to maintain a felt connection with the speaker. The active listener feels an internal response to what the other says. He can then choose to express his response in the form of questions, comments or advice.

Group therapy offers the men the opportunity to relate to other males--a lesson never completely learned in boyhood. As one new client told me, "As a kid, I didn't know how to be a friend. If I liked a boy, I'd come on too strong, too intense, too possessive. Today, if I meet a potential friend, I still end up doing the same thing; I start with the 'Let's go to dinner, let's go to a movie [laughs], what are you doing for breakfast?'"

Most clients have never spoken openly about their sexuality with other men

who share the struggle. This is a frightening but exciting new adventure. Therefore every client is cautious, even fearful, at his first group meeting. There is a sense of excitement, and perhaps even the fantasy of meeting an attractive man with whom he might develop a particularly close, even sexual relationship.

Although the first group sessions are characterized by an intense curiosity about one another, there is also great anxiety about disclosing personal issues. These men are not proud of their sexual orientation, and there is some sense of shame they must face. There is the thought, "God forbid I should meet someone I know!" But eventually, these concerns recede to the background as friendships begin to form.

Once a part of the group, however, each man discovers that this is a place to feel accepted and understood. The group is a place where men share common problems, hard-won insights, and inspiration.

As one man explained, "For me, the group has been like putting on a pair of glasses when you're nearsighted. Before, I could only see vague images and patterns."

Another client said, "I figured out that I suffered this male deficit before I came here. I came because I knew I needed help in figuring out what to do about it. The reason I never made much progress before was that I was working in a vacuum, all alone and not talking to anybody

The basic model of our weekly group discussions is divided into three levels of communication:

Level One: "Without"

Level Two: "Within"

Level Three: "Between"

Level One, "Without" is typical of the first part of each group session. Both in individual and group therapy, it serves as safe warm-up talk. Typically, it

involves conversation about what has happened during the week, and is a reporting of external events with no consideration of interior motivations.

Level 2, "Within", occurs when two or more people begin to investigate and clarify a member's motivations behind the events he reports. There is a shared attempt to understand how he participated in causing the events to happen.

Level 3, "Between," is the most therapeutic level. It is the most personally challenging and risky, but offers the greatest opportunity for building trust. It occurs when at least two members of the group talk about their relationship with each other, while it is happening. Timing is central to this third level and members must speak in the present. When expressing both their positive and negative feelings for each other at the moment, they describe what they are experiencing.

Considerable time may be required to break through to Level Three of direct dialogue. Group members may be easily hurt at this level and there is much approach-avoidance and fault finding. When a member feels hurt, he often makes veiled references to his doubts about whether the group is really of benefit to him. He may threaten not to return the next week.

For all groups, Level Three is the most rewarding. It affords the opportunity to experience mutuality, with its balance of challenge ("kick in the pants") and support ("pat on the back.")

In the first few sessions of a newly forming group, there is an initial phase of "blemish-finding." There is resistance to identifying with the group, as complaints fly. "They're not my type, they're too old," "too young" or "too promiscuous" or "too inexperienced or "too religious" or "not religious enough." This blemish-finding is a symptom of defensive detachment, perpetuating what Brad Sargent calls "terminal uniqueness"--i.e., the idea that "my specialness makes it impossible for other men to understand me." This fantasy keeps each man emotionally isolated as he is locked into the frustrating pattern of creating two kinds of men from all significant male relationships. He either devaluates, minimizes, dismisses and delegates other men to an inferior position, or he elevates, admires and places them on a

pedestal.

Placement of other men on this scale is determined by "type," the symbolic representation of valued masculine attribute he unconsciously feels he lacks and which the other man supposedly possesses. These qualities usually have little to do with the character of the person. Once a realistic familiarity develops, the person eventually loses his erotic appeal.

In our group process we frequently return to the distinction made between two kinds of males by our clients: ordinary and mysterious. Mysterious men are those who possess enigmatic masculine qualities that both perplex and allure the client. Such men are overvalued and even idealized, for they are the embodiment of qualities the client wishes he had attained.

This emotionally crippling pattern of scaled importance is always reenacted in the group process. Obsession with "type" is the source of much of the anger and disappointment in homosexual relationships and accounts for much of the gay relationship's volatility and instability.

Besides devaluing or overvaluing other men, there is a third possible mode of response: mutuality. This is the one toward which we strive. A relationship characterized by mutuality has the qualities of honesty, disclosure and equality. Even where there is an imbalance of age, status or life experience, deep sharing with one another man serves as an equalizer. Mutuality in relationships is the goal of group psychotherapy, for it is on this level of human interaction that healing occurs. Mutuality creates the opening through which passes masculine identification. It is the passage through which each man enters into healing.

One group member said, "If I came to therapy with the thought that I just had to abstain from sex without any positive new direction toward intimacy with other men, I don't think I would be hopeful for real change. Now I have accepted my need for real intimacy, not the sexual expression of it."

Another group member described his experience with the words: "My group is the masculine energy I need every day. It has been a powerful, intense and

enriching experience. Our group has become the father we all need and missed in our early years. There is a power, a presence among us that keeps us giving, healing, and caring."

All treatment must overcome some form of resistance against growth. We may say very simply that the treatment of homosexuality is the undoing of the resistance of defensive detachment from males. Group therapy is a powerful opportunity to work through this detachment, which is a refusal to identify with masculinity.

At times it seems as if all our group members are negatively charged magnets repelling each other. While there is a sensitivity and genuine concern for each other, there is also a guardedness and criticalness that can paralyze the entire group process.

Defensive detachment was described earlier as the blocking process that prevents male bonding and identification. Originally a protection against childhood hurt from males, in adulthood it is a barrier to honest intimacy and mutuality with men. The homosexual is torn between two competing drives: the natural need to satisfy his affectional needs with men, and his defensive detachment, which perpetuates fear and anger in male relationships.

Manifestations of defensive detachment in group appear as hostility, competitiveness, distrust and anxiety about acceptance. Group members are highly sensitive to issues of betrayal and deception. We see fearfulness, vulnerability and defensiveness, fragility of relationships and slow and tentative trust easily shattered by the slightest misunderstanding.

On the other hand, there is a resistance to developing friendship with familiar, non-mysterious males--those who do not possess these qualities. Ordinary men are devalued, sometimes contemptuously dismissed. One client described his perception of men as follows: "Unless I was attracted to a particular guy, I perceived men as these insensitive, Neanderthal types, these monolithic macho things I couldn't relate to, and had contempt for." As a result of this sort of misperception, most clients have had few or no male relationships characterized by mutuality. By placing other men in one of

these two categories, a client justifies his detachment. He either feels too inferior or too superior to establish the mutuality necessary for friendship.

This resistance to friendships with non-mysterious males is one reason why, after an initial interest and excitement about meeting other group members, a client's feelings often turn to disillusionment. He sees the other members in the group as "just as weak as I am," and becomes contemptuous of them. He may be particularly disgusted by the "weaker" group members, those more effeminate, more emotional, who display personality traits of vulnerability. It is important this resistance be dealt with in individual therapy.

The essential therapeutic experience is the demystification of men from sex object to real person (eros to agape). Sorting out his experience of these two distinct perceptions, one twenty-eight year old client said:

"Immediately after every homosexual experience, it feels like something is missing. The closeness I wanted with another man just didn't happen. I'm left with the feeling that sex is just not what I wanted.

"This is in contrast to my relationship with my straight friend, Bob. I don't feel the need to be sexual with him. To be so close to him, getting everything I want from our friendship, but not even thinking about sex...when I allow myself to really be in those friendships, that's very empowering."

When group members meet socially, there is always the possibility that they will fall into a sexual relationship. On rare occasions, there has been such a "fall." Sexual contact unavoidably damages the friendship and can either destroy it completely, or furnish the opportunity for further growth through deeper honesty. The implications of such a fall are great, both for the individuals involved, and for the group as a whole. Therefore I challenge the men involved to self-reflect and dialogue.

"After the Fall," the men are asked to speak to each other in response to the following questions:

1. When did the possibility of a sexual experience first occur to me?

2. What things did I do to set you up for the situation?
3. What emotional effect did this sexual incident have on both of us? Did I violate your personal boundary?
4. Do I feel any anger toward you?
5. Was I manipulative? Was I selfish? Did I put my needs before yours?
6. What were the authentic emotional needs I wanted gratified by you? Comfort, attention, security, affection, power, sexual release?
7. Did I get what I wanted? If not, what did I get instead? Did we impede our progress?
8. How has sexual behavior now changed the quality of our relationship?

Regarding the future:

1. What authentic emotional needs do I have in relation to you now?
2. What do you want from me now?
3. How can I facilitate your development?
4. What lessons about male friendship do you want to learn from me?
5. What kinds of experiences do you still need from our friendship?
6. Do I need to ask your forgiveness?
7. Now, how are we to be for each other?

If these questions are answered in painful honesty, then these two men will find new, non-erotic ways of helping themselves and each other.

The perennial gay fantasy is that sex is possible within a male friendship. But the group becomes aware of one inescapable fact--that a sexual encounter between two men permanently alters the quality of their relationship. Those

engaged in a sexual encounter may deny that anything destructive happened. Or, they may admit that "something" did happen, but insist that it is of no consequence. Now, we must bring into focus the fact that sex is never a part of healthy male friendships.

Over the months, the group addresses many issues. Many of these are related to self-assertion. Often the men report a tendency to "lose" or compromise themselves for male approval. There is a sense of victimization, and anger at what they had to do to gain the other's acceptance. The men see how quickly they can get caught up in hostile dependencies.

Psychotherapy is a process that allows us to grow toward wholeness. I tell the group that although supposedly the subject matter is homosexuality, the underlying process, in fact, is really the universal one of initiation, growth and change.

The men realize that every one is challenged to move forward into fullest adulthood, and each one--heterosexual and homosexual, client and therapist--has his own personal obstacles to overcome, based on past failures in emotional development. The distinctly human abilities to self-reflect and choose positive change are true miracles of human nature.

I am often asked the question, can a homosexual ever "really" become heterosexual?

Discussing his own healing, Alan Medinger, a prominent leader in the ex-gay movement, described the following concern: "Years after I had left behind virtually all homosexual attractions, and years after a blessed and pleasurable sexual relationship in my marriage, one factor continued to disturb me. If an attractive man and an attractive woman enter a room, it is the man I will look at first."

Indeed, critics of reparative therapy believe fantasy determines a man's sexual orientation. Yet if a straight man has a homosexual fantasy, does that make him homosexual? If someone has a fantasy of stealing something, does that make him a thief?

We might find an answer to this question of healing in Dr. Salmon Akhtar's book, *Broken Structures*, where he describes "The Parable of Two Flower Vases."

Dr. Akhtar describes teaching a course on character pathology to a class of clinical psychology interns. He was asked by one student if a severely disturbed client could ever be so completely healed by psychotherapy that he would be indistinguishable from a person who had always been well-adjusted. He replied:

"I paused for a moment and then prompted by an inner voice spontaneously came up with the following answer. I said to him, "Well, let us suppose that there are two flower vases made of fine china. Both are intricately carved and of comparable value, elegance, and beauty. Then a wind blows and one of them falls from its stand, is broken into pieces. An expert from a distant land is called. Painstakingly, step by step, the expert glues the pieces together. Soon the broken vase is intact again, can hold water without leaking, is unblemished to all who see it. Yet this vase is now different from the other one. The lines along which it had been broken, a subtle reminder of yesterday, shall always remain discernible to an experienced eye. However, it will have a certain wisdom since it knows something that the vase which has never been broken does not. It knows what it is to break and what it is to come together."

In my final meeting with the great researcher Dr. Irving Bieber, a few months before his death at eighty-two, I asked him, "Did the homosexual clients you treated, really change internally, or simply gain control of their behavior?"

Quickly, assuredly, he answered, "Of course! Many of my patients became completely heterosexual."

I continued, "But there often seem to be some remaining homoerotic thoughts and feelings."

With the same instant certainty he said, "Sure there are. There may always be some," and he shrugged.

Wishing not to argue with an old sage, I kept quiet but afterward thought, how could Irving Bieber so confidently describe an obvious contradiction?

Akhtar's vases offer an answer: "The broken vase is intact, can hold water without leaking, is unblemished to all who see it yet the lines along which it had been broken remain a subtle reminder of yesterday."

I can but conclude from Akhtar's parable that straight men, vases formed of soft clay, do not know the trauma of falling from their pedestals nor the wisdom that comes from knowing what it is to break and what it is to come together.

For many men, reparative therapy is that way of "coming together."

Book Excerpt: *Healing Homosexuality* (1993)

by Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D.

(Jason Aronson, Northvale, N.J., publisher.  
For information, contact the publisher at [www.aronson.com](http://www.aronson.com).)

## Root Causes, Homosexual Consequences

They say opposites attract.

That maxim, in the very simplest of terms, explains much about our former homosexual condition and how we were able to uncover the underlying problems creating it.

As long as we felt that men were the opposite from us, while we identified with women as our sisters, we remained attracted to our opposite -- the mysterious, unknown masculine. To us, it often felt like men were the opposite sex, so being sexually attracted to them felt natural. Initially, at least, we didn't feel homosexual so much as we felt genderless and, lacking sufficient maleness within ourselves, attracted to that which we felt would make us feel masculine and whole.

Every man has a masculine drive. In our case, that drive inadvertently became sexualized. But we also found it could become desexualized as we fulfilled that masculine drive in more emotionally grounded ways.

We discovered the path to healing as we came to understand that, at least in our case, our homosexual feelings were not the problem but were actually symptoms of deeper, underlying problems and long-buried pain that usually had little or nothing to do with erotic desire. Rather, they had to do with our self-identity, self-esteem (especially our "gender esteem"), relationships and spiritual life. Once we discovered and healed the underlying pain, the symptoms of homosexuality began to take care of themselves.

### Survey on Root Causes

In 2004, People Can Change surveyed the members of its online support groups to determine what they perceived to have been the most significant causes of their developing homosexual feelings in their own lives. We asked about 25 possible factors -- everything from biology to personal choice. More than 200 men responded.

(Keep in mind that this is not a survey of the beliefs of the general "gay" population -- those who have accepted a gay identity and are happy in that life. Rather, it is a survey of the beliefs of those who are seeking to overcome or minimize homosexual desires. Gays may or may not answer these questions differently.)

**1. Father-son relationship problems:** In the survey, 97% said problems in the father-son relationship while they were growing up contributed to their developing same-sex attractions (SSA) -- and men usually identified it as one of the three most significant factors.

- It seems very rare for a man who struggles with homosexuality to feel that he was sufficiently loved, affirmed and mentored by his father growing up, or that he identified with his father as a male role model. Oftentimes the father-son relationship is marked by either actual or perceived abandonment, extended absence, hostility or disinterest (a form of abandonment).

Like all human experience, this is not universal, and sometimes the father-son relationship doesn't seem to have been a problem. Rather, the relationship with brothers or male peers or

male abusers may have created deep wounding. Whatever the source of the estrangement, it is a common experience for many of us to have felt a deep longing to be held, to be loved by a father figure, to be mentored into the world of men and to have our masculine natures affirmed by other men.

**2. Conflict with male peers:** The same percentage of men who said father-son problems contributed to their SSA -- 97% -- also said problems in their male-peer relationships contributed. And half said it was one of the "top three" factors.

- Somehow, even as boys or young teenagers, we felt like we were never "man enough." We felt like we didn't live up to the masculine ideal. We saw ourselves as too fat or too skinny, too short or too awkward, not athletic enough or tough or strong or good-looking enough -- or whatever other qualities we admired in other males but judged to be lacking in ourselves. It was more than low self-esteem, it was low gender esteem -- a deficiency in our core sense of gender upon which our whole self image is built. Other males just seemed naturally masculine, but masculinity never came naturally to us. We aspired to it but were mystified by how to achieve it. Among other males, we felt different and lonely.

Feeling deficient as males, we pined to be accepted and affirmed by others, especially those whose masculinity we admired most. We began to idolize the qualities in other males that we judged to be lacking in ourselves. Idolizing them widened the gulf we imagined between ourselves and so-called "real men." In idolizing them, we increased our sense of our own masculine deficiency.

At the same time that we idolized certain male traits or maleness generally, many of us came to fear other boys and men. Born with unusually sensitive and gentle personalities, we found it was easy for many of us to feel different from and rejected by our more rough-and-tumble peers growing up. We came to fear their taunts and felt like we could never belong. Many of us feared the sports field and felt like we could never compete. Many of us felt rejected by our fathers and feared that we could never measure up or would never really matter to them.

So where did this leave us, as males ourselves? It left us in a Neverland of gender confusion, not fully masculine but not really feminine either. We had disassociated not just from individual men we feared would hurt us, but from the entire heterosexual male world. Some of us even detached from our very masculinity as something shameful and inferior.

**3. Mother-son relationships (and the "smothering mother" syndrome):** Nine out of 10 survey respondents said aspects of their relationships with their mothers contributed to their SSA.

- Even as we perceived our fathers as abandoning, ignoring or being hostile toward us, it was a common experience for us to over-identify with or become overly dependent on our mothers. Oftentimes, we never fully cut the "apron strings" that attached our identity to hers. Mom often became our confidant and mentor instead of Dad. But Mom could never show us how to act and think like a man. So it was common for us to view maleness from a woman's perspective instead of a man's. We inadvertently adopted a woman's view of the world. The gulf between us and the world of men was widened and reinforced.

Feeling alienated from the male world, we often found comfort in female companionship.

Some of us labeled women and femininity as superior to men and masculinity because we perceived females as more sensitive, accepting and loving. They felt "safer" to be with and to expose our painful emotions to. Instead of ridiculing our sensitive natures, they appreciated them. They didn't expect us to prove we were "man enough," even while we were still just boys. Many of us learned to identify with women and girls as our sisters, our buddies and, inadvertently, even our role models. Our sense of girls as the "same sex" and boys as the "opposite" sex was reinforced.

**4. Sexual abuse:** 48% of respondents said that, as children or youth, they had been sexually abused by an older or more powerful person. Usually it was by a male, and in those cases, 96% considered the abuse to have contributed to their developing SSA feelings.

**5. Other sexual experiences:** 93% said they had had other sexual experiences -- including pornography, sexual fantasy and sex play with other boys -- as children or youth, and of those who did, 93% said they believed these experiences contributed to their SSA feelings.

**6. Personality traits:** 87% said they believed their personality traits were a contributing factor.

- A great many of us were born with or developed an innate sensitivity and emotional intensity that we learned could be both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, our sensitivity caused us to be more loving, gentle, kind and oftentimes spiritually inclined than average.

On the other hand, these were some of the very traits that caused our more rough-and-tumble male peers to taunt us, girls to welcome us into their inner circles, moms to hold onto us more protectively, and dads to distance themselves from us. Perhaps even more problematic, it created within us a thin-skinned susceptibility to feeling hurt and rejected, thus magnifying many times over whatever actual rejection and offense we might have received at the hands of others. Our perception became our reality.

### **Homosexual Consequences**

These and other hurts were oftentimes the problems buried below the surface. Complex, interwoven and painful, they drove us to homosexual relationships in an attempt to find healing. But we found that, for us, acting on these homosexual desires actually worsened rather than lessened the underlying problems. Homosexuality, for us, wasn't the solution; it was an escape from solving the real problems that had caused the symptoms to begin with.

Time alone could never really heal these kinds of deep wounds without our going back to face them, acknowledge them, grieve them, release our legitimate anger over them, take steps to repair the damage they had caused us (to the extent we could), and finally, to forgive and move on.



## Overview of Video

The DVD provided on the following page contains three separate videos.

### 1. Gender Affirmation – Part One – Introduction

This video provides an introduction to the necessity of gender affirmative relationships in the lives of young men. *(Running Time 3:28)*

### 2. Gender Affirmation – Part Two – Same-sex vs. Same-gender Attractions

This video explores the difference between same-sex attraction and same-gender attraction, again stressing the necessity for gender affirmative relationships. It is important to note that even though the video points out the differences between same-sex attraction and same-gender attraction, most literature does not yet recognize such differences. The sections used in this booklet referencing same-sex or same-gender attraction were taken from other sources and often reprinted in the original wording of the author of that particular section and may not reflect such differences. *(Running time 5:00)*

### 3. Advice from Elder Busche

This video is taken from a talk given by Elder F. Enzo Busche of the Quorum of the Seventy and is not directly related to Same-Gender Attraction or Gender Affirmative Mentoring. The advice given applies to everyone. *(Running Time 6:44)*