

Gay Conversion: I Slept With Over 200 Men, Now I'm a Happily Married Heterosexual Dad

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(Posted May 2014)

I guess I became straight by accident. It was never a grand plan; the therapy was an attempt to resolve commitment issues, rather than sexual identity. I never had any desire to change my sexuality. But that's what happened – in fact I changed everything.

Having had hundreds of homosexual partners, I eventually married a woman and had a child. And my whole outlook on life changed. I grew from a loud and arrogant person, trying desperately to mask my deep insecurities in group situations, into a strong, assertive guy who loved sports and war films. At the age of 46, I've never felt better in my own skin.

But before we get into the details of my conversion, let's go back to the beginning.

I knew I was gay at about 10 or 11. My cousin himself had come out and I realised my own attractions were the same. At the age of 10 or 11 boys start getting interested in girls, but I was only interested in boys. I was definitely a number six on the Kinsey Scale – an exclusively homosexual male with no heterosexual desires whatsoever.

Teenage years were hell. I often thought of suicide, occasionally self-harmed and had a growing problem with alcohol and gay porn. I came out to my parents when I was 17, in floods of tears. But mum and dad were amazing; they said they had known I was gay and then affirmed their unconditional love for me. My mates at school also told me they had known for some time and supported me. The 'coming out' process wasn't tortuous or traumatic.

At 18 I moved to London from the north of England and fully embraced my gay identity. I became the first person to live openly as a gay man in the section of the university I attended, and even established an LGBT group for other students, actively preaching against those who suggested that being gay was somehow a choice, or even wrong.

I never felt the need to change. I was born gay, it was all I'd ever known – end of. Even though I'd been raised a Christian and attended an LGBT Christian Movement in London, I reveled in the capital's gay scene and led a very promiscuous lifestyle. In fact, I reckon I had 200 sexual partners.

Eventually I settled down with a long-term boyfriend, an ex-soldier and Falklands vet, and we considered going abroad to marry – or at least have a civil-partnership. But around this time I

made the decision to enter a relationship with Christ, which allowed me to examine my life more deeply.

I realised I had some issues, centring on commitment. I discovered I had a deep-rooted fear of rejection, I was too anxious, and I used people. I had an innate fear of men – not of their homophobia, but the real thing: a chasm between me and the normal heterosexual male (Kinsey's so-called number ones).

I terminated my relationship with my long-term partner to get a clean slate, and, acting on a friend's advice, I went into therapy to address my commitment issues. There was nothing brutal or harrowing about the help I received; the horror stories you hear from some of those gay-straight 'conversion' documentaries don't apply here. It was simply a mixture of cognitive therapy, to challenge my core beliefs and root out one-sided thinking; behavioural therapy, to change problematic actions trained through years of reinforcement; and EMDR, which uses rhythmic eye movements to dampen the power of traumatic memories.

My therapist and I never focused solely on my being sexually attracted to men, but my "being gay" had to be part of the dialogue, otherwise I'd have been leaving a part of my life at the door. Much of my journey was about forgiving those I needed to forgive, and recognising where I had built walls against significant others in my life, especially my parents and siblings.

I eventually came to realise that as a boy I had failed to interact with other men on any significant level. I had perceived myself to be rejected by men even as a small boy and had made an inner vow never to deeply trust them. People had reached out to me and I had spurned them, including my father and two older brothers. No wonder men had become a mystery to me and even an obsession by my teens, when I began erotically craving men and feeding this through porn.

I also realised I had thrown myself wholeheartedly into a world of the feminine, with no masculine counter-balance, yet I despised women for having the natural ability to woo every aspect of a heterosexual man, which I could not do. I discovered that my natural place was not among women.

A lot of core behaviours were challenged - my looks, my body, my walk – and my therapist challenged me to look at where I wasn't like other men, and where I was. The therapist began to work on things like my voice and my gait - he was giving me permission to think in a different way, to do things differently.

[Feeling of acceptance](#)

My fears and anxiety gradually subsided, and I began to feel more accepted around both men and women. I moved from constantly rejecting masculine identity to embracing it; my posture changed, I began to walk straighter and lost my old mincing walk. My voice gained a whole new resonance, such that people would regularly comment on it to me.

I began to see that maybe, just maybe, I was never truly gay and that there was a man as real and as noble as the men I had often admired, worshipped and yearned for hidden deep within me, waiting to be freed and released.

Physical contact with women, even touching a woman's hair, became more enjoyable. I began to enjoy being a man, and enjoy women's company more. This doesn't mean I went out and was attracted to every woman I met; I wasn't an on-heat teenager. But it was a gradual process, eventually leading to dates and relationships.

Today I've been married to a woman for eight years, and we have a five-year-old daughter. I love art and theatre, but I enjoy team sports in a way that frightened me as a child. One of my favourite movies is Saving Private Ryan, because it's about brotherhood and deep male friendships, something I'd never enjoyed before.

Am I now exclusively heterosexual, some people ask? Most of the time, yes. But for most people there are periods where sexuality can be quite fluid. At times this is true for me too. I don't miss the gay lifestyle I left behind –when I visited my ex-boyfriend, five years after therapy, it brought to home to me the drawbacks of that life. His voice had become camp and weak, and he had even contracted HIV.

I know more than ever that my decision to entertain therapy, and at a later stage the therapy which concentrates on repairing malformed sexual orientation, saved my life in the long run. It also saved a lot of taxpayers' money too. I now believe I would have ended up considering, and no doubt requesting, gender reassignment at the expense of the public purse.

But the changes in my life don't make me want to preach or convert anyone. Therapy can be dangerous, and there's no reason why anyone should feel compelled to 'convert'.

But I now believe people aren't born gay, and anyone can develop the sort of hidden identity I've found.

James Parker is from the Journey Into Manhood training programme which is organised by People Can Change, a non-profit educational, support and outreach organisation.

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/gay-conversion-i-slept-over-200-men-now-im-happily-married-heterosexual-dad-1443188>

