

"I finally came face to face with the fears that drove my homosexual behavior..."

By "M"

I am writing this well into adult life and as a father of several children. Before I married, I was certain that after I got married the attraction I had to men would go away. As is so often the case, the attraction not only did not diminish, it grew stronger. There was no one in the therapy world at that time who could explain that the attraction to men was a signal from my brain and body that I needed legitimate nonsexual male companionship and friendship. After four years of marriage, I gave up the fight with my desires and started seeking men out for sexual activity.

While I never crossed the line into the type of homosexual intercourse forbidden by the Torah, suffice it to say that my behavior was a constant source of shame. Even so, I couldn't put a stop to it. Over the years, I saw several therapists, one of whom encouraged me to simply accept who "I was" and even find a lover.

By 2005, I despaired of ever overcoming both the attraction and the behaviors associated with it. Then I found a group called JONAH (Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality) whose activities and guidance have given me back my life.

At first, I was resistant to the types of therapy that JONAH promotes, which are variously called reparative or reorientation or change therapy. But as I read more of the books that are suggested by JONAH, I realized that my homosexual desires were not ends in themselves, but symptoms of a man who had lost his manhood, his masculinity, and, in my case, longed for his father. The more I recognized and acknowledged what the symptoms were telling me, the more the behavior decreased.

The really pivotal powerful moments came at a Journey into Manhood weekend that I attended in early April 2006. The event is sponsored by an organization called People Can Change. What I gained from the weekend can only be described as life transforming.

I finally came face to face with the fears that drove my homosexual behavior and was able to use those fears to transform from a frightened boy into a courageous man.

I began to recognize the incredibly powerful masculinity that lay within me, the gold I possess within that makes me a unique man with a mission.

My manhood was affirmed by other men who were in attendance in a way that finally swept away the sense of low self esteem that had permitted the undesired behaviors in the first place. Lifetime, healthy friendships were formed with men who are also seeking a path of complete manhood.

I was finally able to come to grips with the loss of the father I knew and realize that, despite his absence, he loved me very much and was proud of the young man I had become before his death. I came home from the weekend as a better husband and a better father.

Above all, I learned that to touch another man can be done in a way that is healthy, holy and noble. The Torah speaks openly of such touching, as with David and Jonathan. In fact, their friendship is described in Ethics of the Fathers as a pure love, because it is not tainted with a desire for reward, sexual or otherwise. I learned how that touch can happen. As a result, I came away from the activities with a restored sense of personal sanctity and a belief that G-d was giving me strength through SSA.