

How My Life Has Changed Since Last Summer

Written by Rick

(Posted July 2012)

Introduction: The following testimonial comes from an E-mail sent to one of JONAH's Co-Directors concerning the progress made by a struggler who attended one of the experiential weekends recommended by JONAH and also had appropriate follow-up coaching with one of JONAH's experienced and knowledgeable counselors.

My wife and I were talking last night about all the positive changes she has seen in me since last summer. She even said that if I don't get picked to staff the weekend program I attended and which began my true process of change (Journey Into Manhood - JiM), I should consider going again anyway! I was impressed and happy she saw it that way. Kind of for my own sake, I want to list some of the things that have changed in my life since the JiM weekend.

I was just thinking about you earlier today, feeling grateful that you advised me to follow-up the JiM weekend with counseling. At the time I couldn't see the need; after all, I figured everything out during the weekend, what else was there to do? But therapy with a JONAH counselor was the key to turning the JiM weekend into a long-term success and has been so completely worth it for me. Give that man a raise! The JiM weekend was a mountaintop experience. It's been months since I returned to the flat lands and upon reflection I now see that I not only consolidated those lessons through my counseling but gained additional insights which I believe will become part of me. My life has changed significantly for the better. I believe these changes of action and perception will persist. They include:

- I'm not alone -- I'm not a freakish and hopeless aberration.
- I don't transform into a raving sinner just because I hug another man, even though I really really love the hugs and feel like I'm getting a drink of water after ages of thirst.
- I have gained practical tools that help me work through my life-long emotional traps and triggers.
- Though it hasn't been an easy road, I'm closer to my wife now than I've been in years. I feel a renewal of tenderness and respect for her, instead of the hidden resentment that had come to poison all my other feelings.
- Gay porn is not quite as "rewarding" as it used to be -- it seems more tawdry and artificial now. I'm still addicted but (to my dismay sometimes ... lol), it doesn't work as well as it used to.
- I have male friends again, something I didn't think I was entitled to once I got married.
- For the first time in my life, I have a few friends that I can tell anything to (and have done so), and they still like me.

- Relations with all the members of my immediate family have improved, with some incredible breakthroughs I never thought could happen.
- I walk down the center of hallways rather than hiding along the sides (I hadn't even realized I did that), and I stand taller.
- I feel more kindly toward my own body -- it doesn't seem so alien and substandard. I'm grateful for its health.
- I don't experience panic as often.
- At professional meetings I can talk to people and not isolate myself as much as I used to.
- My Heavenly Father loves me.
- I want to live a long, healthy life -- in the past I looked to the future with despair.
- I wear shorts in the summer and actually go to the gym!
- I quite like myself.
- I'm becoming comfortable and happy about being both worse and better than I thought I was.
- I'm a man, in most ways just like other men. I'm not in a gender gray zone and men are not alien creatures.
- Same-gender attraction is just a part of me; it no longer defines me.

Those are a few things that come to mind now. I'm truly grateful -- this has been the best year of my life. And many of these things would never have happened without the encouragement and examples I got from those who came into my life.

Now, if I wanted to, I could write a far longer list of negative things about myself that haven't changed -- but why would I want to do that?

Rick