

## **Life Story of a Hungarian Overcomer**

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(Posted July 2012)

"I was going through a process of eroticism toward that which I believed I lacked - in this case, a sense of my own manhood . . . In the middle of all this turmoil involving my sexuality, I discovered I was actually a Jew by birth when my mother died in 1984 and previously hidden documents showed how I descended from several generations of rabbis and other Jewish communal leaders."

Due to the lack of available information, initially in the communist society in which I grew up and now in the prevalent political culture which claims that being gay is an alternative lifestyle, it has been difficult to access material explaining how to heal my emotional wounds and receive appropriate help.

My same-sex attraction, arousal, fantasies, and gay identity were only one part of my inability to coherently integrate a positive self-identity. This led to an alienation both from my parents and from my society, but I am getting ahead of my story. My homoerotic drives originated in early childhood when my parents divorced and my father was basically absent from my life. To make matters worse, my mother was a bipolar personality. To compensate, I became self-absorbed, oversensitive, and easily depressed. I attempted to escape these characteristics by molding my character to seek perfectionism while simultaneously combining it with an extreme ambition to succeed.

While in high school and university in my homeland of Hungary, I found myself constantly "falling in love" with handsome young heterosexual men. Only later did I learn that through this fantasy I was actually sexualizing my envy of these men which, in my perception, were men with a secure sense of self-identity; moreover, I was going through a process of eroticism toward that which I believed I lacked -- in this case, a sense of my own manhood.

Even in elementary school, I was mystified by boys but prematurely forced myself to date girls. Since I was not comfortable in my own sense of masculinity, having already taken on an attitude of defensive detachment from men (i.e., protecting myself from emotional wounding by other males), I could not relate in a sexual sense to woman as the opposite sex. (To me, men were the opposite sex).

Nevertheless, I felt a lack of gnawing lack of comfort with these gay feelings. During the communist era in Hungary, when any aspect of freedom was taboo, I fell into a gay lifestyle, believing it to be an appropriate rebellion to the system in which I lived. It was cool to "come

out", go to the illegal gay meeting places, and act out. I reveled in a "bad boy" syndrome by conforming to the mores of a group viewed by society as outcasts.

When I was approximately 25 years old (1979), the power of the totalitarian communist state began to erode. In this relaxed atmosphere, it was easier to discover the openly gay spaces where we could congregate and feel our "badness," such as bars, saunas, and avant-garde theatres. Each of these locations became chic imitations of the western lifestyle and freedoms for which we hungered. Somehow this liberation philosophy did not fit well with my inner being.

As I said before, underlying this rebellion was a constant torment that homosexuality was not appropriate as my chosen lifestyle. Thus in 1981 when I was 27 and met Harvey Jackins, the founder of rational co-counseling (RC), I felt that his teaching of "self-acceptance" would quiet my inner conflicts. He taught people to listen to each other in pairs, and suggested psychological methods allowing us to heal deeper wounds. These methods included learning how express emotions by crying, shouting, whining, pounding pillows, etc. His methods were controversial, and so was he. Critics claimed he was a sect-guru. Liberationists such as the gay activists and feminists criticized his view that homosexuality was the behaviorally acting out of an internalized distress pattern. He believed that such distress patterns reflected unfulfilled emotional needs. In his view, unconditional love and the healing power of touch allow us to fulfill these needs and overcome our internal distress patterns.

While listening to Jackin's teachings, I began to understand my touch deprivation and emotional repressions and how I confused sex, love, and intimacy thereby becoming trapped in a series of addictions and disorders. The deprivation of healthy touch negatively impacted every part of my body, soul, and spirit to such an extent that I became mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually sick.

Because several followers of Harvey Jackins were able to regain a wholeness involving a complete male identity, the RC movement lost favor in the eyes of the pro-gay establishments. Others, like me, used the movement as a means to enhance our self-respect by somehow turning the theory around and instead of healing our wounds became brave enough to come out of the closet, live out our fantasies and declare our gayness. In a strange way, this ultimately became a positive act because living as a gay man convinced me that I did not want to live that lifestyle.

In the middle of all this turmoil involving my sexuality, I discovered I was actually a Jew by birth when my mother died in 1984 and previously hidden documents showed how I descended from several generations of rabbis and other Jewish communal leaders. While this revelation initially further compounded my confused state of being, ultimately, as you will see, it gave me a path on which I could travel to gain an intimacy with G-d as my father and provide me with moral standards by which I could lead my life.

Through my religious teachings I learned that G-d gave us certain commandments which we ought to follow. Somehow I began to trust that if Hashem forbids certain behaviors, it was because He had a plan for the world. I began to seriously question anal sex and other sexual expressions. Anal sex? It not only confuses gender, sexual anatomy, and the complementary nature of male and female, but it also confuses a cavity for expelling excrement found both in man and woman with a cavity found only in woman to receive the sperm which produces life. I spoke about this to several of my anonymous sex partners. They not only thought I was crazy but became angry at me for insisting I would not be "making love" anymore. However, I still abused other parts of my body and soul: I used pot and drugs often, frequently becoming delirious, and looked upon myself as a freak not in conformity with G-d's plan of creation.

Israel, unfortunately, has a large and growing homosexual presence. I sought out places where I could meet others who experienced these same-sex attractions. I rationalized to myself that I should go to gay bars and saunas in Israel as it would allow me to practice the Hebrew language. Whenever I was stressed, I would act out but these relapses occurred with less and less frequency as my religious convictions became stronger and stronger.

During my studies, I found several books by Miriam Adahan who wrote about selfhelp. I saw myself in her book "How To Live With Difficult People Including Yourself" and understood that I was a "condemnaholic" who had to change my internalized self-image and my externalized behavior patterns. Among my additional behavioral problems was alcohol consumption. I told myself that I only drank in order to relax but, in truth, I was addicted to alcohol. And, it provided an effective rationale to avoid responsibility whenever I wanted to go "cruising". Thus, in 1993, I joined Alcoholics Anonymous and subsequently, given my other problems, I joined Sex Addicts Anonymous, Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families and other 12 step programs, one for each of my addictions. Each of them in their own way helped me and I learned how to change dangerous behaviors, one at a time, one day at a time.

I also learned that recovery is a choice, an exercise of free will. My rabbis and AA sponsors counseled me to marry. Given my problems, which were still not healed, I found a wife with a codependent personality. Marriage was not the "cure" that I anticipated. I quarreled with my wife and became stressed at my job and over the responsibilities I had taken on to care for my son and daughter.

During this time period I fell into an old pattern of idolizing a masculine image that I lacked. This time, it was with a young Black man. I initially developed a nonsexualized relationship but as we became better acquainted, I revealed that I was addicted to same-sex fantasies. He suggested that if we simply touch each other we could alleviate my fantasy issues. He was addicted to alcohol, pot, and same-sex sex. I relapsed into a relationship with him but all the

efforts I had made over the years enabled me to become conscious of the destructive path on which I was now headed and I was able to stop the relationship. I also began to confide in my wife about my addictive behavior patterns. Her response has been better than I could ever have anticipated. She now assists me in my quest.

For the past 4 years, I have remained straight and loyal to my wife. I continue to have flashes of same-sex fantasies but now I understand just what they represent: flashbacks to my tormented, fatherless inner child. Additionally, I stopped sexualizing friendships.

About 2 years ago, I heard about the formation of JONAH through on-line readings of the NARTH.com site. I received information from them but at the time, which was at their beginnings, they had no support groups to help me. Thus, when I traveled to London to study at a Jewish college, I began attending meetings of Courage, the Catholic self-help group for ex-gays. While the testimonials and friendship of other strugglers was most helpful, I found their religious messages incompatible with my belief system. Nevertheless, many of their recommended readings such as books by ex-gays Bill Consiglio and Frank Worthen provided me with powerful additional insights as to the real nature of my issues.

Because I am physically isolated from many others engaged in traveling the road to recovery, I recently joined two on-line support groups: JONAH and [www.peoplecanchange.com](http://www.peoplecanchange.com). I participate in both of these and, at last, have places where I feel comfortable sharing deep thoughts and emotions.

I am back in Hungary now, with my beloved wife and children. I am so pleased to have finally come to grips with the many layers of wounds which were embedded deep within me and to learn how my childhood alienation from my father and the experience of my mother's emotional instability contributed to my inner problems. Recognizing these underlying causes enables me to pull out the poisonous plants by their roots and replant wholesome healthier growths.

In spite of such inheritances, I am proud to continue building my self-worth through a personal relationship with G-d. With G-d's help and over 4 decades of living, I expect to soon reach my own promised land of freedom. I am finally able to leave behind the remnants of the addictions which were formed within me by the tragic circumstances of my upbringing.

I am happier now than I have been for most of my life, and, while I have not yet finished my journey, I expect to do so. My hope is that society begins to understand the issues that cause same-sex attractions so that many more of us can heal and become emotionally whole.