

Gary's Story

When I was nine years old, my 2 female cousins came to live with us because their father had to go to Iraq to serve in the first Gulf War. During that time, I grew very close to my older cousin, who was about 13 years old at the time. We were best friends; we did everything together, and grew very close. During that year, there were many children in our small house, and unfortunately, my parents had a hard time monitoring all of us and giving us the attention we needed. One night, when my cousins and I had a sleepover in their room, the sexual abuse began. For about a year, my cousin, who was going through puberty at the time, molested me about once a week. I knew something wasn't right, but I wasn't in the position of power, and a part of me also liked it. I wasn't getting enough attention from my parents, and it felt good to be close to my cousin in this way.

When my uncle returned from Iraq the next year and my female cousins left, I was terribly confused and forced to make sense of all of these sexual feelings, before I had even gone through puberty. I tried to have sex with the little girls that my mother watched in her daycare, and eventually, one of the girls told her parents what I was doing. The shame that was placed on me from my parents was more than I could bear. Rather than rescue me, teach me, and put me in counseling, the "bad boy" was left alone to deal with all of this shame. At that point, I subconsciously rejected my father and detached from him. At 10 years old, I rejected the masculine role model in my life, and my growth as a man stopped. I was stuck. In Alan Meddinger's book "Growth into Manhood" he describes the seven stages of growth that a boy undergoes from childhood, to puberty, to adolescence, to manhood. When I was sexually abused, my growth stopped in between childhood and puberty.

Throughout adolescence I struggled with same-sex attraction and sexual addiction. Any way I could receive love, with girls or boys, I would take it. I soon learned that boys, however, were a lot easier to have sex with than girls. While I had girlfriends throughout high school, I took every opportunity with another struggling or gay boy that I knew to have a sexual relationship with. This pattern continued through high school and into college. Meanwhile, I desperately wanted to change my

unwanted same-sex attraction, but all of the praying to God just didn't work.

After graduating college, I moved down to the Washington DC area and began working. That fall, I got involved with a weekly Bible study with the other young men in my church. Coming to DC, I had a new start. These men didn't judge me, they didn't know my struggles; they treated me like I was just "one of the guys"...something that I never really felt in high school or college. I finally managed to have healthy, same-sex relationships that were not erotic. The more I viewed these guys in a non-sexual way and received their acceptance, the more I healed.

Some time that fall, I remember saying to myself, "I no longer feel sexually attracted to men." That was only the beginning, however; I now was able to continue my growth into manhood, which had stopped at the age of 10 and now began again at 23. Two years later, I met a beautiful woman who accepted me and my past, and we fell in love and were married three years ago. My dream of being married and living a heterosexual life had come true. Last year my wife gave birth to a healthy baby boy, and we just celebrated his first birthday last week. Since coming out of homosexuality, I have gone through support programs, counseling, couples therapy, mentoring, and continue to celebrate my recovery in a weekly support group with other men with similar issues. I am a living testimony that change is possible!

I know that my calling is to help other persons with unwanted same-sex attraction (SSA) to come out, heal, and become the men and women they have always wanted to be. I am currently getting my master's degree in professional counseling, and will begin interning as a therapist, counseling others who struggle with SSA