

## Interview: Jerry Armelli

by Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D.

*Jerry A. Armelli, M.Ed., is director of an ex-gay and AIDS counseling group called Prodigal Ministries which he founded in Cincinnati, Ohio, twelve years ago. He and his wife Mia also operate a dance studio for children. Jerry is a NARTH member and has made numerous radio and television appearances, sharing his conviction that homosexuality can be overcome. He is interviewed here by Dr. Joseph Nicolosi.*



**Joe:** Jerry, thanks very much for offering to tell us your story.

But before we begin with that, tell me what you think about the "Gays Can Change" advertising campaign. There's been so much of an uproar about it.

**Jerry:** The message in those ads had a very personal meaning to me. The ads said that change is possible—change in sexual feelings, and change in sexual identity. Gay advocates said this was a hate campaign. But it was not a message of hate. It was a message of life.

**Joe:** What did the message mean to you?

**Jerry:** In my own life, it gave me a wife and a child. They are the joy of my life, and they brought about a reconciliation with my family, and lots of other great things.

**Joe:** Were you truly homosexual?

**Jerry:** I was homosexual through and through, and then someone said I could change. Was this "hateful" toward me? I was depressed, I was suicidal; I thought, is this all I've got, this gay life? Is this my only option? It was death-inducing. So, the message that *change is possible* is not "hate speech" to me.

**Joe:** So tell us: why do you think you had a homosexual problem? Where did this come from?

**Jerry:** Well, I can go back to one of my earliest memories of my developing gender identity. I was probably seven or eight years old and I remember being in the basement of my home, and on this basement wall was an enormous bulletin board. On it were plaques, ribbons, trophies and team pictures of my three older brothers and my father. All of my older brothers were very athletic, and my father was a football coach and also very involved in wrestling and things like that.

So here I was, looking up at this bulletin board and saying, "I can't do it. I don't know how. I don't want to. I'm not interested. I'm afraid. *I'm not like that.*" So I was judging myself in comparison to them, and I said to myself, "I just *can't.*"

I remember a year or two after that, when I was maybe nine or ten, I was sitting on my bed in my bedroom. I remember sitting Indian style, and I was crying. I remember praying a prayer to God, "God, change me into a girl. It seems as though I have everything it takes to be a girl and nothing to be a boy. Please change me to a girl."

Well, I woke up the next morning and I was still a boy, so I figured God wanted me to be a boy, but still, that didn't make me *feel* like I was a boy.

**Joe:** Did you have what they call the classic triadic relationship--critical, distant father, over-involved, close mother?

**Jerry:** You know in actuality, it's kind of funny...my father was more affectionate than my mother was.

**Joe:** Were you afraid of your father? Were you intimidated by him?

**Jerry:** You know, I almost want to say the problem had more to do with my brothers.

**Joe:** That's an interesting point. Tell me about it.

**Jerry:** My brothers had a very intimidating effect on me. Even though they didn't usually tease me or actually mock me, but I would get looks at me that said I was less than them. It was like, "You're a jerk."

**Joe:** Contemptuous looks?

**Jerry:** Right. "You fool, get your act together!" "You're an ass, come into line!" You know? But mostly, I just became intimidated by it. I was just more social than them. I was friendly and relational. I was a peacemaker. I was sensitive in my feelings and less competitive and aggressive, and sports weren't appealing to me. I didn't understand anything about that world. I got involved in wrestling at one time, but when it came time to be in the competitions, I just backed out--I just got scared.

**Joe:** You couldn't relate to the sports world.

**Jerry:** I couldn't relate to it. It wasn't my personality, but I didn't know that, at that time. It just made me feel like, "So *that's* what boys are supposed to do, and supposed to be. I don't feel anything like that, so there has to be something wrong with me."

**Joe:** Science hasn't found any "gay gene," but psychologists *do* believe that certain boys might be more temperamentally predisposed to develop homosexually--which is to say, gentle, introverted, artistic, more timid--and like you say, relational. Sensitive to other people's feelings.

**Jerry:** Right. I like Dr. Satinover's analogy of the basketball player. There are certain genes that make it more likely that a person will be a basketball player--height, quick reflexes--but no gene will *make* any man a basketball player. There also must be *certain triggering conditions* in the environment. I thought that explained homosexuality very well. Just because I have these qualities of sensitivity, nonaggressiveness, and relational interests, it doesn't mean I'm necessarily *going to be gay*.

**Joe:** Exactly. So if a boy is born with that temperament, into a family where certain dynamics exist--in this case, intimidating, aggressive brothers--he will be vulnerable to homosexuality. Freud said many years ago, and I have never seen an exception to this: If a homosexual has an older brother, it's a feared, hostile relationship with him. He was right on. But tell me also about your relationship with your mother.

**Jerry:** I remember following her around a lot, and her even saying, "Stop following me around!" I just think it was really comfortable for me. You describe that as the "kitchen window boy"--the boy who'd rather be inside with his mother, looking out at the other boys, than trying to fit in with them in their aggressive play. I would look out the window and say, "I wish I could do that...I wish I could be like them...I wish I had a body like them...I wish they would tap me on the butt like that...I wish they would invite me to come out and play." At times, I would try to get involved, and I remember them telling me, "Go sit on the curb, you're too small."

**Joe:** Were you small for your age?

**Jerry:** I was smaller than my brothers were, not because they were older, but because they were huskier. I was more slender and slightly built.

**Joe:** Were you sick as a child?

**Jerry:** No.

**Joe:** We sometimes see homosexual men who had chronic childhood illnesses, like asthma, that made them want to stay close to their mothers and away from other boys. They are often left with a feeling of masculine inferiority.

But it was your relationship with your brothers that had the most devastating effect on your sense of masculinity. You don't have any deep resentment toward your father.

**Jerry:** No, never did, except there is another dynamic, though. I'm not angry with him, but he just wasn't "tuned in" about the psychological stuff that was going on with me. He just couldn't relate to it. He was supportive of me in whatever I did, but basically he only knew about sports. That's how he had related to his first three boys. But when I came along and got involved in my interest of theater--a parent can't go to rehearsals. You go to a performance just once. There's no real opportunity for involvement. So he just goes to the performance and he hugs you and he's proud of you and...that's it. He didn't discourage my acting, but he didn't encourage it either. It was "OK."

**Joe:** So many pre-homosexual boys get into theater and acting.

**Jerry:** Acting's relational. It's safe. It's non-threatening.

**Joe:** We see a lot of interest in acting and role-playing in the gay world. I believe the gay identity, itself, is a role--a place of hiding from the challenge of a gendered world. Acting can provide a role through which to hide.

**Jerry:** That young, I don't know if I was even thinking I was homosexual.

**Joe:** Oh, no. It's not that you were thinking you were homosexual. You were thinking, "I feel different." That's the point here. Gay advocates would say that first you were gay, because you were born that way; and *because* you were gay, you felt different. I would say, first you *felt different*, and that difference made you believe you were gay. Homosexuality is the final outcome of feeling different and estranged from men.

**Jerry:** Right. It absolutely was, with me. I think part of my problem was that instead of meeting the challenges I faced when I was growing up, I tended to *avoid* whatever activity or challenge caused that feeling of inadequacy, of being different, of being "less than other men." I would avoid all of those things, which meant all of the things my brothers did. I'd avoid my *brothers themselves*, and their whole masculine realm. But in the theater realm, I was comfortable.

**Joe:** This is what I see repeatedly, the theme with the clients I work with, which is, "I always felt different. I never felt like one of the guys." There was a sense of differentness.

**Jerry:** Right. It was not because I was born homosexual or gay, it was because of this gender inadequacy and inferiority. The feeling of "not matching up."

**Joe:** All right. So from there, did you go into the gay world at all?

**Jerry:** Unfortunately, at the age of eleven I was molested by an older boy.

**Joe:** How old was he?

**Jerry:** He was four years older than me, already past puberty.

**Joe:** So he was 15.

**Jerry:** Yes. He was of an age where he knew what he was doing.

**Joe:** Many other boys like yourself had the same experience. There is a high correlation between homosexuality and early sexual experience with an older male.

**Jerry:** He was of that group of boys that I *admired* but *hated*. You see, there is another dynamic that comes in here. I hated those boys because of my defensive detachment from them. If you hate them, your feeling of isolation won't hurt as much.

**Joe:** You hate them, but you admire them. That kind of same-sex ambivalence is exactly what you see in so many gay relationships. It is spoken of as love, but there is almost invariably an element of envy and anger.

**Jerry:** I admired this older boy because he had the physique, he had the trophies, he had the position, and he had the male friends that I didn't have. I really wanted to be friends with him the same way the other boys were friends with each another, but we never had that kind of real relationship.

Now, there was also in my contempt and envy a *hatred* and *bitterness* because my childhood effeminacies had stuck with me. For one thing, this is because I had been modeling myself after girls, since I was simply more comfortable with them. Role-playing house--I liked that; it was relational, it was social. I realized that these sissy-like qualities really offended this group of males--and so I actually began to flaunt these qualities to make a mockery of the masculinity of the other boys.

**Joe:** That's interesting, because now the relationship becomes masochistic. To get back at them, you act effeminate. But to act effeminate is to put yourself down.

**Jerry:** It also creates a greater chasm, by putting me out of relationship with them even further.

**Joe:** Again, we see this today in gay pride parades; the marchers flaunt their effeminacy and their outrageousness as a way of showing their anger toward conventional society. But in doing so, they are putting themselves down.

**Jerry:** Putting themselves down, and yes, to make a mockery of masculinity. I think it is really out of anger. They are saying, "I don't want masculinity. Your masculinity sucks. It stinks. It's foolish." That's what was going on with me.

**Joe:** But at the same time, you were envying it and wishing you could have it.

**Jerry:** Right. I wanted that physique, and to have those close male relationships, and to do those things boys did together.

**Joe:** And so you see the ambivalence there is toward masculinity in the gay world. On the one hand you see that kind of aggressive, caricatured, "campy" behavior--yet at the same time, the single most highly valued trait in the gay world is still masculinity. As much as gay advocates say, "We've evolved *beyond* gender distinctions; we don't care about gender," whenever you read the personal ads in gay papers, you see "Wanted: Straight-acting guy."

**Jerry:** Yes, I think that is the root, there. When I see that I think, wow--if I was still pursuing that lifestyle, I could really see myself doing some of those wild things, too. That was where I was, back then.

**Joe:** So what happened next?

**Jerry:** That relationship with the 15-year-old lasted for almost seven years.

**Joe:** The one you started when you were only eleven?

**Jerry:** Right. It wasn't violent, it was seductive. It just went on. I just got hooked on the behavior. It was every week--maybe sometimes once a month, but it was frequent and regular. I wanted it; we both wanted it, whatever. I finally weaned myself off that at about the age of 17.

**Joe:** How could this happen without your parents finding out about it?

**Jerry:** We'd meet anywhere where there wasn't anybody around.

**Joe:** I see. I understand.

**Jerry:** So then, at age 23, I was in a show. A guy in the show appeared and was giving me a lot of attention, and I was really becoming sexually attracted to him. Up to that point, I had been like two different people, but finally, I was really more consciously admitting to myself that yes, that part of me really existed.

**Joe:** There had been that split-off part. "I go and do it, and it feels good, but when I walk away from it, I'm a different person."

**Jerry:** Right. Absolutely. Before, I didn't think about it, and certainly didn't talk about it. This 15-year-old kid and I, we'd been the only two people that ever knew about what was going on.

**Joe:** Yes. And I'll bet he is happily married now, with ten kids.

**Jerry:** Happily married--he is, yes, and with kids. So this time, a friend of his came up to me and said, "Joe's gay and he likes you. Are you gay?" And I remember a long pause and I remember saying, "I don't know." That was the first time I had ever let that idea come out of my unconscious--all this suppression of this sexual behavior with this other guy, and these feelings I had been carrying around with me for a long time. Finally, I was letting that conflict out.

So immediately, after that I said two things to myself. I said, first of all, "I'd better find out what's going on within me, before I do something that I'm going to regret for the rest of my life." Then the second thing I said, was...here's where it gets a little spiritual. I said, "God, if you say it's OK to go gay, I'll go gay. If not, I won't."

Those were two things I had to find out for myself, from that point.

So I went back to the Catholic high school which I had graduated four or five years ago, and I went to the counselor there who was one of the deacons, and said, "I think I'm homosexual." He was a great listener, a wonderful friend, and is my friend today, but he did not know how to help me. Then I told my mom, and then I told my dad. It was extremely difficult, but I'm glad I went to my parents.

**Joe:** Yes.

**Jerry:** My mom, all I remember is she had a blank look on her face. That's all I remember. I remember trying to start to tell her about ten times, taking a breath; almost about to say it, and I couldn't say it. I tried again, and finally I told her. That's all I remember. But I was even more afraid to tell my dad, because I thought, "Maybe he might throw he out."

**Joe:** You were 23 at this time?

**Jerry:** Right. So finally, I just asked him for health insurance so I could see a psychologist. I said, "Just trust me. When the time is right, I will tell you what's going on, but for now, just trust me and let me do this." So they gave me the insurance. I went to a Jewish woman psychologist. So my goal here was to find out if I was homosexual, and I did. I found out that I was.

**Joe:** Oh, is that what she said?

**Jerry:** No. She was really non-directive. I was so talky. As I was talking, I was basically coming out to myself. "I had this sexual relation with this guy. I felt this way." It was just admitting to myself, "I'm homosexual." She didn't necessarily name me that way; I don't recall that. But at least I'd admitted it to myself, and so I gave her a call and I said, "I'm done with you now, because I found out what I wanted to know, which is if I'm homosexual or not." She didn't say, "Yes you are," or "No you're not," or "Come back." Although she did say, "I'd like to talk to you first," but I said, "No. It's OK."

**Joe:** You see, that's the problem. I want to put something in right there. We're living in a culture that has created an artificial dichotomy -- "Are you gay or are you not gay?" A sexually confused kid comes in asking that very question: "Am I gay, or am I not gay?" So he sits down and the therapist doesn't have to say a word, because as the kid just talks, his strongest feelings are about guys, which therefore means--inevitably it seems--"I must be gay." But just because these feelings are strong and intense and there is a big preoccupation with them, doesn't mean a gay lifestyle is inevitable for this young kid. You have to teach the client the *meaning of these feelings*. This is a *reparative drive* -- "You're trying to connect with the masculine." Just a *mere description of the phenomenon*, without any attempt at deeper understanding, would tell him he's gay...but going beyond the surface to the meaning of the feeling, of the drive, we can see that he's really trying to *repair a deficit in male identity*. He's trying to connect with the masculine, but he doesn't know how else to do it, other than sexually.

We're living in a culture today that sets up the parameters of the question: "You're either gay, or you're not gay." But those are false parameters. A better way to ask the question would be, "Maybe you think you're gay because you have unmet needs for male attention, affirmation and affection...?" So really, the therapist needs to be educated.

**Jerry:** Right; because I would go and I would talk, and in that whole process, the conclusion seemed to be inevitable: "*I'm homosexual*." So then I came out to one of my friends that was gay, and he took me to my first gay bar, my first gay party.

**Joe:** What was that like for you?

**Jerry:** A little bit scary but..

**Joe:** Exciting?

**Jerry:** Yes. I was in it for somewhere between three to six months. The gay parties, gay communities and gay organizations.

**Joe:** Only a few months?

**Jerry:** That was enough.

**Joe:** You thought, "Whatever I'm going to see, I've seen it by now."

**Jerry:** Right, that's the way I felt. And what I saw was a lot of promiscuity, a lot of backbiting, and a lot of gossip.

**Joe:** A lot of bitchiness.

**Jerry:** A lot. I saw men acting like women, and women acting like men, and even though I was effeminate, it was just way beyond anything I would... It was like, "Something's wrong here." I would ask them questions like--remember, I was on this quest-- "Could it be okay with God? "

**Joe:** That's right...You were still waiting for God's answer.

**Jerry:** Right, and I was also thinking, I've got to find out what's going on with me before I do something I'll regret for the rest of my life. Any questions I had in my mind, I wanted to face them, right then and there.

I was pretty bold, because I wouldn't accept the package being offered to me by the gay community. I felt like when I went in, I was handed this pretty little present in a box that said, "Everything is taken care of for you. You just talk this way. You just do these things. You go to these places. You sleep with these many men."

**Joe:** It's a package deal. It's like you were putting on a new coat.

**Jerry:** Right. "Here it is." And I was like, "No. If this is so right, if you believe this is so true, if this is so valid...then why can't we discuss this honestly and thoroughly?" I would ask questions, such as, "Our bodies, they don't really work together...What do you think about that?" No answer, or they just didn't want to talk about it.

**Joe:** Gay advocates just don't want to talk about it. There are two principles essential to being a gay affirmative therapist. Number one, "You're gay *because you're gay*." Period. No more discussion. No thinking or talking about developmental factors. Number two, "Everything you experience negatively in your life *is the result of homophobia*." What you need to be a gay-affirmative therapist is these two, uncompromising principles.

**Jerry:** I am so glad for whatever was within me to help me see the truth...whether it was my personality, my faith...

I had lived so long in denial. Denial of my wants, denial of my feelings, denial of my same-sex attraction, and denial of the molestation, for years. It was extremely frightening and traumatic for me. It was like there was *another person* who was homosexual, who had been molested for years, and now I was just getting to know that person, and it was ugly...and it was me. I was traumatized by this split--this homosexual self, a victim, a person who had been involved in sexual activity with this guy for six or seven years; and then, there was just *me*, Jerry--you know, who was just this everyday, normal, good, social, kid. Oh my gosh, you know. I was going through a psychological flip-flop.

**Joe:** Let's get back to when you said you were in the gay world and here is this little package delivered to you, but you can't get into any meaningful discussion, because the answers you get are always shallow.

**Jerry:** Right. I would ask the question, "You know, God says in the Bible about a husband and wife and their relationship, but it doesn't talk about a husband and a husband. What do you think about that?" No answer. They didn't want to talk about it. It was glaring.

I still had the morality in me even though I had had this sick, closeted relationship before, so I decided I was not going to sleep with another guy--not until he tells me he loves me, or he'll marry me--and they just couldn't understand it. They said "Stop screaming 'gay' if you're not going to put out." I was told that, in just those words. "Stop screaming 'gay' unless you're going to put out."

**Joe:** It's true. So many thoughts are coming through my mind. Whenever I work with young men--I'm sure you've had the same experience in your ministry. Whenever you see a 17, 18, 19, 20, 21-year-old kid, they all say, "I'm looking for love." When you speak to somebody in his 30's who has been in the gay world for a while, he's finally given up on that. At first, they really do believe they are going to find it. But a monogamous relationship is just not out there--and gay literature supports that statement. Two men may stay together as friends and housemates, but they're not faithful.

**Jerry:** So next I went to Dignity, the Catholic group that affirms men in being gay. At that time, it was what you would call "a gay bar, only without the alcohol." Dignity's message was not about purity, not about celibacy, not about faith, and it was not about relationship with God. Neither was it about Catholicism. It was about, "OK, pick up your picket signs. We're going down to City Hall. What bar are we going to after this meeting? You're new here? Come with me, I'll show you." I felt crude. I felt sick. It was terrible.

Because I was Catholic, I felt *worse* after going there than I did at the gay bar.

**Joe:** So what happened next, when you became disillusioned?

**Jerry:** I didn't actually get involved in a relationship, because I didn't want to do something I was going to regret for the rest of my life. Still, this molestation thing was something I had to understand and deal with.

**Joe:** So what happened?

**Jerry:** I fell into a depression because I thought, "If this is what being homosexual means, if this is all there is, I don't want it! It's not for me. I'll just go back inside of myself. I'll push this all back down. But, oh, my gosh...I can't." And then the thoughts started going to my head. "Just take your life. You're going to be unhappy. If you go back inside yourself, you're going to be unhappy. Just take your life right now."

I told some people about it, including the counselor at my high school, and he saw the depression and he said to me, "Would you want to join a prayer group?" And I said, "Anything. I'll try anything." I didn't know what to do...I was getting conflicting answers. Some straights were telling me it's OK to be gay, some were telling me it's not. As for religious people--likewise, some were saying it's OK, some were saying it's not. And of course, gays were telling me it's OK. I still hadn't found my answer from God. I was so depressed...

So I went to the small Catholic prayer group, and there were a lot of spiritual encounters. I'll tell you about one. I know you are more interested in focusing on the psychological aspects than the spiritual aspects, but I have to tell you--just for the spiritual wonderful of it.

I walked through the narthex of the church and I was going the doors of the main sanctuary. I opened up the door, and I put one foot in, and then I put the other foot in. Right then, there was a little voice that spoke inside of me that said, "*You're home. The war is over, and you're finally home.*" It was almost like claws sticking in my back that had been holding me down for so long, and I hadn't even known they were



there. And they just *lifted* when I put my feet in the sanctuary. I walked over to that small little prayer group, and an enormous weight came off of me, and a lot of things happened.

It was in that group that I met Jesus as a real living, active, involved person, at a time when I was really a mess, and a real sinner. He was the answer. I gradually made him the Lord of my life, and then the turning-around started to begin. The healing was through that small group that didn't really know anything about me. I just decided to follow the principles and the directives of being a Christian, which are so therapeutic.

Receiving forgiveness *heals*. In renewing your mind and going after your goals and dreams, and in building healthy relationships with men, and women, and family. All of those things that the faith said to do, I did, and oh my gosh...so much happened.

**Joe:** It worked.

**Jerry:** It changed my *feeling* and my *identity*.

**Joe:** We need more men and women like you to come out and tell your story. That's the only way we're going to win this battle. Because for thirty years, gays have been telling what I call "the generic coming out story." It's said to be a story of *liberation, with a happy ending*, and this is what makes it so attractive. Out of the desire to be understanding and compassionate, people just accept that story at face value, without looking at it any further. But there's so much more to the story than that statement, "I'm gay and I'm happy." This is why your story and others like it are so important.

**Jerry:** I'm very willing to share it, because I've heard the cry of thousands of men and women who are acquiescing to a life that they *don't want*, but they don't believe they *can possibly have anything else*. There has to be this option presented, just like it was presented to me. Let people choose, and give them support in making that choice!

**Joe:** Absolutely. Now you're married. How long have you been married?

**Jerry:** Been married over four years.

**Joe:** What were the critical steps, or plateaus, or turning points that got you to where you are today? Besides the religious experience, what comes to mind?

**Jerry:** Well, you know it is psychological, but it's also spiritual. I remember it was "Jesus, *you're the first man I'm trusting enough not to hurt me, so I'm going to let you love me.*"

Now, that relationship can be a platform to then say, "You know, if he loves me and accepts me, then I have no reason to be afraid of another man, or feel intimidated by him." So he gave me a platform, and I could begin to take risks and be in relationship with other men. Finally, I could let other men in. Before, I had kept them out because they were hurtful, but I began to say, "They *can't* hurt me because my relationship with Jesus has taken the power away from them. They don't hold the keys to life; I don't need their affirmation; I don't need them to make me feel okay."

I remember weeping on my living room floor, pounding my fists, because I had been accepted into my first professional ballet company. I got into the Cincinnati-New Orleans City Ballet's Nutcracker, and I was the Nutcracker. I thought to myself. "Boy oh boy, now my brothers will think I'm great. Finally I've lived up to them...even surpassed them."

But the problem was, I just didn't get it. I wept. I said, "Jerry, you *want* your brothers' approval but you don't *need* it." It was from that day on that I understood, "Christ gave this approval to me, now I can give

to to myself, and therefore I can move before men feeling as capable and as adequate as they are." I began to discover, "Oh my gosh ... I really *am like them*, and they really *are like me*."

**Joe:** And knowing that, takes away the sexual attraction.

**Jerry:** Yes--experiencing identification with men.

**Joe:** Because if you develop that brotherly feeling, there's no place for eroticism.

**Jerry:** Right, there isn't. It's so satisfying at that level, as equals, as men. Then I don't need sex.

**Joe:** Now let me ask you--a lot of people who come out of the gay life will say, from time to time they still have some fleeting attraction, while some, on the other hand, will say, "I have absolutely none." What would be your answer today regarding any homosexual feelings?

**Jerry:** I know an attractive man when I see one. And like most people, I have the capability within me to take part in a lot of different sexual behaviors. I could have sex with a group of people; I could act in a porno flick; I have the capability of having sex with anybody. But I don't allow myself to, and it's at the point in my life where it's no longer a struggle. I'd have to go through a lot of barricades--psychologically, spiritually and emotionally--to get to the point of acting on any temptation. I am very fulfilled in my life. I don't want homosexuality.

**Joe:** One of the things that ex-gay counselor Richard Cohen said was very good, I thought. We did a TV show together and the host asked him, "Richard, you mean to tell me now that you're married, you have no more homosexual attractions?" And he said, "When I have a homosexual attraction it's a signal to me that I'm not taking care of myself. In other words I'm not maintaining my connection with my wife, or I'm not connecting with my male friends, or I'm stressing myself out at work."

**Jerry:** For myself, I say, "I know what's *really* going on to motivate this feeling." And then I have to look at that. Also, I have to remind myself that I had six to seven years of regular conditioning of my psyche and my body biochemically, to respond sexually to another male.

**Joe:** Totally. It's in the brain, in the pathways--the neurological pathways. You can never erase that, although you can imprint new experiences on top of the old ones.

**Jerry:** Yes, I can...and my family and friends are a fantastic new way of living!

**Joe:** Are you sexually attracted to your wife?

**Jerry:** Absolutely.

**Joe:** It's a satisfying emotional and sexual relationship?

**Jerry:** Emotionally, sexually, absolutely; we both love sex.

**Joe:** That's great.

**Jerry:** Yes. It is. We're blessed. Sometimes we cry after we make love. It is very good.

**Joe:** She knows your whole history.

**Jerry:** She knows it better than anyone.

**Joe:** You have a lot to say; a lot of insight. Jerry, I want to thank you very, very much for sharing these very difficult and personal thoughts. I also want to thank you for giving hope to the other guys who are struggling. People need pictures, and you provide the picture of a man who has "been there, done that," and then walked out. This is especially important for all the young kids who think there is no other option.

**Jerry:** I am glad to share this good news.