

Coming Out to Heal

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(Posted July 2010)

My whole life I've felt different and though I've had friends, I've always felt like an outsider. For as long as I can remember, I've been attracted to the same sex. I'm 33 years old, attended public school and yeshiva, lived a secular lifestyle and a religious one, worked in many fields, and am now married with children. I discovered JONAH a bit over year ago, and more than anything, they've taught me that *change is possible and that I can do it*.

It's been a difficult year with many ups and downs, but I'm starting to see real change in myself. The other night I took one of my biggest steps yet. I knew in order to continue my journey I needed to tell a non-same-sex attracted (SSA) man about my issues in order to feel more connected to the "world of men." (JONAH teaches that we need four distinct categories of male relationships and a trusted straight friend with whom to be entirely authentic with is one of them.) So a few days ago, I carefully chose a close friend, and after over 20 years of living behind a mask, I "came out" to Yehuda.

It went as I thought it would. I knew he would accept me and after speaking for half an hour about where I was, my struggles, the path ahead of me, and why I chose him and what I needed from him, it was almost anti-climactic. That was all the time I thought we had and Yehuda went off to take care of business. He asked me if I could wait a half hour as he wanted to continue our discussion because he had something to share with me.

So I waited...

No, Yehuda didn't "come out" to me for those of you expecting it to go that way. He did share with me though, a history of pornography addiction that has gotten better since his marriage, but is still very much present in his life and causing him much anguish at the situation. He expressed a tremendous interest in the processes I've been working with and what I've learned from my journey. Happens to be he's learning to be a counselor and he was so interested in what I told him that he wants to buy Arthur Goldberg's book "Light in the Closet: Torah, Homosexuality, and the Power to Change" (which explains many of these processes.)

I got a lot of affirmations from Yehuda. He was so impressed by my initiatives and my progress and told me how those close to me have seen a real change in me in the last month or two: that I've been much more positive. It was amazing for me to hear, as I hadn't noticed. (Side Note: The other night, someone was comparing the people in the room to the 7 dwarfs and he compared me to Happy!!! After 20 years as Grumpy, I found hearing this description of me as an "out of this world" experience.

We talked for 4 hours. We walked the streets, grassy fields, industrial areas and HE really opened up to ME. We were able to talk openly and honestly to each other. Yehuda told me about a week ago he's always known there was a lot in him beneath the surface that he's never let out and because of my willingness to be authentic, now for the first time, he felt comfortable being fully open with someone. He wanted me to help him with his own trials which was so affirming to me. As we parted ways for the evening, HE thanked ME. Unbelievable!

I have to add, probably the most amazing part of the experience was when we were talking about something that was bothering Yehuda. We talked it through, and only when we got to the end did I realize that I had just walked him through a process that I myself had been working on in order to try to clarify my own issues! We did all the steps I had been taught, and he walked away "clear"er AND with a specific goal (or "stretch") that he wanted to work on accomplishing during the week!! I couldn't believe what I had just done and how it panned out so perfectly before my eyes. I felt so vindicated in my connection to the process, I was able to internalize that I was able to offer it to someone else subconsciously.

It was an amazing evening with a now even closer friend so I want to express my gratitude to JONAH for helping me get there. If it weren't for speaking to Arthur just a bit over a year ago, and taking the first steps in my journey out of unwanted SSA, I can't imagine how lost I'd still feel.

Thank you JONAH,

Eric Rustman