

Happy 42nd Birthday to Me: Un-Stonewalling My Dad

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To Men Who are Fellow Journeys,

Of course, every man's situation is different, every father and every son is unique. I had a great deal of fear before I told my dad about my unwanted same-sex attraction (SSA). It was definitely a situation where fear and anticipation of the event was far worse than actual doing it.

My dad's response could not have been more loving, he took me in his arms, and as I cried like a small boy, he told me that he loved me, that he always had, and that he would do whatever it would take to help me heal.

Before reading the letter below to my dad, I showed it to my counselor, a Journey Into Manhood (JiM) grad himself, who also completed his own journey of healing. He offered suggestions on modifying the content, and recommended that instead of delivering the letter and letting my dad read it, that I actually read it to him. I did so. It began a beautiful healing experience between my Dad and myself. For what it is worth, I have pasted below the letter that I wrote and read to my dad last year, on the evening of my 42 birthday.

Dear Dad,

You are my father, and I love and honor you. I moved to Maryland to be closer to you.

I know that as a child, I was often difficult to understand. I know that as a child, I was difficult to reach. Why? Because I shut you out! I am sorry for this, and I ask for your forgiveness. You see, for some reason I decided when I was about 4 or 5 that you did not like me. I then defensively decided to respond by not liking you first, and by doing so built up emotional walls to maintain a safe distance. Safe, because my perception that you did not like me hurt me terribly and by stonewalling you, I thought I could prevent myself from being hurt again. I desperately needed your love and approval, but did not know how to ask for it. As a hypersensitive child, I felt different from most boys. I did not understand what this difference meant, and I did not understand how to incorporate this difference into my development as a man.

Dad, I love you and I don't want to cause you pain or heartbreak. Indeed, I really didn't want to tell you anything about this, but two people have influenced me to do so: (1) my counselor, who says it would be very helpful to my healing; and (2) a friend, who said that by not telling you, I

would be denying you an opportunity to father me. I have done that too often in the past. In my search for healing, I have heard some stories of absolutely horrific fathers, and I am blessed to have a loving, Godly man, whom I can admire, love and respect as my father.

I'm sure you know what I am going to tell you, I'm sure you knew 20 years ago when that crazy lady called the house late one night. "I struggle with same sex attraction," sometimes victoriously, sometimes in miserable failure.

Several friends warned me to be prepared for a negative or unsupportive response from you. I told them that I had no doubt as to your response, that my father would love and support me in my search for healing in any way that he could, that my father would love and accept me. I know I can be sure of God's love and, Dad, I know I can be sure of your love.

Dad, I would like you to join me in talking with my counselor sometime. He will be in Pittsburgh the week of March 15th, and I intend to see him. I would like it very much if you could join me. I've ordered a book that I ask you to read as well. Dad, I love you so much, and I am so glad you are my father. I want to be closer to you. I want to spend time with you. Maybe we could work at the stables together on Sunday mornings, followed by breakfast.

Your loving son,
Paul