

My Roller Coaster Ride to Freedom from Unwanted SSA

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My fellow brothers,

Around 10 years ago, I had a different life. Almost a completely different identity. Despite growing up in a religious Jewish background and being taught from an early age the 'wrongs' of immoral behaviors, I was convinced that change from Same Sex Attraction (SSA) was not possible. At that point in my life, I had already been married and was now divorced with a few children.

Taking my information from the media and new-found friends, I re-trained myself to believe that my SSA was here to stay and I should just accept it, so I worked very hard to internalize this belief. I was also constantly acting out in many ways, not knowing why or paying attention to the damage I was causing myself and my family. Inside myself, I wasn't happy and felt lots of pain. However, I was too busy masking it to realize. I used many things to medicate my pain. Looking back now, I can honestly say it was the beginning of my end, G-d forbid.

Lucky for me, I had a persistent mother who loved me dearly and was not willing to accept what I was believing. She kept on doing research after research until she stumbled upon this small organization called JONAH after her friend told her about Elaine Berk & Arthur Goldberg, Co-Directors of JONAH, who were running parent meetings in NYC. My mother tried to convince me to contact JONAH but I was steeped in denial and told her I didn't need JONAH because I was just fine where I was.

Thank G-d my mom persisted and finally I attended a JONAH meeting where I heard three men who were willing to share their experiences about their journey out of unwanted SSA. I was able to identify with these men and their backgrounds. Our stories were somewhat similar in a weird way. Although I still wasn't convinced that this work was for me, something clicked inside me and I agreed to give it a try. Little did I realize then that I was agreeing to get on the most volatile roller coaster of my life; mind you I should also say the most rewarding one as well.

I even went on a Journey Into Manhood weekend and started therapy while keeping one foot in the lifestyle. Of course that didn't work so I decided to give up on the therapy altogether. After a while I started getting more depressed and realized I needed a change, so I started a food diet. That worked for a bit and I realized I needed more change - an internal change. So I stopped using drugs and joined a 12 step program. That's when all my original therapy started to come

full circle. I was finally able to think with a clear mind. I started to realize the emotional wounding I suffered with, restarted therapy, and got back on the wagon.

I did Journey Continues, New Warriors, Mothers Weekend, Nobleman, a few Shabbatons and lots of groups and meetings. Even now, I continue doing the work, attend mens groups and 12-step meetings. I understand how vital this work is for my well-being. Fear was and continues to be a big obstacle in my life. Since I do not wish to live in fear, I try to do whatever is in my power to overcome it.

Once I started to work on myself and started to change, all those around me seemed to be changing as well. My children. My family. My friends. My community members. My business relationships. The truth was that I was the one who was changing and the people around me were responding to my change. Thank G-d, I have since remarried which has brought a whole new set of challenges and many rewards as well.

Why am I sharing this with you? To give you hope. To let you know change is possible. My hope is that you identify with one or more of the things I said. This journey is possible. I'm living proof of it. Is it easy? Heck no. There were many, and I continue to have, days I just want to throw up my hands and give up. My emotional wounding is deep and continues to rear its ugly head. I just know that going back to that other lifestyle is not a choice for me.

Yeah, escaping is fun and filled with fantasy. However, it's unreal, short-lived and usually regretful. Then what? The next fix. Only to repeat the same cycle over and over. Time slips by and we suddenly realize that we are exactly where we started or perhaps even further back in our journey of life. Only a whole lot more disconnected.

The good news is, each morning we awake, we get a new chance to restart our journey. The rest of our life starts now. We do not have to carry over the baggage of yesterday into tomorrow. Change starts now.

For me, support from fellow men on my journey is crucial. I know they get me. They understand the crap that runs through my mind & veins sometimes. Not many others get it. I need them and they need me. They call me on my bluffs and are able to love me when I'm unable to love myself. Out there, there is not much of this mutual feeling of love & support.

I'm deeply grateful to this organization called JONAH. They saved my life and helped bring future generations into this world. It would not have happened any other way. I know I speak on behalf of others as well when I say this:

Change can start now for those willing to make the journey !