

## **My Healing Journey into Manhood**

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"Having an emotionally-distant father and an emotionally-close mother created a male gender identity crisis. I knew I was male yet I didn't fit in with the other guys. Because I was insecure with my masculinity, I made an easy target for ridicule by my peers. I was made fun of for how I ran and how I looked. These negative messages became a source of ingrained shame throughout my life."

My name is Henry. I am 46 years old. For as long as I can remember, I hated myself. When I began reparative therapy to change from homosexuality, I learned the reason why I had this self-hatred. The reason I didn't like myself is because I didn't feel like a man. Today, I feel happy, free, and most-importantly, I feel powerful. And the reason for this is: I stepped into my manhood.

The gay activist community would have you believe that one is born gay and that you will come to like yourself if you accept your homosexuality. To those who say "Once gay, always gay" I say - "No f\*\*\*\*\* way!" I was not born gay and my feelings of not liking myself occurred when I was a child, long before I realized that I was homosexual.

Growing up, I felt lonely, isolated and different from the other boys. I would see the other boys playing from the window of my parent's home and I yearned to be playing outside with them. I was a "kitchen-window boy", a phrase used by Dr. Joseph Nicolosi in his book *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*. I stayed home and watched TV and read books. Because I felt different from, and inferior to, the other boys I defensively detached from the world of boys. The roots of my defensive attachment began when I defensively detached from my father.

Besides hating myself at an early age, I also hated my father. Little did I know that there was a cause and effect relationship between the two. In rejecting the most significant male figure in my life, my father, I also rejected his very essence: his masculinity. The following incident in my life is indicative of the extent to which I hated my father. I sucked my thumb until I was six years old. The day my father touched my thumb was the day I stopped being a thumb sucker. I believed my thumb never tasted the same after my father touched it. I wasn't "trembling before God," I was trembling before my father.

My father was not an ogre. He didn't abuse me, or beat me, or belittle me. Because he believed it was the role of the mother to raise the kids, he abandoned me emotionally by not giving me the time, and love, that I was entitled to - and needed - to develop my internal sense of masculinity.

My mother, on the other hand, was there to fill the emotional void. She gave me unconditional love and was overprotective. She was my solace and comforter in facing a world I was so ill equipped to be a part of. My close relationship with my mother also contributed to my rejection of my father. Early on I got the message from my mother that she was disappointed in my father. At the same time, I got the message that she preferred me more than she preferred her husband.

Not surprisingly, I adopted my mother's personality. Whereas my father was an extrovert and not afraid to express his anger, my mother was an introvert who kept her feelings bottled up inside. I felt my mother was the smarter of the two, because she didn't get angry. I regret that my mother and I became a team against my father. Whenever my parents argued, I sided with my mother based on my perception that she too was hurt by my father. Consequently, I made an internal vow never to hurt my mother and, in order to please her, I became a good little boy who never got angry. In doing so, I became a people-pleaser.

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When I began reparative therapy, I learned why I was the way I was. A person does not sexualize what they are familiar with. Instead, they are attracted to what they perceive is different from themselves. Because I saw men as different from me, I was attracted to them. This male gender identity crisis was the reason why I was homosexual. While I never acted out, I was driven to look at the physical appearance of other men. Because I didn't have a sense of my own masculinity, I was looking to get it from other males. For me, homosexuality is really a masculinity deficit disorder. Today, I am no longer sexually attracted to men and have a growing physical attraction to women. I will not stop the path I'm on toward heterosexuality.

The healing of homosexuality is the development of one's own masculinity AND above and beyond that, ownership of one's inherent masculine power. My experience has been that the work I've done outside the therapist's office has been just as important, if not more important,

than the work I've done in therapy. As Alan Medinger has written in his book *Growth Into Manhood*, masculinity is not developed by reading a book or sitting in an analyst's office; masculinity has to be acquired. It comes from doing the things men do in order to overcome the loss of masculine power associated with defensive detachment.

My healing journey began when I did the New Warrior Training Adventure. I went to place inside me I never knew existed. I accessed my masculine power. It was the greatest moment of my life. In doing the New Warrior weekend, I entered the world of men. I received the male affirmation that had been absent throughout my life. Subsequent to the weekend, I completed the two-month Integration Group meeting process. Two years after I did the New Warrior weekend, I staffed a weekend. It was at that time that I came to own my masculine power. I realized that men coming to the weekend, most of whom are heterosexual, were seeking what I already had: masculine power. For the first time in my life, I have something that heterosexual men want.

As part of my healing process, I saw a masculinity development therapist who became a mentor and a second father to me. We went to a park where he showed me how to hit a baseball. He showed me how to hold a bat and how to stand in the batter's box. I love the power that comes from swinging the bat and driving a baseball into the outfield! This is what I never experienced when I was a boy. Rather, I disconnected from my body. As Nicolosi writes in his book on male homosexuality, because masculinity is connected to use of the body, when you're not using your body you disconnect from it. Playing sports heals that disconnection and increases one's sense of masculinity.

I learned in therapy that to live your life as a man means to honor your emotions. In other words, be authentic. Because I shut down emotionally from the time I was a boy, I had to learn how to honor my feelings. I learned that feelings are felt in the body and that by listening to my body, I can learn what I am feeling. I can now automatically express what I'm feeling in my body. If I'm angry or afraid, I feel it in my stomach. I consider the showing of masculine emotion to be my greatest power.

One of the things I've learned in doing this work is something about fear. I was always driven by fear. My mother embodied safety and comfort. Safety and comfort are the obstacles to overcome if you want to change from homosexuality. Doing this work does bring up fear. Yet, there are two things about fear that I know to be true: there's the fear itself and then there's the bringing your fear with you, overcoming it, and experiencing the exhilaration of overcoming it. So there's nothing wrong with being afraid. Bring your fear with you and there will be people to help you along the way.

With love,  
Henry