

Reflection After Attending a Journey Into Manhood Weekend

Written by "Jack"

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NOTE: *Below is an E-mail received from a journeyer who has been in counseling with a Jonah Institute counselor for the past year or two. He attended Journey Beyond (JB), an advanced weekend designed for men who have completed significant healing work and during that process experienced substantial emotional growth. Journey Beyond is a significantly advanced version of Journey into Manhood (JiM). Both weekends are sponsored by www.peoplecanchange.com.*

Dear Jonah,

I guess I find it hard to really put all my thoughts feelings and emotions into words, but I am going to try. I really have admiration for all of my fellow journeyers who articulated their feelings and emotions in such an eloquent manner.

This week has been a whirlwind; a mixture of clarity and confusion, of success and failure, of gold and shadows. I really feel life is so beautiful and several thoughts resonate deeply from the weekend experience.

1. "The shattered is indestructible." All of us in our own way have spent years of isolation--feeling trapped, lost and broken. We no longer retain those feelings--we no longer have that; in fact we are all so much stronger because we have directly faced the issues with which we deal. The processes we have undertaken, not only on this weekend but also through our individual counseling and group support, have given us such a deep understanding of life, and its meaning, including an ability to truly understand mankind's essential humanity and authenticity; something that the world around us continues to be so confused about. We should absorb that wholeness and realize that just as shattered glass cannot be further shattered but rather provides a resiliency and strength, so too do we contain within ourselves this same strength and resiliency. Our religious literature teaches us that the strength of a righteous man is his ability to turn failure into a source of strength and to bounce back from adversity and challenges.
2. "This is not a problem to be solved rather a mystery to be lived". When I left to go on the weekend I had a plan. This weekend was going to be the final piece in the puzzle to solve my SSA. Then I was going to come home and live happily ever after. As wonderful as that sounds, the weekend enabled me to become far more real about my goals and motivations. The weekend proved to me that as one reaches beyond one's horizon, we are met by another.

Even though right now (at this moment), I feel no SSA at all, I am cognizant and real enough to realize that unless I stay connected, unless I have ALL my needs met authentically, unless I resolve to truly surrender, and unless I feel the wholeness that I do right now, issues that interfere with this healthy state of being will crop up for me. The only truly consistent man is a dead one. The wonderful part of living life as I now know it is: Although I don't know the details of tomorrow, I now have at my fingertips the tools to make sure it is a future I want and cannot wait for. I have empowered myself to make decisions that will enhance my ability to choose the type of life I wish to lead. Things will be hard at some points in the future, but I now have internalized new tools enabling me to re-align the way I deal with these moments. I need not fall back into the old ways I have now fully surrendered.

3. "I am loved and beautiful". You know that Enrique (A JONAH counselor and a JB Mentor) really helped me with the following realization. There is a little 13-yearold boy inside of me who I have simply hated. I resented him and found him to be foul, unlovable and a disgrace for "allowing" the sexual abuse that I encountered to take place. This little 13 year old has been cocooned within me and further wrapped within a cold hard shield of hate. No one was there to love and protect him. As such, behavior patterns took place; they involved a deep searching for this love. Because the 13 year old was unable to find love and acceptance within me, he looked for it elsewhere, that is, in other men. I am now finally beginning to make peace with this beautiful innocent wonderful 13 year old, the little chubby cutie who felt so lonely. Once this relationship between me and my inner child are totally at peace, a huge piece of my work will be complete. We NEED to love ourselves, (including our shadows who were there to protect us), just as we are.
4. "The old comfy shoe". We all have a tendency to enter a comfort zone when life gets tough. We seek to find it in order to placate our wounds. It began with a pacifier when we were babies, then it changed to TV, perhaps pornography, possibly drugs and other sort of illicit behavior. This comfy old shoe involves the places we go to seek escapism from any difficult reality. It's a funny thing, but as I was unpacking here at home, I realized I actually left my "comfy old shoe" at the campsite! Despite losing a really nice pair of shoes, G-d was giving me a message through the loss of these shoes. He was showing me that "yes, you have left behind a part of you; but, please recognize you can still move on with the rest of your life."

Brothers, I thank you for being there for me, for allowing me to see myself truly as I am, a beautiful man (with a masculine hairy chest!!!) who is able to love and live life with new vigor and hope. I can now fully live my mission: I co-create a world where I teach, love and enlighten others by staying connected and being consistent.

Keep well, and connected and blessed to be the wonderful men you all are.

Sincerely,
Jack