

## **Touching the Core of My SSA**

*By: David from Pennsylvania*

(Posted August 2013)

The journey continued for me last weekend with another step forward. I would like to explain what happened, and it's going to take up a bit of space.

The condensed version is that I staffed a JiM (Journey Into Manhood) weekend and experienced a breakthrough in understanding my SSA (same-sex attraction).

Here is what I already knew: I want to take care of younger men, 20-30 year-old men. This is what my SSA has looked like ever since it started resurfacing in my late thirties. It's not been about sex, it's been about emotional connection, this soft spot of caring and compassion inside for some of them, wanting to help them avoid the pitfalls I made, wanting to share what I have learned, showing them the kind of love, acceptance and affection I missed earlier in my life. I have found safe ways to explore this and most of the time it has been healthy. But there have been several cases in which I almost got lost, experiences about which I still carry shame. For lack of a better way to describe it, I fell for a few of them. I crossed a line emotionally – never sexually - and started feeling possessive and attached. I've been through this several times in recent years, and as I've become stronger and more self-aware, the pull - that urge to take care of the other man, to ease his pain and make his life easier somehow - has gotten easier to manage. But it has never gone away.

Last weekend the bubble burst. I felt myself being pulled into one of these emotional attractions again. Rather than freaking out or getting buried in shame, I stayed with it. In between staffing duties at the weekend, I talked it through with a couple of other trusted staff men. Finally, in the last few hours of the weekend, I was actually able touch the core of it, release the shame and hear what the voice inside was saying. For all these years I have been projecting 26-year-old me out onto other men. It's not them I want most to take care of. It's me. 26-year-old me.

I was 26 when I walked away from the gay lifestyle for good. I walked away from a man whom I loved deeply. I left my friends, I left my city, I embraced a new spiritual path, I joined a new community and I put down new roots. It was probably the most difficult thing I have ever done. I believed then, and still believe, that it was the right thing to do. But I never processed it, I never fully talked it out with anyone. There was no Peoplecanchange (PCC) at that time, there were no JiM weekends, therapy was not an option for me. I talked a lot to God, I worked with myself inside, and I shared as much as I could with a couple of men in my new community. But I see now that what I basically did was stuff that life and that man - that young, idealistic 26-year old man and many of his hopes, dreams, passions, likes, dislikes, crazinesses, talents and abilities- I stuffed him away to walk a new path I felt called to walk. I just did it and never looked back.

You can't really do that. That young man never went away. He is still inside me, yearning to be heard, acknowledged, spoken to and loved. At long last, perhaps for the first time ever, I finally heard him last weekend. In the midst of sobbing uncontrollably on Sunday afternoon when I finally touched the core of this, I kept hearing the voice of this remarkably gifted GUTS leader I got to work with on the weekend. His thundering voice was telling me, "Give it a voice! Give it a voice! Say it! Say it!" And then from deep inside, 26-year-old me spoke: "Listen to me. I'm in pain. Acknowledge me. Honor me. Accept me. Love me."

I finally get it.

So I have come up with three stretches. First, I have started writing a long letter to 26-year-old David. I'm talking to him about the challenges he is going to face, advising him what to do, explaining how it's going to feel and trying to comfort and reassure him it's going to be all right. I'm doing for him exactly what I have already done for a number of men I have come to know and care about on this path. I'm fathering him, mentoring him in this letter. I have just started, but already it feels unbelievably right and good. When I write then read back what I have written, I feel whole.

Second, I am going to start owning my age. I'm fifty years old. Ever since I started doing this work, I have always related more readily and easily to guys half my age. I tell myself that is because that's when I shut myself down to bottle up my SSA, when I was the age they are now. That's fine I guess, but in many other ways I am definitely not that age anymore and nothing in me wants to be. I'm wiser, more grounded, and have figured out so many things by now that the thought of going back actually repulses me.

So my second stretch is to make three lists by the end of this coming weekend:

- \*What I loved about being 26
- \*What I don't miss about being 26
- \*What I love about being me now

The last stretch is over a longer term - to actively and consciously start shifting my focus back to 26-year-old me when I start feeling one of these care-taking attractions coming up inside. I want this shift to become automatic someday. Not sure how difficult this will be because I have never really worked at it before. But at least now I see where I need to go.

So that's it. If you made it this far, thanks taking the time to read. Writing about this stuff and getting these things in front of me helps me stay clear. It is my hope that sharing it might help someone else, too.

Peace and blessings,  
Your brother,  
David