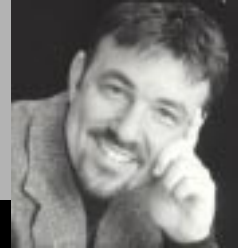


# Kort's Korner

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Joe's practice specializes in sexual addiction, childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse, depression and anxiety.

He offers workshops for couples and singles. He runs a gay men's group therapy and a men's sexuality group therapy for straight, bi and gay men who are struggling with specific sexual issues.

His therapy services are for gays and lesbians as well as heterosexuals.

## Anything But Straight: Unmasking The Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth

While searching the Internet for information on "ex-gay" literature, I ran across this book on [www.anythingbutstraight.com](http://www.anythingbutstraight.com). I first thought the website was a spoof, since it showed a photo of John Paulk fleeing the cameraman, who was apparently following him. John Paulk was the ex-gay spokesperson for the Focus on the Family Organization, which is against homosexuality. Paulk had come out publicly and published a book saying that he had "changed" his sexual orientation. He married a "former" lesbian named Anne. Now they appeared on the talk-show circuit and covers of magazines such as Newsweek stating that changing from gay to straight is "not about hate, it is about hope." Now he was seen in a Washington D.C. gay bar, with pictures as proof of having been inside. I literally laughed out loud, realizing that this site was actually promoting Wayne Besen's forthcoming book, *Anything But Straight*. It promised to be engaging, funny and informational, so I immediately pre-ordered it.

I began reading it on the plane flight to one of my own book signings, trying to hold back laughing out loud at what he had written. Seeing me shaking in spasms of hilarity, the other passengers must have thought I was crazy. I have read any number of journal articles and books critiquing Reparative Therapy (or as I call it, Extreme Makeovers).

Meaning no offense to the authors of those articles, they are clinical and academic, difficult to get through. This book wasn't.

Mr. Besen has done his "homo-work"—attending reparative conferences, interviewing those who consider themselves "ex-gay" as well as those who are "ex-ex-gays." One of the latter is a lesbian; he quotes her as saying she had "done everything to change her

orientation, from praying endlessly to fasting for days at a time. But this did not make me straight. It just made me a hungry lesbian."

Besen writes about how most of the "ex-gay" movement depends on religion-giving yourself over to Jesus Christ. He points out that this leaves out Jews and, being Jewish himself, he posed as someone wanting to "heal his homosexuality," as these ex-gay ministries

promise to accomplish. Since he could not relate to Christian teachings then what, he asked, might he do to help him turn straight? They referred him to JONAH (Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality). He soon discovered that this group is also a "front organization for Christian political groups" and even offends many Jews by encouraging them "to read books that tell them they must



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*"The theory of "same-sex ambivalence" is based on the erroneous belief that two people of the same gender are "looking for parenting through each other, yet they cannot provide parenting to each other, as they are both damaged"*

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become Christian to change." Besen states, "Jewish parents who contact this group won't get ex-gays as children, but they do run the risk of getting 'ex-Jews'."

He explains the histories of—and differences between—ex-gay groups like "Exodus" and the Catholic Church's "Courage" and "Homosexuals Anonymous". Exodus professes to "cure" homosexuals' broken sexuality and to help them become more male or female. Ironically, its ex-gay founders, Michael Bussee and Gary Cooper, fell in love, became ex-ex-gays and eventually left the organization, and now have spoken publicly against it. Courage gives "the gift of chastity" according to Besen, and was founded by the Catholic Church. Homosexuals Anonymous (HA) was begun by a guy named Colin Cook who was inappropriately sexual with multiple participants of HA according to the members who attended his meetings. Colin was forced to leave his position. Today, Exodus and HA are the largest ex-gay groups around.

Besen addresses the concepts of "gender rejection" and "same-sex ambivalence," terms coined by these reparative workers to promote their negative ideas about homosexuality. "Gender rejection" is about "defensive detachment" from one's gender, where "boys will avoid sports and girls will shun their femininity and embrace more masculine endeavors, such as fixing cars." He quotes openly gay Billy Bean, the former professional baseball player, who ridicules the idea of a

sport affecting one's sexuality. The theory of "same-sex ambivalence" is based on the erroneous belief that two people of the same gender are "looking for parenting through each other, yet they cannot provide parenting to each other, as they are both damaged."

Besen does a phenomenal job of exposing these reparative therapists' logical lapses and hidden agendas, along with their prejudice, sexism and opportunism. Perhaps most interestingly, all their work is mostly geared toward men, which I think speaks volumes. Our American society diminishes woman, and if you are a male, anything female is to be punished. Reparative therapy is one of the punishments used against "effeminate" men and gay men who do not meet traditional masculine stereotypes.

One man who stands out—and whose opportunism Besen exposes—is Richard Cohen, a psychotherapist and ex-gay author of *Coming Out Straight: Understanding and Healing Homosexuality*. Besen attended Cohen's workshop and witnessed Cohen in action. In his workshop, Cohen teaches that homosexuality arises, in part, from being deprived of touch by others of the same sex. So at the workshop he has men touch each other.

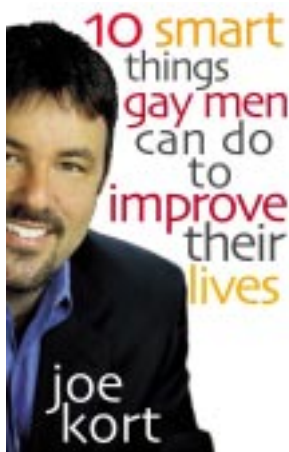
Besen enlightens the reader about Cohen's presented work but in his witty and straightforward way, sheds light on Cohen's real intentions by quoting Cohen himself as ends his workshop:

"Now that you have seen how I help people transition from homosexual to straight, you can buy my new book or you can purchase my therapeutic tapes, and don't forget my hope and healing videos. I'm also available for speaking engagements. And, of course, I take credit cards. G-d bless. Amen. Be straight."

I hope that this review intrigues you enough (and made you laugh enough) to want to read this book, the best I have ever read on these poor ex-gays and the horrible work being done to people fooled into believing they can change their orientation. Besen's book is EXcellent!

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