

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.

Book Helps Gay Men Strengthen Relationships

By Nicole M. Robertson, Of The Daily Oakland Press July 2003

Depression landed him in therapy when he was 14 - "30 percent of teen suicides are linked to being gay and lesbian, and I think I was on my way," he says - but it wasn't until he was 19 that he was able to come out to his parents.

"Therapists had told me since the beginning that I was gay because of a smothering mother and distant and absent father," Kort explains. "So while I knew I was gay and that would not change, I was also angry at my parents for being that way and 'making me gay,' according to the therapists." When he did come out, it was with anger and blame on both sides. Complicating matters, he had a girlfriend with whom he was trying to work out a heterosexual relationship.

"We stayed together two more years trying to make it work," he says. "It just didn't and couldn't. It was a lie. She and I both knew it. So we ended it. I came out in a positive way July 24, 1982, met a guy and dated him for several months.

"I feel celebratory that my book arrives 21 years almost to the date that I finally came out.

Kort is a Royal Oak-based therapist certified in *Imago*, a program for helping couples communicate more effectively and working through childhood issues and for singles to learn relationship skills. He also is an adjunct professor at Wayne State University in the school of social work teaching gay and lesbian psychotherapy to graduate students. His therapy clientele is 50 percent gay men, 15 percent lesbians and 35 percent heterosexual couples.

"Joe Kort knows the danger of living a lie. He sees it in his private psychotherapy practice, working with gay men, lesbians and straight couples. And he experienced it in his own life."

"I wrote this book because gay men were coming to me and asking for the same kind of help when they came to see me as a therapist," Kort says. "I was providing each of them with the same types of help and information. I thought that if I could provide them with this information in book form it would help them along through the therapy they were in - a sort of

bibliotherapy, we psychotherapists call it these days."

His book offers 10 points to build self-esteem, grow up and commit to a partner. He also addresses sexual addictions and advises gay men to find mentors to help them through problems that baffle them. The book is rich

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with specific strategies for working through problems instead of running away from them. Kort hopes it will help gay men build more fulfilling lives.

“I want them to be optimistic about being able to create a gay affirmative way of life that can include a life partner, healthy family relationships and positive self-esteem,” he says.

He hopes this book will also serve other therapists, as well.

“There are so many psychotherapists out there, both gay and straight, who work with gay male clients and are not aware of the specific issues at hand in working with gay clients,” he says. “I thought the book could be a useful tool for them to refer to in helping gay men with these issues psychotherapeutically.”

Gay men have had a distinct disadvantage in psychotherapy, which traditionally has tried to make them straight, leaving them feeling like failures - angry, guilty and unworthy.

“Historically, therapy has wounded gay men by trying to change them or by gay men having to explain to their therapists what gay life is all about,” Kort says. “The worst is for a gay man finding a therapist and realizing well into it that the therapist is homophobic or at the least homo-negative about some of gay life. That should not be for the therapist to bring into the therapy. That should be something the gay man decides for himself in a setting that is nonjudgmental on the therapist’s point of view.”

He began practicing psychotherapy in 1985 with a goal of offering gay-positive treatment. “I wanted gays and lesbians to know that as a therapist I would provide them with quality treatment coming from a gay-positive place and not to have to worry I would try to change them or fix them as many therapists today still do.”

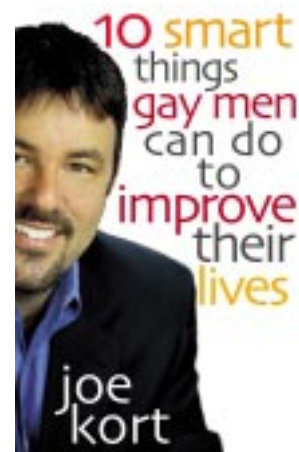
And, by the way, Kort is in a committed relationship with his partner of 10 years.

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