

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.

Anger Under New Management

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I'm angry. Every time I open the paper or watch the news and the subject of marriage for gays and lesbians is raised, or when I read or hear some homophobe's position on it, I get angry. (I refuse to say *gay marriage* because we are talking about the same marriage as heterosexuals; *gay marriage* sounds like we are talking about something different). They use misguided facts or veiled hate and prejudice in their words. I close the television or the paper and am enraged.

I know about unresolved anger and resentment. As Debbie Ford, a nationally known coach, puts it, "*it is like swallowing poison and hoping the other guy dies!*" Yikes! It is not healthy to hold all of this anger and do nothing with it. I look to my books on anger management, none of which help me or seem effective. So while at a psychotherapy conference last month, I went to an anger management presentation. To my surprise, it was different from any other that I had attended and for the first time, useful in dealing with anger and resentment.

The presenter's name was Steven Stosny (www.compassionpower.com). He caught my attention in the first five minutes with these words, "I don't believe in anger management. Studies show that after one year of anger

management classes and therapy, people relapse back to their old patterns with anger. You must find core value in yourself. If you do not value yourself enough, you will carry unresolved anger and resentment." In hearing this I was intrigued: it made sense to me.

I began thinking about how from birth we are devalued as gays and lesbians. From the beginning as are cradled in our parents' arms,

we are neglected in terms of the expectation that we are heterosexual. One of the cruelest forms of punishment is to ignore someone. We are ignored from the very beginning. We all know the rest of the story about how we bury our core selves and go into hiding for being ashamed of who we are.

And we are reminded by the media daily about how little value we hold in discussions about

marriage for gays. "Don't say 'I do' to gay marriage" the headlines read. The military says we are of no value to them so "Don't ask, don't tell". So it makes perfect sense that as a culture of gays and lesbians, we might not value ourselves and therefore carry unresolved anger and resentment.

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He talked about how anger can shorten a person's life span if not resolved. It can also lead to heart disease, stroke, cancer, hypertension, depression, anxiety, alcoholism, drug-addiction and other compulsive behavior.

The antidote, Stosny says, is to learn to value one's self more through self-compassion. He says, "Self-compassion and compassion for others makes us virtually immune to the ill-effects of anger." He goes on to say that unresolved anger is from feeling unimportant, disregarded, accused, devalued, rejected, powerless and unlovable. So the more you value yourself, the less unresolved anger you will have. He says that one cannot have compassion for one's self and others, and carry unresolved anger at the same time.

During this time of the legalizing of marriage for gays and lesbians, we must take time to value ourselves more and not wait for others to validate us. While anger can be productive, it *must* come from a place of valuing ourselves and each other. If we are devaluing ourselves and each other as gays and lesbians, then they win; they will have the upper hand. The "they" are those individuals who trying to pass laws against us.

Stosny asks you to do a very difficult thing in order to subside the unresolved anger and resentment is compassion for those who are

the object of your anger. He believes that the more compassion and value you have for yourself and those you are angry toward, the more resolution you will have and the more productive you will be. In his words, "You have to regulate your own emotions, not the environment. Anger is not for solving problems." I understand what he means. When you are angry, all others see and hear is your anger and not your message; you are not able to be productive and do the work that needs to be done for yourself if you are stuck in anger!

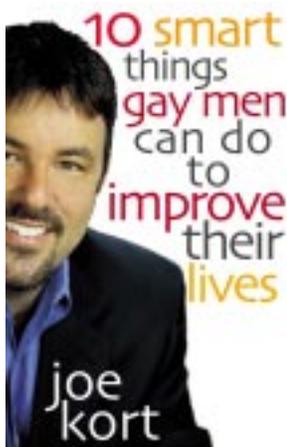
Let's not get "stuck" in anger and resentment. Let's value ourselves and know that in our valued state we can lead our way through this negativity we face. Let's not make ourselves negative, or devalued or bad; let's work on correcting the situation by regulating our feelings and taking care of ourselves and our own.

Smart ways to value yourself are:

1. Come out to one person per week.
2. Talk to your family about marriage for gays and what is happening currently.
3. Stay updated and know the facts on marriage for gays to be able to answer questions from family and friends.
4. Register to vote and make sure you vote this November.
5. Join Human Rights Campaign (HRC).
6. Read books on marriage for gays. Two recommended books are "*Why You Should Give a Damn About Gay Marriage*", by Davina Kotulski, Ph.D. and "*Gay Marriage*" by Jonathon Rauch
7. If you are a gay or lesbian couple, consider going to Massachusetts and getting legally married.
8. Call or email your local newspapers, anonymously if you are more comfortable, and ask them if they print marriage announcements for gay and lesbian couples.

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