



kort's korner

Straight Men Who Have Sex with Other Men

MANY MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN (MSM) get referred to me by their straight therapists. Holding my books and other coming-out literature in their hands, they explain that their therapists

have tried to help them come out. But since they say they are not gay, their therapist has sent them to me to assess their true orientation.

I have seen hundreds of heterosexual men come to my office with same-sex behaviors worried that they might be gay. However I have always been able to help these men distinguish between their organic, innate sexual and romantic orientation as well as their sexual preferences. I have always known that straight men can have sex with other men and not be gay. However that concept makes people very anxious. Some think the behavior itself defines a gay orientation. Others—particularly gays and lesbians—understandably worry that it will be used to show that people can go from gay to straight. The reality is that from the start these SMSM's are not gay and now we have research to prove it.

A recent New York City survey found nearly one in 10 men say they're straight and have sex only with other men. The findings appear in the Sept. 19, 2006 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. They also found that 70%

of these straight-identified men having sex with men are married. In fact according to the Center for Disease Control, more than 3 million women are, or have been wives or girlfriends of men who secretly have sex with other men. In fact, 10% of all married men in this survey report same-sex behavior during the past year.

Some of the findings include:

- Straight-identified men who have sex with men report fewer sex partners than gay men.
- Straight-identified men who have sex with men report fewer STDs in the past year than gay men.
- Straight-identified men who have sex with men are less likely than gay men to report using a condom during their last sexual encounter.
- Straight-identified men who have sex with men are more likely to be foreign born than gay men.

It is crucial to have this information as the survey shows that a man who says he is straight but is having sex with other men is more likely to be married

than a straight man who has sex with women, according to the survey. Only 54% of the men who say they're straight and have sex with women are married, compared with the 70% marriage rate among the men who say they're straight but have sex with men. This is different than gay men who are heterosexually married in what I call the "New Mixed Marriage."

The beginning stages of the coming out process can resemble many other psychological processes. Before coaching clients into the coming out, I assess with them what their sexual behavior means—as it does not necessarily indicate a need for coming out.

Just because you are sexual with the same gender, doesn't necessarily reflect sexual/romantic orientation. There remains a difference between sexual identity, orientation, fantasies and behavior as discussed in the article "Are You What You Orgasm?" (*available online at www.joekort.com*)

Historically, many a therapist would tell clients who were struggling with homosexuality they weren't really gay or lesbian, but that various factors made them this way. Gay Affirmative Therapy is clear that orientation is innate. Individuals who act out homosexually or fantasize about same-sex partners may not be gay to begin with.

The possibilities include homosexuality or bisexuality, sexual addiction,

continued

Straight Men Who Have Sex with Other Men, continued

bi-curious, homo-eroticism, sexual abuse and more—you should be informed and understand each of these issues before helping a client through the coming-out process.

Men who were sexually abused as boys or teenagers may re-enact that trauma by engaging in homosexual behaviors—and at first glance, appear to be in early denial about their homosexuality. By contrast, some women, gay or straight, who have been sexually abused will repress their sexuality, while others re-enact their early abuse by being sexually promiscuous with men when, in fact, they are lesbians.

As a result, many clinicians reassure clients that once their abuse issues are resolved, their same-sex behaviors will evaporate. But this doesn't always hap-

pen, particularly if the client is innately gay or lesbian.

This concept is important in understanding ex-gays who claim to have changed their sexual/romantic orientation. Success rates in returning people to their “innate heterosexuality” are low to null because these individuals are not heterosexual. Those who have succeeded in rooting out their gay impulses most likely were sexually abused by a same-gender perpetrator, which confused or clouded the individuals' primary orientation which was heterosexuality. Or they may, in fact, have just been an SMSM.

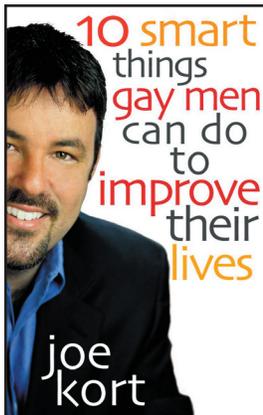
Also, bisexuals may be able to repress their same-sex feelings—simply because they were not that strong to begin with.

Terms to Understand

- **MSM:** Men who have sex with other men including gay, straight, bisexual, bi-curious, questioning and any male who has sexual activity with another male.
- **SMSM:** Straight Men who have sex with men.
- **WSW:** Women who have sex with other women including gay, straight, bisexual, bi-curious, questioning and any female who has sexual activity with another female.

For Further Reading

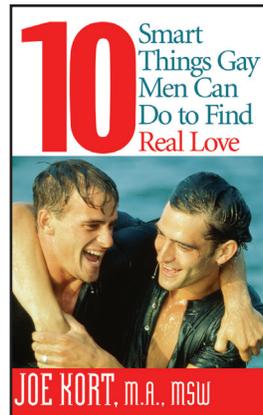
available from Alyson Books or online



“... a fine book. I recommend it to its intended audience and to the straight community who want to be better informed about gay relationships.”

Harville Hendrix, Ph. D.

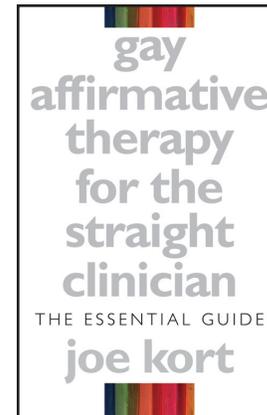
author, *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples*



“... a brave, intelligent, rich book. It invites and enables the reader to explore the knottier archetypal forces at work in all of us which make sex and love the exasperating joys they can be.”

Guy Kettelhack

author, *Dancing Around the Volcano*



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