

Conversion Therapy: Six Points Worth Considering

First, 'conversion therapy' is the current lightning rod of contempt for anyone who refuses LGBT+ identity and destiny. And anyone who supports that decision: friends and family, churches, therapists. While celebrating every person's right to change partners or genders, our culture demonizes those who choose to align their bodies with their obvious purpose of generating new life.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the entertainment industry. 2018 began with 'Miseducation of Cameron Post' and ends with 'Boy Erased', a small film with big stars about a young man who following his rape by a college friend attends a 12-day 'conversion therapy' camp where he is subject to a prison-like house of horrors marked by manipulation of every kind. The credo is coercion: Christians imposing nightmarish tactics upon otherwise well-adjusted persons with same-sex attraction who become self-hateful. The cure? A jail-break! (In this case, with the help of Mama Nicole Kidman, for whom I would gladly flee the big house.)

Nicole aside, the vibe is everywhere. I just read a detailed article entitled 'Taught to Hate Myself' that lists drug-induced aversion therapy, electro-shock treatments and use of heterosexual porn as 'conversion' tricks in curing gays, resulting in failed 'straight' marriages, suicide, and overall wrecked lives. Surprisingly, no professional counselors are named. You know why? No therapist worth his or her salt would engage in any of these trumped up shenanigans. 'Conversion' therapists do not exist. And if any facsimile of the 'conversion camp' of 'Boy Erased' ever existed, we can be grateful it does no more.

Second, the term 'conversion' therapy never existed in any professional sense of the word. Since the beginning of psychotherapy, clinicians have understood same-sex attraction to be a 'reparative' drive—not the defining characteristic of one's sexual adulthood but a symptom of something else, an unconscious effort to repair some deficit or breach. From this understanding, skilled helpers help persons 'to read' their sexual desires properly; that involves helping clients to recognize legitimate needs at the heart of same-sex attraction, and to face painful relationships and traumas that may have contributed to the attraction. Here therapists function as healers of actual wounds that have divided lives and made persons more vulnerable to LGBT+ self-perceptions and behaviors, as in the case of childhood sexual abuse.

My journey to wholeness was laid by Jesus. But along the way, skilled helpers helped me sort out my desires along the narrow road to life, neither condemning me for them nor limiting me to their demands. They helped me to walk through same-sex attraction, face squarely some factors that contributed to it, and grow in self-acceptance.

Third, Living Waters, Courage, and all the ministries I know in the Restored Hope Network do not practice this form of therapy. How do I know that? We are not therapists! We are lay persons who come alongside anyone who—in light of identity conflicts and sexual addictions--wants to grow in

the love of Jesus Christ. We meet in groups, which are voluntary, coercion-free, and aimed at centering one's affections and identity upon Jesus Christ. 'Therapy' is a meaningful term and practice that should only apply to persons who have the skill to forge a long term, in-depth relationship with a person who wants professional help for the purpose of clearing out debris from his or her path to wholeness.

Fourth, we need these therapists! Persons with gender identity problems are vulnerable, not only to conflictual sexual desires but to mental health issues like chemical addiction, personality disorders, depression, and suicidal tendencies. We lay persons must recognize our limits in the face of another's fragility. We must learn to refer our people to skilled helpers who can help individuals navigate a range of issues, including constructive ways of facing same-sex attraction beyond merely branding them LGBT+.

Fifth, I suggest that we work with new language. I'm fine with reparative therapy, but it is now guilty by its bizarre 'conversion' association. How about 'integration' therapy, which references the goal of becoming whole, united with the good of our own gender selves by overcoming divides that bar us from chaste relating with either gender?

Sixth, the battle is raging to demonize and do away with therapeutic help for persons refusing the LGBT+ destiny. Christians around our country are drinking the cool-aid; refusing to believe there is any psychological 'stuff' to gender disorders, they are joining the tirade against providing such help. That was evident in our recent, temporary win against 2943 in California. Although the bill was shelved, many Christians, including the saints at Rosemead, Biola University's clinical counseling arm, went on record (see website) to refute therapeutic 'change' efforts as a kind of olive branch to the LGBT+ community. This will come back to bite us. Gay activist and author of 2943, Evan Low, has announced his plan to reframe the bill in 2019 and to outlaw all such therapeutic efforts. The fight goes on, and we must wage it without throwing our clinical allies under the bus.

ANDREW COMISKEY A time of prayer and fasting. If you'd like to pray along with us, let us know and we can send you a [book](http://andrewcomiskey.com) or you can get it through kindle here: <https://www.amazon.com/Becoming-Good-News-Andrew-Comiskey-ebook/dp/B07E95JKP5/>
