

MICRONESIAN SEMINAR
P.O. Box 160
Pohnpei, FM 96941



Micronesian Counselor

July 15, 2006

Issue 62

Homosexuality in Micronesia

AVAILABLE NOW!

- **The MicSem video collection is available on line at *www.micsem.org***
- **ALL our videos are now available on DVD and VHS for \$10**
- **The MicSem photo collection is now available online along with digital thumbnails at *www.micsem.org***



Major Scott Nicloy

"The horror of growing up gay is the horror of having a secret that you do not understand, and you are afraid to tell anyone for fear that they will not love or respect you anymore."

-Brian McNaught, Author and Lecturer

Introduction

As an evangelical pastor and a certified addictions counselor who works with gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) people, I often get asked to address the subject of homosexuality. I have just as often set such requests aside, as I have no desire to be involved in controversial issues. However, a gay friend recently sent me an email describing how he was told by an evangelical pastor to burn in hell and was then threatened with physical violence if he should ever again attend church. Around the same time, I was corresponding with Fr. Fran Hezel about the problem of known or suspected GLB people in Micronesia being harassed at the workplace. Prompted by these two occurrences, along with my own counseling caseload involving sexual orientation concerns and various requests from concerned people, I decided to address the issue of the challenges faced by gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in Micronesia.

One of the problematic aspects of the whole homosexual debate is the issue of people yelling and screaming at each other when they are not even talking about the same thing. Consequently, it is best to define some key terms in reference to human sexuality:

- Sexual orientation is biological; it is about what you feel,
- Sexual conduct is behavioral; it is about what you do,
- Sexual identity is cognitive; it is about how you define yourself as a sexual person.

EXPERIENCE

MICRONESIAN SEMINAR

www.micsem.org



Our **library** is recognized worldwide as one of the best collections on Micronesia. It houses 18,000 titles focusing on history and anthropology, government, education, social and economic development, and the natural sciences.



The MicSem library currently has 45,000 **photographs** available. Our historical photos, which date from over a hundred years ago through the present, include an extensive WWII collection and offer a unique window into our Micronesian past.



The **video collection**, 450 videos strong, including our 48 in-house productions, has been compiled from sources all across Micronesia and beyond. All videos, along with the rest of our library, are available for viewing, for free, by everyone, Monday-Friday.



The Micronesian Seminar website, **www.micsem.org**, houses our Micronesian issues discussion forum, our photo albums on various historical topics, book search engine, and our online publications, including the Micronesian Counselor, and more!

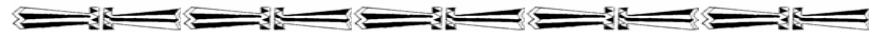


all employees, including GLB employees. This is, after all, good for business. People who feel physically and emotionally safe at the job site are happier and more productive employees and they will tend to stay longer in their place of employment.

Pastors and churches should support and promote traditional concepts regarding marriage and family throughout Micronesia, especially in light of the serious problems associated with the spread of STIs, HIV/AIDS, and unplanned pregnancies. Yet, they need to be kept in mind that it is not necessary to wound and to destroy people who are struggling with same-sex orientation issues when promoting traditional concepts of marriage and family.

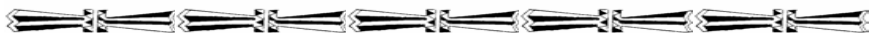
In regards to the Micronesian society as a whole, please accept GLB people. They are, after all, your sons and daughters and, in some cases, your husbands and wives, your mothers and fathers. Many of them are struggling with same-sex orientation issues in pained tortured silence that you may know nothing about; because “The horror of growing up gay is the horror of having a secret that you do not understand, and you are afraid to tell anyone for fear that they will not love or respect you anymore.”

* * *



Usually, unless someone says something about their sexual orientation issues or is engaging in overt behavior, there really is no way to tell if a person is gay or straight. Movie star Rock Hudson was for years considered the paradigm of male masculinity, a hunk of male protoplasm that made young girls scream in delight and older women swoon with longing. Hudson often starred in leading romantic male roles in various hit movies. At one point he was even married. In real life, however, Rock Hudson was gay to the marrow of his bones. For years Robert Reed played the handsome idealized husband and the perfect father on the popular TV sitcom series “The Brady Bunch.” In real life, nonetheless, Reed was a gay man, even though he was once married and he had a daughter by that marriage. Currently, Chad Allen, an openly gay actor, plays a straight man in the movie End of the Spear that honors five slain evangelical missionaries. Some gay men like Hudson, Reed, and Allen play straight men in the movies and on TV; other gay men play straight men throughout their whole lives. Some are in fact very good at it. In fact, some gay men are so good at playing straight roles that they have convinced themselves that they are straight, even when that is not the case.

In reality, it is possible for a person to be thoroughly homosexual in terms of sexual orientation and, yet, be thoroughly heterosexual in terms of sexual conduct and even in terms of sexual identity. At some level, though, same-sex oriented individuals are usually living in a state of denial, confusion and incongruence between sexual orientation, sexual conduct, and sexual identity. As a result, many gay, lesbian, and bisexual people find that the strain of the incongruence between sexual orientation, sexual behavior, and sexual identity is too much for them to handle. They end up having an emotional breakdown, getting caught up in some incident that is shocking even to them, or they are plagued with a great deal of anxiety, shame, guilt, and distress. At that point, the primary goal of doing therapy work with GLB clients is to bring about a



sense of congruence between sexual orientation, sexual conduct, and sexual identity, and then on the basis of that congruence to help GLB people make deliberate, honest and responsible lifestyle decisions. People who are in a state of congruence are able to make deliberate and responsible lifestyle decisions in regards to their sexuality that are in keeping with their moral standards. People in a state of incongruence often act out in emotional pain and confusion that bring harm to themselves and others.

The Plight of Being a Gay in Micronesia

Ken sat all alone in his room, very sad, not knowing what to think. It could not be true, could it? Ken did not want to be gay. The very idea filled him with horror and dismay. Ken wanted so badly to be “normal.” His eyes filled with tears as he prayed, “Dear God, please, I do not want to be gay.” Ken sat on his bed in pain filled bewilderment. Why was he feeling the way he was? Why did the sight of a good-looking young man and not the sight of a good-looking young girl attract him? Ken wanted so desperately to be like his brother, Dave. Dave was popular with the girls. Dave seemed so carefree. “Why did I have to end up being the freak in the family?” Ken thought to

Usually, unless someone says something about their sexual orientation issues or is engaging in overt behavior, there really is no way to tell if a person is gay or straight.

himself. “God, please, I do not want to be a freak.” Ken’s mother came into the room to put away the laundry. Noticing her son looking sullen, she asked in a maternal fashion, “Is everything okay, Ken?” Ken forced a smile. “Yeah, Mom, everything is okay.” Ken then busied himself with his homework, but, it was hard for him to concentrate. There was a deep ache inside of him that tore at him. It was a pain that he could not express or share with others in his family, in his church, or with his friends. It



The real goal of counseling and therapy is not to change a person’s sexual orientation, which is impossible. The real goal of counseling is to lead the GLB person to a state of self-acceptance and a healthy sense of self-love. Then, on the basis of self-love and self-acceptance to help that person to make decisions in regard to sexual conduct and self-identity that are honest and in keeping with a set of life-affirming principles.

The Final Word

“The horror of growing up gay is the horror of having a secret that you do not understand, and you are afraid to tell anyone for fear that they will not love or respect you anymore.” For those who are GLB people in Micronesia, I trust this essay has reduced the pain, the alienation, and the loneliness of not understanding what it means to be gay. Hopefully, you have learned that there are people with whom you can share your lifelong struggles concerning your sexual orientation. Please acknowledge your sexual orientation as it really is, and then be responsible in the decisions you make in regards to your sexual orientation. Live a deliberate, conscious lifestyle based upon self-acceptance, self-knowledge and self-understanding, and based upon responsible, life-affirming moral choices.

For those who may not be GLB but who have family members and friends that you know or suspect of being GLB, I trust this essay has given you some understanding and insight into what they are going through in their lives. Perhaps you now have an understanding of how to help them further along on their life journeys. One way of doing so is to refer them to a qualified, supportive counselor.

I am concerned about the mistreatment and harassment of known or suspected GLB people in the Micronesian workplace. Let me kindly remind employers and supervisors that there is a moral and ethical need to provide a safe work environment for

there are some gay rights advocates who are quick to scream homophobia, where such accusations are hurtful and unjust. However, homophobia, like racism, is an ever present reality that many GLB people face every day in their lives. GLB people in Micronesia, as elsewhere, must often swallow in pained and tortured silence a lot of homophobic hate and ignorant rhetoric about same-sex orientation issues as they go about their daily lives at home, at church, and at the workplace.

As bad as external homophobia is, internalized homophobia is far worse and far more destructive. The biggest challenge in working with many GLB people on sexual orientation issues is dealing with their own self-hatred, self-rejection, and self-loathing for being same-sex oriented. All failures in counseling GLB people fall and break apart on this hard adamantine stone of self-rejection and self-hate. All sexual addiction problems, such as compulsive masturbation and obsessive sexual fantasizing, are rooted in self-rejection and self-hate. All truly perverse sexual longings are rooted in self-rejection and self-hate. All anxiety, neuroses, emotional problems related to sexuality issues are rooted in self-rejection and self-hate. Sometimes when I am working with a GLB person I simply ask the question, "Why do you hate yourself so much?" GLB people come to me thinking that their problem is homosexuality. I generally have to point out to them that their real problem is self-hatred. As long as they are fueling their own self-hate and self-rejection they will never be freed from a sexual addiction problem that may be plaguing their lives.

There is no such thing as THE gay lifestyle anymore than there is such a thing as THE straight lifestyle. Naturally, a Catholic nun in a convent and a lap dancer in a bar do not live the same lifestyle simply because both women are heterosexual.

was a pain that made him feel different and alienated from everyone else. It was a pain that he could not understand, and that he could not share with anyone else for fear of losing the love and the respect of the people that mattered most to him in his life.

Just how many GLB people are there in Micronesia? The famous Kinsey Report of the 1950s put the gay and lesbian population at 10% of the general population. This 10% figure is still commonly used. Other

more recent studies indicate that 5% of the male global population and 2% to 3% of the female population are exclusively same-sex oriented. A much larger percentage of people,

however, have attractions to both genders according to the research. No doubt, every adult person in Micronesia has acquaintances who are same-sex oriented, even though he or she may not know the identity of those individuals. Most people just assume that everyone around them is heterosexual. However, in reality, that is often not the case. If every GLB person in Micronesia should turn purple over night, the next morning there would be jaws hitting the ground all over the place in a state of stunned shock. If you are same-sex oriented, the important thing to remember is that you are not alone. In fact, you are in good company. There are many gay and lesbian people in Micronesia just like you.

Recent studies indicate that 5% of the male global population and 2% to 3% of the female population are same-sex oriented.

Harassment at the Workplace

In May of 2005, the people in the state of Washington were shocked when they opened up their newspapers to an exposé outlining the homosexual conduct of one of the most extreme anti-gay legislators in the state, a hard hitting politician who based his political campaigns on an ardent pro-traditional

family values platform, and who blasted to bits any legislation that had anything remotely to do with homosexuality. Then, in January 2006, an outspoken anti-gay fundamentalist Baptist preacher in the state of Texas was arrested for propositioning an undercover male police officer in a park. Many times those who are the most ardent in fighting homosexuality in others are the very ones who are fighting homosexuality within themselves. Consequently, when I hear stories of co-workers in Micronesia harassing a known or suspected GLB person at the workplace, my mind immediately begins to entertain questions regarding the sexual orientation issues of those who are doing the harassing. After all, why are they so threatened by a person who is perceived as being gay?

With this in mind, I tell gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in Micronesia who are being harassed at work that the harassment is not a commentary about them. Rather, the harassment is a commentary regarding those who are doing the harassing and their own unresolved fear issues concerning their sexuality. Healthy people with healthy attitudes concerning their own sexuality do not need to harass known or suspected GLB people at the workplace. Fear based upon ignorance is the foundation of harassment of GLB people at the workplace. It is one thing to be opposed to homosexuality on the basis of religious, moral, or social beliefs. Still, the harassing of GLB people in the workplace is a sign of weakness, not of strength.

The Gay Brain

The human brain is divided into three parts: the lower brain, the middle brain, and the upper brain. Your sexual desires, as well as your other basic biological drives, such as hunger and thirst, come from your lower brain. These very basic biological drives are then processed in your middle brain. They



family who may suspect or have figured out that a parent is gay. Thus, the children are sometimes left in a state of confusion and bewilderment. Consequently, in such homes we end up with a situation where there is a pink rhinoceros in the home that everyone knows is there but won't talk about.

While I believe that there are some valid arguments for not telling a spouse that one is same-sex oriented under certain circumstances, I now believe that it really is necessary in most cases. As hard and difficult as having such a painful, risky conversation might be, I generally encourage married GLB clients to tell their spouses that they are gay. Of course, every case is different. As a general rule, however, if you are married your spouse should know. In fact, most likely your spouse already knows and is waiting for you to say something.

Most gay men and lesbian wives sincerely love their spouses and their families, and they want their mixed orientation marriages to work.

Furthermore, most gay men and lesbian wives sincerely love their spouses and their families, and they want their mixed orientation marriages to work. Currently, there are books, websites, and support groups addressing this issue. Coming to terms with your own homosexuality or finding out that your spouse is gay does not automatically mean an end to the marital relationship. Rather, such honesty may mean an opportunity for a deeper, more committed and meaningful relationship.

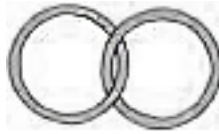
Dealing with Homophobia

Homophobia is the irrational fear of anything pertaining to homosexuality. A person on moral and religious grounds can oppose homosexual conduct and not be considered homophobic or against same-sex people per se. Unfortunately,

whether one is gay, straight, or bisexual.

Married and Gay

According to conservative estimates there are over 2 million gay/straight marriages in the United States. There are several reasons why a gay person will enter a mixed orientation marriage: (a) the gay person is in denial regarding his or her sexuality, (b) the gay person believes marriage will cure his or her “problem,” (c) the gay person really wants to be married, have children, and live what is considered a normal life, (d) it is a marriage of convenience.



If after many years of marriage a gay person finally begins to deal with his or her same-sex orientation issues, should that person tell the spouse about one's same-sex sexual orientation? I have a close friend who is a psychotherapist who would say no. His argument is that such a disclosure may lead to the break up of the marriage and the loss of family, career and reputation. In his opinion, the advantages of telling the spouse that one is gay does not offset the emotional pain and trauma that such a confession will inflict upon the heterosexual spouse and the children.

However, there is another side to this argument, and it is the one that I think most psychotherapists would now advocate, as well as those heterosexual spouses who have found themselves unwittingly in mixed orientation marriages. In short, the spouse really does need to know if the marital partner is gay. Many times the spouse suspects something is amiss in the marital relationship, may be distressed over why he or she is not more appealing to the marital partner, may have suspicions about the spouse's sexual orientation, or may even have found out in some way that the spouse is in fact gay. Thus, the spouse ends up feeling confused, hurt, frustrated, angry, and betrayed. Sometimes there are older children in the

are then presented to your upper brain for you, as a thinking person, to make a decision regarding how you are going to handle the biological desires for sex, water, and food that are coming up from your lower brain via your middle brain.

For example, let us say that your lower brain sends up a signal that says “Water, get water now.” At that time the midbrain starts shuffling through some files and comes up with a picture of a tall glass of ice tea. So, the midbrain starts flashing this big neon sign in your brain of a tall glass of ice tea. Your upper brain says to you, “Go to the refrigerator, pour yourself a glass of ice tea to drink so that lower brain will shut up and the midbrain will stop flashing that blasted annoying picture, so I can get some rest.” You say to your upper brain, “Right.” You then go to the refrigerator, grab the pitcher of ice tea, pour yourself a glass, and drink it. The lower brain is happy and satisfied, the midbrain retracts the flashing neon sign, and the upper brain is now freed up to again think on something truly important and profound—like the history of chocolate.

If you are same-sex oriented, the important thing to remember is that you are not alone.

Now, you cannot control what goes on in the lower part of your brain. It is below your radar in terms of consciousness. Furthermore, you cannot control what goes on in the middle part of your brain for precisely the same reason. That is just the way midbrains are. Your lower brain, from which your sexual drive originates, is even worse. You cannot tell it anything, either. It will not listen to you. The neurons in the lower brain and the midbrain think that the neurons in the upper region of the brain are uppity, like they live on snob hill or something.

Thus, there are two major parts of your brain that are off limits to you in regards to being verbally assessable. That is,



there is no way for you to assess what is really going on in the lower and mid regions of your brain structure. Consequently, much of what goes on in your gray matter is beyond your control.

Naturally, hating yourself, despising yourself, loathing yourself over what is really beyond your control is an option that you can make. However, I suggest to my GLB clients and friends that they have better options to consider in life, such as liking themselves whether they are gay or straight.

To get back to the main point at hand, let us say that the limbic system of your lower brain starts sending up to your midbrain some sexual impulses and urges. The midbrain goes through its file cabinet, trying to find for you the best picture possible that will most satisfy the demanding nature of your lower brain. Here you are a guy, flowing with testosterone, your hormonal juices are percolating and the midbrain pulls out this picture of this drop dead gorgeous hunk of male protoplasm. Your upper brain says, "Now, wait a minute. I am a guy. I am not supposed to be having pictures of male dudes floating around in my brain." So, your neo-cortex sends back the message to your midbrain and lower brain with the note, "Not acceptable. Send up another picture."

The limbic system located in the lower part of the brain at this point is getting a bit irked and sends up more urges. In response, the midbrain sorts through more picture files and sends up more images for your neo-cortex to review. Suddenly, you are daydreaming about a balcony overlooking a quiet oceanfront front at twilight, soft music is playing in the background, and in your fantasy you look across a candlelit table and you see an image of a handsome guy. "Help! SOS! All systems alarm! The neo-cortex is not happy. Reject message. Urgent! Send up other pictures."

By this time no part of your brain is happy. The lower brain




understanding, and a sense of what and who you are, and how your body and brain respond to certain sexual stimuli.

How About Reparative Therapy?

Again, sexual orientation is about what you feel, sexual conduct is about what you do, and sexual identity is about how you define yourself as a sexual person. Sexual orientation is biological. It deals with the way the human brain is hard-wired. Even if a gay person never engages in homosexual conduct, that individual is still a gay person. It is not possible, therefore, to change a person at the biological foundations of human personality without destroying the person. Sexuality is about more than just the sex act. It is more than simply having a sexual response to a sexual stimulus. It deals with the essence of who you are as a person at the biological rock bottom level of your being. Thus, it is not possible to change a person's sense of being at the biological foundation of the human personality without destroying the person.

In seeking to destroy homosexuality many Christian ex-gay ministries have destroyed people.

In seeking to destroy homosexuality many Christian ex-gay ministries have destroyed people. Despite the claims of "hundreds of thousands" of people becoming ex-gay in the sense of having a successful transformation of their sexual orientation, we are still waiting to see a person who (1) has been ex-gay in that particular sense longer than for five years; (2) is not receiving any financial benefits for promulgating his or her ex-gay testimony; and (3) whose progression of sexual orientation transformation has been documented according to well established accepted criteria for academic studies and scientific research. In short, there is no such thing as reparative therapy. It simply does not work. Nonetheless, everyone should live a responsible lifestyle, regardless of



turn is triggering the sexual response system. At this point, same-sex oriented people can live deliberate lifestyles based upon clarity of thought, self-understanding and self-acceptance, rather than acting out sexually in emotional pain and confusion.

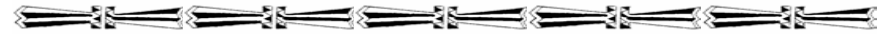
Not everyone who is gay, acts gay. Not everyone who is gay identifies him or herself as gay. Consequently, when a guy comes into my office concerned about being gay, the first thing I ask him is what he dreams about a night when he is sound asleep. If he says, "I dream about men." I say, "You are gay, that is the way your brain is hardwired, deal with it, and get on with your life."

Naturally, once you become fully aware and conscious of your sexual orientation, you need to make some definite and

Part of the problem with many gay people is that they sometimes obsess day and night about being gay, when in reality they really need to be doing something else with their lives—like living.

deliberate decisions regarding what kind of life you want to lead. Now, there are people who talk about the gay lifestyle, as if they knew what they are talking about. There is no such thing as THE gay lifestyle anymore than there is such a thing as THE straight lifestyle. Naturally, a Catholic nun in a convent and a lap dancer in a bar do not live the same lifestyle simply because both women are

heterosexual. Many GLB people for religious or other reasons have decided to live celibate lives. Other GLB individuals that can accommodate it engage in heterosexual marriage and parenthood. For still other GLB people, having a monogamous same-sex partner for life is a deliberate lifestyle choice. Of course, there are those who do have multiple same-sex partners, just as there are heterosexuals who do the same. Whatever lifestyle a GLB person decides upon, it should be a deliberate lifestyle choice based upon self-knowledge, self-



is very angry and redoubles the intensity of the sexual signals. It is pounding its hot button with all of its might. The upper brain is extremely upset because it is not getting the kind of pictures that it wants. The middle brain is stressed and distressed, as the midbrain is frantically scouring file cabinets, photo albums, historical records, and every scrap heap located in your brain for pictures that are simply not there. Thus, there is this war raging between the limbic system of the lower brain and the neo-cortex of your upper brain with the hypothalamus of your middle brain caught in between the intense cross fire. The war ends when you (a) collapse from nervous exhaustion and hyper-tension, (b) commit suicide, or (c) in your upper brain you think, "Okay, I am gay. I can live with that."

Many people spend many years of their lives in painful self-analysis and excruciating soul searching, trying to understand why they are gay.

Now, a same-sex oriented man may say to himself, "I am not gay; I am straight. I do not engage in any same-sex behavior and I am married with children." However, during sleep, the limbic system of the lower brain says to the midbrain, "Finally, that moralizing upper brain is sound asleep. Hey, Midbrain, pull out those same-sex pictures that we were looking at last night."

What Should You Do If You Are Gay?

As a counselor I have GLB people coming to me in a state of intense anxiety. When one of these high strung, nervous types finally blurts out "I'm gay," my response normally is "Oh, is that all? Thank goodness, I thought you came to see me about something serious. You only came to see me because you are gay."



Naturally, the intention of adopting such an attitude in counseling is not to minimize someone's painful struggle with being gay, nor to play down the severe consequences that being gay may in fact have in one's life. However, the intention of adopting such a casual, nonchalant attitude is to help a gay person to realize that being gay is not an all consuming life obsession. It is not worth dropping dead over from hypertension. Part of the problem with many gay people is that they sometimes obsess day and night about being gay, when in reality they really need to be doing something else with their lives—like living.

So, part of the problem of dealing with a sexual orientation issue in your life is the need to put things into perspective. Many GLB people spend many years of their lives in painful self-analysis and excruciating soul searching, trying to

**Whether you are
gay or straight,
your positive
qualities as a
person outweigh
your negative.**

understand why they are gay. "My mother was overbearing and my dad was emotionally distant," and all that pseudo-Freudian nonsense that some ex-gay ministries advocate. Well, forget psychoanalysis. You are not gay because your overbearing mother mishandled your toilet training days

while your passive emotionally non-involved father was out drinking beer and chewing betel nut under a mango tree. You are not a gay male because your older sister mistook you for a cute doll and dressed you up in girl's clothing. You are not gay because you were sexually molested as a youngster, although you may have some other very severe emotional and sexual trauma issues because of the sexual molestation that may need in fact to be addressed.

There is a common saying that I firmly believe applies to many homosexuals: "Get a life!" This is not to minimize the seriousness of being gay, the problems and the complications that being gay may bring to your life, or the reality of the



intense emotional pain, loneliness, and alienation that you may experience as a gay person. However, you are more than your sexual orientation. Whether you are gay or straight, your positive qualities as a person outweigh your negative. So, put this sexual orientation thing in perspective and do not make it an all consuming obsession. In other words, get out there and play a game of volleyball with some friends, run an errand for your grandma, walk the dog, go shopping, see a movie at the local theater, read a book, watch television. Just do not waste a lot of your time sitting alone in your room trying to figure out this gay thing. Live life.

Emotional Problems

In reality, most of my counseling work with homosexuals does not concern homosexuality per se. Rather, it deals with the stress, the anxiety, the sense of alienation, the loneliness, the guilt and the shame that GLB people often experience as they struggle with their biologically-based same sex attractions. Of course, as it is with heterosexuals, so it is with homosexuals: emotional needs can become sexualized. When emotional needs are sexualized they then can trigger the sexual response system. Thus, when the person feels lonely, the person feels sexual; when the person feels anxious, the person feels sexual; when the person feels shame, the person feels sexual.

Sexual addiction problems are not so much about sex as they are about unmet emotional needs. When emotional needs are identified and are satisfied in life affirming ways the intensity of the sexual drive diminishes remarkably, even to the point that such desires are quite manageable. Naturally, learning to identify and to deal with emotional needs in a life affirming manner does not change one's sexual orientation. Even so, with the sexual orientation issue no longer being a source of anxiety, guilt or shame, the sexual orientation issue no longer fuels the problem of emotional neediness, which in