



HEALTHY SEXUAL SOLUTIONS

Reparative Therapy

What is a Reparative Therapy?

Reparative or conversion therapy describe any attempt or process to change a person's sexual orientation, including efforts by transformational ministries. It is sometimes called sexual re-orientation.

Research does not support conversion therapy as an effective treatment modality. There have been no objective screening criteria, no consensus about outcome measurement, and no blinded or side-by-side studies and there is no article in a peer reviewed scientific journal stating that conversion therapy alters someone's sexual orientation.

More importantly, there is potential for harm when clients participate in conversion therapy.

The ACA, APA, AMA, and other professional organizations have cited certain ethical concerns and considerations related to the ethics of this process.

Harmful to Clients

The governing board of American Psychological Association passed a resolution, 125 to 4, declaring that mental health professionals should not tell gay clients they can become straight through therapy or other treatments.

The article goes on to say "Instead, the APA urged therapists to consider multiple options - that could range from celibacy to switching churches - for helping clients whose sexual orientation and religious faith conflict.

In a resolution adopted on a 125 to 4 vote by the APA's governing council, and in a comprehensive report based on two years of research, the 150,000 member association put itself firmly on record in opposition of so called "reparative therapy" which seeks to change sexual orientation. No solid evidence exists that such change is likely, says the report, and some research suggests that efforts to produce change could be harmful, inducing depression and suicidal tendencies."

Unethical Therapy

Reparative or conversion is considered unethical by ACA, APA, and AMA. Moreover, reparative therapy is not effective. No empirical scientific support exists for this approach and it can be harmful to clients.

Counselors who conduct this type of therapy view same-sex attractions and behaviors as abnormal and unnatural and, therefore, in need of "curing." The belief that same-sex attraction and behavior is abnormal and in need of treatment is in opposition to the position taken by national mental health organizations.

ACA opposes portrayals of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals as mentally ill due to their sexual orientation. ACA opposes the promotion of reparative therapy as a cure for individuals who are homosexual. According to the DSM-IV-TR, homosexuality is not a mental disorder in need of being changed.

With this in mind, one would have a difficult time discussing the appropriateness of conversion therapy as a treatment plan.

No scientific evidence has been published in psychological peer-reviewed journals that conversion therapy is effective in changing an individual's sexual orientation from same-sex attractions to opposite-sex attractions. No longitudinal studies have been conducted to follow the outcomes for those individuals who have engaged in this type of treatment. And research published in peer-reviewed counseling journals indicates that conversion therapies may harm clients.

Ethical Concerns

The Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association (APA) has passed a resolution affirming four basic principles with regard to treatments to alter sexual orientation, so-called conversion or reparative therapies.

These principles are:

Homosexuality is not a mental disorder and the APA opposes all portrayals of lesbian, gay and bisexual people as mentally ill and in need of treatment due to their sexual orientation;

Psychologists do not knowingly participate in or condone discriminatory practices with lesbian, gay and bisexual clients;

Psychologists respect the rights of individuals, including lesbian, gay and bisexual clients to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy;

Psychologists obtain appropriate informed consent to therapy in their work with lesbian, gay and bisexual clients.

The resolution further states that the APA "urges all mental health professionals to take the lead in removing the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with homosexual orientation."

Supporters of the resolution, which passed the APA Council overwhelmingly by a voice vote, believed that it was critical for the Association to make such a statement due to the questions of the ethics, efficacy and benefits of conversion

therapy which are now being debated within the profession and within society as a whole.

"Our concern," stated Douglas Haldeman, Ph.D., President of APA's Society for the Psychological Study Of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issues, "is that a person, especially a young person, who enters into therapy to deal with issues of sexual orientation should be able to have the expectation that such therapy would take place in a professionally neutral environment absent of any societal bias.

Additionally, therapists should be providing clients with accurate information about same-sex sexual orientation. This resolution reasserts the profession's commitment to those two principles."

The APA Council of Representatives is the major legislative and policy-setting body of the organization. The American Psychological Association (APA), in Washington, DC, is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes more than 151,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 50 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 58 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare.