

In the fall of 2008 I met a man through mutual friends. He had recently turned 40, and was a single divorced father of two young boys, ages 7 and 9. Our mutual friends invited us to dinner for the sole purpose of introducing us, and we immediately hit it off.

We started dating but he had a lot of restrictions on how fast to take our relationship, such as no sleepover dates on the weekends when he had custody of his children, which I absolutely respected at first.

Over the course of the next few months I learned that he had been raised part Baptist and part Pentecostal which he affectionately termed Bapti-Costal. He held the importance of family above all, being the youngest of nine children. In high school he expressed romantic feelings towards boys to his older siblings and parents much to their dismay. They sent him to a church counselor who employed a variety of techniques, most of which we would call psychological brainwashing. He pretended to follow the counselor's advice and lied, saying that he was cured of his impure desires. They nearly succeeded in repressing his natural inclination towards the same sex. He went through the motions of dating girls, became a youth pastor himself, and began inflicted the same sort of damage on other younger impressionable members of his congregation.

Years later, the guilt of what he was doing to the younger members of his church caused him to come out again, a second time as an adult. And once more his church and family sent him to a much more aggressive counseling style. The techniques used by this new counselor were much more insidious, employing heavy guilt sessions, and using biblical passages to help in his reprogramming. He was taught to turn his feelings of sexual attraction towards women. He allowed himself to be set up on a date with the daughter of a church leader and forced into a loveless marriage. Having such a strong base of family values he tried valiantly to make the marriage work, eventually producing two children. But eventually the repression of his true nature proved to be too much and he suffered a mental breakdown, asked for separation from his wife, and detached himself from the more religiously fervent of his family.

It was during this first year after his coming out when we met. After many months of dating he told his two sons that I was spending the weekend with them, which thankfully they thought was totally normal. I grew to love the two boys very much and saw the possibility of a future with them as a family.

We attended Metropolitan Community Church together where we found a sense of community and spirituality and welcoming inclusiveness. Finally he could express his spirituality and reconcile it with his nature.

The damage done to him psychologically prevented us from having a healthy sexual relationship because of all the attached guilt. It was many more months before we even started to be able to have the beginnings of normal sex life. He distanced himself further from his family as most of them could not condone his behavior or what they saw as chosen lifestyle, which sent him into the occasional depressive episodes.

He was interviewed on our local news channel about how damaging mentally, physically, psychologically, emotionally, that the conversion therapy was that he suffered. He was interviewed in silhouette, with a pseudonym, and slight voice altering so he would not be recognized by anyone from his family or church.

Eventually after 3 years he came to a sort of inner peace and broke it off with me as he wanted to explore life as a single gay man.

It was many more years after that that he started to heal the relationships with many of his family. Several years later I learned from mutual friends that he had met a man and settled down with his two boys who were now teenagers living the perfect family life that I had always envisioned for myself.

His two boys suffered the fallout from their father's inability to have healthy relationships and grew up dysfunctional themselves, unable to have healthy relationships with friends or family.

A few years ago I learned that he had committed suicide not long after his 50th birthday.

This is what conversion "therapy" does, it destroys lives.