

CONVERSION THERAPY IS DAMAGING AND DANGEROUS FOR YOUTH

WHAT IS CONVERSION THERAPY?

"Conversion therapy (CT) also called reparative therapy refers to efforts to change an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression" (SAMHSA, 2015 p.66).

"When I came out to my parents, they found me a conversion therapist who told me transgender people were sick and belonged in mental hospitals. He forced me to throw away all my girl's clothes as part of my treatment, but, having to dress as a male sent me into complete despair, hopelessness, and depression" (SAMHSA, 2015, p.44).

We must rely on retrospective studies to understand the dangers of CT because it is unethical for researchers and mental health professionals to provide a treatment that is known to be harmful. **CT has been shown to worsen internalized homophobia, interrupt healthy identity development, increase depression, anxiety, self-hatred, and self-destructive behaviors, and create mistrust of mental health professionals** (Halpert, 2000).



Major health, mental health, and educational organizations recognize the dangers of CT and support its ban.

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Association of School Administrators
- American Counseling Association
- American Federation of Teachers
- American Psychological Association
- American School Health Association
- Interfaith Alliance Foundation
- National Association of School Psychologists
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Association of Social Workers
- National Education Association
- School Social Work Association of America

Empirical Retrospective Experience Tells Us:

- ❑ Individuals who claim to change their orientation struggle with their homosexuality their whole life (Weis et al. 2010).
- ❑ During CT, Therapists mentioned that the LGBT identity is bad, sick or inferior and to increase spiritual and religious practice (Flentje et al. 2013).
- ❑ Clients of CT rated their experience as being very destructive and not beneficial (Jones, 2003).
- ❑ Minors undergoing CT reported higher sexual identity distress and lower self esteem (Dehlin, 2014).

"I'd be brainwashed day after day after day, with them telling me about what hell was like and how I was going to be there...and they began to 'heal' my relationship with my parents by trying to prove that my father was distant and my mother was overbearing. They were trying to show that I had this brokenness sexually and they were using my [drug] abuse against me" (Price, 2014).

"It is nearly impossible to describe walking into a therapist's office after surviving conversion therapy. The problem is that we need help from a system we have only known to hurt us. Hearing that I would be okay and that my new therapist could help me learn to cope with the pain of my conversion therapy experience was like getting a second chance at life" (SAMHSA, 2015, p.50).

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