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*adult sexual partners or potential partners about your past as a child sexual abuser?*

When I feel comfortable in a friendship, I share this part of me. I feel it is important that someone close to me know this information. It is a part of me, and though I'm not proud of what I did, I am very proud of the effort I've taken to gain control and stay in control.

*EB: What keeps you from acting on any continuing attraction to boys under age 21? How long have you been offense-free?*

As I said, I have not acted inappropriately since August of 1983. Here is what I feel is the most important aspect of my recovery: Any time I see a boy I find attractive and know he is underage, I have gained a way of approaching this situation. I accept and say to myself that I am attracted to him. If I'm with someone who understands my recovery, I may even tell them. Then, I go through a series of statements that at one time I had to say very slowly and move away from the presence of the boy.

Now I can just think it quickly – in one fell swoop. I say [to myself] that though I find him appealing and attrac-

tive, that I owe him his right to privacy, to his innocence, to his own time frame to become comfortable with his sexual life, to honor and respect his physical space. And I also say to myself that I owe it to myself, and realize the consequences that could come from such an interaction, that I have paid dearly in the past, I owe it to my wonderful family for their continued support, and to my huge circle of friends for all they have done for me and continue to do for me. And I have a huge responsibility for all the people I represent in the work I do, for those many people who have said they look up to me and want to someday be as strong as I am [in remaining offense-free]. I owe it to all the therapists who helped me so well with the right direction to my life.

All of this is said quickly now – but there was a time when I stated all that after the acceptance of the attraction. I have found it very important to take ownership of the attraction.

Let's face it, we all "window shop" humans we find attractive. And none of us can answer why we are attracted to whoever we are – it just so happens we are. It is vital for me to accept that and own it, then move on.

## Treatment continued from page fifteen

that relates to sexual offending, Cumming responds, "Such relationships are likely to fit the definition of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is a legal definition. The age of consent has not changed that much. Whether the victim thinks that it is sexual abuse or not is basically irrelevant. A boy of 14 having sex with a 21-year old man may think that it's consensual, but it would be legally defined as abuse. The issues are the age of consent and the age difference between the abuser and the victim."

The legal age of consent for sex in Vermont is 16 for both boys and girls.

"No matter how involved in the relationship or convinced of its consensual nature, a later re-evaluation may reveal the manipulations that were used and change a person's feelings about the relationship," Cumming continues. "Most teenagers are quite clear about when they're being abused, but there's a small group of kids who may be unclear because the abuser's manipulations are more subtle."

Cumming and McGrath outline sex offender treatment in six steps:

1) First get the offender to accept responsibility for his

actions and the harm he caused.

2) Deal with distorted thinking used to justify their actions.

3) Teach the offender to understand the impact of his behavior on victims and to show more empathic behavior with other people around them. Teach the offender to recognize other people's emotional stress, to identify another person's perspective, and to communicate empathy toward others. "If sex offenders could learn empathetic skills, they wouldn't be able to hurt another person again," says Cumming. "It's really the opposite of military training to turn other people into objects so we can kill them."

4) Deal with sexual arousal – reduce deviant arousal, enhance arousal to an appropriate adult partner. The basic lesson is that it's not okay to act on arousal around kids, and if offenders can reduce the level of their arousal around kids, they are much less likely to act on it. "With gay men, especially those who aren't sure about their sexuality," adds Cumming, "that's where there's a lot of discussion about how to get support for them. When an adult is troubled that he is so aroused to children, we use behavioral interventions to interrupt their deviant arousal and behavior. I've talked to sex offenders from other states who have said [behavioral intervention] was the part of the program that they hated the most, but it was also the most effective part in helping them change their arousal to kids."

5) Relapse prevention planning – teach offenders how and when to intervene in their own patterns of behavior that lead up to a sexual offense.

6) Address social competency issues, such as anger management, substance abuse treatment issues, and/or dating skills. Asked how a straight treatment professional teaches a gay sex offender dating skills and social competency within a gay cultural milieu, McGrath admitted, "It becomes somewhat questionable about what values someone espouses around various sexuality issues, such as cruising. Mostly we provide support services and networking resources – glbt groups at local colleges, OITM, and referral to other therapists who deal with coming out issues."

Planning for release into the community. Sex offenders are released into the community usually under some kind of supervision, such as parole. Release planning involves setting up a support team of people who know the offender's issues and can help steer him in a positive direction, provide encouragement and monitor his behavior. Besides being under the supervision of a parole officer, the offender is required to participate in sex offender-specific outpatient treatment.

McGrath reiterates that males who were molested in childhood by other males are not necessarily gay, though he agreed that it likely complicates their process of sorting out their sexuality. "Does that make someone gay by having a sexual experience with an older male? I don't think so. Sexual preference is largely innate, much of it happens *in utero*."

## Does Sex Offender Treatment Work?

According to Georgia Cumming, Program Director for the Vermont Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Abuse, the current model of sex offender treatment used in Vermont works – not perfectly, but better than no treatment – based on a recent outcome study.

The study followed up on 195 adult male sex offenders who were referred to the prison-based treatment program between 1989 and 1993. Of the 195 sex offenders, 56 completed the treatment program; 49 entered the program but did not complete it; and 90 refused treatment. No information was given on how many – if any – of the study participants identified as gay. There were no differences in assessed re-offense risk level among the three groups (completers, partial treatment recipients, and treatment refusers).

In a six-year follow-up, 5.4% of the men who completed treatment (3 of 56) committed another sexual offense and were caught. Of the men who got only partial treatment (typically left the program, or violated rules and were expelled from the program) just over 30% (15 of 49) were arrested again for a sexual crime. About the same percentage of men who were not in the treatment program at all were arrested again for some form of sexual abuse (27 of 90, or 30%).

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