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Reparative therapies are trying to fix something that need not be fixed. All of the major mental health organizations, including the American Psychological Association⁽¹⁾, The American Psychiatric Association⁽²⁾, the National Association of Social Workers⁽³⁾ and the American Mental Health Counselors Association⁽⁴⁾ have taken the position, over the past 30 years, that homosexuality is not a mental disorder. Gay, lesbian and bisexual youth do not need to change their sexual orientation because there is nothing wrong with it.

Furthermore, the major mental health organizations have either condemned the use of reorientation or reparative therapies, or strongly discouraged the practice. They have done so because homosexuality and bisexuality are not disorders that need to be repaired. Also, there is very little evidence that reparative therapies actually change sexual orientation. More disturbingly, in many cases, reparative therapy does more harm than good to the individual. None of the mental health organizations consider reparative therapy to be a soundly research-based and safe treatment.

There is also some evidence that reparative therapists prey on a vulnerable, stigmatized group, out of religious or political ideology rather than proven theories of development, and do not practice according to the ethical standards of the mental health professions. For example, one study in 2001⁽⁵⁾, of 120 people that had formerly been treated with reparative therapy found that 74% of the participants were never told by their therapists that the American Psychological and Psychiatric Associations had determined that homosexuality was not a mental disorder. In fact, many had been lied to by their therapists who told them that it *was* a mental disorder despite the positions of the mental health associations. Eighty-three percent were never told that affirmative therapists, not biased against a homosexual orientation, were available. These people were not given proper informed consent for treatment at the time they had reparative therapy, and many of them eventually believed that the reparative therapy actually harmed them by making them more depressed, discouraged, or in some cases suicidal.

The most important thing I can say to you today is that the psychological literature indicates that the majority of openly lesbian, gay and bisexual men and women live happy, well-adjusted lives. It is not necessary to repair their sexual orientation because it is not broken. Homosexuality and bisexuality are normal variations of human behavior. As a psychologist, I can tell you that what lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people need is not therapy to try to change them. What they need is their families' and churches' and schools' support and respect. The less discrimination and rejection they face, the happier and healthier they will be.

References

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