



## **Counseling for Sexual Identity Concerns: A measured, careful, and compassionate approach**

Professional therapy for same-sex attraction and sexual identity has recently generated question and concern – both in families and policy debate. Regulatory bans against helping youth in any manner that does not comply with LGBT values and identity are advancing. This matter is too critical to give in to either uncompassionate rhetoric or overreaching regulations. At stake are religious freedoms sacred to families and American life, client autonomy, individual well-being, and parental rights. Much is bound up in this topic – the greatest of which is people’s profound human pain and need for informed, client-sensitive help. We recoil at assertions from either side that reduce people to issues or brush aside deep personal angst with one-sided sound bites.

This is why Focus on the Family takes a measured, careful, and compassionate approach to this life-impacting family topic.

**We believe in and support the availability of professional counseling in matters of sexuality that is respectful, safe, ethical, and responsive to the client’s values and desires.**

God’s love guides our response to this issue. Every human possesses inherent dignity and immeasurable worth. Christians are called to defend and protect the marginalized and suffering among us. Individuals with homosexual attractions or gender concerns often suffer stress, family strain, and questions that are deeply perplexing. There is no place for shame, degradation, or coercion of any child, teen, or adult in the tender journey of sexual development, including the sacred space of counseling. Sound professional therapy *does not* utilize or abide by such qualities, but rather meets individuals at their point of need to alleviate anxiety, clarify values, and work toward their chosen aims. Doing so creates meaningful help for individuals and their families.

Biblical humility also guides us. Sin is pervasive and impacts each of us – there is no room for pride or judgment. Personal wrongdoing as well as simply living in an imperfect world deeply affects everyone. Temptations are common to us all, and many of these tendencies arise out of factors we didn’t choose. Sexuality is particularly complex in this way. Countless biological, social, familial, spiritual, and environmental matters converge to influence a person’s sexual behaviors, attractions, and identity labels.

This is where the free practice of professional counseling can be a profound and important service. Well-informed, ethical counselors offer beautiful and artful support that fully regards the client's holistic emotional needs (not merely the sexual ones) and explores and aligns with their deeply held values and spiritual faith. Counselors also help clients make meaning of their subjective experience of sexuality and determine how they want to proceed with their options in life. This client-honoring approach is the standard of care used by competent professionals and should be freely available to all.

As with *all* professional counseling, this includes very personalized conversations to empower individuals for health and realistic living toward their goals. For some, this includes investigating not only what they believe to have influenced their attractions, but also the degree of fluidity (variability) in attractions they might discover over time. We do not advocate for any therapy that "requires" or promises categorical change or sexual conversion. We especially denounce any practice that shames, degrades, coerces, abuses, or insults individuals with demands to earn basic human acceptance. This is not only unbiblical, it's inhumane. Alterations in one's inner sense of sexuality or attractions, while this does occur in the course of time for some, are subjective and individualized. And such changes are certainly not a prerequisite to experiencing God's love or to living a life full of His grace and abundance. How one responds to attractions, temptations, or human desire is something we believe the Bible does speak to for those who profess to follow its design and mandates.

For all these reasons, we stand firm and with care in our outlook – doing so in civility and good will toward those who differ. We likewise urge Christians to maintain relationships of love with their LGBT-identified neighbors, friends, and family members, journeying together with them in humble dialogue, care, and relationship.

For more on this topic, [visit www.FocusontheFamily.com/UnderstandingHomosexuality](http://www.FocusontheFamily.com/UnderstandingHomosexuality)