



CPA Policy Statement on Conversion/Reparative Therapy for Sexual Orientation

The Canadian Psychological Association opposes any therapy with the goal of repairing or converting an individual's sexual orientation, regardless of age. Conversion therapy, or reparative therapy, refers to any formal therapeutic attempt to change the sexual orientation of bisexual, gay and lesbian individuals to heterosexual (e.g., Nicolosi, 1991; Socarides & Kaufman, 1994). It can include prayer or religious rites, modification of behaviours, and individual or group counselling (Bright, 2004; Nicolosi, 1991).

Scientific research does not support the efficacy of conversion or reparative therapy (Haldeman, 1994; Spitzer, 2012; see Anton, 2010). Conversion or reparative therapy can result in negative outcomes such as distress, anxiety, depression, negative self-image, a feeling of personal failure, difficulty sustaining relationships, and sexual dysfunction (e.g., Haldeman, 2001; Shidlo & Schroeder, 2002; Beckstead & Morrow, 2004; Glassgold et al., 2009). There is no evidence that the negative effects of conversion or reparative therapy counterbalance any distress caused by the social stigma and prejudice these individuals may experience.

The Canadian Psychological Association also recognizes that individuals differ in the fluidity of their sexual attractions across the lifespan (Rust, 1993; Spitzer, 2003; Diamond, 2007), but does not view such naturally occurring fluidity as supporting arguments in favour of conversion or reparative therapies. As well, individuals may experience distress about their non-heterosexual attractions or orientation, due to negative internalized beliefs or external factors such as family, religious, or societal values or discrimination (e.g., Bartlett, Smith, & King, 2009; Beckstead, 2012; Beckstead & Morrow, 2004). As such, seeking therapy from an LGB-affirmative or person-focused therapist is a positive step towards maintaining one's mental health (see Anton, 2010; Beckstead 2012).

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