

Gay and Transgender Issues in the Workplace

Mike Wallace Had a Male Crush

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Thirty years ago, Mike Wallace told me that he had been attracted to a handsome male co-worker at a broadcast station in Detroit. He speculated that every man had homosexual feelings. Both my father and Ray's father thought the same thing. We think our dads had male crushes in their lives, too. Why else would they make such an observation?

In today's parlance, male-male, non-sexual relations are called "bromances." This refers to when guys, regardless of their sexual orientations, have intimate relationships with other men. They want to spend their free time with each other. For instance, they might go fishing together every weekend, just not at Brokeback Mountain.

But Mike Wallace, the recently deceased CBS veteran newsman, never courted a close friendship with the handsome man with whom he worked. Yet, he seemed fascinated by the recollections of his feelings, and wanted to share them with me at a conference at which I spoke about gay issues. He wondered what I thought about his belief that every man has such feelings.

If it's true that every male has had, or will have, a male crush in his life, we have to accept that this is true for Pope Benedict XVI, Fred Phelps, Pat Robertson, Chuck Norris, Rick Santorum, George W. Bush, and Mark Wahlberg. How we men react to our male crushes depends upon a great many factors, including how often the crushes occur, our religion, our politics, our culture, and even our DNA.

This past week, I heard from two men who were dealing with their male crushes. One of them is married with children, and recently checked himself into the hospital because of suicidal tendencies. He called to say how terribly upset he is about how his persistent male crushes will impact his wife, children, his work, and his future happiness. The other man I heard from by e-mail is a 25-year-old Iranian who has lived in dread of how his male crushes have threatened his life.

We've made up words to describe ourselves based upon our crushes. If we have only an occasional same-sex crush, we call ourselves "heterosexual." If we have lots of same-sex crushes, we call ourselves "bisexual," and if almost all of our crushes are for people of the same sex, we call ourselves "gay."

Mike Wallace wasn't gay. His male crush—or crushes—didn't preoccupy his life. But, he was able to talk about them. I've found that only sexually and emotionally mature people are able to acknowledge their feelings to themselves and to others.

I've had female crushes. I believe that every man who identifies himself as "gay" has also had a female crush. I never wanted to act on those crushes sexually, but I have been deeply emotionally attracted to women in my life. I'm not bisexual in identity or behavior, but I think the labels "gay"

and "straight" are dishonest representations of the human experience. Everyone is emotionally bisexual.

The other night at a dinner party, Ray and I met a former heterosexually married man who is now in a gay relationship. He has children, like many gay-identified men I know. In our one-on-one conversation, I surprised myself by acknowledging a long-felt observation: Gay-identified men who have been heterosexually married, and have raised children, tend to be more emotionally mature and responsible than gay-identified men who have never been husbands and fathers.

That's not to say that late-blooming, former straight husbands and fathers can't be annoying and embarrassing in their efforts to wrap themselves in gay liberation, and make up for lost sexual satisfaction, by wearing age-inappropriate clothing and dominating conversations with fifth-grade innuendos. But most formerly married husbands and fathers that I have met seem to be less narcissistic, and obsessed with youth and beauty, than are gay men who have spent their lives self-indulging.

A recent study published in *The New York Times* suggests that our DNA dictates whether we will be Republicans or Democrats, whether we will loathe our fantasies or enjoy them, whether we will keep small groups of loyal friends, or share our love with everyone, whether we will embrace religious dogma, or reject regimented living. Our DNA, then, can impact how we deal with our male crushes. My guess would be that our DNA also impacts how long we live in marriages that betray our feelings, and how long we live in countries that threaten our feelings.

Fear is a common denominator in all of our lives. We fear our feelings, the differences we see in others, and the insignificance of our lives. It seems to me that the well-balanced life is one in which we embrace all of our feelings. When we make decisions, they should honestly reflect our awareness of our feelings, the assumption that all other living things share our struggle with fear, and that how we respond to our feelings dictates the happiness we experience in our own lives, and that we create in the lives of others.

Men, like Mike Wallace, who have had a male crush, owe it to themselves and to those in their lives not to deny their experiences. Rejecting our feelings by creating religious or political wars against them is dishonest and destructive.