

# Positive Therapy

## Setting the gay record . . . straight!

**G**ay Affirmative Therapy for the Straight Clinician, a new book by author and Royal Oak psychotherapist Joe Kort, LMSW, shows those in helping professions how to work effectively with lesbian and gay clients.

Written primarily for mental health professionals, this book is also useful for any doctor, teacher, rabbi, nurse or anyone working directly with lesbian and gay clients.

As Kort says, "It is not enough to be gay friendly, you must be gay informed."

His book helps straight professionals work with gays and lesbians by understanding their families of origin: "When a gay family member comes out of the closet, the rest of the family immediately goes in," and Kort instructs how to work with those who discover that a loved one is lesbian or gay.

He also explores the homonegative assumption that an "alternative lifestyle" makes for a more difficult way to live. For gays and lesbians, the "alternative" of masquerading as heterosexuals is actually harder and can lead to depression and self-defeating, even self-destructive behavior.

"Most people are homo-ignorant rather than homophobic," writes Kort.

"From birth," he explains, "the culture imprints us to think that heterosexuality is primary and that any other orientation is inferior. Thus, there's no room for exploring anything but a heterosexual orientation."

This leads to lesbians and gays role-playing heterosexuality and not being authentic to their true selves.

### What's Featured

Some of the features of *Gay Affirmative Therapy for the Straight Clinician* include understanding the coming out process, recognizing damaging heterosexual privilege — institutional, legal and societal where it exists and exploring the shame and alienation, isolation and neglect that



Author Joe Kort

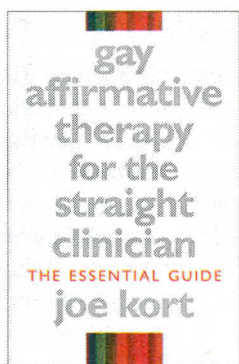
lesbian and gay children endure while growing up.

Kort explains how most heterosexuals hear the word *sex* when they hear the word *gay*: "A number of times, a straight man has noticed my wedding

ring and asked if I'm married. I'll say, 'Yes,' because I am. When he asks my wife's name, I pleasantly tell him I'm married to a man whose name is Mike. Often, the guy steps back and exclaims, 'Dude, I'm not gay!' as if I had a sexual motive or tried to convert him."

When people wish Kort a Merry Christmas, "I nicely tell them I am Jewish; whereupon they usually respond politely by saying, 'Oh, sorry! Happy Chanukah!' I've never heard anyone exclaim, 'Dude, I'm not Jewish! Are you trying to convert me?'"

Thus, his incentive for writing this book — to help straight readers who want to help lesbians and gays as individuals and couples. □



For those interested in buying *Gay Affirmative Therapy for the Straight Clinician* published by WW Norton Books and meeting Joe Kort, the Lesbian and Gay Community Center in Ferndale will hold a "bookwarming" on Friday, June 13. To learn more, call him at (248) 399-7317 or visit [www.joekort.com](http://www.joekort.com).

Det. Jewish News 6/12/08