

# Why Conversion Therapy is Wrong: A Comprehensive Analysis from Theological and Psychological Grounds

Rt. Rev. Szymon Niemiec – Psychologist, Ericksonian Psychotherapist and ecumenical Christian clergy.

## Introduction

Conversion therapy, also known as reparative therapy or conversion efforts, is a discredited practice that aims to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. This harmful practice has been condemned by numerous medical, psychological, and religious organizations worldwide due to its inherent lack of efficacy, unethical methods, and detrimental impact on individuals' well-being.

In this extensive exploration, we delve into the theological and psychological reasons why conversion therapy is fundamentally flawed and unacceptable. We delve into the potential harms of this practice and advocate for its eradication.

## Theological Arguments Against Conversion Therapy: Upholding Dignity and Embracing Diversity

At the core of many religious traditions lies the unwavering belief in the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. These traditions often espouse the concept of God's unconditional love and acceptance for all people.

Conversion therapy stands in stark contrast to these fundamental religious values. It seeks to alter an integral aspect of a person's identity, often employing harmful and degrading methods, and contradicts the principles of love, acceptance, and respect that are central to many religious teachings.

Here we delve into specific theological arguments that refute the validity of conversion therapy:

### 1. Creation in God's Image:

Many religious traditions affirm that God created all individuals in their own image, bestowing upon them intrinsic value and worth. Conversion therapy, by implying that being gay or transgender is inherently wrong, contradicts this fundamental belief.

## 2. Love of Neighbors as Ourselves:

Jesus Christ's teachings emphasize the importance of loving our neighbors as ourselves. This directive compels us to embrace and accept people for who they are, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Conversion therapy, by attempting to change an individual's inherent identity, is a blatant violation of this Christ-centered principle.

## 3. Grace and Acceptance:

The Bible teaches that all individuals are sinners in need of God's grace. This concept signifies that we should refrain from judging others or seeking to change them. Instead, we should focus on our own relationship with God and allow others to live their lives authentically.

# Psychological Arguments Against Conversion Therapy: Debunking Fallacies and Protecting Well-being

Conversion therapy has been thoroughly debunked by the scientific community, lacking any credible evidence to support its claims of changing sexual orientation or gender identity. In fact, substantial research demonstrates its harmful psychological consequences.

Here we examine specific psychological arguments that expose the ineffectiveness and harm of conversion therapy:

## 1. Rejection of False Assumptions:

Conversion therapy rests on the outdated belief that homosexuality and transgender identity are mental disorders. However, these concepts have been removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) by the American Psychiatric Association, reflecting the latest scientific understanding.

## 2. Use of Harmful Techniques:

Conversion therapy often employs unethical and harmful techniques, such as aversion therapy and electric shock therapy. These methods have been proven ineffective and can cause lasting psychological damage, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

## 3. Internalized Stigma and Self-Rejection:

Conversion therapy can contribute to internalized homophobia and transphobia, leading individuals to reject and despise aspects of their identity. This internal struggle can hinder self-acceptance and mental well-being.

# The Harmful Impacts of Conversion Therapy: A Call to Action

The negative effects of conversion therapy are well documented and far-reaching. These harms can include:

## 1. Psychological Trauma:

Conversion therapy can cause significant psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation.

## 2. Social Isolation and Exclusion:

Individuals who have undergone conversion therapy may face social isolation and exclusion, making it difficult to form healthy relationships and find support.

## 3. Challenges in Identity Formation:

Conversion therapy can hinder an individual's ability to form a positive and healthy sense of self, potentially leading to confusion, guilt, and internal conflict.

## Conclusion: Embracing Diversity and Protecting Human Dignity

Conversion therapy is a harmful and ineffective practice that has no place in a society that values diversity, inclusion, and human dignity. It is based on outdated assumptions about sexual orientation and gender identity and has been rejected by the medical and psychological communities.

We must continue to speak out against conversion therapy and work to protect the rights of all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. By fostering understanding, acceptance, and respect for all people, we can create a world where everyone can live authentically and with dignity.

### About author:

Rt. Rev. Szymon Niemiec has been fighting for the rights of LGBT+ people in Poland since 1998. By education, he is a psychologist, an Ericksonian therapist, and an academic lecturer. He is also the creator of the first Polish pride parade, called the Equality Parade, and co-creator of the first Polish questionnaire for examining gender dysphoria and gender identification in adults and teenagers.