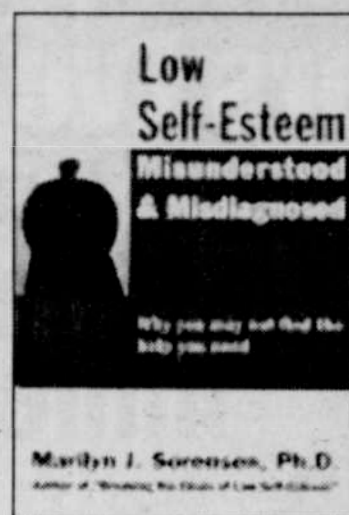


You just might decide you never were diagnosed correctly in the first place. And because of requests from her clients, Sorensen is hard at work on a complementary workbook dealing with low self-esteem.



others have entertainment industry award statues on their mantels...yet many have found the acknowledgment of their power, gifts and talents very troubling."

Wallman spent three years developing the program, and it is indeed pleasant and easy to use. After mousing through the sample, you might decide to plunk down your digital cash and try the deluxe model.

From a perusal of that, it looks like you get your money's worth—and then some. Each

Other sources of help are available on the Internet. One of those is the Institute for Personal Growth.

Margaret Nichols founded it in 1983 specifically to provide psychotherapy for gay people by gay people. The institute quickly attracted talented therapists and became the largest agency of its kind in New Jersey.

Realizing this kind of specialized therapy is often unavailable in the hinterlands, the therapists started offering "e-therapy" at www.ipgcounseling.com. They even give an e-freebie: E-mail them a question, and they'll send you one response free.

They have an excellent site with a helpful section called "What's so different about 'gay' therapy?" It might help you decide whether it's important for you to have a lesbian therapist. They also list numerous links, including www.find-a-therapist.com, which can set you up with an online or telephone shrink or even find someone for old-fashioned face-to-face dishing.

The institute offers a large section on mental health news of interest to the gay community, including one that caught my eye about research indicating children who are abused early in life develop differences in their brains!

Depression affects many gay men and lesbians as they deal with issues such as coming out, sexual confusion and family acceptance. Often they're left feeling alone, with no one to talk to. Some are wary of discussing intimate issues with a stranger, so online therapy at least can be a good starting point.

Another even more technically extreme concept is offered at www.yourtherapist.com/gay. You can get a free taste of the services by interacting with a computer program that will quiz you about your mental health or lack thereof.

It was designed to offer a lower-cost alternative to traditional therapy. The national average for a 50-minute therapy session is more than \$100.

Unlike typical Internet therapy, where you normally wait days for a response, this self-help program gives immediate feedback 24/7. At \$39.95 for the complete 10-week program, it's certainly affordable.

Although this is not a substitute for one-on-one therapy, it is a safe introduction to concepts of self-evaluation. The free trial version asks users to answer questions and choose traits from various lists, then returns them in different contexts. For example, one exercise allows people to read themselves described in a positive way they never might have experienced before.

According to founding therapist Lee Wallman, "It's based on a positive approach that focuses on your strengths—your natural gifts—rather than just bemoaning the past."

In fact, he feels many people are suffering from societal pressure to conform and have repressed their best selves. "In my professional practice, I see some of the most successful people in Hollywood. Some are household names,

week you download a long chapter of material to read before you do the interactive portion. Chapter 1 is 41 pages! (Or you can buy a printed version of the workbook online.)

According to the introduction, these are some benefits you can expect to gain from using the program:

- Know and embrace your special, natural gifts.
- Get to know what goes on inside your head that limits you from the free and healthy expression of these gifts.
- Recognize what happens outside yourself that sets off this internal, limiting process.
- Learn how to rescript or replace this reaction.
- Feel successful in the expression of your gifts and proud simply to use what nature gave you—realizing the use of your innate beauty, brains and talent is what will make you happy and fulfilled.

Sadly, it appears the workbook was written for a mainstream (read het) audience, not for gay people, as implied. The first example is about a beautiful, brilliant, successful woman with too many male suitors. Yeah, that's a problem we all can relate to! Still, if you can move past examples like that, there appears to be much of value in this program.

If you prefer your help to come with a face attached, Debora Landforce, M.S., is a counselor, teacher and consultant in Eugene. As a lesbian therapist, part of her work for many years has been to support the

sexual minorities community through the stresses of the holidays.

In fact, she's created a special program called "Surviving the Holidays," which she presents throughout the state. Last month she served up the info to the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays chapter in Grants Pass.

If you'd like to schedule an appointment to talk about holiday issues—or anything else—she can be reached

at 541-302-9002. Watch for her program in the Portland area next year.

Landforce's presentation includes 20 tips for surviving the holidays. At the top of the list is the 48-Hour Rule regarding traveling or inviting guests into your home. Unless you are receiving full acknowledgment and inclusion from the people you are with, stay no more than 48 continuous hours with them. Emotional health deteriorates significantly after this time.

After two days, plan a break, a side trip, anything to break the contact. Honor your feelings and needs—don't let the airline schedule determine how long your visit should be! ☐

ORIANA GREEN is a Portland writer who believes we all could use some therapy—electronic or otherwise.

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