

My Journey
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My introduction to male spirituality began shortly after 9/11/2001. The terrorist attacks were a huge wake up call for me. I was attending church and had a good job etc. The outside looked good but inside I was not OK and there were too many secrets. Somehow I knew I had to get honest with myself and with others if I was ever going to get beyond where I was stuck. I tried a Celebrate Recovery group but that was short lived. Then I started going to a men's group at my church called "Ground Zero". It was named that before 9/11, deriving its name from 12 steps only asking, "Where do you start before Step 1?" At Ground Zero.

The group was a Godsend for me. I met many men who I continue to have deep friendships with today. I have been meeting on a weekly basis with some of these same men for the better part of these last 12 years. In the early years we had huge turnouts for a Monday night group night. Up to 100 men attending. We usually had large group introduction then we'd break up into small groups and share. For me the best thing was having a talking stick, which gave you the right to talk and everyone else had the right to listen. At first having 5-6 minutes of uninterrupted time to check in was very intimidating. I was fearful of just talking to one other person, more so when speaking in front of a group. That was a major challenge for me, but slowly over time it became more natural.

Things I learned during those early days were that you can truth your way out of trouble areas. Lots of behaviors have power over us just because we keep them secret. In AA they say you are only as sick as your secrets. So sharing with a group these areas of life somehow brought freedom. James 5:16 says, "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." Confess not to be forgiven so much but to bring healing. So this is what we did.

The check in also had a way over time of bringing out things I did not know about myself. Over time, I have found the very act of speaking brings up new things from new places. It's as if I get amazed by what I say because those words were not pre-formulated in my head. That experience continues to this day as I step up to speak in more places and especially when I have extended time to talk like at my Spiritual Director appointments.

Another big thing I learned in those early days were that I needed to push beyond my comfort zone. The talking, especially in front of others was out of my comfort zone but there were many other things too. Going to events I feared attending. Being friendly and in conversation with people I was afraid of. Taking on roles at work and in men's community that I initially feared doing or thought I was incapable of doing. Sure there have been failures but always something more or different on the other side.

Eventually some of the men, including myself started going to other events outside of church sanctioned events, like New Warrior Training Adventure and MROP. To me the NWTA was an initiation into being “a man among men” and that was really good. The MROP though was this miraculous, marvelous opening up into so much more and it occurred at a time when I was very much defeated, depressed and lost over failures of my main personal relationships. The MROP really opened my eyes to value of quiet time, silence and time alone especially in nature. It really seems to feed my soul.

I did my MROP in 2006 in Frost Valley, New York. Less than 1 year later Richard came to speak in Bay Area and at that point he gathered many of the initiated men and asked us to form a region. So out of that group we have been meeting regularly and the NorCal region has started to really establish itself. We just did our 2nd MROP and we have done 2 FIRMings and other workshops and trainings. I have enjoyed being part of the team that has put these events on and I have been welcomed to help with Southern California MROP's and FIRMings. Each of these events has stretched me. Pulling and pushing me again and again out of my comfort zone.

It has been a wild ride at times and I love it.