

# Jeffrey Chernin, Ph.D., MFT

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6310 San Vicente Blvd. Suite 410  
Los Angeles, California 90048  
United States

Phone: 323-692-7781

I've been providing therapy to LGBT individuals and same-sex couples since 1992. I began at an LGBT community center, where I had an internship, before going into private practice. Whether you're depressed, anxious, experiencing relationship issues, or simply need someone to talk to (who isn't in your friend and family circle), you will see that I will attempt to help you meet your goals in the first session onward. In fact, that's my only goal - which is to help you become the person you'd like to be or find yourself in the relationship you'd like to have. With over 25 years of experience, I have come to believe that many of our problems stem from difficulties managing our emotions. In fact, we don't avoid certain people, places, or things - but rather we avoid the feelings that those people, places or things bring up in us. We are "emotional managers," and the emotions are located in a very "young" part of our brains, which sometimes causes us to say to ourselves - "that's ridiculous," or "I shouldn't feel that way." To me, part of therapy is learning how to respond to our emotions rather than change them. Often, people also say to themselves, "What's wrong with me?" or "Why can't I just...?" That is known as a "secondary reaction," and part of the therapy work is also about achieving the "No wonder!!" goal, which is to understand that you may be having a normal response to an abnormal situation. The example I like to give is regarding people who are obese. Many obese people have had traumatic or highly difficult childhoods and adolescence. Eating is a "coping strategy" to deal with highly unpleasant emotions.

Putting it all together, when an obese person says, "What's wrong with me?", they're really communicating shame and embarrassment. Hating yourself for being overweight simply adds to the emotions that you have to manage (!). That's why self-hatred and self-shame never works for ANY sort of change - it simply becomes part of the vicious circle. And therapy is designed to help change that, which is what I have been doing for many years and would welcome the opportunity to assist you.

Specialization(s): Gay couples and individuals

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