

# Gay and Transgender Issues in the Workplace

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## Love is...

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The massage therapist cried in my arms after telling me about his unrequited love for the spa's attendant. The massage was a birthday gift from Ray, and I tried hard to maintain silence and focus on the physical experience. But we talked instead—of how hurt he was that his generosity to the man was never reciprocated. As he finished his work on me, I urged him to take great pride in his wonderful skills, having heard from him that he has worked on former First Ladies, movie stars, and CEOs. I also asked him to let go of the man who didn't love him in return, and focus instead on finding a man who would take good care of him. That is when he cried. He didn't think it possible that he would ever find such love. I gave him a kiss on the cheek and hugged him for a long time. "Don't give up," I said. "He's out there."

Love is elusive.

Upon my return home from our week away, I heard that a gay priest I cared for very deeply had died. He and I met in 1974 when my name was known for challenging the Catholic Church's position on homosexuality. John took me to lunch when I visited his area of the country. When he was transferred to Toronto by his religious community, he fell in love with another American, and left the priesthood. Several years later, he and his partner broke up, and John returned to the priesthood as an openly gay man. The love he sought was more accessible to him as a pastor, he said, than in a one-on-one relationship with another man.

Love is multi-faceted.

A few days before Ray's and my birthday getaway, I sat with a man at the gay Starbucks in Wilton Manor, Florida, who wanted to talk about spirituality. I asked him if he was in a relationship. He told me that he would like to be, but he wouldn't want the other man to move into his home because he liked his things the way they were, and he didn't want them moved around. Ideally, he said, he would fall in love with a man who had his own home, and they would live separately.

Love is complicated.

My friend Mark is one of the most physically and spiritually attractive gay bachelors that I know, but he's not eligible. Despite my efforts to play matchmaker, Mark is currently consumed by his mother's wellbeing. Every spare moment he has, he spends with her, ensuring that the staff in the hospital or nursing home takes good care of her. Like the character played by Laura Linney in the film *Love Actually*, Mark, at this moment, chooses his responsibility to a cherished family member over his own desire to be in a loving relationship with another man.

Love is patient.

Among my birthday cards was one from my brother, Tom. That is noteworthy because we have been estranged for the past few years, and have each avoided contact with the other. The "why" of it is of less importance than the peace we each have found in our separate lives. Yet, we love and miss each other. I broke the silence recently when I sent him a congratulatory e-mail on being named to a wonderful new position at work. When I saw his distinctive handwriting on the birthday envelope, I felt both dread and grateful relief.

Love is strong.

Ray hollered up the stairs this morning that the spouse of Andrew Tobias had died. We didn't know Charles Nolan, but it broke our hearts that the gay man who described himself as "the best little boy in the world" was forced to let go of his 53-year-old partner of 16 years. The author of the beloved, classic, coming out book, *The Best Little Boy in the World*, had grown into a wise, capable, gay man who had found love despite the odds, and was now forced to experience the pain of loss that no words can comfort.

Love is painful.

An e-mail message just arrived from someone to whom I had given a copy *Are You Guys Brothers?* He wrote, "Just finished your book and found it, in a word, *delightful*. Your candor, vulnerability and honesty are truly inspiring....You and Ray have certainly carved out a wonderful life for yourselves, and are role models for all of us who were told that to be gay is to grow old alone and pathetic. Thank you for presenting another set of faces to the world."

Love is possible.