Becoming an Ally and Advocate: LGBT 101

Join the network of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members who are willing and prepared to create safer spaces for transgender, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, and questioning people. The OHIO SafeZone project is a voluntary, educational effort that helps participants better understand queer identities while also exploring strategies on how to be an ally to LGBTQ communities on and off campus. The workshop offers a starting point for deeper engagement of the dynamics of gender and orientation.

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What is in this packet

What is SafeZone

- What is a “Safe Zone” ... pg. 4
- About this workshop ... pg. 5
- Free to be Me ... pg. 5
- Respect Guidelines ... pg. 6
- Institutional Grounding for SZ ... pg. 7

Why this conversation matters

- Ohio realities ... pg. 8
- School Climate in Ohio ... pg. 9
- National Transgender Discrimination Survey – Ohio results ... pg. 11
- 5 Challenges for Modern LGBTQIA+ Teens ... pg. 13

What is Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

- Working Definitions (Queerionary) ... pg. 17
- LGBTQ Flag Guide ... pg. 26
- Understanding Sexual Orientation, Sex, and Gender ... pg. 27
- Everyone has a Sexual Orientation and a Gender Identity ... pg. 29
- What is Intersex ... pg. 30
- Societal Expectations Chart ... pg. 32
- Asexual Spectrum ... pg. 33
- I think I might not be Straight—so what am I ... pg. 35
- Reflective Self Inventory ... pg. 38
- Breaking through the Binary ... pg. 39

Coming Out

- Coming Out ... pg. 45
- What do I do if someone comes out to me ... pg. 48
- Making a Coming Out Plan ... pg. 49
- Intersectionality ... pg. 50
- Intersecting Identities ... pg. 50
- Multiple Dimensions of Identity ... pg. 51

Privilege and –isms

- What are Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia ... pg. 52
- Words that Hurt and Why ... pg. 52
- Heterosexuality Questionaire ... pg. 56
- Examples of Heterosexism ... pg. 57
- Cisgender Privileges ... pg. 58
- 3 Examples of Everyday Cissexism ... pg. 59
- 5 Ways to end Heterosexism ... pg. 62
Allyship

- Using Privilege to Create Change … pg. 63
- What is an Ally … pg. 64
- Four Levels of Becoming an Ally … pg. 64
- Being an Ally can be Difficult … pg. 64
- Traits of an Ally … pg. 65
- Where do I go from here … pg. 66
- 10 Ways to Fight Hate on Campus … pg. 68
- Now that you are a SafeZone … pg. 69
- How to be an Ally … pg. 70
- The Ones We Left Behind: On Being an Ally to Small Town Queer … pg. 71
- Knowing Your (lack of a) Role: Honoring Healing Spaces as an Ally … pg. 74
- Scenarios Activity … pg. 79
- Gender Pronouns Guide … pg. 83

Resources

- University based LGBT Resources … pg. 84
- Campus and Community Allies … pg. 85
- Ohio LGBT Organizations … pg. 85
- National Resource Roundup … pg. 86

Disclaimer and Note: Though we have revised this packet to add information and to make it as comprehensive as possible, we are mindful that not everything is included—some aspects of identity are covered more and others less. We are committed to providing a starting place for understanding and engaging the complexities of sexuality and gender. We apologize if it appears that we have overlooked or neglected certain topics; we are updating our online resources to provide even more comprehensive resources and are developing supplemental SafeZone programs (SZ 201) to provide opportunities to go deeper as well as raise awareness about identities and intersections of identities that are not included in this packet. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact us at the LGBT Center…it takes the whole #rainbowbobcatfamily to #safeallthezones.
What is a “Safe Zone”?
From the “Campus Climate for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People: A National Perspective” by Susan R. Rankin

The SafeZone symbol is a message to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer (LGBTQI) students, faculty, staff, and colleagues that this is a safe place where one may be open about their identity without fear. This space hereby respects all people regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. The person displaying this symbol has participated in a training workshop to increase his/her awareness and sensitivity to LGBTQI and ally issues and is one who can serve as a referral/resource person.

What is the purpose of “Safe Zone” Trainings?

The purpose of the “Safe Zone” training is to reduce homophobia and heterosexism on Ohio University’s campuses and within the Athens community (as well as regional campus communities) by training students, staff, faculty and community members (Allies) to serve as resources on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex issues and support anyone who is dealing with issues pertaining to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The overall mission of this project is to raise awareness of LGBT issues and pledge a commitment to fostering an environment on campus that is devoid of discrimination based on one’s sexual orientation, sexual identity, or gender identity.

Why do we need a “Safe Zone” at OHIO?

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) community is often the victim of unjustified discrimination and unfairness. A “Safe Zone” works to diminish such discrimination by establishing a place that is free of stereotypical barriers and promotes respect for individuals of all sexuality and gender identities.

Additionally, relevant statistics validate the need for a “Safe Zone.” For instance, according to The Campus Climate Assessment (by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force) of 20 college institutions:

- More than one-third (36 percent) of GLBT undergraduate students have experienced harassment within the past year, as have 29 percent of all respondents.
- Those who experienced harassment reported that derogatory remarks were the most common form (89 percent) and that students were most often the source of harassment (79 percent).
- Twenty percent of all respondents feared for their physical safety because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and 51 percent concealed their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid intimidation.
- Forty-one percent of respondents stated that their college/university was not addressing issues related to sexual orientation/gender identity.
- Respondents were divided on whether or not the institution had visible leadership regarding sexual orientation/gender identity issues, with 44 percent agreeing and 34 percent disagreeing.
- Forty-three percent felt that the curriculum did not represent the contributions of GLBT people.

These statistics help to substantiate the need for a “Safe Zone.” Additionally, these alarming statistics help to emphasize the lack of education—in the general public—surrounding LGBTQI issues.
About this Workshop ~ Getting Started
Edited from: Diversity Works, Amherst, MA, Task Force Against Homophobia

1. This workshop is grounded in several core beliefs: 1- Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia decrease opportunities to talk freely and learn about LGBT people—farther perpetuating the oppression of Heterosexism and Cissexism/Cisgenderism. 2- Being heterosexual is not a choice. Neither is being LGBTQ. 3-We have all learned unwanted oppressive beliefs. While we did not ask to be taught them, change hinges on our ability to separate fault/guilt from responsibility.

2. Discussing feelings is important to your understanding of the issues of difference and diversity. We hope to create a sense of safety so that feelings can be shared.

3. There may be LGBT people in this group. Some may choose not to come out, while others will come out. This may be true as well for others who have LGBT family members or loved ones.

4. One person can speak for all LGBT people. How could they? There is no one “LGBT”, but rather a diverse and varied community of individuals who are LGB and/or T. This workshop and views expressed are intended to give you a better understanding of issues that LGBT people may face and potential common trends. Remember that a little information is better than none, but a little information applied too broadly can be detrimental as well. Overall, to best understand LGBT people you need to meet, befriend, and understand them as individuals.

5. Please respect our time here together. Turn off all electronic devices.

6. We invite ALL questions. This is a safe place to ask what you want/need to know. However, due to our limited time today, we will not spend much time on any one topic.

7. Unlike most workshops, our goal is not to cover all material in this packet in detail. Our goal is to give you some good information and to get you started or help you continue on your journey to be an ally and advocate.

8. We ask that you commit to spending at least one additional hour reading this packet and web resources to supplement this workshop.

9. To make this workshop a safe place for all, we invite additional ground rules from you at this time.

“Free to Be Me” Statement
I, ______________________, hereby have permission to be imperfect with regard to people who are different from me. It is okay if I do not know all the answers about LGBTQ issues or if, at times, my ignorance and misunderstanding becomes obvious. I have permission to ask questions that may appear stupid. I have permission to struggle with these issues and be up-front and honest about my feelings. I am a product of a heterosexist and transphobic culture, and I am who I am.

I don’t have to feel guilty about what I know or believe, but I do need to take responsibility for what I can do now: -Try to learn as much as I can. -Struggle to change my false/inaccurate beliefs or oppressive attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people.
(Adapted from: Bryan L. Brunette, “Free to be You and Me.” 1990.)
Respect Guidelines

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• There may be LGBTQ people in this group. Some may choose not to come out, while others will come out. This may be true as well for others who have LGBT family members or loved ones.

• One person can’t speak for all LGBTQ people. How could they? This workshop and views expressed are intended to give you a better understanding of issues that LGBTQ people may face and potential common trends. Remember that a little information is better than none, but a little information applied too broadly can be detrimental as well. Overall, to best understand LGBT people you need to meet, befriend, and understand them as individuals.

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  Recognize Your Communication Style
  Expect to Learn Something About Yourself and Others
  Speak Clearly and Use Personal Examples When Making a Point
  Participate Honestly and Openly
  Engage in the Process by Listening as Well as Speaking
  Confidentiality/Curiosity/Charity
  Take Responsibility for Yourself and What You Say
Institutional Grounding for SafeZone

Ohio University's Non-Discrimination Policy: Ohio University does not discriminate against any person in employment or educational opportunities because of race, color, religion, age, national origin, national ancestry, sex, pregnancy, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, military service or veteran status, mental or physical disability, or genetic information.

President Roderick McDavis' Diversity Initiative: Ohio University is committed to promoting an atmosphere where understanding and acceptance of cultural and ethnic differences are ensured. A climate that represents and embraces different cultures enhances the University’s ability to provide all of its students with the experiences necessary to successfully compete and achieve in an increasingly diverse and complex society.

Diversity in all of its forms serves to enrich the distinct educational experience of OHIO students, faculty, and staff. There is no better way to learn about the world than to create an environment where students of diverse backgrounds—and indeed, students from all over the world—study, live, learn, and socialize together.

Ohio University is committed to equal opportunity for all people and is pledged to take direct and affirmative action to achieve that goal. In upholding its commitment, Ohio University will not accept racism, sexism, homophobia, bigotry, or other forms of violations of human rights. Such actions are inconsistent with, and detrimental to, the values that we hold essential as an institution of higher learning.

Office for Diversity and Inclusion's mission and cornerstone values: Diversity is a dynamic phenomenon, which means that any definition of diversity will miss some of its evolving features. With that caveat in mind...diversity signifies difference and heterogeneity between and among individuals, groups, and cultures. Specifically, diversity is inclusive of all ages, races, ethnic groups, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, national origins, cultures, socioeconomic classes, abilities, ways of thinking, geographic regions, and religions. Ohio University is committed to promoting an atmosphere where understanding and acceptance of cultural and racial differences are ensured.

- **Mission:** To facilitate an infusion of diversity throughout institutional policies, practices, curricula and programs, leading to a supportive and affirming environment and positive experience for all students, faculty and staff.
- **Cornerstone Principles:** The cornerstone principles provide strategic guidance in the University's quest to promote and value diversity. **Our four cornerstones are: Respect, Inclusion, Community and Excellence.**
  - **Respect** ~ is fundamental in promoting civility and is an imperative factor in appreciating difference.
  - **Inclusion** ~ benefits individuals and society at large, and is reflected throughout Ohio University's long history and commitment to diversity.
  - **Community** ~ is a constantly evolving concept. Fostering community is increasingly important as dynamic interactions between cultures, societies, and nations occur more commonly and ideas overlap and intersect.
  - **Excellence** ~ is essential in all University pursuits and necessary to demonstrate the principle that promoting inclusion increases quality.

These principles guide institutional diversity initiatives that promote mutual understanding, cognitive and character development, global engagement, social justice, and preparation for our evolving society; and support Ohio University's values of Character, Civility, Citizenship, Commitment, and Community.
Snapshot of Ohio LGBT Realities
From the Movement Advancement Project

State Population
- Total Adult Population: 8,880,551
- LGBT Population: 319,700
- LGBT % of State Population: 3.6%
- % of Same-Sex Couples Raising Children: 18%

LGBT-Relevant Laws

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<th>Marriage &amp; Relationship Recognition</th>
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<th>Stepparent Adoption</th>
<th>Foster Care Laws &amp; Regulation</th>
<th>Donor Insemination Protection</th>
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Local Municipalities & Counties with Non-Discrimination Ordinances
- 21% of state population protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation
- 20% of state population is protected from discrimination based on gender identity*
- **Cities and counties prohibiting employment discrimination based on sexual orientation:**
  - City of Canton; City of Cleveland Heights
- **Cities and counties prohibiting employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity:**
  - City of Akron; City of Athens; City of Bowling Green; City of Cincinnati; City of Cleveland; City of Columbus; City of Coshocton; City of Dayton; City of East Cleveland; City of Newark; City of Oxford; City of Toledo; Village of Yellow Springs

*As a result of a 2012 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) ruling, the federal sex discrimination law, Title VII, now protects employees nationwide from discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression. By contrast, the above list reflects state and local laws and ordinances that explicitly protect workers from discrimination based on their gender identity. The level of enforcement of these ordinances may vary by jurisdiction. This information is constantly changing, and we welcome suggestions for additions or changes.
More than 9 in 10 heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) and nearly 9 in 10 heard other homophobic remarks (e.g., “fag” or “dyke”) at school regularly (i.e., sometimes, often, or frequently; see Figure 1).

More than 8 in 10 regularly heard other students in their school make negative remarks about how someone expressed their gender, such as comments about someone not acting “feminine” or “masculine” enough (see Figure 1).

6 in 10 regularly heard negative remarks about transgender people (see Figure 1).

Students also heard anti-LGBT language from school staff. 26% regularly heard school staff make negative remarks about someone’s gender expression and 18% regularly heard staff make homophobic remarks.

The majority experienced verbal harassment (e.g., called names or threatened): more than 7 in 10 based on their sexual orientation and more than 5 in 10 based on the way they expressed their gender (see Figure 2).

Many also experienced physical harassment and physical assault: for example, more than 3 in 10 were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) based on their sexual orientation and 1 in 10 were physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked or injured with a weapon) based on the way they expressed their gender (see Figure 2).

Students also reported high levels of other forms of harassment at school: 87% felt deliberately excluded or “left out” by peers; 79% had mean rumors or lies told about them; 54% were sexually harassed; 48% experienced electronic harassment or “cyberbullying”, and 40% had property (e.g., car, clothing, or books) deliberately damaged and/or stolen.

61% of students who were harassed or assaulted in school never reported it to school staff, and 51% never told a family member about the incident. Among students who did report incidents to school authorities, only 35% said that reporting resulted in effective intervention by staff.
FACT: Many LGBT students in Ohio did not have access to in-school resources and supports.

- Only 4% attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (see Figure 3).

- Nearly all could identify at least one school staff member supportive of LGBT students, but only 54% could identify 6 or more supportive school staff (see Figure 3).

- Only 4 in 10 had a Gay-Straight Alliance or similar student club at their school (see Figure 3).

- Less than 2 in 10 were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events (see Figure 3).

RECOMMENDATIONS

School-based supports such as comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, school personnel who are supportive of LGBT students, Gay-Straight Alliances, and LGBT-inclusive curricular resources can positively affect school climate for LGBT students. Findings from the 2013 National School Climate Survey demonstrate that students attending schools with these resources and supports report more positive school experiences, including lower victimization and absenteeism and higher academic achievement.

Given the high percentages of LGBT students in Ohio who experience harassment at school and the limited access to key resources and supports that can have a positive effect on their school experiences, it is critical that Ohio school leaders, education policymakers, and other individuals who are obligated to provide safe learning environments for all students take the following steps:

- Implement comprehensive school anti-bullying/harassment policies;
- Support Gay-Straight Alliances;
- Provide professional development for school staff on LGBT student issues; and
- Increase student access to LGBT-inclusive curricular resources.

These actions can move us toward a future in which all students in Ohio will have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

To learn more about GLSEN, visit www.glsen.org or contact glsen@glsen.org.
To get involved in a GLSEN chapter in Ohio, visit www.glsen.org/chapters or contact chapterinfo@glsen.org.

GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

In 2013, GLSEN conducted the eighth National School Climate Survey (NSCS), a biennial survey of the experiences of LGBT youth in U.S. secondary schools. The national sample consisted of 7,898 LGBT students from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. A total of 300 respondents were attending schools in Ohio. The majority of the Ohio sample was White/European American (82%), 7% multi-racial, 6% Hispanic/Latino, 3% African American/Black, and 3% Middle Eastern/Arab American, Native American/American Indian, or Asian/Pacific Islander. The gender composition was 46% cisgender female, 27% cisgender male, 12% genderqueer, 11% transgender, and 5% some other gender (e.g., genderfluid). Most (89%) attended public schools. The school community makeup was 48% suburban, 36% rural/small town, and 16% urban. The results reported for Ohio have a margin of error of +/-5%.

For the full 2013 National School Climate Survey report or for any other GLSEN research, go to www.glsen.org/research. Follow @GLSENResearch on Twitter.

Findings of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey
by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

Ohio Results
There were 194 respondents from Ohio.

Workplace Discrimination
Rates of discrimination were alarming in Ohio, indicating widespread discrimination based on gender identity/expression:
- 81% reported experiencing harassment or mistreatment on the job
- 28% lost a job
- 27% were denied a promotion
- 46% were not hired
- 50% experienced an adverse job action, such as being fired, not hired, or denied a promotion

Harassment and Discrimination at School
Those who expressed a transgender identity or gender non-conformity while in grades K-12 reported alarming rates of harassment (86%), physical assault (40%) and sexual violence (14%). Harassment was so severe that it led 15% to leave a school in K-12 settings or leave higher education.

Economic Insecurity
Likely due to employment discrimination and discrimination in school, survey respondents experienced poverty and unemployment at higher rates than the general population:
- 17% of respondents had a household income of $10,000 or less, compared to 4% of the general population.\(^1\)
- 17% were unemployed compared to 7% in the nation at the time of the survey.\(^2\)

Housing Discrimination and Instability
Survey respondents experienced blatant housing discrimination, as well as housing instability, much of which appears to stem from the challenges they face in employment.
- 10% were evicted
- 11% were denied a home/apartment
- 13% had become homeless because of their gender identity/expression
- 18% had to find temporary space to stay/sleep
- 25% had to move back in with family or friends
- 32% reported owning their home compared to 67% of the general population.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Seven percent (7%) is the rounded weighted average unemployment rate for the general population during the six months the survey was in the field, based on which month questionnaires were completed. For monthly rates, see National Conference of State Legislatures. See U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “National Unemployment Summary: Unemployment Increases to 9.8% for November,” (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010): http://www.ncsl.org/?tabid=13507.
Harassment and Discrimination in Accommodations and Services

50% were verbally harassed or disrespected in a place of public accommodation or service, including hotels, restaurants, buses, airports and government agencies.
15% were denied equal treatment by a government agency or official.
24% were denied equal treatment or harassed by judges or court officials.
12% of those who have interacted with police reported harassment by officers.
39% reported being uncomfortable seeking police assistance.

Health Care Discrimination and Health Outcomes

21% were refused medical care due to their gender identity/expression.
1.03% were HIV positive, compared to the general population rate of 0.6%.
27% postponed needed medical care, when they were sick or injured, due to discrimination.
Only 34% of the respondents had employer-based health insurance, compared to 59% of the general population at the time of the survey.
44% reported attempting suicide at some point in their life, over 27 times the rate of the general population of 1.6%.

Note: In the full report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, we found that discrimination was pervasive throughout the entire sample, yet the combination of anti-transgender bias and persistent, structural racism was especially devastating. One of our most important findings was that people of color in general fared worse than white participants across the board, with African American transgender respondents faring far worse than all others in nearly every area examined. Due to the sample size of respondents from this state, we were unable to break these state results down by race/ethnicity without creating small sample size problems. However, we expect that people of color in this state would exhibit the same national pattern.

5 Challenges for Modern LGBTQIA+ Teens
(And How You Can Help)

by Ellen Friedrichs, Everyday Feminism

In a lot of circles, there is a perception that this generation of LGBTQIA+ teens have more support and greater security and face fewer challenges and less hostility than ever before.

In large part, that's because we now live in a world where queer youth may come out to their peers via social media and then can expect to grow up, and if they want, have a family, and in more and more places, legally marry. Combine this with the fact that LGBTQIA+ teens have increased access to Gay/Straight Alliances (GSA's), community programs, Internet support, and positive media representations, and things start to seem pretty hopeful. That's a major shift from my experience as a teen in the nineties when not one kid was out in my high school, the fight for marriage equality was in its earliest days, and Bill Clinton's endorsement of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy actually passed for liberal politics.

Yet, despite today's advances, we all know that homelessness, suicide, homophobia, and transphobia remain awful realities for too many young people. In the queer community, and even beyond, these crises get a decent amount of attention. But many LGBTQIA+ teens face different challenges that are closely connected to navigating contemporary expectations and realities which don't always make it on our radar.

So here are five issues that may not grab headlines, but which can still be pretty arduous for queer teens today.

1. Coming Out Younger: For the past few decades, the average age to come out has been getting younger. A British study found that generationally, there has been a continuous drop in the age of coming out. For people over 60, the average was 37. For those in their 30s, the average age was 21. But for those between 18 and 24, the average age to come out was 17. Similarly, American research out of Cornell has found the typical LGBTQIA+ youth now comes out at 16, compared to 21 in the 1970s. In many ways, coming out earlier is a really positive thing. For a lot of teens, coming out in high school is a freeing experience that connects them to community, allows them to access support, and takes the stress of hiding off their shoulders. But there are also risks since coming out can leave a young person vulnerable to harassment and hostility. A significant number of kids are also coming out well before high school. Again, this can have numerous benefits. But since preteens are even more emotionally and physically susceptible to abuse than are their older peers, the difficulties can intensify the younger someone is. To complicate things further, some of the worst abuse suffered by LGBTQIA+ teens happens at home, leaving minors nowhere to turn, especially if school is also a hostile environment. As a government study on LGBTQIA+ youth homelessness reported, "We are seeing a new epidemic...largely because youth are coming out earlier. They are coming out to their families at age 12 or 13 instead of 18 or 20. In some ways, this is a good thing; it means they are getting societal cues that it is [acceptable] to be gay, but they are not old enough to be able to live independently yet, and they face rejection by parents and families and emotional and/or physical abuse at school." As this study so clearly demonstrates, LGBTQIA+ youth it can be extremely complicated to navigate the not always compatible realities of modern life.

2. Pressure to Come Out: We never ask hetero or cisgender teens to publicly discuss their sexual orientations or gender identities, yet in a lot of forward-thinking communities, this is expected of LGBTQIA+ teens. Indeed, in some environments, the idea that a teen just isn't ready to come out is simply considered old fashioned, uncool, or uptight. Sometimes queer kids are expected to be ambassadors for their communities. Other times, peers feel that LGBTQIA+ friends are betraying
themselves by not coming out and would just be so much happier if they did. And of course, there
are also situations where a partner is sick of hiding a relationship. As one boy wrote on the LGBT
Teens site that I edit: “I am dating a new guy and we have been friends for five years. He already
came out to me, and I came out to him. But now he wants us to come out to everyone together at
once and I’m not ready. But his birthday is coming up and he said that what he wants is for
everyone to know we are dating.” Obviously, this kid’s boyfriend has every right not to date
someone who isn’t out. But coming out to please a partner is a really complicated move and one
that could go south fast. Whatever the motivation, expecting young people to come out before
they are ready, or chastising them for not doing so, is unfair and places too much of a burden on
adolescents whether or not they have figured out their identities.

3. Increased Visibility: The days when the closest you could get to queer representation on TV was
Three’s Company’s Jack Tripper as a hetero man playing gay for laughs are a thing of the past.
Hollywood, too, has moved from only showing only LGBTQIA+ characters as pathetic or
predatory to allowing for a little more nuance. Off screen, we have YA novels featuring non-
suicidal queer characters, an openly gay NFL player, respected transgender spokespeople like
Laverne Cox, and a few politicians who wear LGBTQIA+ identities openly and attempt to move
progressive causes forward. Yet with increased visibility comes increased detection, and as a
result, kids may be outed by peers who in the past may not have noticed a gay classmate.
Emma Mogavero is a bisexual high school junior from New York who works with GLSEN (the
Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network) and has witnessed this phenomenon. She says: “My
best friend was brutally bullied in middle school, not because he was gay (he hadn’t figured it out
yet), but because he was perceived [to be gay] due to his voice, his mannerisms, the fact that he
was into musical theater, etc. Not only that, but even today as an openly gay teenager who is
trying to start a GSA in his Catholic school, he still feels he has to hide certain parts of his
personality because he doesn’t want to be seen as that guy.” Is also important to realize that as
queer visibility increases, it isn’t only unwanted outing that can result. So too can backlash.
As Carl Siciliano, founder of the Ali Forney Center, a New York organization serving homeless
LGBTQIA+ youth, told Rolling Stone Magazine, “The summer that marriage equality passed in
New York, we saw the number of homeless kids looking for shelter go up 40%.” Often driven by
hostile religious beliefs and fired up religious leaders aghast at increasing support for LGBTQIA+
rights, parents may now be hyper-reactive. The results can be everything from abuse at home, to
curbs on freedoms, kicking that child out, or forced “conversion” therapy.

4. The Internet: The Internet has provided a lifeline for countless queer youth, connecting them to
supportive organizations like GLSEN, The Trevor Project, It Gets Better, Scarleteen, the ACLU,
Advocates for Youth, The National Center for Transgender Equality, and PFLAG just to name a
few. But not all kids have the same online access. Plenty of parents and schools monitor kids’
Internet use and install filters and trackers. What people don’t always realize is that many of
these programs don’t just block out porn. Almost all of the most commonly used software
includes a special category to block websites that have information about LGBTQIA+ issues and
organizations, even though the websites are not sexually explicit in any way! Then there is the
issue of search terms. The wrong search terms can send teens to some pretty awful places. If
you are a kid who has not had a lot of exposure to the queer community, you might type in the
language you have heard at home, in your church, or from your abstinence-only education
program. The result is that you may come up with things like: “Is homosexuality a sin?” or “How
do I overcome my lesbianism?” or “What should I do about unwanted same-sex attraction?”
Indeed, when I typed in “What should I do about unwanted same-sex attraction?” the first result I
got was for a site called Same Sex Attraction, which greeted me with this message: “If you don’t
want to be gay, you don’t have to be. There is a way to overcome your same-gender (gay or
lesbian) feelings and homosexual behavior. If you want to make changes in your life, you can.”
The rest of the results on the first search page came from religious Christian groups that treat the
idea of conversion therapy as real science and which spew horrifying lies about what it means to
be gay. On the other hand, even a slight change of language elicited really different results. When I typed in “Is being gay a choice?” I got two YouTube videos telling me it wasn’t, and then articles from the Huffington Post, Upworthy, and the New Republic confirming this assertion.

5. Life at School: Though youth often drive social change, school – the institution most often central in young peoples’ lives – often lags behind when it comes to providing a safe and supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ students. Though we now have GSA’s, Safe Spaces, and the occasional queer or trans prom king or queen, there are far too many schools where LGBTQIA+ teens still face discrimination and harassment on a daily basis.

A 2013 GLSEN survey found that schools nationwide remain hostile environments for a troubling number of queer students. According to the survey,

- 74% percent were verbally harassed in the past year because of their sexual orientation, 55% because of their gender expression
- 30% missed at least one day of school in the past month as a result of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable
- 36% were physically harassed because of their sexual orientation and 23% because of their gender expression
- 17% were physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation and 11% because of their gender expression
- 65% heard homophobic remarks frequently or often
- 33% heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people, like “tr*nny” or “he/she,” frequently or often.

And it’s not only peer-on-peer harassment that’s a problem. For Casey Hoke, a gay transgender high school senior who also works with GLSEN, one of the most frustrating aspects of school has been dealing with teachers. As he says: “[Teachers weren’t using accurate] pronouns before I legally changed my gender marker, there was confusion and prejudice against me beginning to using male facilities. Some were unaware of how to address LGBT-specific bullying and slur usage, and ‘outed’ me in class discussions.” His recommendation? “Teacher training is crucial should be implemented for every district so that teens can feel more comfortable in their places of learning.”

What We Can Do

The good news is that adult allies can help LGBTQIA+ youth address these issues. Here are a few ways how:

1. If you work with youth, create a welcoming environment both for kids ready to come out and for those who are not. GSAs are one good way to do this since they give kids of any identity, or at any stage of identifying, a place to address LGBTQIA+ issues.

2. Don’t give religiously motivated hate-speech a pass. This seems obvious, but sometimes religious intolerance is seen as more acceptable than plain old secular intolerance.

3. If you identify as queer, don’t tell kids how much easier they have it today than when you were a kid. This diminishes and invalidates their struggles.

4. Educate teens about their legal rights. Let them know that the ACLU accepts reports about harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as about public schools that use anti-gay Internet filters, allow hostile environments, or prevent teens from bringing same gender dates to school events where opposite gender dates are allowed.

5. If you have a website that you think would help LGBTQIA+ teens, consider broadening your language to reach a wider range of kids.
Queer Teens Can Still Be Really Isolated

Today’s world offers queer teens opportunities impossible to imagine even a decade ago. But there are still plenty of teens for whom those opportunities are not at all on the horizon.

As this girl recently posted on my LGBT teens site: “I am lesbian, and I live in East Texas. East Texas is a small and ‘normal’ area. I hardly have any friends here at all. I am homeschooled, and 90% of the children in my neighborhood know that I am a lesbian and despise me for it. They treat me as if I am a disease.”

This post, and the countless others like it, are important reminders that while we have come a long way, we still have a long way to go. But with a rising generation of young, empowered queer activists on the scene, I am pretty sure that an ever more positive future is on the horizon.
Queertionary: Working Definitions

These are short working definitions for a basic understanding of LGBTQIA identities and concerns. You are encouraged to seek additional information for a better understanding of the many aspects of each term. Please visit the LGBT Center and/or our website for additional information and resources on understanding the growing vocabulary of terms related to sexuality and gender.

Ableism: The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people who have mental, emotional and physical disabilities.

AFAB: Assigned female at birth. This term refers to what gender you were assigned at birth (in this case female, thus you are expected to be a girl/woman), and is important because many trans* people use this as a way to talk about their gender identity without being pinned down to more essentialist narratives about their “sex” or what gender they “used to be”.

Affectional Orientation (also called Romantic orientation): refers to an individual’s pattern of romantic attraction based on a person’s gender. This is considered distinct from sexual orientation, which refers specifically to a person’s patterns of sexual attraction, which is distinct from romantic attraction. Romantic orientation terminology follows that of sexual orientation terminology:
- A heteroromantic person is someone romantically attracted to a different gender.
- A homoromantic person is someone romantically attracted to the same gender.
- A biromantic or panromantic person is romantically attracted to multiple genders
- An aromantic person is someone who is not romantically attracted to any gender.

There are also some people who do not find the concept of romantic attraction useful, who may use terms such as "wtfromantic". Like sexual orientation, there is a gray area between aromantic and romantic, which is called grayromantic. They may feel romantic attraction, but very rarely, or very weak. For many people, their romantic orientation and their sexual orientation may be in alignment, so the gender(s) of the people they fall in love with are also the gender(s) they are sexually attracted to. For others, however, their romantic and sexual orientations may not match. This is true not only for asexuals but for people of all sexual orientations. For asexuals, who do not experience sexual attraction, it is often their romantic orientation that determines which gender(s), if any, they are inclined to form romantic relationships with. (adapted from the Asexual Visibility and Education Network)

Ageism: Any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of age or any assignment of roles in society purely on the basis of age.

Agender (also referred to as Genderless or Non-gender): is an identity under the nonbinary, genderqueer and transgender umbrellas. Agender individuals have no gender identity and/or no gender expression. They may simply describe this in terms of having no gender or as identifying as a person rather than a gender. Some agender people feel that they have no gender identity, while others feel that agender is itself a gender identity. This is similar to and overlaps with the experience of being gender neutral or having a neutral gender identity. As some agender people have no gender identity, it is important to not talk about nonbinary or transgender people's experiences solely in terms of gender identity. (from Nonbinary.org)

Ally / Advocate: A person who supports LGBTQIA people; allies and advocates can be both heterosexual and cisgender (non-LGBTQ) as well as LGBTQ people supporting each other. Someone who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexual and cisgender privilege in themselves and others; has a concern for the well-being of LGBTQIA people; and a belief that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, monosexism, transphobia, and cissexism are social justice issues. An ally actively works to end intolerance, educates others, and supports LGBTQIA issues, concerns, equal rights legislation, etc.
**AMAB:** Assigned male at birth. This term refers to what gender you were assigned at birth (in this case male, thus you are expected to be a boy/man), and is important because many trans* people use this as a way to talk about their gender identity without being pinned down to more essentialist narratives about their “sex” or what gender they “used to be”.

**Androgynous:** Having neither a clearly masculine or feminine appearance or blending masculine and feminine.

**Asexual:** Asexuality is a sexual orientation describing people who do not experience sexual attraction. Many asexuals can be emotionally and/or romantically attracted to other people and may additionally identify as bisexual, gay, lesbian, or straight. There are also aromantics who do not experience romantic attraction and form close platonic relationships. Also, asexuals may identify as any gender. Sexual orientations, like asexuality, describe who someone is attracted to. Behavior does not always mirror that, and while many asexuals remain virgins, others choose to explore sex. Asexuality is no more a phase than any other form of sexual expression. Sexuality is fluid and can change over a lifetime for some, but that is not universally true. Youth who identify as asexual should be treated with the same respect as youth who come out as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Other term to know is Ace which is slang for asexual identified people (*from Asexual Awareness Week*)

**BDSM:** (Bondage and Discipline, Domination and Submission, Sadism and Masochism) “BDSM denotes a set of erotic preferences; it’s a form of sexual expression (although you can, without trying too hard, find splinter groups who will say it’s not about sex at all) that involve what’s called “power play”, or the taking of complementary roles that set two or more participants at different levels of power. Among the roles common in BDSM relationships or sessions, you might choose from top and bottom, dominant (dom or domme) and submissive, master or mistress and servant or slave, and many more. Even among those black-and-white-sounding names, though, you can find grey areas – switches are people who feel equally comfortable in more than one role, sometimes even in the same session. An important thing to understand when learning about these roles, though, is that in many if not most cases, the bottoms, submissives and slaves are just as likely to be dictating the terms of the session as their more powerful-sounding counterparts. BDSM is a single acronym that unites a myriad of lifestyles, fetishes, and paraphilia that may otherwise have nothing in common. By and large, the only thing that BDSM layers above in common is the agreement that it should be performed by responsible partners, of their own volition, and in a safe way – the motto “Safe, sane and consensual” sums it up.” (*From www.whatisbdsm.com*)

**Bear:** The most common definition of a ‘bear’ is a man who has facial/body hair, and a cuddly body. However, the word ‘bear’ means many things to different people, even within the bear movement. Many people who do not have one or all of these characteristics define themselves as bears, making the term a very loose one. ‘Bear’ is often defined as more of an attitude and a sense of comfort with masculinity and bodies.

**Bi-gender:** One who has a significant gender identity that encompasses both genders, male and female. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are there. (from the National Center for Transgender Equality)

**Binarism:** Erasing, ignoring or expressing hate towards people who identify outside of the gender binary. Also supporting the incorrect idea that the only legitimate genders are man and woman, and ignoring all others.

**Biphobia:** The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals, which is oftentimes related to the current binary standard. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQIA community, as well as in general society.
Bisexual: A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and sexually attracted to members of more than one gender. Some prefer less binary based terms such as omnisexual and pansexual.

Butch: A gender expression and/or identity connected to masculinity which can be used by queer people of any and all genders.

Cisgender: The prefix ‘Cis’ is of Latin origin, meaning "on the same side as or of." “You may have heard the word cisgender before, but you may not know what it means. Cisgender is a term used to describe people who, for the most part, identify as the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, if a doctor said “it’s a boy!” when you were born, and you identify as a man, then you could be described as cisgender. In other words, ‘cisgender’ is used to describe people who are not transgender. So why do we say ‘cisgender’ instead of ‘non-transgender’? Because, referring to cisgender people as ‘non trans’ implies that cisgender people are the default and that being trans is abnormal. Many people have said ‘transgender people’ and ‘normal people’, but when we say ‘cisgender’ and ‘transgender’ neither is implied as more normal than the other. Using the word ‘cisgender’ is also an educational tool. To simply define people as ‘non-trans’ implies that only transgender people have a gender identity. But that’s not true. Like sexual orientation, race, class, and many other identities, all of us have a gender identity.” (From Basic Rights Oregon)

Cisgender Privilege: The privileges cisgender people have because their gender identities match their assigned gender and because they are considered “normal”. For example, cisgender people don't have to worry about violence and institutionalized discrimination from being cis, or having to legitimize their gender identities to others.

Cissexism (cisgenderism): Erasing trans* people, their bodies, and their experiences and/or expressing hatred and bigotry towards trans* people. “Cisgender people – people who identify with the gender they were categorized as at birth – enjoy a range of privileges over trans* folk. We often use the word “transphobia” to refer to a range of negative attitudes towards trans* folk. While the difference between cissexism and transphobia is not entirely clear, and many people use the terms interchangeably, cissexism is often thought to be a more subtle form of transphobia. By “subtle,” I mean that it is less visible to cisgender people. Despite this, it is no less damaging. In fact, it could be argued that it is more damaging as fewer people notice it – while most decent people would be quick to condemn physical attacks on trans* folk, fewer people would notice how harmful it is to assume that only women have vaginas. However, the very attitude that regards cisgender as the norm and others the trans* community leads to the denial of trans* people’s rights. Our society regularly makes cissexist assumptions. It assumes that all people identify with the gender they were categorized as at birth, based on their genitals. Assuming all people are cisgender results in cisgender people being seen as “normal” and “natural”, while transgender people are seen as the opposite – “abnormal” and “unnatural.” This attitude toward the trans* community is what leads to discrimination and transphobic attacks.” (From Everyday Feminism)

Closeted/In the Closet: Refers to an LGBTQIA person who will not or cannot disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status to their friends, family, co-workers, or society. It can also refer to one who has come out to only a few people. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet”; for example, a person can be out in their social life, but in the closet at work, or with their family. Also known as on the “Downlow” or on the DL.

Coming Out: The life-long process of discovering, defining, and proclaiming one’s own sexual orientation, gender identity, romantic orientation, queer identities, or status as an intersex person to oneself, family, friends and others.
Cross-dresser: Someone who dresses as and presents themselves as a gender other than the one they typically identify with. Cross dressing can be purely aesthetic, sexual, a facet of someone's gender identity, or have other meanings. Transvestite: Often used synonymously with cross dresser this term is usually derogatory and isn't preferred by most people today.

Demisexual: People who only experience sexual attraction after forming emotional connections. *(from Asexual Awareness Week)*

Drag: Taking on the appearance and characteristics associated with a certain gender, usually for entertainment purposes and often to expose the humorous and performative elements of gender. Drag Queen—a person who consciously performs femininity and/or womanhood. Drag King—a person who consciously performs masculinity and/or manhood.

Family: Colloquial term used to identify other LGBTQQI community members. For example, an LGBTQQI person saying, “that person is family” often means that the person they are referring to is LGBTQQI as well. *(from Penn State’s Office for Student Affairs)*

Fem/femme: A gender expression and/or identity connected to femininity which can be used by queer people of any and all genders.

FTM/F2M: Abbreviation which stands for “female-to-male” and is usually synonymous with trans man but which can also be used by other AFAB (assigned female at birth) trans* people. This term is problematic to some AFAB trans* people as they feel they were never female and because X to Y terms can put too much focus on traditional means of physical transition.

Gay: Can refer to homosexual men or to homosexual people generally.

Gender: A complex combination of roles, expressions, identities, performances, and more that is assigned gendered meaning by a society. Gender is defined by both individuals and by society; how gender is embodied and understood varies from culture to culture and from person to person. Gender is more complex than a binary or even a simple spectrum.

Gender Affirmation Surgery (formerly known as Sexual Reassignment Surgery): Refers to doctor-supervised surgical interventions, and is only one small part of transition. Avoid the phrase "sex change operation." Do not refer to someone as being "pre-op" or "post-op." Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, undergo medical surgeries. Individuals should avoid overemphasizing the role of surgeries in the transition process. *(from the GLAAD Media Reference Guide)*

- Genital Reconstruction Surgery: A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter genitalia in a gender affirming manner. In some states, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of one's gender identity. Also known as “Gender Confirming Surgery” or “bottom surgery”.

Gender Assignment: The process of assigning a gender to children at birth, usually based on genitals alone. It is assumed that our bodies should meet certain gendered expectations and when intersex individuals are born with “unexpected” genitalia they often face social stigma and medical intervention. It is also assumes that our gender identities should and will match this gender assignment but this isn't the case for trans* people.

Gender Attribution: The act of categorizing people we come into contact with as male, female, or unknown. Gender attribution is questionable as it can lead to misgendering people unintentionally because one can never know a person's gender identity just by looking at them.
Gender Bender / Gender Fuck: “A gender bender or one who genderfucks is a person who actively rebels against, “fucks” or "bends," expected gender roles. Gender bending is sometimes a form of social activism undertaken in response to assumptions or over-generalizations about genders. Some gender benders identify with the gender assigned them at birth, but "challenge" the norms of that gender through androgender behavior and atypical gender roles. Gender benders may also self-identify as transgender or genderqueer, feeling that the gender assigned to them at their birth is an inaccurate or incomplete description of themselves; some are transsexual and desire to change their physical sex through hormone therapy or sex reassignment surgery.” (From Wikipedia)

Gender Binary: The pervasive social system that tells us there can only be masculine cisgender men and feminine cisgender women, and there can be no alternatives in terms of gender identity or expression.

Gender Expression: How one expresses their gender outwardly and/or the facets of a person's expression which have gendered connotations in our culture. There is no right or wrong way to express your gender.

Gender Identity: An individual's internal sense of their gender. One’s gender identity may or may not align with their assigned gender, and one's gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Identity Disorder / Dysphoria (GID): In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association released the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) which replaced the outdated entry "Gender Identity Disorder" with Gender Dysphoria, and changed the criteria for diagnosis. The necessity of a psychiatric diagnosis remains controversial, as both psychiatric and medical authorities recommend individualized medical treatment through hormones and/or surgeries to treat gender dysphoria. Some transgender advocates believe the inclusion of Gender Dysphoria in the DSM is necessary in order to advocate for health insurance that covers the medically necessary treatment recommended for transgender people. (from the GLAAD Media Reference Guide)

Gender nonconforming (GNC): Not fully conforming to gendered social expectations in terms of expression, roles or performance. A term used to describe some people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. Please note that not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming. Many people have gender expressions that are not entirely conventional -- that fact alone does not make them transgender. Many transgender men and women have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Simply being transgender does not make someone gender non-conforming. The term is not a synonym for transgender or transsexual and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender non-conforming. (from the GLAAD Media Reference Guide)

Genderqueer: This term can be used as an umbrella term for all people who queer gender, as a similar term to gender nonconforming or as a specific non-binary gender identity. A term used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for transgender or transsexual and should only be used if someone self-identifies as genderqueer. (from the GLAAD Media Reference Guide)

Gray-aceual: People who identify somewhere between asexual and sexual on the sexuality spectrum. (from Asexual Awareness Week)

GRSM: Acronym preferred by some groups for being more inclusive of diversity of sexual orientation. Gender, Romantic, and Sexual Minorities
Heteronormativity: The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexual orientations such as gay, bisexual, pansexual, etc.

Heterosexism: The belief that all people are heterosexual, the assumption and/or belief that heterosexual relationships and behavior are superior, and the actions based on this assumption. Usually used to the advantage of majority culture. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinates people because of their non-heterosexual sexual orientation.

Heterosexual: A man who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and/or sexual attractions to women or vice versa. This is also the sexuality that dominant discourse prescribes.

Heterosexual Privilege: Advantages and benefits that come automatically by being heterosexual; i.e.: Marriage and all the benefits that go along with it, acceptance from family, safety, and acceptance in one’s chosen career field.

Homophobia: Fear, anger, discomfort, intolerance, or lack of acceptance toward LGBQ people, homosexuality, or any behavior or belief that does not conform to rigid sex role stereotypes. The internalized version of this is having these feelings about one’s own non-heterosexual orientation.

Homosexual: A person who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and/or sexual attraction to persons of the same gender. More of a medical term, it is considered outdated when referring to gay people or communities.

In Community Language/Out of Community Language: The use of terms that may be allowed or more accepted when used by a member of a cultural community that should not be used by those who are not part of the community; ie: Dyke: Derogatory slang term for lesbians, Fag/Faggot: Derogatory slang term for gay men, Queer: Derogatory slang term for LGBTQ people. Tranny: Derogatory slang term for trans women and some other AMAB trans* people. These terms, especially Queer, have been embraced and reinvented as positive, proud, political identifiers when used by and about some LGBTQIA people.

Intersex: A person born with any manner of “ambiguity” in terms of gendered physical characteristics. This can include genitals, reproductive organs, hormones, chromosomes, or any combination thereof. Intersex is a more modern term that replaces the out of date term ‘hermaphrodite’. Many intersex people believe that early childhood surgical intervention is not only unnecessary but cruel, and advocate counseling and support for children and families.

• From Fenway Health: A spectrum of conditions involving [variations] of the sex chromosomes, gonads, reproductive ducts, and/or genitalia. A person may have elements of both male and female anatomy, have different internal organs than external organs, or have anatomy that is inconsistent with chromosomal sex. These conditions sometimes are not identified until puberty, when the person either fails to develop certain expected secondary sex characteristics, or develops characteristics that were not expected. According to the DSM-IV-TR, Gender Identity Disorder is not an appropriate diagnosis when a strong and persistent cross-gender identification is concurrent with a physical intersex condition. However, people born with certain intersex conditions may be more likely than the general population to feel their gender assignment at birth was incorrect. The term “Disorders of Sex Development” (DSD) is currently recommended where the medical care of infants is considered. Sometimes written as “Disorders of Sexual Development” or “Disorders of Sex Differentiation”. These terms are controversial and not widely accepted. Some people suggest that a better term is “Variation in Sex Development” or “Variability in Sex Development” (VSD), thus eliminating the negative connotation of the word “disorder”. “Hermaphrodite” is an old term previously used instead of “intersex” and is now considered pejorative.

Lesbian: A woman who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and/or sexual attractions to other women.
LGBTQIA: An acronym which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual/alley.

Lifestyle: How a person lives or chooses to live and behave. Because LGBTQIA people are so varied and diverse, it is a misnomer to call all sexual and gender difference a “lifestyle” since there is no one way to be an LGBTQIA person. Examples of life styles would instead include: athletic, vegan, hobbies, rural/urban, etc.

Monosexism: The belief that all people are, or should be attracted to only one gender. Monosexism affects people who are attracted to two or more genders such as bisexuals, pansexuals, and omnisexuais.

MTF / M2F: Abbreviation which stands for “male-to-female” and is usually synonymous with trans woman but which can also be used by other AMAB (assigned male at birth) trans* people. This term is problematic to some AMAB trans* people as they feel they were never male and because X to Y terms can put too much focus on traditional means of physical transition.

Non-binary: Those who identify as a gender that is neither man nor woman or who are not men or women exclusively. Non-binary can refer to a specific gender identity or it can function as an umbrella term including people who are genderqueer, agender, bigender, neutrois and others.

Oppression: exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit.
- Individual Level: beliefs or behaviors of an individual person; conscious or unconscious actions or attitudes that maintain oppression.
- Institutional Level: institutions such as family, government, industry, education, and religion are shapers of, as well as shaped by, the other two levels. The application of institutional policies and procedures in an oppressive society run by individuals or groups who advocate or collude with social oppression produces oppressive consequences.
- Societal/Cultural Level: society’s cultural norms perpetuate implicit and explicit values that bind institutions and individuals; cultural guidelines, such as philosophies of life, definitions of good, normal, health, deviance, and sickness, often serve the primary function of providing individuals and institutions with the justification for social oppression.

Outing: The involuntary disclosure of one’s sexual orientation, romantic orientation, gender identity, or intersex status. It is also the political act of declaring a person’s identity publicly without their permission/consent. Allies must take care not into inadvertently out someone.

Pansexual: A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and/or sexually attracted to members of all genders. Pansexual is distinct from bisexual because the root-word 'pan' means all whereas 'bi' means two, thus pansexuals recognize the many genders that exist and are attracted to all of them. Some pansexual people may also describe themselves as gender blind, meaning gender does not play any role in who they are attracted to.

Passing: When used by trans* people, it can either mean that one is being read as the gender they identify as or that one is being read as cisgender. For example, a trans man who people read as a man, most likely a cis man.

Polyamory: Refers to having honest, usually non-possessive, relationships with multiple partners and can include: open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and sub- relationships (which denote distinguishing between a ‘primary’ relationship or relationships and various “secondary” relationships).
Pride: Not being ashamed of oneself and/or showing one’s pride to others by coming out, speaking out, marching, etc. Being open, honest and comfortable with oneself.

Queer: Used as an umbrella identity term encompassing lesbian, questioning people, gay men, bisexuals, non-labeling people, and anyone else who does not strictly identify as heterosexual. “Queer” originated as a derogatory word. Currently, it is being reclaimed by some people and used as a statement of empowerment. Some people identify as “queer” to distance themselves from the rigid categorization of “straight” and “gay”.

Queerplatonic: One type of non-romantic relationship where there is intense emotional bond and commitment that goes beyond what is traditionally thought of as friendship. (from Asexual Awareness Week)

Questioning: The process of exploring one’s own sexual, romantic, and/or gender identity.

QUILTBAG: Acronym used by communities in place of LGBT. Q - Queer and Questioning; U – Unidentified; I – Intersex; L – Lesbian; T - Transgender, Transexual; B – Bisexual; A – Asexual; G - Gay, Genderqueer.

Racism: The systematic subordination of targeted racial groups (Blacks, Latin@s, Native Americans, Chican@s, API, etc.) who have relatively little social power in the United States, by members of the agent racial group who have relatively more social power (Whites).

Rainbow Flag: San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker designed a flag for the city’s 1978 Gay Freedom celebration. LGBTQ movements worldwide have since adopted it as a symbol of LGBTQ identity and pride. It has six stripes in the traditional form, but can be seen as streamers, etc, which run in the order of red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple. The flag also symbolizes diversity within unity.

Relationship Model: A way to define to describe the relationships in one’s life. Traditional relationship models discuss the nuclear family; queer relationship models discuss chosen family; asexual relationship models can push the boundaries beyond friendship. (from Asexual Awareness Week)

Same Gender Loving: A term from the African American/Black LGBTQIA community and used by people of color who may see ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ as terms of the white LGBTQIA community.

Sex: A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. A binary system (man/woman) set by the medical establishment, usually based on genitals and sometimes chromosomes. Because this is usually divided into ‘male’ and ‘female’ this category assigns gendered meaning to bodies and ignores the existence of intersex and trans* people. See intersex.

Sexism: The cultural, institutional, and individual set of beliefs and practices that privilege men, subordinate women, and denigrate values and practices associated with women.

Sexual Orientation: The direction of one’s sexual interest toward members of the same, different, both, or multiple genders. It is based on whom a person is emotionally, physically and/or sexually attracted to.

Sexuality: A person’s exploration of sexual acts, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, and desire.
- Sexuality spectrum: Similar to the gender spectrum, the sexuality spectrum indicates that some people identify strongly with sexuality, some strongly with asexuality, and some identify in between. (from Asexual Awareness Week)
SOGI: Acronym used in place of LGBT, especially outside of the United States. Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity Minorities.

Squish: Similar to a crush, a squish is a asexual term for interest in someone beyond traditional friendship roles. *(from Asexual Awareness Week)*

Stonewall: On June 28, 1969, NYC police attempted a routine raid on the Stonewall Inn, a working class gay and lesbian bar in Greenwich Village. Unexpectedly the patrons resisted, and the incident escalated into a riot that continued for several days. Most people look to this event as the beginning of the American Gay Liberation movement and all subsequent LGBTQIA movements.

Stud: A term used by people of color, and primarily by African Americans, referring to people, often women, who are masculine or butch. Though many studs identify as women and with the lesbian community, not all do.

Trans man: A man who was assigned female at birth (meaning they were medically and legally designated as female and likely raised as such) but then came to identify as a man. Some people may identify as transmen, without the space, to indicate that their gender is somehow more complex than simply being a man.

Trans woman: A woman who was assigned male at birth (meaning they were medically and legally designated as male and likely raised as such) but then came to identify as a woman. Some people may identify as transwomen, without the space, to indicate that their gender is somehow more complex than simply being a woman.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is not the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. “Transgender” can include transsexuals, cross dressers, trans men, trans women, genderqueers, non-binary people, and more. Trans*: This term has a similar meaning as transgender but the asterisk is meant to show a more inclusive attitude towards the multitude of people under the transgender umbrella.

Transition: Broadly defined this is the process trans* people may go through to become comfortable in terms of their gender. Transitioning may include social, physical, mental, and emotional components and may not fit into the narrative we are used to seeing. Transition may or may not include things like changing one’s name, taking hormones, having surgery, changing legal documents to reflect one’s gender identity, coming out to loved ones, dressing as one chooses, and accepting oneself among many other things. Transitioning in an individual process.

Transphobia: The irrational fear of those who are trans*, gender non-conforming or those perceived as such due to the inability to deal with gender ambiguity.

Transsexual: This term often refers to binary trans* people (trans men and trans women), or to trans* people who physically transition in any way. While still a preferred term for many, some people dislike the term because of its connection to the medicalization of trans* people and the focus it can put on physical transition.

Triangle: *Pink Triangle:* The pink triangle was one of the Nazi concentration camp badges, used to identify male prisoners who were sent there because of their homosexuality. The pink triangle was also used to identify sexual offenders including rapists, paedophiles and zoophiles. Every prisoner had to wear a downward-pointing triangle on his or her jacket, the colour of which was to categorise him or her by “kind”. Originally intended as a badge of shame, the pink triangle (often inverted from its Nazi usage) has been reclaimed as an international symbol of gay pride and the gay rights movement, and is second in popularity only to the rainbow flag. *Black Triangle:* The black triangle was a badge used in Nazi
concentration camps to mark prisoners as "asocial" or "arbeitsscheu" (work-shy). It was later adopted as a lesbian or feminist symbol of pride and solidarity, on the assumption that the Nazis included lesbians in the "asocial" category. More recently it has been adopted by UK disabled people's organisations responding to increasing press allegations that disabled benefit recipients are workshy. Lesbians have over time claimed the black triangle as a symbol of defiance against repression and discrimination, and it is considered a counterpart to the gay pink triangle. Lesbians in Germany and the United States began reclaiming the black triangle as a pride symbol in the 1980s. *(from Wikipedia)*

**Two Spirit:** A term specific to Native/First Nations cultures and people which some LGB, queer, pansexual, transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people identify as. This term should not be co-opted by non-Native/First Nations people.

**Womyn:** Some womyn spell the word with a "y" as a form of empowerment to move away from the "men" in the "traditional" spelling of women.

**Ze / Hir:** Alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some gender variant persons. Pronounced /zee/ and /here/ they replace —he/she and —his/her respectively

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![The Ultimate Mini LGBTQ Flag Guide](image-url)
Understanding Sexual Orientation, Sex, and Gender
From North Dakota State University’s Level 2 Safe Zone on Gender Identity

What is Gender?

Gender identity is defined as a personal conception of oneself as a woman, a man, or another gender. This concept is intimately related to the concept of gender role, which is defined as the outward manifestations of personality that reflect the gender identity. Gender identity, in nearly all instances, is self-identified, as a result of a combination of inherent and extrinsic or environmental factors; gender role, on the other hand, is manifested within society by observable factors such as behavior and appearance.

Thus, gender role is often an outward expression of gender identity, but not necessarily so. For most people, their gender identity matches the identity that was assigned at birth based on their biological body; however for some people their gender identity may not match that assigned gender. It is important also to note that cultural differences greatly influence the expression of one’s gender role: what women and men are expected to do in the United States is not the same as what women and men do in all other parts of the world.

The process of becoming aware of one’s gender identity it is an important part of the psychosocial development of a child. In the realm of pediatrics, recognition of gender identity is a process rather than a particular milestone, and any deviation from societal norms can bring about distress to both the child and the child’s family. However, it should be noted that this stress is caused by a societal un-acceptance of the individuals gender, not the gender identity or gender expression itself.

What is Biological Sex?

A person’s sex refers to the biological aspect of their identity, or the body they were born into. A person is born as female, male, or intersex. People often make the mistake of considering only the genitalia and sex organs when discussing sex, but in actuality sex refers to the whole body. A person’s sex has no influence on their sexual orientation.

Many cultures associate the male sex with the gender identity of man and the female sex with the gender identity of woman; however this is not the case for everyone. Culture does not influence the sex of the body an individual is born into, however it does influence the gender identity that individuals’ have. Essentially, sex refers to male, female, or intersex and gender refers to man, woman, or another gender.

What is Sexual Orientation?

Sexual orientation refers to feelings of emotional and sexual attraction to men, women, both genders, neither gender or another gender. There is not one, single root of sexual orientation and it is currently believed that our sexual orientation develops from a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Although, labels such as heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual are commonly used, many individuals find such labels restrictive and potentially offensive. The word “homosexual” was created in 1860 to medicalize and treat people who were attracted to members of the same sex. The word “heterosexual” was created as a counter to homosexual, and originally referred to a man who had many sexual partners. In addition, these labels stem from a linear scale that ranges from ‘exclusively homosexual’ to ‘exclusively heterosexual’ with all other sexualities falling in between. However, many sexologists believe that this scale is far too restrictive and oversimplified.
What Does it Mean to be Transgender?

The notion that gender is a binary system that consists only of a “man or woman” identity and conflicts with the postmodern view that gender identity is fluid. This binary view, although held true for many years, is based on models of development that have been heavily critiqued and are often no longer supported by those who study gender. When we look to more modern theories of gender identity development, the term “transgender” refers to the crossing of gender boundaries, and can be thought of as an umbrella term that encompasses terms such as, cross-dresser, transvestite, transsexual and intersex. Even though these terms can fall under the transgender umbrella, it does not mean that all individuals who identify as a cross-dresser, transvestite, transsexual or intersex would also consider themselves to be transgender. Some individuals do not identity with any commonly used label.

When a person identifies as transgender and is in the process of transitioning (or has completed transitioning), ze/she/he could identify as male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM). Again, this is an identity that is for each individual person to have, not for other people to assume.

Image from: http://onbecomingjordan.wordpress.com
Everyone has a Sexual Orientation and a Gender Identity

The Kinsey Scale
The pioneering work of Dr. Alfred Kinsey and his associates in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s still influences current literature/studies on LGBT people. While some have question the validity of his research, his findings have been supported by further research from Masters and Johnson, and by other researchers. Kinsey developed a seven point continuum based on the degree of sexual responsiveness people have for members of the same and opposite sex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>exclusively heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>predominantly heterosexual, incidentally homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>equally heterosexual and homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>predominantly homosexual, incidentally heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>exclusively homosexual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kinsey suggested that it is necessary to consider a variety of activities in assessing an individual’s ranking on the continuum: fantasies, thoughts, dreams, emotional feelings, and frequency of sexual activity. Many “heterosexuals,” may fall somewhere between numbers 0-3 because they may occasionally think/ dream/ fantasize about sexual activities with members of the same sex and/or occasionally act on these feelings.

Multiple Spectrums of Self

“Intersex” is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types—for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY.

Though we speak of intersex as an inborn condition, intersex anatomy doesn’t always show up at birth. Sometimes a person isn’t found to have intersex anatomy until she or he reaches the age of puberty, or finds himself an infertile adult, or dies of old age and is autopsied. Some people live and die with intersex anatomy without anyone (including themselves) ever knowing.

Which variations of sexual anatomy count as intersex? In practice, different people have different answers to that question. That’s not surprising, because intersex isn’t a discreet or natural category.

What does this mean? Intersex is a socially constructed category that reflects real biological variation. To better explain this, we can liken the sex spectrum to the color spectrum. There’s no question that in nature there are different wavelengths that translate into colors most of us see as red, blue, orange, yellow. But the decision to distinguish, say, between orange and red-orange is made only when we need it—like when we’re asking for a particular paint color. Sometimes social necessity leads us to make color distinctions that otherwise would seem incorrect or irrational, as, for instance, when we call certain people “black” or “white” when they’re not especially black or white as we would otherwise use the terms.

In the same way, nature presents us with sex anatomy spectrums. Breasts, penises, clitorises, scrotums, labia, gonads—all of these vary in size and shape and morphology. So-called “sex” chromosomes can vary quite a bit, too. But in human cultures, sex categories get simplified into male, female, and sometimes intersex, in order to simplify social interactions, express what we know and feel, and maintain order.

So nature doesn’t decide where the category of “male” ends and the category of “intersex” begins, or where the category of “intersex” ends and the category of “female” begins. Humans decide. Humans (today, typically doctors) decide how small a penis has to be, or how unusual a combination of parts has to be, before it counts as intersex. Humans decide whether a person with XXY chromosomes or XY chromosomes and androgen insensitivity will count as intersex.

In our work, we find that doctors’ opinions about what should count as “intersex” vary substantially. Some think you have to have “ambiguous genitalia” to count as intersex, even if your inside is mostly of one sex and your outside is mostly of another. Some think your brain has to be exposed to an unusual mix of hormones prenatally to count as intersex—so that even if you’re born with atypical genitalia, you’re not intersex unless your brain experienced atypical development. And some think you have to have both ovarian and testicular tissue to count as intersex.

Rather than trying to play a semantic game that never ends, we at ISNA take a pragmatic approach to the question of who counts as intersex. We work to build a world free of shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgeries for anyone born with what someone believes to be non-standard sexual anatomy.
By the way, because some forms of intersex signal underlying metabolic concerns, a person who thinks she or he might be intersex should seek a diagnosis and find out if she or he needs professional healthcare.

**How Common is Intersex?**

To answer this question in an uncontroversial way, you’d have to first get everyone to agree on what counts as intersex — and also to agree on what should count as strictly male or strictly female. That’s hard to do. How small does a penis have to be before it counts as intersex? Do you count “sex chromosome” anomalies as intersex if there’s no apparent external sexual ambiguity? (Alice Dreger explores this question in greater depth in her book *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*.)

Here’s what we do know: If you ask experts at medical centers how often a child is born so noticeably atypical in terms of genitalia that a specialist in sex differentiation is called in, the number comes out to about 1 in 1500 to 1 in 2000 births. But a lot more people than that are born with subtler forms of sex anatomy variations, some of which won’t show up until later in life.

Below we provide a summary of statistics drawn from an article by Brown University researcher Anne Fausto-Sterling. The basis for that article was an extensive review of the medical literature from 1955 to 1998 aimed at producing numeric estimates for the frequency of sex variations. Note that the frequency of some of these conditions, such as congenital adrenal hyperplasia, differs for different populations. These statistics are approximations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not XX and not XY</td>
<td>one in 1,666 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klinefelter (XXY)</td>
<td>one in 1,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androgen insensitivity syndrome</td>
<td>one in 13,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial androgen insensitivity syndrome</td>
<td>one in 130,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical congenital adrenal hyperplasia</td>
<td>one in 13,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late onset adrenal hyperplasia</td>
<td>one in 66 individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal agenesis</td>
<td>one in 6,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovotestes</td>
<td>one in 83,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiopathic (no discernable medical cause)</td>
<td>one in 110,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iatrogenic (caused by medical treatment, for instance progestin administered to pregnant mother)</td>
<td>no estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 alpha reductase deficiency</td>
<td>no estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed gonadal dysgenesis</td>
<td>no estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete gonadal dysgenesis</td>
<td>one in 150,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypospadias (urethral opening in perineum or along penile shaft)</td>
<td>one in 2,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypospadias (urethral opening between corona and tip of glans penis)</td>
<td>one in 770 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of people whose bodies differ from standard male or female</td>
<td>one in 100 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of people receiving surgery to “normalize” genital appearance</td>
<td>one or two in 1,000 births</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS
From the University of California, Davis Safe Zone Training

At birth if you are assigned Male…

It is expected that you will be a Man…

As a man, society expects you to be Masculine…

Men are expected to be attracted to women= Heterosexual/Straight.

At birth if you are assigned Female…

It is expected that you will be a Woman…

As a woman, society expects you to be Feminine…

Women are expected to be attracted to men= Heterosexual/Straight

However, not everyone meets society’s expectations

Dear Society,

Sex ≠ Gender
Gender ≠ Gender Expression
Gender Expression ≠ Sexual Orientation
Thank You

TRANSCLAN.TUMBLR
The Asexual Spectrum

Many asexuals identify with two orientations: a romantic and a sexual one. According to the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), an asexual’s romantic orientation determines “which gender(s), if any, they are inclined to form romantic relationships with.” There are also individuals in the asexual community who identify in the gray area between asexuality and sexuality.*

*Note that this infographic is a limited and not definitive model of the asexual spectrum. Not all asexuals will identify or agree with the definitions in this graphic.

Source: AVENwiki (asexuality.org/wiki/)

THE HUFFINGTON POST
**Sexual Attraction:**
Sexual attraction is a feeling that sexual people get that causes them to desire sexual contact with a specific other person.

**Romantic Attraction:**
Romantic attraction is a feeling that causes people to desire a romantic relationship with a specific other person.

**Crushes:**
A crush is a romantic attraction to someone, a desire for a romantic relationship of some kind, a desire that is possibly temporary in nature, possibly never to be acted upon.

**Squishes:**
A squish is an aromantic crush, a desire for a strong platonic relationship with someone.

**Sensual Attraction:**
A desire to do sensual (but not sexual) things with certain people, especially relating to tactile sensuality such as cuddling.

**Aesthetic Attraction:**
An attraction to other people that is not connected to a desire to do anything with them, either sexually or romantically. They simply appreciate their appearance.
I Think I Might Not Be Straight – So What Am I?
by Melissa A. Fabello, Everyday Feminism

I have a very active Tumblr ask box.

As an out-and-proud sexuality educator with a faithful following of mostly young people, that’s to be expected. The world is not kind to adolescents and young adults looking to understand the inner workings of their sexuality, and so when they find a personable person who has the answers – and can ask anonymously, at that! – they latch on.

And one question that I get asked repeatedly looks something like this: “I think I might be bisexual. I like boys, but I also kind of have a crush on this girl in my math class. But I’ve never dated a girl before, so my friends say that I can’t be bi. I’m really confused. What am I?” Or this: “I’ve come to the conclusion that I don’t feel romantic or sexual attraction to anyone, regardless of their gender. Is there something wrong with me? Is there something to call this? What can I do?”

All of these questions have two important things in common: 1) They clearly state what their feelings and attractions are, and 2) their anxiety is almost entirely focused on labels. People aren’t asking me to help identify their feelings. They’ve already got a steady hold on that. They want help figuring out what to call those feelings – and that’s a very different beast, indeed.

So let’s talk about it.

Sexuality 101: What Is It Anyway?

Generally, when laypeople use the word “sexuality” (as in “What’s your sexuality?”), they’re conflating it with what we, people in the field of Human Sexuality, actually call “orientation” or “identity.”

They’re not the same. Here’s why: A person’s sexuality encompasses a lot!

It’s made up of five major components: Sensuality, Intimacy, Sexual Health and Reproduction, Sexualization, and Sexual Identity. And even those components are broken down into many others, which develop over time, are affected by our environments, and are relatively fluid. So, really, when a person asks “What’s your sexuality,” they could be asking about a myriad of things – from body image to physiology to our feelings of vulnerability to our pregnancy status.

We all have a sexuality that is made up of much, much more than who we’re into. And even when we’re just talking about the orientation stuff, there’s actually more to consider than what the average person thinks.

Scales and Grids and Confusion

Ask anyone who’s ever taken an introductory psychology class or volunteered for an LGBTQIA+ organization who Alfred Kinsey is, and they’ll probably at least be able to tell you one thing: He’s that dude that made up that scale! And yes, he did. Among many, many other things, he did.

The Kinsey Scale, in short, is simply a line graph numbered zero through six that helps illustrate the kinds of attractions that people feel with zero representing “Totally into the Same Gender” and six representing “Totally into Another Gender.”

Three, which is in the middle, represents “Completely an Equal Opportunity Employer.” And one, two, four, and five are basically saying, “I’m Mostly This, But I’m Also a Little of That.” These aren’t the labels that Kinsey used, by the way. This is a Fabello original.
Contrary to popular belief, though, there isn’t a test to place you on the scale. You just kind of place yourself, based on what your feelings are: “Oh, I’m kind of into men and women, but I think I like women a little bit more. I guess I’m a four.” But then, in the late 1980s, this dude named Fritz Klein came along and was like, “Hold on. This scale kind of sucks. Sexuality is more complicated than this linear graph makes it out to be. I’ll expand upon it” (not an actual quote). And so he did.

He created the Klein Orientation Grid, which added variables to the equation. Instead of just asking a blanket question of “To whom are you sexually responsive?” Klein’s model asks seven questions – including “With whom have you have sex?” and “Which gender do you socialize with?” – and has you consider your past, present, and future ideals.

This gets at the fact that sexuality is a complicated topic – which is great – but the end result is a grid that’s—well—complicated. And yet, these are the only two graphic representations of sexual orientation that most people know, if they know any at all – either a super simplified version or a way too complex one! And so, if you don’t mind, I’d like to take a second to celebrate…

The Birth of the OBI Model

In 2010, Don Dyson and Brent Satterly (full disclosure: they are both professors in the program through which I obtained my Master’s degree) came along and published a paper and said, “We are going to create the model to end all models” (also not an actual quote).

And the OBI Model was born, separating the following related dimensions: Orientation, Behavior, and Identity. And this is what we want to use to have this conversation – not those other scales. So what does it all mean, though?

Orientation

In short, your sexual orientation describes the gender(s) to which you feel sexual attraction or about which you have sexual fantasies. Who do you find yourself attracted to? When you’re on a crowded bus and find yourself inadvertently scanning for cuties, who are you looking for? When you’re enjoying some sexy alone time in your bed, who do you find yourself thinking about? What kind of porn do you watch? This is what we’re talking about when we say “orientation” – the relatively subconscious, automatic feelings of attraction that you have on sexual and romantic levels.

Behavior

Your sexual behavior refers to the gender(s) that you engage in sexual activity with. Who do you have sex with, go on dates with, present yourself in public with? When you do your ‘Who I’ve Had Sex With’ roll call, which genders are called out? When we discuss behavior, we’re honestly talking about just that – the way that you behave.

And it’s important to note that the way that you behave doesn’t necessarily reflect your orientation. For example, you could be sexually attracted to both men and women (orientation), but not have found someone of the same gender to try dating or sleeping with yet (behavior). Or you could be solely attracted to the same gender (orientation), but be in the closet and therefore only dating and sleeping with another gender (behavior).

The way that you behave sexually can be influenced by many internal and external factors. Just because you behave one way doesn’t mean that you consider yourself oriented that way. And the whole “How do you consider yourself?” question is significant. Because…
Identity

A person’s sexual identity is the label with which the person identifies. What do you want to call yourself? When you look in the mirror, which word(s) do you use to describe yourself that feel good? Are there any at all?

The concept of identity is simple, although it is often misunderstood. Your identity – plain and simple – is how you see yourself. That’s it.

It isn’t necessarily a word to describe your attractions; it isn’t necessarily a word to describe your behaviors; it’s just a word that you can choose to use to describe who you are. And no one else gets a say – not even sex educators on Tumblr.

The problem is that our culture tends to give us only three words to use – Gay, Straight, and Bisexual – which is totally ridiculous. There are way more stops on the Sexual Identity train than just those. And that’s where a lot of confusion comes into play.

People understand their orientation (who they’re attracted to). And people understand their behavior (who they’ve been sexual with). What they have trouble with is their identity (what to call themselves) if they don’t neatly fit into one of those three boxes. And if you’re like me and don’t find yourself comfortably fitting into any of those labels, you can be left with this panic like, “WELL WHO AM I AND WHAT IS LIFE AND IS THERE EVEN A GOD?” And that can be really scary.

So Now What?

1. Focus on Naming Your Feelings: At the end of the day, what’s most important here is to understand who you want to get jiggy with (if anyone at all). If you can do that, the stressful part is actually already over. Because knowing who and what you like is a big deal. Not everyone can do that. Not everyone is even ready for that step. If you can confidently say “This is who I want sexually and romantically, and this is who I don’t,” then you’re way ahead of a lot of other people! And you’ve got your shit sorted enough to start putting yourself out there as a prospect.

2. Let Your Identity Come to You: Here’s the thing about labels: They’re only useful insofar as they’re useful. Otherwise, they’re kind of a hassle. At the end of the day, we can’t put people into boxes. We want to because our brains are wired to compartmentalize, but sometimes we need to be like, “Shut up, brain. I’ve got this.” Feel like the ~Sexual Identity Trifecta~ of Gay, Straight, and Bi doesn’t work for you? Not sure you’re comfortable with Queer either? Cool. You can find another one. There are tons of labels out there to choose from – from heteroflexible to biromantic to demisexual – that might make more sense for you. And if you still can’t find something? That’s alright. Make up your own damn label. Not having a word for yourself doesn’t mean that you don’t have an identity. It just means that your label is currently under construction. And honestly, whose isn’t? “Self-actualization” is high on Maslow’s hierarchy for a reason: It’s tough to get to. Sooner or later, a word will creep along that feels right for you. And maybe later on in life, you’ll want to abandon it to adopt a new one. The point is: Whatever works for you works for you. Go with it.

I’m not going to tell you that labels are for soup cans, although I understand that sentiment.

As a person who struggled for most of her life trying to find a label (and therefore has had to come out, like, three times already), I totally understand the desire to have your feelings validated with a label that says, “This Is Who I Am, and My Experience is Valid.” But the secret that no one is telling you is this: This is who you are, and your experience is valid – with or without a label affixed.
Reflective Self Inventory

DIRECTIONS: Think back and as you review each situation below:
1. When and where did it occur?
2. How old were you?
3. How did you feel about the situation?
4. How did the situation influence your attitudes, values, or beliefs about LGBT people and issues?

QUESTIONS: When was the first or a significant time in which you:
1. became aware that people had different sexual orientations?

2. became aware that people had different gender identities?

3. became aware that people were treated negatively because of their sexual orientation?

4. became aware that people were treated negatively because of their gender identity?

5. felt angry about homophobia/heterosexism and transphobia/ cissexism in our society?

6. decided to actively resist homophobia/heterosexism and transphobia/ cissexism?

Final Questions: (Consider friends, family, students, colleagues, group members, clients, etc.)
• What direct interactions have you had with LGB people over the years?
• What direct interactions have you had with Trans* people over the years?
Gender is a tough subject to tackle. There are a lot of facets to consider, a lot of pressures at play, and we have all been conditioned in such a way that our first instinct is almost unanimously wrong. But we’re going to tackle it. No, we’re going to tackle the balls out of it. Coming to our aid, I would like to present to you: The Genderbread Person!

The schema used here to map out gender is what I like to call the “-ness” model. You could call it the independent unidirectional linear continua model, but that seems wordy. Individuals can plot where they identify along both continua to represent varying degrees of alignment with the traditional binary elements of each aspect of gender, resulting in infinite possibilities of “gender” for a person.

If that was a bit dense for you, it’ll all make sense soon. Just know that in each category (gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and attraction), you are to place a point on each of the directional
lines, representing your man-/ woman-/ masculine-/ feminine-/ male-/ female-ness, whether it be nada or a lotta.

**Understanding the Genderbread Person**

As you see above, we have four main elements that we’re looking at. I will break those down, but before that I want to talk in generalities. First of all, if you noticed that the first three categories all pertain to gender, while the fourth pertains to sexuality, great job. Skip ahead to the next paragraph.

For everyone else: if that doesn’t make sense to you, or you’re unsure of how all four interrelate, worry not. By the end of this article it’ll all make sense or you can have your money back. Whenever I talk to groups about gender, a common problem arises: people tend to assume that someone will consistently be masculine/male/man or feminine/female/woman, and when I tell them that couldn’t be further from the truth, I get blank stares. I’m about to say something that will likely freak you out, but be cool, because it’ll all make sense soon. Gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation are independent of one another (i.e., they are not connected). With that said (I’m going to say it again later), let’s move on and talk about what each of those concepts represent.

**Gender Identity: Who You Think You Are**

![Gender Identity Diagram]

On the left of both continua we have “nongendered,” which, you guessed it, means existing without gender, and on the right we have “woman-ness” (the quality to which you identify as a “woman”) and “man-ness” (ditto, but with “man). Below we have some examples of possible plots and possible labels for those plots. Examples of common identities that aren’t listed include agender, bigender, third-gender, and transgender.

Gender identity is all about how you, in your head, think about yourself. It’s about how you internally interpret the chemistry that composes you (e.g., hormone levels).

As you know it, do you think you fit better into the societal role of “woman,” or “man,” or do neither ring particularly true for you? That is, do you have aspects of your identity that align with elements from both? Or do you consider your gender to fall outside of the gender norms completely? The answer is your gender identity.

It has been accepted that we form our gender identities around the age of three, and after that age it is incredibly difficult to change them. Formation of identity is affected by hormones and environment just as much as it is by biological sex. Oftentimes, problems arise when someone is assigned a gender based on their sex at birth that doesn’t align with how they come to identify. We’ll talk about that more later.
Gender Expression: How You Demonstrate Who You Are

On the left of both continua we have “agender,” which means expression without gender (“genderless”), and on the right sides we have “masculine” and “feminine.” Examples of different gender expressions and possible labels are down below. “Androgynous” might be a new word, and it simply means a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity.

Gender expression is all about how you demonstrate gender through the ways you act, dress, behave, and interact—whether that is intentional or unintended. Gender expression is interpreted by others based on traditional gender norms (e.g., men wear pants, women wear dresses).

Gender expression is something that often changes from day to day, outfit to outfit, event or setting to event or setting. It’s about how the way you express yourself aligns or doesn’t with traditional ways of gendered expression, and can be motivated by your gender identity, sexuality, or something else completely (e.g., just for fun, or performance).

Like gender identity, there is a lot of room for flexibility here. It is likely that your gender expression changes frequently without you even thinking about it. How about an example? You wake up and you’re wearing baggy grey sweatpants and a t-shirt. As you walk into your kitchen to prepare breakfast, you’re expressing an androgynous-to-slightly-masculine gender.

However, you see your partner in the kitchen and decide to prowl in like Halle Berry from Catwoman, then you are expressing much more femininely. You pour a bowl of cereal, wrap your fist around a spoon like a viking, and start shoveling Fruit Loops into your face, and all-of-a-sudden you’re bumping up your levels of masculinity. After breakfast, you skip back into your bedroom and playfully place varying outfits in front of you, pleading your partner help you decide what to wear. You’re feminine again.

I assume this entire time you were imagining it was you, with your gender identity, acting out that example. Now go through the whole thing, but imagine someone with a different gender identity from you going through the motions. Now you are starting to understand how these concepts interrelate, but don’t interconnect.
Biological Sex: The Equipment Under the Hood

On the left we have “asex,” which means without sex, and on the right we have “female-ness” and “male-ness” (both representing the degree to which you possess those characteristics). In the examples below, you see a new term, “intersex,” which is a label for someone who has both male and female characteristics. You also see two “self ID” (self identification) labels, which represent people who possess both male and female characteristics, but identify with one of the binary sexes. Oh, and how did you feel about me expressing my masculinity in the heading of this section?

Biological sex refers to the objectively measurable organs, hormones, and chromosomes you possess. Being female means having a vagina, ovaries, two X chromosomes, predominant estrogen, and you can grow a baby in your stomach area. Being male means having testicles, a penis, an XY chromosome configuration, predominant testosterone, and you can put a baby in a female’s stomach area. Being intersex can be any combination of what I just described. For example, someone can be born with the appearance of being male (penis, scrotum, etc.), but have a functional female reproductive system inside. There are many examples of how intersex can present itself, and below you can see some statistics from the Intersex Society of North America that describe the frequency of intersex births. (check out the stat I bolded, but be prepared to be shocked)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not XX and not XY</td>
<td>one in 1,666 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klinefelter (XXY)</td>
<td>one in 1,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androgen insensitivity syndrome</td>
<td>one in 13,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial androgen insensitivity syndrome</td>
<td>one in 130,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical congenital adrenal hyperplasia</td>
<td>one in 13,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late onset adrenal hyperplasia</td>
<td>one in 66 individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal agenesis</td>
<td>one in 6,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovotestes</td>
<td>one in 83,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiopathic (no discernable medical cause)</td>
<td>one in 110,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iatrogenic (caused by medical treatment, for instance progestin administered to pregnant mother)</td>
<td>no estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 alpha reductase deficiency</td>
<td>no estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed gonadal dysgenesis</td>
<td>no estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete gonadal dysgenesis</td>
<td>one in 150,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypospadias (urethral opening in perineum or along penile shaft)</td>
<td>one in 2,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypospadias (urethral opening between corona and tip of glans penis)</td>
<td>one in 770 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of people whose bodies differ from standard male or female</td>
<td>one in 100 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of people receiving surgery to “normalize” genital appearance</td>
<td>one or two in 1,000 births</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sexual Orientation: Who You Are Attracted To

On the left we have "nobody," meaning no feelings of attraction. On the right we have "men/males/masculinity" and "women/females/femininity." Examples below include "pansexual," which is attraction to all genders ("gender-blind"), "asexual," someone who experiences no (or little) sexual attraction (but might still experience romantic/other attraction), and "bisexual," a person attracted to people of their gender and another gender.

Sexual orientation is all about who you are physically, spiritually, and emotionally attracted to (so really, you could plot three points on each of those continua, if you wanted to get really specific), and the labels tend to describe the relationships between your gender and the gender types you're attracted to.

If you are a man and you're attracted to women, you're straight. If you're a man who is attracted to men and another gender, you're bisexual. And if you're a man who is attracted to men, you're gay.

This is the one most of us know the most about. We hear the most about it, it's salient in our lives, and we understand where we stand best. It's pretty cut and dry, right? Maybe.

Interestingly enough, pioneering research conducted by Dr. Alfred Kinsey in the mid-20th century uncovered that most people aren’t absolutely straight or gay/lesbian. Instead of just asking “do you like dudes or chicks?” (very scieny, I know), he asked people to report their fantasies, dreams, thoughts, emotional investments in others, and frequency of sexual contact. Based on his findings, he broke sexuality down into a seven point scale (see below), and reported that most people who identify as straight are actually somewhere between 1 – 3 on the scale, and most people who identify as lesbian/gay are 3-5, meaning most of us are a little bi-.

0 – Exclusively Heterosexual
1 – Predominantly heterosexual, incidentally homosexual
2 – Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
3 – Equally heterosexual and homosexual
4 – Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
5 – Predominantly homosexual, incidentally heterosexual
6 – Exclusively Homosexual

Putting It All Together – Interrelation vs. Interconnection

Wow, that was a lot of information all at once, can we agree? The crazy part: I held back. I have written separate articles about each of the sections above, because there is still so much to say. But you don’t need to worry about that right now. We need to make this all make sense — synthesize some knowledge up in your brain.
Remember earlier when I said that thing, then I said I would say it again? It's on the rig, in case you forgot. This me saying that again: though the four things I presented above are certainly interrelated, they are not interconnected.

What do I mean by that? Gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation are independent of one another (i.e., they are not connected).

People’s sexual orientation doesn't determine their gender expression. And their gender expression isn’t determined by their gender identity. And their gender identity isn’t determined by their biological sex. And also every other mismatch of A isn’t determined by B combination you can dream up from those inputs.

Those things certainly affect one another (i.e., they are related to one another) but they do not determine one another. If someone is born with male reproductive organs and genitalia, he is very likely to be raised as a boy, identify as a man, and express himself masculinely. We call this identity “cisgender” (when your biological sex aligns with how you identify) and it grants a lot of privilege. It's something most of us who have it don’t appreciate nearly as much as we should.
Coming Out

The term “coming out” (of the closet) refers to the life long process of developing a positive LGB and/or T identity. Coming out can be a long and difficult struggle for many LGBT individuals because they often have to confront the homophobia, biphobia, and/or transphobia they learned growing up. Before they can feel good about themselves, they have to challenge their own attitudes. For some, it takes years of painful work to develop a positive LGB and/or T identity, for others it may not seem to take as long because it is an individualized journey. Each LGBT individual needs to decide when, how and to whom they will disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

What might LGBT people be afraid of?

- Losing friendships and family connections, closeness in relationships/friendships, their job, their children, and/or financial support from family members.
- Being the subject of gossip, harassed, physically assaulted, and/or thrown out of the house.

Why might LGBT people want to come out to others?

- To end the secrecy and to stop wasting energy by hiding an essential part of themselves.
- To feel closer to those people, like they have integrity, and/or “whole” around them.
- To make a statement by being an example to others.

How might LGBT people feel about coming out to someone?

- Scared, vulnerable, relieved, concerned about how the person will react
- Proud

How might an individual feel after someone has come out to them?

- Disbelieving, uncomfortable, scared, shocked, angry, disgusted
- Supportive, flattered, honored
- Not sure what to say or do next
- Wondering why the person came out

What do LGBT people want from the people they come out to?

- Acceptance, support, understanding, comfort, a closer relationship
- Hearing that disclosure will not negatively affect the relationship
- An acknowledgement of their feelings
- A smile and a hug

Ways that you can help when someone comes out to you:

- Remember that the person has not changed. They are still the same person you knew; you just have more information about them now than you did before. If you are shocked, don’t let the shock lead you to view the person as suddenly different.
- Don’t ask questions that would have been considered inappropriate before their disclosure.
- If you would like more information, ask in an honest and considerate way. If you show a genuine and respectful interest in their life, they will most likely appreciate it.
- Don’t assume that you know what it means for the person to be LGB and/or T. Every person’s experience is different.
- They may not want you to do anything necessarily. They may just need someone to listen.
- Consider it an honor that they have trusted you with this very personal information. Thank them for trusting you.
- Clarify with them what level of confidentiality they expect from you. They may not want you to tell anyone else, or they may be out to others and not be concerned with who finds out.
- If you don’t understand something or have questions remember that people who are LGB and/or T are often willing to help you understand their life experiences.
For LGBTQ+ people, coming out is a process of understanding, accepting, and valuing one's sexual attraction/orientation/identity and/or gender expression/identity. Coming out includes both exploring one's identity and sharing that identity with others. It also involves coping with societal responses and attitudes toward GLBTQ people. GLBTQ individuals are forced to come to terms with what it means to be different in a society that tends to assume everyone to be heterosexual and that tends to judge differences from the norm in negative ways. The coming out process is very personal. This process happens in different ways and occurs at different ages for different people. Some people are aware of their sexual identity at an early age; others arrive at this awareness only after many years. Coming out is a continuing, sometimes lifelong, process.

**Coming Out to Oneself**

Recognizing your own sexual identity and working toward self-acceptance are the first steps in coming out. First, concerning sexual identity, it helps to think of a sexual orientation continuum that ranges from exclusive same sex attraction to exclusive opposite sex attraction. Exploring your sexual identity may include determining where you presently fit in that continuum. There are many things to think about when coming out. Some of the positive outcomes may be increased self-esteem, greater honesty in one's life, and a sense of greater personal integrity. In addition, there is often a sense of relief and a reduction of tension when one stops trying to deny or hide such an important part of his/her life. Coming out can lead to greater freedom of self-expression, positive sense of self, and more healthy and honest relationships.

**Coming Out to Other LGBTQ+ People**

Often, after spending some time getting in touch with one's own feelings, the next step is to come out to others. It is usually advisable to come out first to those that are most likely to be supportive. LGBTQ+ people are a potential natural support system because they have all experienced at least some of the steps in the process of coming out. Furthermore, coming out to other LGBTQ+ people can help you build a community of people who can support and assist you in coming out to others in your life. Many LGBTQ+ communities offer a number of helpful resources, including local coming out groups, social outlets, and political and cultural activities and organization.

Coming out to other LGBTQ+ people does not need to happen quickly. Also, choosing to do so does not mean that you must conform to real or presumed expectations of the LGBTQ+ communities. What is most important is that you seek your own path through the coming out process and that you attend to your unique, personal timetable. You should not allow yourself to be pressured into anything you are not ready for or don't want to do. It is important to proceed at your own pace, being honest with yourself and taking time to discover who you really are.

**Questions to Consider When Coming Out to a Loved One**

1. Relationship to the loved one:
   a. What does this relationship mean to you? This information can help you make the decision, but it might also be useful to communicate to the loved one while coming out.
   b. What does coming out to this person mean to you? (This information might also be useful to communicate to the loved one while coming out.)
   c. How will coming out improve this relationship?
   d. How might coming out strain this relationship?
e. What will be obstacles for this person to accept your sexual orientation?
f. What internal resources does this person have to cope with these obstacles?

2. Timing:
   a. What are the pros and cons of coming out to them at this moment? Could there be any financial ramifications of coming out? Can you afford to deal with those ramifications at this time?
   b. Many students only go home on holidays or at stressful family times. Is this the best time for you to come out? If not, do you need to schedule a trip home devoted to coming out or do you need to come out in a letter or phone call?
   c. Given your current internal and external resources, is this the best time to come out for you?

3. Location:
   a. Where will the person feel most comfortable hearing this news?
   b. Where will they feel the least attacked, put-on-the-spot, or humiliated?
   c. Where will you feel the most comfortable?
   d. What will you do after coming out?
   e. Is there a person you can talk with afterwards?

4. Resources:
   a. What are your internal and external resources?
   b. What external resources (books, brochures, referrals, etc.) can you offer to your loved one?

5. Support for person coming out:
   a. What kinds of support do you need for your coming out to be a positive experience?
   b. Do you have a safe person(s) to talk with?
   c. What might you say in order to come out? What order might you say it in? How can you prepare for any issues (especially negative reactions) you can anticipate arising during the conversation?
   d. Coming out to certain people (especially family) can be very stressful regardless of whether the outcome feels positive or negative. What can you do to take care of yourself in the event of a stressful coming out experience? What can you do to celebrate or congratulate yourself after a stressful coming out experience?

It is especially useful for allies working with college students to understand this process, as many students find college a safer place to come out than their homes. Of course, some people come out earlier than the undergraduate years and may find coming out issues less overwhelming or salient than those in the midst of coming out for the first time. As with many things, the most important thing to remember is that we need to listen to students and meet them where they are.
What do I do if someone comes out to me?

Adapted from University of California, Davis Safe Zone Training

1. **Listen.** Coming out is often the result of years of coming to terms with one self, and the fact that they have decided to tell you means that they want to include you in their life.

2. **Remain neutral and non-judgmental.** They’ve come to you because they trust you, this should not be seen as the time to advocate a particular way of life or discuss the moral ramifications of being LGBT.

3. **Ask sensitive questions and be willing to learn.** Avoid questions that imply that there is something wrong with being LGBT, such as “Have you seen somebody about this issue?” Also, avoid questions that would have been considered rude within the relationship before this disclosure.

4. **Be supportive.** Let them know that you are there to talk with, or listen. For those just coming out, they may need resources that you will find in the back of this resource manual. Being supportive means being open-minded.

5. **Don’t ignore it.** Make an effort to take an interest in this part of their lives; they came to you because they are tired of living in secrecy.

6. **Don’t make their sexuality the extent of your interactions.** It is important to remember that this person has not changed, you may be shocked by their revelation, but they’re the same person as before.

7. **Be honest and open.** It’s okay to admit that you don’t know everything about this subject, or even anything. It is also okay to be uncomfortable with this subject, just be honest! Your discomfort with the subject may come across as discomfort with the person or their sexuality. If you feel uncomfortable you can suggest that they speak to someone more educated on the subject.

8. **Keep it confidential:** This is not yours to reveal to others. Show the person you are trustworthy, and let that person decide if and when to tell certain people.

   **Referring someone should be done in a constructive, positive way.**
   **Being an ally is about being an askable person, not about having all the answers.**

   1. It took a lot of courage for them to come to you, don’t desert them!
   2. If they are struggling beyond your skills to help them, encourage them to speak to a counselor with the understanding that their problem is not being LGBT but the pressures put on LGBT people because of homophobia. Be sure to convey to them that counseling is a tool for their use and not that there is something wrong with them.
   3. Communicate that you are not abandoning them, invite them to return anytime.

Because of societal pressures that impose heteronormativity, some LGBT people experience isolation and depression. Warning signs to watch out for:

- Has the student stopped going to class?
- How are their grades?
- Are they working? How is that going?
- Are there changes in daily functions such as:
  - sleeping more or less than usual
  - crying
  - weight gain or loss
  - stopped participating in activities they used to enjoy
  - talk about excessive partying or substance use
- Refer to counseling anyone who voices suicidal thoughts or feelings
Making a Coming Out Plan

What it is you want to say?
Particularly at the beginning of the coming out process, many people are still answering tough questions for themselves and are not ready to identify with a certain label. That’s okay. Maybe you just want to say you’re attracted to someone of the same gender, or that you feel uncomfortable with the expectations of cultural “gender norms.” Maybe you just want to say you’re feeling your true gender does not align with the gender binary of male/female. Labels aren’t important; your feelings are. You may want to try writing out what you want to say to help organize and express your thoughts clearly.

What are your best- and worst-case scenarios?
Thinking through what might happen when you come out to different people can help you be prepared. Could your housing or financial situations be affected? Make sure you have alternatives in place. What is the ideal reaction you’re hoping for? Think about specific steps or actions that could help make it a reality.

Why now?
Timing can be very important. Be aware of the mood, priorities, stresses and problems of those to whom you would like to come out. Be aware that if they’re dealing with their own major life concerns, they may not be able to respond constructively to yours.

Can you be patient?
Some people will need time to deal with this new information, just as it took time for many of us to come to terms with being LGBTQ. When you come out to others, be prepared to give them the time they need to adjust to what you’ve said. Rather than expect immediate understanding, try to establish an ongoing, caring dialogue.

Intersectionality
Based on the work of Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberle Crenshaw
From the North Dakota State University 2012-2013 Safe Zone Program

Originally conceptualized as a legal matter ensuring that African American women were treated equally in the workplace, the theory of intersectionality has provided people of color a means of justifying their existence as a whole being. Intersectionality poses that racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism and other limiting structures in society are so closely linked and dependent upon one another it is inconceivable to believe that we can dismantle one without simultaneously working on the others. The limiting structures in society that prevent individuals from excelling are collectively referred to as the Matrix of Domination. They weave together and form a structure that often appears overwhelming and impenetrable. We must begin to recognize the diversity in identities and the way that they construct and manifest themselves. Providing individuals with the ability to allow their identities to intersect allows for a more whole acknowledgement of their being. Because one is never bringing only one component of their identity to the table, it is necessary that we begin to understand how all marginalizing structures are interconnected.

Intersecting Identities
Adopted from: DePaul University’s Office for LGBTQA Student Services: Safe Zone Training Program

Most people’s identity development involves the consolidation of more than simply an identity based on sexual orientation. People often have to also develop their identity in many areas such as gender, race, and religion. One’s sexual orientation and gender identity are rarely confronted in isolation from other aspects of oneself. Integrating the many areas of identity is an important task for all college students and perhaps particularly for LGBTQ students.
Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

From the work of Elisa Abes, Susan R. Jones, and Marylu McEwen

- Identity dimensions are intersecting rings around a core.
- No one dimension may be understood singularly—only in relation to the other dimensions.
- In the center is the core sense of self, comprising of the valued personal attributes and characteristics.
- Surrounding the core and identity dimensions is the context in which a person experiences their life.
- The salience of each identity dimension to the core is fluid and depends on contextual influences.
What are Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia?
From the North Dakota State University Safe Zone Training

The following are examples of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Sometimes well-meaning heterosexuals will say or do something without realizing that they are acting on heterosexist or homophobic attitudes and beliefs. When heterosexuals treat LGBT people as — others, they are highlighting the perceived differences between us all, rather than the similarities.

- Expecting a LGBTQIA person to change his or her public identity or affectional habits or mode of dress
- Looking at a LGBTQIA person and automatically thinking of their sexuality or gender identity rather than seeing them as a whole and complex person
- Assuming that a bisexual person is really straight but is currently — experimenting with a gay or lesbian relationship
- Changing your seat in a meeting because a transgender person sat in the chair next to yours
- Thinking you can — spot one! Worrying about the effect a LGBTQIA volunteer or co-worker will have on your program
- Using the terms — gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, intersex or transgender as accusatory
- Not asking about a LGBTQIA person’s partner although you regularly ask, —How is your husband? or —boyfriend? or —wifell or —girlfriend? when you run into a heterosexual friend
- Kissing an old friend but being afraid to shake hands with a queer person. Thinking that if a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person touches you, he or she is making a sexual advance
- Stereotyping lesbians as man-haters, separatists, or radicals and gay men as sissies, wimps, or woman- haters, and using those terms accusingly
- Feeling repulsed by public displays of affection between LGBTQIA individuals but accepting the same affectional displays between heterosexuals as —nice
- Wondering which one is the —man? or —woman? i.e., Feeling that queer people are too outspoken about queer rights Assuming that everyone you meet is probably heterosexual — or homosexual Being outspoken about queer rights, but making sure everyone knows you are straight Not confronting a heterosexual remark for fear of being identified as queer.

Words that Hurt and Why
From University of California, Davis Safe Zone Training

Sometimes we say words without realizing the impact they may have on others. Help make a safe place for everyone.

- BITCH: Derogatory towards women; even if used towards other men; including gay/queer men. It dehumanizes women making it easier for violence to be inflicted on them.
- WHORE/HO: A derogatory word towards women who are sexually active, which is seen as bad. A double standard between men and women who are sexually active.
- GHETTO: A term often used to denote something is cheap, worn out, poor, etc; reference to housing communities that are impoverished and disproportionately impact people of color. (urban dictionary.com)
- PIMP: A man who makes a profession out of reducing women to commodities and convincing them to sell their bodies to clients. An oppressor of women. (urban dictionary.com)
- ILLEGAL “ALIEN”: Offensive word used towards undocumented immigrants that reduces them to something less than human, without taking into consideration political, social, and economic factors that can negatively impact people.
• “THAT’S SO GAY”: A statement used in a negative way to refer to events, occurrences, or inanimate objects. Using words related to queer culture in place of negative words fosters an environment that promotes and perpetuates violent hate crimes against queer people.

• RETARDED AND LAME: Offensive term about people with disabilities often used to denote something is bad, stupid, etc.

• USING “GAY” AS AN UMBRELLA TERM FOR THE LGBT COMMUNITY LEAVES OUT MANY PEOPLE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY.

Words that are BIPHOBIC and Why

Biphobia: Fear or hatred of people who are bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, or nonmonosexual. Biphobia is closely linked to transphobia & homophobia.

“Bisexuality doesn’t really exist, people are just gay or straight”
• This statement denies the fluidity of sexuality and dismisses people’s experiences and definitions of self. People deserve the right to define their identities any way they wish. Honor people’s identities.

“I think everyone is really Bisexual”
• People often say this as a way to acknowledge the fluidity of sexuality, however it dismisses people who identify as Bisexual and their experiences.

“You’re too femme/butch to be Bisexual”
• A person’s gender presentation does not indicate their sexual orientation. Bisexual people have a range of gender presentations, just like everyone else.

“Who do you see yourself ending up with?”
• This is another way of implying that someone has to “end up” gay or straight and ignores bisexuality as a valid identity. It also assumes that everyone desires to be in one long term monogamous relationship.

“Bisexual people just want straight privilege.”
• Bisexual people experience discrimination from both the gay and lesbian community and from the straight community. They never fully experience straight privilege, because they are not straight. Often their identities are invisible and denied.

“Bisexual people are just greedy and want to have sex with everyone.”
• This stereotypes bisexual people and assumes they are all promiscuous. It creates negative attitudes towards sex and works against creating a sex positive climate. It also comes from the notion that bisexuality is not a legitimate identity but is only about behavior.

REMEMBER: Identity does not equal behavior and behavior does not equal Identity. A person’s identity does not determine what behaviors they engage in and vice versa.
Words that are TRANSPHOBIC and Why

Transphobia: the fear or hatred of transgender people or people who do not meet society’s gender role expectations. Transphobia is closely linked with homophobia & biphobia.

“You’re such a Tranny”
• Calling someone a Tranny, whether they identify as Trans or not, can be offensive. This may be a term people within the community use for themselves, but should not be as a joke or without a person’s consent.

Using the wrong pronouns or making assumptions about others’ gender identity
• It is important to respect the names and pronouns people prefer. If you are not sure, ask: “what are your preferred pronouns?”

Asking others about a transperson’s identity or offering information about someone.
• Inquiring about someone’s identity to someone else is inappropriate. Ask yourself why you want to know. If you are concerned about using the person’s preferred pronouns ask the person directly.

“That person doesn’t really look like a man/woman.”
• What does a man or woman really look like? There is no one way to look like a man or a woman. It should also not be assumed that all Transmen want or have to strive to be masculine or that Transwomen should be feminine. Gender presentation is fluid and we should support all the ways people choose to present their gender.

“Why would you transition if you are going to be gay?”
• Gender identity and sexual orientation are two separate aspects of one’s identity. This question demonstrates how heterosexual identity is more valued in our society and reinforces homophobia & heterosexism.

Calling someone “it” or “He/She” is demeaning and does not validate their identity or respect them as a person.

“What is your REAL Name? I mean the one you were given at birth?”
• Asking this question implies that the person’s chosen name and gender identity are not “real.” It is important to respect people’s choices around sharing or not sharing personal information.

Potential Internal Stresses of LGBT People

1. Low self-concept due to the societal messages that heterosexuality is “right” and “normal.”
2. Pain of invisibility; thus not meeting other LGBT people.
3. Pain of having to suppress and not explore sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
4. Conflict due to gender role stereotypes and gender attributions.
5. Anger and frustration with society and expectations to conform to heterosexual or cisgender norms.
6. Depression due to a build up of stresses from the items above and more.
7. Cautious of how they look – not being too stereotypical.
8. Critical evaluation of whom to trust – so they are not ridiculed and exposed.
9. Fear of others and self being defined by sexuality ONLY.
10. Homophobic and/or transphobic to self – believing feelings are “wrong” due to societal pressure.
Oppressive Forums and Discrimination

- Employment
- Public accommodations
- Housing
- Child custody cases and difficulty in adoption
- Rejection by family members/friends
- Violations of due process
- Police harassment / Threats of Imprisonment
- Verbal harassment / ridicule
- Assault/Physical violence/ assault
- Verbal threats/ assault
- Arrest, public court trials, and imprisonments
- Limitations regarding freedom of speech, association, and equal protection under the law
- The long history of dishonorable discharge from military service
- Attempts to “cure”: electroshock, aversion therapies, castration, clitoridectomies, hormonal injections, etc.
- No access to legal, economic and social supports of heterosexual married couples: joint tax credits, joint credit, insurance/medical benefits, will/inheritance, social security/pensions of partner, joint custody, divorce.

Homophobia Impacts Us All

- Homophobia inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own sex, for the fear of being perceived as LGB.
- Homophobia locks people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self-expression.
- Homophobia prevents some LGB people from developing an authentic self identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress and oftentimes trauma on the individual, as well as on their heterosexual spouses and their children.
- Homophobia increases premature sexual involvement, the chance of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Young people, of all sexual identities, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are not LGB.
- Homophobia inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. We are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.
Heterosexual & Cisgender Privilege

Privilege: Rights, opportunities or resources that one group has access to and that other groups are denied. If you are heterosexual and/or cisgender (or in some cases, perceived to be), you can live without ever having to think twice about, face, confront, engage, or cope with anything listed below.

HETEROSEXUALITY QUESTIONNAIRE
(Attributed to Martin Rochlin, PhD, January 1977)

1. What do you think has caused you to be heterosexual?
2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
3. Is it possible your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of people of the same sex?
4. If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn't prefer it?
5. Isn't it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
6. Isn't it possible that all you need is a good gay lover?
7. If heterosexuality is normal, why are a disproportionate number of mental patients heterosexual?
8. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
9. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex? Why are they so promiscuous?
10. Do heterosexuals hate and/or distrust others of their own sex? Is that what makes them heterosexual?
11. If you were to have children, would you want them to be heterosexual knowing the problems they'd face?
12. Your heterosexuality doesn't offend me as long as you don't try to force it on me. Why do you feel compelled to seduce others into your sexual orientation?
13. The great majority of child molesters are heterosexuals. Do you really consider it safe to expose your children to heterosexual teachers?
14. Why do you insist on being so obvious, and making a public spectacle of your heterosexuality? Can't you just be who you are and keep it quiet?
15. How can you ever hope to become a whole person if you limit yourself to a compulsive, exclusively heterosexual lifestyle, and remain unwilling to explore and develop your homosexual potential?
16. Heterosexuals are noted for assigning themselves and each other to narrowly restricted, stereotyped sex-roles. Why do you cling to such unhealthy role playing?
17. Even with all the societal support marriage receives, the divorce rate is spiraling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?
18. How could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual like you, considering the menace of overpopulation?
19. There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that could help you change if you really wanted to. Have you considered trying psychotherapy or even aversion therapy?
20. Could you really trust a heterosexual therapist/counselor to be objective and unbiased? Don't you fear he/she might be inclined to influence you in the direction of his/her own preferences?
21. How can you enjoy a full, satisfying sexual experience or deep emotional rapport with a person of the opposite sex when the differences are so vast? How can a man understand what pleases a woman, or vice-versa?
Examples of Heterosexism

- Assuming that everyone you meet is heterosexual.
- Assuming that everyone has or is interested in having an opposite-sex partner.
- Assuming that all mothers and fathers are heterosexual.
- Assuming all sexually active women use birth control.
- Assuming that all unmarried people are "single," while in reality they may have a same-sex partner.
- Assuming all children live in families with heterosexual parents.
- Using language that presumes heterosexuality in others, such as husband or wife, instead of gender neutral language such as partner.
- Using official forms which allow only for designation as married or single.
- Denying equal employment benefits to people with same-sex partners (i.e. spousal insurance).
- Omitting any discussion of persons who are LGBT as part of educational curricula.

Image from: University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s Safe Zone Program
CISGENDER PRIVILEGES

1. Strangers don’t assume they can ask me what my genitals look like and how I have sex.
2. My validity as a man/woman/human is not based upon how much surgery I’ve had or how accurately other people view my gender.
3. Strangers do not ask me what my “real name” is and then assume that they have a right to call me by that name.
4. If I tell people about my gender, I don’t have to hear “so have you had THE surgery?” or “oh, so you’re REALLY a [incorrect sex or gender]?”
5. I am not expected to explain to friends, family, or strangers what it means to be my gender, how I knew what my gender was, or whether my gender is just a “phase”.
6. I don’t need to prove how long I have identified as my gender in order to have my health needs taken seriously.
7. The medical establishment does not serve as a “gatekeeper” denying my self-determination of what happens to my body, nor requiring me to undergo extensive psychological evaluation in order to receive basic medical care.
8. I do not have to worry that life-saving treatment will be withheld from me due to my gender, nor will all of my medical issues be seen as a product of my gender.
9. I do not have to worry whether my gender will be questioned by others seeing/hearing: pictures from my childhood, my identification or official documents, others’ language used to refer to me, my speaking and singing voice, or any of my body parts.
10. If someone mistakes my gender, it will rarely continue to the point of an argument. A simple assertion of my gender will generally be enough to convince the other person.
11. Bodies like mine are represented in the media and the arts. It is easily possible for representations of my naked body to pass obscenity restrictions.
12. If I am attacked by a lover, no one will excuse my attacker because they were “deceived” by my gender.
13. I do not have to worry about whether I will be able to find a bathroom to use or whether I will be safe changing in a locker room. I can use public showers without fear of being attacked for my genitalia.
14. I don’t need to be constantly aware of how others perceive my gender.
15. I can expect my government-issued identification to accurately represent who I am. If my identification does not, I expect to be able to remedy this quickly and easily, without added expense, undue delay, arbitrary criteria, or a necessity to present evidence or medical documents.
16. My gender does not make me necessarily unfit to be a parent in the eyes of the law, regardless of what state I’m in.
17. I expect my gender to not unduly affect my ability to travel internationally.
18. I expect access to, and fair treatment within sex segregated facilities such as: homeless shelters, domestic shelters, drug rehab programs, prisons, hostels, and dorms.
19. I never have to wonder what to put down on legal or official forms when they ask for “sex” or “gender.”
20. When I express my internal identities in my daily life, I am not considered “mentally ill” by the medical establishment.
21. I am not told that my sexual orientation and gender identity are mutually exclusive.
3 Examples of Everyday Cissexism

by Sian Ferguson, Everyday Feminism

Often, oppressive assumptions and myths are so embedded in our society that it is difficult to recognize how detrimental they are. In order to effectively tackle inequality, we must carefully examine the fundamental assumptions and attitudes that support oppression.

Firstly, I want to point out that I’m cisgender. I’m not a trans person, and as such, I am definitely not the authority on what is cissexist and what is not. My aim here, however, is to educate others—mainly other cisgender people—and provoke discussion about cissexism within society. I welcome any corrections, and am more than happy to listen to anyone who believes I did not check my cisgender privilege.

What Is Cissexism?

We live in a society that assumes gender based on genitals. When we are born, we are categorized as a gender based on the appearance of our genitals. “Transgender” is a word that generally refers to people who do not identify with the gender they were categorized as at birth. A person with a penis would be classified as a boy, but will identify as a woman. Therefore, this person is a woman. Likewise, someone with a vagina might identify as a man. Many people do not feel like solely a man or a woman. These people often refer to themselves as non-binary.

Trans* people can experience gender in a number of different ways. As such, the existence of people who identify as transgender essentially challenges the idea that gender = genitals. Unfortunately, the conflation of gender with genitals is deeply rooted in society. It is seen as “normal” and “natural” to identify with the gender associated with one’s genitals. As a result, transgender people are often labelled unnatural or abnormal, and are oppressed, marginalized, and underrepresented by society.

Cisgender people—people who identify with the gender they were categorized as at birth—enjoy a range of privileges over trans* folk. We often use the word “transphobia” to refer to a range of negative attitudes towards trans* folk. While the difference between cissexism and transphobia is not entirely clear, and many people use the terms interchangeably, cissexism is often thought to be a more subtle form of transphobia.

By “subtle,” I mean that it is less visible to cisgender people. Despite this, it is no less damaging. In fact, it could be argued that it is more damaging as fewer people notice it—while most decent people would be quick to condemn physical attacks on trans* folk, fewer people would notice how harmful it is to assume that only women have vaginas. However, the very attitude that regards cisgender as the norm and others the trans* community leads to the denial of trans* people’s rights. Our society regularly makes cissexist assumptions.

It assumes that all people identify with the gender they were categorized as at birth, based on their genitals. Assuming all people are cisgender results in cisgender people being seen as “normal” and “natural”, while transgender people are seen as the opposite—“abnormal” and “unnatural.” This attitude toward the trans* community is what leads to discrimination and transphobic attacks.

How Should We Tackle Cissexism?

In order to eradicate transphobia, we need to tackle cissexism. Questioning cissexism might seem like a difficult thing for cisgender people to do as it requires us to challenge our thinking at a very fundamental level. But it is still absolutely necessary. Think about it: If challenging cissexism seems exhausting for us cisgender folk, how exhausting must it be to be a trans* person living in a cissexist society?
If we want to stand in solidarity with the trans* community – or be decent human beings – we should be prepared to do difficult work in order to challenge oppressive ideas. That being said, we’re all socialized to be cissexist.

So if you’re working toward allyship and you do slip up once in a while, don’t hate yourself for it. I used to wallow in my guilt every time I realized I had said something inadvertently racist, sexist, cissexist, ableist, or homophobic. But guilt doesn’t help anyone. Rather, it has a pacifying, negative effect on people. Instead of overindulging in shame, I propose that we apologize, educate ourselves, and learn from the mistake so that we do not repeat it. This allows us to continue to focus on the people we’re trying to support, rather than our own feelings.

But beyond recognizing and owning up to our own mistakes, we can start tackling cissexism by taking a look at a few cissexist assumptions and dissecting them. It is necessary for us to think about why they are harmful, how they contribute to cissexism, and how we can change it.

**Identifying Cissexism**

While the list of instances of cissexism is endless, I’ve decided to start by discussing three. The assumptions in these situations are ones we’ve probably all made at some point in our lives (I know I still need to work on number three!). But it’s important for us to work toward changing our attitudes, and those of people around us.

1. **“Is it a boy or a girl?”** This is one of the first questions that most people ask when they find out that someone is pregnant. An idea that many people will find hard to wrap their heads around is that a sonogram will not be able to tell them what their child’s gender is. Since genitals do not determine gender, you actually won’t know your child’s gender identity until they’re able to tell you. To assume the child’s gender based on their genitals is to assume that the child is cisgender. This is a cissexist assumption – there is a chance that the child is trans*, and if this is the case, they should not feel othered. I’ve found that plenty cisgender supporters of the trans* community assume their children to be cisgender, too. This is an extremely difficult issue to navigate as raising a child without imposing a gender identity upon them is extremely tricky. Cissexism is so ingrained into our souls that we can hardly imagine freeing our children from it. It’s a good idea to think about how we could make parenting less cissexist. I don’t know if I would ever have children, but if I did, I would raise them without choosing their gender identities for them. I don’t think I would be able to reconcile my pro-trans* views with raising my child in a cissexist manner. Also, ya know, I don’t like the idea of defining my child by their genitals. Creepy!

2. **Sexual Education:** I’m a born-and-bred South African. While I can’t speak for the rest of the world, I can safely say that the sexual education in South Africa is problematic. Heterosexism, impracticality, sexism, and slut-shaming aside, it is also extremely cissexist. From a young age, we are taught that little girls have vaginas and little boys have penises. Later, we are taught about a “woman’s reproductive system” and a “man’s reproductive system.” In Life Orientation, we discuss women using oral contraception and men using condoms. In all of these instances, gender is conflated with genitals. Additionally, Life Sciences (biology) can espouse cissexism. An over-simplified study of genetics tells us that women have XX chromosomes and that men have XY chromosomes. In reality, there are many instances in which people with XX chromosomes have penises and people with XY chromosomes have vaginas. Even if the presence of XX chromosomes always resulted in the presence of a vagina, we know that not everyone with a vagina is a woman. A simple addition to the curriculum could make a world of difference. Schools are the perfect place to teach children and adolescents about transgender issues. This being said, a change in curriculum seems a far-off dream for most of us. Instead, we can aim to educate the young people in our lives.
about trans* and intersex issues as best as we can. When explaining genitals to smaller kids, explain that many women are born with penises, and that many boys are born with vaginas, and that many people are not men or women, or are a bit of both. And all of that is perfectly alright. What matters is how one feels and identifies – not one’s private parts. Some people might want to change their bodies to reflect their gender identity, but some might not – and either way, it’s perfectly okay. When it comes to sexual education at a school level, we can talk about bodies typically associated with being male and those associated with being female. We should explain that many people are born with ambiguous genitalia, which is usually referred to as intersex. This is perfectly okay, and this is natural. Emphasize that genitals do not determine gender. Many parents, teachers, and care-givers might be tempted to oversimplify and generalize when approaching sex ed. They might simply tell their children/charges that boys have penises and girls have vaginas. Even those who stand in solidarity with the trans* community might think that it would be better to simplify the message and allow the child to learn about transgender and intersex people later on in life. Against this, M.A. Melby argues: “What tying ‘penis’ to boys and ‘vagina’ to girls does is make genitalia part of what defines a ‘boy’ and a ‘girl’ for the child. Children are in the cognitive stage where they trust authority to define what things are, what is right and wrong, and what the fundamental models of the universe are.” She goes on to say that teaching generalizations as the truth can be harmful. Most men have penises. Few women are presidents. If we can justify teaching our children that all men have penises, we could use the same logic to justify teaching our daughters that no women ever become presidents. If we wouldn’t teach our children sexism, why would we teach them cissexism? Teaching cissexism at an early stage will make it harder for children to change their thinking when they’re older. This requires a lot of unlearning and relearning. It would be a lot easier to simply nip cissexism in the bud by teaching your children the truth.

3. Feminist Activism: Lauren Kacere recently wrote about trans* exclusion in the feminist movement as well as how and why we should work towards making the movement trans-inclusive. Transphobia in feminism is a huge issue, but even seemingly trans-inclusive feminism can be cissexist. Reproductive rights advocacy is an area where cissexist assumptions are often made. Rights pertaining to abortion and contraception are often referred to as “women’s reproductive rights.” This is harmful as it assumes that the only people who need abortions are women. By extension, it assumes that the only people who possess uteruses are women – another example of the conflation of genitals with gender. This problem was identified by #ProTransProChoice campaign, which sought to encourage organisations such as Planned Parenthood and NARAL to use more trans-inclusive language. As the campaign organizers point out in their change.org petition: “The rhetoric of the pro-choice movement is typically based around the assumption that only folks who identify as women are hurt by restrictions on reproductive health care – such as abortion and contraception. #StandWithTexasWomen took the stage in 2013; ‘Trust Women’ has been the mantra of this movement for decades.” Often, pro-choice citizens complain about men dominating discussions about abortion, particularly in politics and law-making bodies. Many people argue that men should not have so much say over “women’s” reproductive rights. Let’s remember that many men can fall pregnant, and they might need abortions. Instead of simply saying that men should not dominate discussions about abortion, we should say that cis men should not dominate discussions about abortion. Am I saying that pro-choice campaigns and organizations are transphobic? No – indeed, most reproductive rights advocacy appears to be very inclusive of the trans* community. But the language they use, and the language the media and the public uses, needs to change to demonstrate that.

There are countless other examples of everyday cissexism – from bra and tampon commercials aimed only at women, to bathrooms being divided by gender, to “lesbian sex” being regarded as sex involving vaginas only.
5 WAYS TO END HETEROSEXISM

Heterosexism is the hatred or discrimination of people who are not heterosexual.

1. When you meet somebody, don’t assume that you know their sexual orientation.

2. Don’t use gay as a synonym for stupid or bad.

3. Pay attention to how queer people are treated around the world, and speak up against mistreatment.

4. When people make homophobic comments, ask them to stop even if you aren’t offended.

5. Don’t act offended if people think you’re queer.

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[Logos and contact information]
Using Privilege to Create Change

From the work of Sheri Atkinson, Coordinator GLBT Services, St. Cloud State University

Knowing that we have privilege often can lead heterosexuals to have feelings of guilt and defensiveness. These feelings are understandable because we did not ask to be privileged because of our sexual orientation. However, the reality is: if we are heterosexual, we receive a great deal of privilege in our society. So, now the ball is in our court – how can heterosexuals use their heterosexual privilege to create change?

- **Awareness:** Become aware of the daily exclusions that affect those who are not heterosexual, male, upper/middle class, able-bodied, and/or white. Become aware of the advantages and conveniences you experience in your daily activities due to your social status. Become more aware of how you may transition between being effected by a form of oppression and how you may be the perpetrator of oppression. Analyze and critique the messages you have been taught. See what is happening around you.

- **Knowledge:** Understand how oppression permeates the systems and institutions in society. Understand how you may be contributing (consciously or unconsciously) to an environment that fosters oppression. Educate yourself to understand the experiences of those who have not been afforded the privileges that you have through reading and talking to others.

- **Skills:** Form strategies to confront and counteract oppression. Form coalitions with others who are working to end individual and institutional oppression. As a member of a privileged group, you generally have access to individuals with similar experiences; use your credibility to create opportunities to educate others about oppression and privilege.

Managing Privilege

Privilege refers to the **uneven distribution** of power within a society. Privilege exists when that aspect of your life is seamlessly accepted into the world without scrutiny or suspicion. Personal privilege is the possession of these unearned attributes that dictate the ease and influence one will have within society.

Privilege is a **fact**, not an insult! You can’t help it if you have it, and you don’t have to feel guilty about it.

Privilege is not **absolute**. Most people occupy multiple social positions with multiple levels of privilege or disadvantage.
What is an Ally?

An ally is a “safe person” for someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender to speak with. This means that one is committed to providing support and to maintaining confidentiality. This commitment extends to people with a gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender roommate, friend or family member who may wish to speak with someone. An ally is somebody who will confront instances of derogatory language, confront stereotypes, use inclusive language, work to educate themselves, treat LGBT people like they do everybody else, and support policies and laws that promote equality.

An Ally is any student, staff, faculty, or community member who...

- Commits to educating oneself, and others, about oppression, heterosexism, biphobia, transphobia, and homophobia, and to combat it on a personal level
- Works towards providing a safe, confidential support network for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community.
- Believes that our campus is enriched and enlivened by the diversity of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people.

An Ally is not...

- An expert on LGBT Issues
- A counselor / therapist
- A spokesperson for everyone

Four Levels of Becoming an Ally

Adapted from Western Michigan University

1. **Awareness**: Explore how you are different from and similar to LGBT people. Understand your privilege. Gain this awareness through talking with LGBT people, attending workshops, and self-examination.
2. **Knowledge/Education**: Begin to understand policies, laws, and practices and how they affect LGBT people. Educate yourself on the many communities and cultures of LGBT people.
3. **Skills**: This is an area that is difficult for many people. You must learn to take your awareness and knowledge and to communicate it to others. You can acquire these skills by attending workshops, role-playing with friends or peers, and developing support connections.
4. **Action**: This is the most important and frightening step. Despite the fear, action is the only way to affect change in the society as a whole. It is not enough to do 1-3, you have to share it with others.

Being an Ally Can Be Difficult

Compiled from various sources including HRC and R. Sherover-Marcuse

Being a visible or outspoken ally to LGBT people may be a challenging experience, but many find that it is very rewarding. Advocating for LGBT equality is not solely the responsibility of those who are affected by inequality.

1. It may make you unpopular among some heterosexual and cisgender people.
2. People might assume that you are queer because you support LGBT rights.
3. You might be criticized for being involved in a cause that is thought to be wrong by some people.
4. Your friends or colleagues, who are uncomfortable with the topic, might become distant or disagree with you because you support LGBT people and rights.
5. Sometimes, because of past negative interactions with heterosexual and cisgender people, even some LGBT people might question your motivations for being an ally.
6. Assume that making mistakes is part of the learning process of being an even more effective ally.
7. Acknowledge and apologize for mistakes; learn from them but don’t retreat.
8. Don’t attempt to convince LGBT people that you “are on their side.” Just be there for them.
9. Do not expect “gratitude” from LGBT people; remember, being an ally is a matter of your choice. Graciously accept the gratitude that you may get, but don’t expect it.
10. Becoming an ally is a process, and not a one-time event. Be an Ally for life!

Traits of an Ally:
How You Can Best Help LGBTQIA People

Edited from “Thirteen Things You Can Do” by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alliance at Iowa State University

1. Understand and check your feelings, values, beliefs and thinking about LGBT issues and people. Know when and how negative feelings you may have toward LGBT people may prevent you from offering non-prejudiced help. Refer elsewhere if you cannot change. If you cannot be a strong support, be a strong referral agent.
2. Remember that not everyone is heterosexual and cisgender.
3. Use inclusive language. Use “partner,” or other gender-neutral terms, instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” when talking to others. Ask “Are you seeing anyone?” instead of “Do you have a girlfriend?” Provide a supportive atmosphere for those who are or think they may be LGBT. Avoid language (forms) that implies that all people are cisgender, “male or female,” and either “single, married, or divorced.”
4. Talk and interact with LGBT people and those who support them. Advocate and participate in educational programs for all, so that LGBT people receive service without prejudice and with the empathy deserved by all.
5. Do not presume that all LGBT people regret or dislike their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
6. Remember that societal oppression and discrimination create much unhappiness for many LGBT people.
7. Know when your skills and your knowledge reach their limit. Refer people elsewhere when they need help that you cannot effectively supply.
8. Stress that anything brought to you is confidential and keep all things confidential!
9. Confront homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and anti-LGBT jokes and comments.
10. Familiarize yourself with campus and community resources. Refer people to those resources as necessary.
11. Know your organization’s nondiscrimination policy.
12. If someone comes out to you, respond with warmth and friendship. Remember that coming out to someone can be very difficult for LGBT people, so be honored that someone chose to tell you.
13. Be Visible: Participate in LGBT events at OU throughout the year and wear your support – “Question the Gender Binary” buttons, “Gay? Fine By Me” shirts, etc.
14. Talk about LGBT issues in the context of diversity. Train yourself to be an advocate for LGBT students by including their experiences and concerns in discussions about diversity issues.
15. Continue educating yourself about LGBT issues by attending university events and reading magazines, newspapers, and books. Know what is current and in the news.
16. Take advantage of opportunities to participate in collaborative projects with LGBT colleagues.
17. Be a 100% ally – no strings attached. Unconditional acceptance is a must...this can not be faked.
18. Encourage other allies by recognizing and acknowledging their efforts. Allies need support too!
19. Display your SafeZone card and button and encourage others to become a SafeZone too!
Where do I go from here?
Action Continuum for Confronting Hate Speech
From the scholarship of Dr. Ladelle McWhorter and the University of California, Davis Safe Zone Training

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<th>Works Against Social Justice</th>
<th>Works Toward Social Justice</th>
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<td>Actively join in Behavior</td>
<td>No Response</td>
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<td>Educate Oneself</td>
<td>Interrupt the Behavior</td>
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<td>Interrupt and Educate</td>
<td>Support Others’ Proactive Response</td>
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<td>Initiate Proactive Responses</td>
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ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

Tolerance: this term has often been used as a positive term in regards to diversity. However, with further analysis we can see how this term can be problematic. We often tolerate things that we dislike and do not value. It may be a step in the right direction however it should not be the ultimate goal to strive for as a community.

Acceptance: this term tends to be used in a more positive manner; however it still implies there is something to accept. It maintains the power structure by creating two distinct groups: those that are accepted and those who get to do the accepting.

Respect: esteem for or a sense of the worth or excellence of a person, a personal quality or ability, or something considered as a manifestation of a personal quality or ability (dictionary.com). By respecting people of all identities we can move to a society that values everyone equally.

Advocacy: the action of advocating, pleading for, or supporting a cause or a community (adapted from dictionary.com). By speaking up and acting with/for underrepresented and underserved communities, we can use our power to create a more inclusive and integrated society.

Ongoing Actions

- **Confronting Oppression**
  - Politely confronting anti-homosexual joke tellers, but not pushing it
  - Deciding to participate in activities regardless of what others will think
  - Mediating between people with differing opinions.

- **Growing as an Ally**
  - Reading books on LGBTI issues
  - Being aware of issues that minorities face
  - Joining organizations that support LGBTI people
  - Educating yourself instead of waiting for LGBTI people to teach you
• Making yourself aware of individuals, organizations, agencies, staff, faculty, and courses that deal with issues of oppression.

• **Challenging Oppression**
  o Educating others
  o Engaging people in dialogue about sexual minority issues (or presenting programs, incorporating material into a class presentation, making handouts or posters, inviting LGBTI speakers to your group)
  o Confronting not just obviously homophobic comments but also comments of the nature of "I am not prejudiced, but...."

• **Joining an Ally Support Network; for example a PFLAG Chapter, Equality Ohio action group, or a local highschool's Gay Straight Alliance (there are also multiple groups online).**

• **Challenging Heterosexist Systems**
  o Working to change heterosexist institutional practices, such as
  o Teachers working for an inclusive family life curriculum
  o Administrators allowing live-in domestic partners for those with on-campus jobs.
  o Employers extending benefits to domestic partners
  o Opposing candidates who oppose LGBTI civil rights
  o Training staff to be sensitive to LGBTI people and issues.
  o Refusing to buy products and support corporations that do not have inclusive non-discrimination and domestic partnership policies.

• **Explore limitations of being an ally.**
  o An important part of being an ally is knowing and understanding our limitations. Explore areas in which you have privilege (heterosexual privilege, white privilege etc.) and how that plays into being an effective ally.

• **Continue Your Education ~** Visit our website and check out our Resources Section: [http://www.ohio.edu/lgbt](http://www.ohio.edu/lgbt)
10 Ways to Fight Hate on Campus
From the Southern Poverty Law Center, [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

EVERY YEAR – more than half a million college students are targets of bias-driven slurs or physical assaults. EVERY DAY – at least one hate crime occurs on a college campus. EVERY MINUTE – a college student somewhere sees or hears racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise biased words or images.

Based on years of research into the incidence of hate crimes at U.S. colleges and universities, The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has published a guide for college students on how to fight hate crimes on their campuses:

1. **Rise Up** – Inaction in the face of hate will be viewed as apathy or, worse yet, as support for bigotry itself. Do something. Don’t let hate go unchallenged.
2. **Pull Together** – Bias incidents and hate crimes can divide communities. Don’t let hate tear people apart on your campus; pull together instead.
3. **Speak Out** – When hate strikes, don’t remain silent. Join with others; use your voices to denounce bigotry. Also, help guide the administration in its role.
4. **Support the Victims** – Make sure that any planned response to a hate crime or bias incident takes into account the victims’ needs and wishes. Too often, decisions are made on behalf of victims, but without their actual input.
5. **Name It, Know It** – Are you dealing with a hate crime or a bias incident? Hate crimes are a matter for the criminal justice system; bias incidents are governed by campus policy.
6. **Understand the Media** – What happens if the media descend on your campus during a bias crisis? And what happens if they don’t? Prepare yourself to understand and work with the media.
7. **Know Your Campus** – Before, during and after a bias crisis, examine institutional racism and bigotry on your campus. Be prepared to negotiate your way through these problem areas for effective change.
8. **Teach Tolerance** – Bias crises often bring pain, anger and distrust to campus. They also present an opportunity for learning. Don’t miss the chance to eradicate ignorance.
9. **Maintain Momentum** – The immediate crisis has passed. You’ve got two papers due and a midterm coming up. No one seems interested in follow-up meetings. What happens now?
10. **Pass the Torch** – What happens when you leave campus? Will you leave behind a record of activism that will inspire incoming students to pick up the fight? Make sure you do.
Now that you are a SafeZone
Adapted From the Ohio Wesleyan University Safe Zone Program

After this training, IF YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE, you are invited to display “SafeZone swag” and to embody allyship in ways that make sense in your particular situation. Don’t worry, you don’t have to be an expert on all things LGBTQ… it simply and radically means that you are an askable person who individuals and groups can turn to with questions and to be connected to appropriate resources. We ask that if you take a card/sticker/button, it be a sign of your solidarity with the LGBTQ communities on and off campus—and that…

- You will be a friend to anyone who comes out to you or comes to you with questions regarding sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression.
- You will be open-minded.
- You will recognize your own personal boundaries.
- You will engage in the process of developing a campus environment free of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and cissexism.

Remember that systems of oppression such as homophobia/transphobia and sexism are intertwined. For example, much of the homophobia we see and experience today is because of our cultural norms that tell men that they can’t be feminine and women that they can’t be masculine. Try to remain aware of how homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, racism, sexism, and other oppressions exist in your environment. THAT’S A LOT! But you can do it. And be patient with yourself—being an ally is a lifelong journey that takes learning every day, even when you have been an ally or in the LGBTIQ community for a long time.

*If you encounter a crisis situation, please contact the OHIO Counseling and Psychological Services at 740-593-1616*

When supporting trans people, it is important to:

- Validate their identities
- Respect their privacy. Many trans people may want only a few trusted people to know their gender identity. Make sure it is okay with the person to discuss with other people that they are transgender or other related details of their lives.
- Consider trans people when announcing community events, especially around using inclusive language… be aware of gendered spaces, such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and gender-specific events, which can all be sources of potential embarrassment or violence for trans people.
- Just ask! If you are not sure what pronoun a person uses or how they identify, just ask. If for some reason you don’t feel comfortable, try to speak without using gender-specific pronouns.
- Acknowledge their experience. If a trans person does talk about their body, identity, or experiences, listen to them and acknowledge their experiences as real.
- Remember that being transgender is about gender identity, not sexual orientation. There are straight, gay, lesbian, and bisexual transgender people, along with all other sexual identities too.

To create an inclusive and safe environment:

- Be mindful that there are people in your residence hall, classes, groups, campus, and/or community who are LGBTIQ… we are everywhere!
• Be mindful that closeted LGBTIQ people are on your floor, in your classes, in your groups, on your campus, and in your community are wondering how safe the environment is for them.

• Show that you are a safe person for LGBTIQ people to turn to by making it clear that you accept and support all people. You can do this by:
  o Putting a rainbow pin on your backpack
  o Attending queer events
  o Challenging anti-gay comments and behaviors
  o Liking LGBTQI pages/causes/groups on Facebook

• Never assume the gender of someone’s significant other AND never assume that you know someone’s gender

• Actively pursue self-education on LGBTIQ issues and current events

• Take responsibility for your own privilege—it is not about feeling guilty but about being change here at OU, Athens, Ohio, the US, and the world!

• Interrupt prejudice and take action, even if there may be no LGBTIQ people present

• Have a floor event surrounding LGBTIQ education (email us at lgbt@ohio.edu for ideas!)

• Challenge jokes and stereotypes about LGBTIQ people

• Actively advertise that LGBTIQ people are welcome at your events and promote LGBTQI events happening on campus

• Find out and share resources and information about LGBTIQ-affirmative service providers, events, bookstores, etc.

**Video Blogger Franchesca Ramsey Perfectly Explains How To Be An Ally**

*By Nina Bahadur, Huffington Post*

On December 3, it was announced that an NYPD officer would not be indicted for placing an unarmed African-American man named Eric Garner in a chokehold, causing his death. After the news broke, people peacefully protested in dozens of cities including New York, Seattle, D.C., Detroit and Chicago.

The deeply upsetting cases of Eric Garner and Michael Brown have set off a wave of anger across the country, and made many people -- of all races -- want to take action. But how can a person who isn't a part of an oppressed or grieving community be a good ally? A new video from vlogger Franchesca Ramsey details how to do just that.

From race or ethnicity to sex, gender identity and countless other indicators, privilege pertains simply to the "things in life you will not experience or have to think about just because of who you are," Ramsay explains. Ramsey runs through five key guidelines for allyship:

1. Understand your privilege.
2. Listen and do your homework.
3. Speak up, not over.
4. You'll make mistakes, apologize when you do.
5. Ally is a verb -- saying you're an ally is not enough.

Watch the full video above to learn more: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/05/franchesca-ramsey-video-ally_n_6275680.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/05/franchesca-ramsey-video-ally_n_6275680.html)
The Ones We Left Behind:
On Being An Ally To Small Town Queers
by Sarah Fonseca, Everyday Feminism

During one of my embarrassingly frequent “southern lesbian” google search binges, I ran across an essay by Audri, a gay teen hailing from Mississippi: I want to stay in Mississippi for college. There’s gay flight in Mississippi because everyone thinks it’s so horrible so they leave. And nothing ever changes when all the gay people leave. And conservative people will never be used to a butch lesbian holding another girl’s hand or two guys holding hands if they don’t see it.

That was in August. For two months, Audri’s words haunted me. Several weeks ago, they were pushed to the forefront when I returned to my hometown in Georgia. You see, I was one of those flighty gays who left. For me, leaving was remarkably easy. Because I am educationally privileged, university was my ticket out of Dodge. Scholarships and grants not only funded my tuition, but my exodus. Additionally, getting out was simple because I’d never been truly attached to that tiny town I once mistakenly called “home.” I had few relatives and even fewer friends living there; neither of my parents were even natives of the state. I never had to painstakingly uproot myself. My heart and soul were never planted there to begin with.

Of course you want to visit the place that shaped the girl you’re in love with, watch all her stories spring up around you, and you get to walk right through them. You just don’t realize how you have to undo yourself to walk down the streets. –Michelle Tea

I returned to northern Georgia, if only briefly. And maybe it was what Audri said, or maybe it was the fact that my mama is the only person capable of coaxing my twangy accent out of hiding, or how the word “gay” is only used as a slur in my hometown. Or maybe it was some combination of the three. But I realized something important: Telling queer people to leave their conservative hometowns for the sake of being treated with common decency is not good enough.

Maybe you’re like me. Maybe you’re on a constant search for the place that’ll make your heart perform backflips. Maybe your hometown isn’t your real home. That’s great….But maybe it is. And that’s great, too.

Rural communities are all about staying power. Their residents tend to greet familiar faces with warm smiles and tight embraces, while throwing caution and raised brows to newcomers. It’s not unusual for a family to reside in a house for generations, or reference the long-gone as if they were just sitting at the kitchen table the day beforehand. The connection to the land itself is often as intense as those between residents. Sometimes, you spend so many years breathing the atmosphere of a place that you find yourself exhausted and winded when you spend time outside of that comfortable bubble known as “home.” If you were to ever leave, you would break so many hearts, including your own.

This is the essential conflict of being queer in a small, conservative town: Should you chose to live openly and unapologetically, you might be rejected by the very people and things you’ve spent 14, 20, or even 47 years loving. You might even come to resent the place for the same reason you love it: It never changes.
For a while, the internet was my home. I began coming out when I was on the cusp of starting high school, at the age of 14. For the next four years, the web was both teacher and therapist; it dulled the silence of isolation and fear and reassured me that I was not alone. It also told me that there were lesbians out there who looked more like me and less like the local EMT lady who’d never been married. We were diverse and plentiful. I existed; we existed.

Yet every gay resource I encountered — from The L Word to blogs to those seedy old MSN chat rooms with more straight men than lesbians — indicated that I should get the hell out of my intolerant hometown, population: 8,000 homophobes. The message was subliminal but clear: Leave. Move to a bigger city. There’s a big, lesbian world awaiting you on the other side with open, intricately tattoo’d arms.

If you’re reading this and are currently in love with a tiny place that hasn’t loved you back yet, I want you to know that this is okay. You are not small-minded, unworldly, or masochistic for dismissing the silly myth surrounding the mutual exclusivity of gay life and city life. I want you to also know that, contrary to everything I’ve said so far, it is possible to inspire change and build community in your own neck of the woods. You’re already doing it by holding your ground. The world needs people like you; the world needs Audris. I want you to know that this flighty gay is here for you. I’m not speaking as a saint here, but a Southerner; someone who knows her way around a three-redlight town. I may no longer breathe the same rural air that you do, but my lungs remember it. LGBT solidarity is not locational. It transcends those borders. And if anyone ever tells you to move to a bigger place because it’s easier, bless their hearts and tell ‘em they’re doing allyism wrong.

Many queer community conceptions of place equate rural towns with dearth and death. In my own experience, there is some deeply difficult truth to this. However, the flipside of that equation is that cities are believed to home the only resourceful and relevant populations of queer communities, and rural queers are expected to make exodus to the great glittering cities to seek validity and assimilate, regardless of where their grandparents are buried, or what particular shade of light or stink of marsh mud their heart leaps to.

--TT Jax

Realistically Speaking

_First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Then they fight you. Then you win._

- Mahatma Gandhi

A common saying heard during my childhood was, “A true lady never talks religion or politics.” Yet much of progressive activism hinges upon doing just that. Whether your goal is coming out to a new person or starting a queer-straight alliance at your high school, you’re gonna have to eventually speak up. And in doing so, you might feel a little bit insane, particularly if you’re the first of your kind. You may even question your own cause.

While I was told to never talk about religion or politics, I later realized that this only applied to belief systems which deviated from those of the majority. Your opposition’s reaction will be two-fold: First, they will ignore you in the hope that you will go away. Someone may tell you that, “We don’t have a gay problem here.” Once your critics realize that you aren’t going anywhere, they will react in terror. You may be painted as a radical. Your sexuality may be equated with promiscuity and immorality, which may make your school’s administration even more reluctant to approve such an endeavor. I say these things first not to be a total Debbie Downer, but because this may be the biggest uphill battle of your life. Knowing how your homophobic and
transphobic opposition will attempt to wear you down is equally as critical as knowing what you’re fighting for.

Do Your Research

Before you seek out an adviser or speak to your principal, have a game plan. Know what you stand for. Be able to talk about why you’re so darned deadset on doing this seemingly impossible thing, and be able to thumb off your rights if necessary. While The Education of Shelby Knox reminds us that Queer-Straight Alliances in high schools can be ruled unconstitutional if they violate a district’s abstinence-only (read: sex[less] education) policy, the federal government also protects QSAs from discrimination:

QSAs are often formed as non-curricular clubs, which are student clubs that are not directly related to a school’s curriculum. In contrast, curricular clubs relate directly to subjects taught in school. The federal Equal Access Act applies to non-curricular clubs. Under the Equal Access Act, if a public high school allows any non-curricular student group access to school resources, then it must provide all other non-curricular student groups—including QSAs—equal access to the school’s resources. If the school treats some non-curricular clubs differently than others, then it risks losing its federal funding.

What this basically means is: If your school has a chess club or a chapter of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, it’s legally obligated to recognize your organization, too. Educating others is just as important as keeping yourself clued in. In small towns, word of mouth travels faster than 4G internet. As someone taking a stand, this is something that can work in your favor.

Some of your peers might begin taking those first curious and tentative steps toward allyship or coming out, and it’s good to have resource packets on hand for them, as well. GSA Network has a lot of really solid resources available for printout. LGBT Teaching Aids’ comprehensive queer vocabulary list includes All Of The Terms, from pronouns to acronyms. It’s a great primer when working to create safe spaces. When building an info packet, I recommend compiling a nice mix of concrete resources and fun stuff, like personal essays by LGBT folks or even a Get Baked post because no one—not even your haters—can turn down comfort food like peanut butter cookies and homemade blueberry ice cream.

Safety Nets

When fostering community in reluctant spaces, it’s important to remember to take care of yourself first and foremost. Good leaders understand the merits of self-care. Are you fortunate enough to from an accepting household? If not, do you have a place to go if the shit were to hit the fan? Being actively out of the closet while also having a secure roof over your head is definitely a privilege.

Before you do community, you’ve got to do you. If you have all of those things in place, make sure that the members of your organization have those same safety nets in place. If a member requests anonymity and discretion, respect this. Trust their decisions, and they’ll trust you in turn. If you or the people you know are still experiencing discrimination in any form, there are places to turn, from your nearest ACLU affiliate to GSAN’s legal resources, and HRC’s hate crime department. This is not about bombarding you with a slew of phone numbers and links.
It’s about keeping you and yours safe. It’s important to acknowledge that fucked-up things can and do happen to rural queers, and they’re more inclined to go unreported simply because smalltown community leaders reek of bigotry; you say nothing because you’re “used to it.”

Make It Personal

If you have the ability to be out at home, you’ve got to make that shit so personal that it burns. Where there’s disinterest in headlines and percentages, there’s bound to be an obsession with the anecdotal; stories about one’s day, often paired with colorful language, are staples of working class conversation.

The mundane both comforts and inspires thought. Just like you’ve never really seen gay people outside of the local EMT lady who’s never been married, neither have the people surrounding you. You can yell statistics on LGBT teen suicide until the cows come home, but these will never evoke the same amounts of empathy that living openly does. Numbers, even when attached to critical statistics, are cold and sterile.

Your behavior and the way you love will always speak louder than words.

Know Your (Lack of a) Role: Honoring Healing Spaces as an Ally

By Kel Kray, from Everyday Feminism

“Why does the gay community segregate itself? Can’t we all co-exist?”

“But wouldn’t participating in a black cultural event show that I stand in solidarity as a white person?”

“As I guy, I need to talk with women about misogyny and let them know I support them.”

“But I’m an ally!”

Believe me, I know the feeling. You arrive at an awesome conference brimming with solidarity. Scanning through the program book, you spot the perfect workshop title, and you’re pumped for the conversation! Someone finally gets me!

Then! The italics below: “Closed to trans identified participants only.” “POC only.” “For those who identify as women.” Oof. The deep, gut-punch realization that even though you come with golden intentions and this potential conversation sounds safer than any you’ve encountered, this space isn’t for you.

Why can’t I join? Oppression also hurts me as an ally. Can’t we join together? It sounds like you’ve come across a healing space. Anyone who has participated in a healing space knows its value.

We’ve all been there – coffeetalk with your girlfriends about body image and diet culture, joining an LGBTQIA+ support group and not fretting over whether you’ll have to come out, going to an
event to mark the end of Ramadan, free from the gaze of American Islamophobia. You walk into the room and experience the relief of being among your people, whether they’re friends, family, or strangers.

In this space, you speak with a distinct freedom. You share what it is like to be you in the world without wondering if your voice will be steamrolled, if eyes will shift or roll, or if your experience makes anyone else in the room feel badly about their people.

For once you aren’t teaching; you’re healing. But sometimes we get so super energized as allies that our memory of the importance of healing spaces can seem to fade away. Denied access to another’s healing space, we suddenly feel hurt. Blocked from a conversation we desperately want to have, and confused about how to show solidarity.

It’s in these moments that we need to remember that being committed to a cause does not make us immune to perpetuating the problem. An ally taking up airtime in a healing space not only silences the voices of those directly experiencing oppression, but replicates the exact oppression we’re trying to address.

**Healing Space, Segregation, Safe Space: What’s the Difference?**

Healing Space: A space claimed by a marginalized group free from the impact of the dominant group.

Healing spaces go by a couple of different aliases: closed spaces, exclusionary spaces, identity alike spaces, and exclusive safe spaces. They can be formal, as in a workshop closed to folks of a particular identity. But sometimes it’s not so spelled out.

Consider a lesbian bar, or a historical black church, or a youth hang out area: It’s not formally exclusive, but the space’s primary function is to reflect and nurture a particular identity. These are spaces that could be fractured by a group of men, white parishioners, or adult observers.

Wait, are you advocating for segregation? Segregation isn’t a choice. It’s forced removal. Segregation doesn’t challenge oppression – it strengthens it. Healing spaces are very different.

For example:
Asian Employee Group is a healing space marker because it indicates a choice on behalf of Asian employees to create community free from white supremacy. Remember José vs Joe? Institutionalized racism is alive and well, and the American workplace is no exception. Thus, the existence of this group challenges that status quo.

Western European Employee Group is a segregation marker because a dominant group is claiming space already given in society (that is, Joe is already hired over José). The existence of this group reinforces that status quo.

Unlike healing spaces, safe spaces don’t require that someone share a particular identity. Safe spaces simply require members to be accountable for the influence of the power and privilege they carry. So healing spaces may also be safe spaces under those agreements. Or they may not.
For Those On the Outside, It Might Hurt a Bit

A few months ago, I had brunch with two beloved friends who I had just introduced. Conversation quickly turned to our queer identities and family relationships. Within moments, my friends established a beautiful connection over a shared rootedness of their gender identities in their ancestors’ Indigenous Latinx cultures.

As they probed deeper and deeper, spinning into stories of ancient heritage, my voice began to drop off. And I realized: My story doesn’t belong in this conversation. I sat and watched as they leaned in and their eyes lit up at meeting someone who shared their story – who not just knew of it, but felt it.

Inside, my mind swirled: Why aren’t they including me? Neither of them has even looked at me in 30 minutes. I want to participate in the conversation, too! And yet: I don’t have anything to share. I don’t actually have this kind of ancestral understanding of my gender. In fact, my ancestors probably colonized their land.

I sat in silence and mourned the distance I felt given my lack of a shared identity. But what would it have meant for me to step in and ask my friends to take care of my feelings? What might it have done to their stories?

The celebration and solidarity they had built might have been muddied or shifted focus. I was privileged to witness this healing conversation between two new friends, a place free from the impact of the dominant group. To insert myself into the conversation would be to centralize my whiteness in a space that was reveling in its absence. Instead, my role was to step back. True solidarity means knowing that though we may experience oppression ourselves, we also can act in the role of the oppressor.

The world has few healing spaces for marginalized identities. Systems of oppression set the context in which marginalized groups are kicked to the curb in favor of privileged or dominant groups.

As a queer person, I experience heterosexism and cissexism differently than someone who doesn’t identify that way. I find deep comfort in communities of other queer people. In those healing spaces, I find reclamation from pain and discover untold strengths in shared experiences. The tears flow, the laughter roars, and I am held. And yet, I know many of my friends need healing spaces without me.

As an ally, I know that my experiences with oppression do not give me access to all experiences of oppression or relieve me from responsibility for my privileged or dominant identities. And I honor that sometimes I can’t contribute shared experiences to the healing spaces of others because my own privileged or dominant identities contribute to their need for them.

How Am I Supposed to Know When It's a Healing Space?

Sometimes it’s unclear when you’ve come across a healing space, so let’s check out a few scenarios.

1. The Disinvite: A crew of your friends who are First Nation are going to a Pow Wow on Friday night and don’t invite you. You are not First Nation, but you really want to go and are feeling hurt. What do you do? Consider why you want to go, and locate the ouch.
Do you want to learn about Pow Wows and First Nation culture? Find what’s going on through Media Indigena or check an introductory book! Explore some recorded Pow Wows on YouTube. Do you miss your friends? How about lunch tomorrow? Do you want to become engaged in Indigenous folks’ activism? Read Vine De Loria’s Custer Died for Your Sins, check out some of the work of Suzan Shown Harjo, and stay up to date on Indigenous experiences of oppression and activist possibilities! Do you feel a bit sad or unwanted? Sit with that. Consider how marginalized groups experience similar feelings in their daily lives. Speak to other allies.

2. Do I Belong Here?: A queer women’s group has opened up at the LGBTQIA+ center. You’re new to town and want to find community. You identify as a trans man, but didn’t feel safe when you attended the queer men’s group. You wonder if maybe you could check it out. What do you do? Check in with yourself and the space. Is this space exclusive to those who identify as women? Or is it for those who somehow identify with a female gendered experience? Identify what you are seeking from this space. Are you looking to discuss your experience being misgendered female? Or are you looking to socialize? These are different things that will differently impact the healing space. Know thyself!

3. The Looking Glass: You’re with a group of straight friends, and they want to go dance at a gay bar. Or you’re traveling with a group of non-Muslim friends, and they’re curious to check out a mosque during prayer. You’re feeling a bit funky about whether or not this is cool. What do you do? Notice a pattern yet? Check in with yourself and your group: What are your intentions? Are you looking to dance or do some experiential learning? Is there any other way you could achieve those goals? If you do choose to go, minimize your impact on the space. Rolling 12-deep and loudly staking out the center of the dance floor is different from subtly participating in the existing culture of the bar. Find a mosque that offers tours that don’t disrupt worship. Work with your friends to better understand their intentions.

As an Ally, Healing Spaces Are About Stepping Back — And Finding New Ways to Step Up!

As you move forward in your quest for social justice, follow these few steps to stay mindful of healing spaces – the ones that are yours, the ones that are theirs, and the ones that we share together.

1. If it’s clear it’s not for you, do not go. Seriously. Don’t.

2. Breathe: Part of honoring healing spaces is stomaching the hurt that oppression is real: It’s in your family, your friendships, your workplace, your neighborhood. It is part of your everyday life. You are a part of it. No need to resist feelings of sadness, shame, frustration, and even anger. Allow them to wash over you and mourn. Spend time exploring where your sense of loss comes from, and channel that loss toward rebuilding.

3. Check in with yourself: Still navigating your identities? Unclear on how you benefit from power and privilege? Check in! Do some fierce identity exploration. What is it like to be you in the world? Beverly Daniel Tatum wrote a great piece on understanding the complexity of identities. Talk to members of marginalized groups about what it’s like to be them in the world. Notice the differences. Ask friends about their experiences of
outsiders entering their healing spaces. Notice how your identities impact the spaces of others, and where your identities are associated with dominance and privilege.

4. Acknowledge your privilege: Did I ask for that privilege? No. Does it hurt? Yes. But do I ignore it? Absolutely not. Take that self-awareness and turn the energy outward. Begin to push back on your privilege and check out this excellent ally guide. You’ll notice that translating your energy into purpose benefits you directly and also helps you build like-minded communities!

5. Engage your people in conversation: You may be the first to raise questions of identity and power and privilege among your friends, family, or community. This can be scary, but it is one of the most important places for work! Here are tips for talking about privilege to folks who don’t know what you mean. Expect your friends to embark on the same journey that you are on – to be their best selves and to honor the ways our different experiences create different needs.

Your Ultimate Charge

In Our Dead Behind Us, Audre Lorde stated, “It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.” Respecting the healing spaces of others does not mean you do not have a role in our shared struggle for justice. Instead, it’s an invitation to engage and support one another in a way that honors our differences. Stay in conversation with yourself. Breathe. Stay in solidarity with others. Learn. Stay focused on healing. Listen. You got this!
**Scenarios Activity: Living into your allyship**

*Adopted from the Safe Zone Project (http://thesafezoneproject.com)*

Best for: Small Group with Medium Trust; last about 20 mins

Necessary supplies: Scenario handouts for participants

**Goals & objectives**

- To provide real world situations that participants may encounter in the future and for participants to think through and game plan the different ways to handle the situation
- To empower participants to feel more comfortable applying the knowledge that they have gained during the course of the workshop in real-world situations

**Step-by-step walk through**

- Introduce the activity to the participants.
- Split the group up into smaller sub-groups. Groups of 3 are ideal but no more than 4.
- Give each group a scenario to work on - instruct them to talk out the scenario within the group and come up with a few best practices on how to handle the situation or scenario.
- If any group finishes incredibly quickly either provide them another scenario or ask them to briefly describe their solution and complicate the scenario for them.
- Bring the groups back together and review the scenarios. Ask an individual from each group to read out their scenario and then ask the whole group to discuss what they thought the best way to handle the scenario would be. Ask for feedback from the larger group, add your own, and then move onto the next group repeating the process.

**Scenarios**

- You are becoming friends with this guy named Alex. One day you’re hanging out Alex gets oddly quiet and finally after you ask them repeatedly if anything is bothering them they come out and tell you they’re bi. Alex says he’s totally comfortable with it, has known for a long time, but doesn’t really feel like they know how to tell other people at school even though they really want to. What do you do?
- You leave your dorm room one morning and you notice something on your friend José’s whiteboard on his door just across the hall. José is one of your friends, is gay, and has been out to you since you’ve known him. The whiteboard says, “Hey fag – give me a call later today, we have to pregame that party. Jess.” You know Jess is one of José’s best friends, but you don’t know her that well. What do you do?
- You and a group of friends are waiting in line for food at a dining hall. Some people behind you in line are chatting about the new Xbox that just came out and you overhear one of them say, “Dude you’re still playing on a PS2, that’s so gay, seriously.” What do you do?
- One of your teachers (who you know quite well) is talking about sexuality or gender in class. When the discussion goes quiet they turn to you and ask if you have anything additional to add. What do you do?
- One of your new friends, Dee, who you don’t know that well, meets you and a group of mutual friends for lunch. They start talking about their roommate and how weird and annoying they always are. Dee goes onto say, “She also told me that she’s bisexual, I don’t actually really have a problem with bisexuals but I don’t know how comfortable I am, like, changing in the same room as her, I mean that’s weird right? Like I don’t know it just kind of weirds me out.” What do you do?
Guiding questions
The following are questions that you could include in the scenario activity. The text that follows each question is suggestions of how to answer the question if the groups don’t offer all of the different possibilities for a scenario.

You are becoming friends with this guy named Alex. One day you’re hanging out Alex gets oddly quiet and finally after you ask them repeatedly if anything is bothering them they come out and tell you they’re bi. Alex says he’s totally comfortable with it, has known for a long time, but doesn’t really feel like they know how to tell other people at school even though they really want to. What do you do?

- Reassure Alex that you are glad that he felt he could tell you, that you can be trusted with the information, and that you’re really happy to be helpful in anyway that you can
- Ask some questions. Why doesn’t he feel like he can tell other people at school? What indicators have his friends given that they would not be cool (or would be cool) with having queer/gay/bisexual friends? Does he feel like its specifically to his bisexuality or is it because he is not straight? Careful to ask and not to grill... you’re only looking to get information that will help you help him!
- Offer a few different scenarios to Alex.
- Game plan out what a conversation between he and one of his close friends may look like. Throw out the idea that he could just tell one of his friends and ask them to tell others. Or he could tell someone he trusts the most and ask them what they thought their mutual friends reactions could be.
- Test the waters by bringing up gay/bi/queer subjects, celebrities, issues around Alex’s friends and see what their reactions are.
- Let Alex know that you believe even if his friends are initially surprised this doesn’t mean they won’t come around. That if he is comfortable with himself and his sexuality that he can likely explain and help his friends become comfortable with it too.

You leave your dorm room one morning and you notice something on your friend José’s whiteboard on his door just across the hall. José is one of your friends, is gay, and has been out to you since you’ve known him. The whiteboard says, “Hey fag – give me a call later today, we have to pregame that party. Jess.” You know Jess is one of José’s best friends, but you don’t know her that well. What do you do?

- It is important to make clear that in this scenario, while José maybe totally cool with Jess calling him that word, that other people seeing it on his white board may feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or otherwise negatively because they don’t understand the relationship between him and Jess. The word can be quite triggering and therefore because it is in a public space it is an issue.
- Erase the word fag from the whiteboard message.
- Go to José and explain to him that you saw what Jess wrote on his white board, explain why you erased the word, and let him know how it make you feel. You could explain that you understand he might be ok with her using that word but that it makes you uncomfortable (and/or you feel it makes others uncomfortable) and so you erased it to ensure that others wouldn’t see it. Ask José to talk to Jess and to let her know not to write that word or similar language on his whiteboard in a public space.
- Go to Jess and let her know that you saw her message and that you wanted to let her know that the word that she used made you uncomfortable. It is important to assume that Jess had no negative intentions, and to speak to her with that in mind. Let her know that you totally understand that her and José likely are cool with that word, but that other
people may find it uncomfortable and that you’d appreciate if she just not use it in writing because some people may get the wrong idea.

• Go to your RA. Ask them to speak to Jess or José about it. Let them know it isn’t an incident of hate speech (as far as you know) that you simply think it is not an appropriate thing to have written on a whiteboard in the hallway even between friends and that you’d appreciate the RA talking to one of them just to sort out the situation.

You and a group of friends are waiting in line for food at a dining hall. Some people behind you in line are chatting about the new Xbox that just came out and you overhear one of them say, “Dude you’re still playing on a PS2, that’s so gay, seriously.” What do you do?

• Turn around and ask the individual who made the comment and inquire, “Hey, I don’t know if you know this but some people feel really uncomfortable and unsafe when they hear that kind of language being used. I do and it’d be really cool if you could not say that phrase again,” or something to that effect.

• It’s important to realize than most people aren’t confronted on their use of homophobic language and that they may not have homophobic intentions behind it. It is helpful to remind people that the words they use matter and still have the effect of being perceived/received as homophobic even if they didn’t mean/intend to. It is also very possible that the individual will avoid using such language again simply because they do not enjoy being confronted by random people in a lunch line. So either way its a win win.

One of your teachers (who you know quite well) is talking about sexuality or gender in class. When the discussion goes quiet they turn to you and ask if you have anything additional to add. What do you do?

• Speak with the teacher after class or during office hours (or send um an email!) to explain to them that you did not enjoy being singled out in front of the class in that way, and while you are really involved with GSA stuff on campus, that you’d still appreciate not being looked to as the representative or “expert” in the room.

• Explain that to be singled out publicly can be very uncomfortable, particularly when you may not be out to all of your classmates, and also point out that often stigmatized or marginalized students are put into the role of “educator” or “expert” by others and that it needs to be a choice whether to fill that role or not.

One of your new friends, Dee, who you don’t know that well, meets you and a group of mutual friends for lunch. They start talking about their roommate and how weird and annoying they always are. Dee goes onto say, “She also told me that she’s bisexual, I don’t actually really have a problem with bisexuals but I don’t know how comfortable I am, like, changing in the same room as her, I mean that’s weird right? Like I don’t know it just kind of weirds me out.” What do you do.

• You could inquire (now with the group or later alone with Dee) what it is that weirds her out about her roommate. Is it that her roommate is bisexual and she doesn’t totally get that? Would she feel equally weirded out if her roommate was gay? Does she not quite understand why her roommate felt the need to tell her?

• Would feel equally weirded out if roommate was gay. Chat with Dee about the fact that she doesn’t need to feel weirded out that her roommate is bi. Point out that her roommate wanted her to know because she didn’t want her to find out through some other source and then wonder why the roommate didn’t tell Dee directly. By telling her directly the roommate is being very cognisant of Dee’s feelings and it demonstrates that she is going to be respectful of that space in the future. Also point out that the roommate
is likely very worried that Dee will feel uncomfortable in the space - so Dee doesn’t need to worry about

Make it your own
You can do this activity a number of different ways, you don’t have to split groups up and have them sitting down in smaller groups to make it work.

Put up a spectrum on a wall with three signs, “very confident”, “somewhat confident”, “not at all confident”. Read out a scenario and ask people to place themselves on the spectrum of how confident they would be in handling this situation you just described. From here you can have individuals simply shout out their thoughts or you can split people into smaller groups - taking people from all parts of the spectrum and putting them together. Note: Having people share ideas out loud requires a high level of trust as well as having people rate their confidence levels.

You can print out and place around the room the different scenarios. Ask people to stand by the one they would most like to answer. Or they feel they would be the least confident in knowing how to handle. Ask the groups to tackle the question they choose (while making sure no group gets too big).

You can role play out the scenario. After having people in smaller groups game plan how they would handle the scenario, you can act as the person that has the issue or the individual that the group is addressing. You can have the group elect a person to do the role play, or they can all act as one person and support each other through the scenario.

Notes about the activity
Feel free to add any scenarios that you think would be helpful to this list. This is just a sampling to give you ideas on where you can go with the questions. Tailor scenarios to you group, for example, if you’re working with Greek life as questions that are specific to their unique group using their terminology and situations that may arise. It is great to have participants generate their own scenarios for this during the anonymous Q&A section that way you get to really cover the scenarios they are most interested in addressing.
Gender Pronouns Guide

Some people don’t feel like traditional gender pronouns (she/her, he/him) fit their gender identities. Transgender, genderqueer, and other gender-variant people may choose different pronouns for themselves. The following guide is a starting point for using pronouns respectfully.

How do I know which pronouns to use?
If the person you’re referring to is a stranger or brief acquaintance (like a server, cashier, fellow bus patron, etc), you may not need to know. If the person is a classmate, student, or coworker, for example, it is best to ask. Try:
• “What pronouns do you use?”
• “How would you like me to refer to you?”
• “How would you like to be addressed?”
• “My name is Tou and my pronouns are he and him. What about you?”

How often do pronouns change?
Remember that people may change their pronouns without changing their name, appearance, or gender identity. Try making pronouns an optional part of introductions or check-ins at meetings or in class.

What if I make a mistake?
Most people appreciate a quick apology and correction at the time of the mistake. Try:
• “Her books are—I’m sorry, her books are over there.”
By correcting yourself, you’re modeling respectful pronoun use for others in the conversation.
If you only realize the mistake later, a brief apology can help. Try:
• “I’m sorry I used the wrong pronoun earlier. I’ll be more careful next time.”

When should I correct others?
Some people may not want a lot of public attention to their pronouns, while others will appreciate you standing up for them. If someone uses the wrong pronoun for a person who isn’t present, try a brief correction:
• “I think Sam uses she and her pronouns. And yes, I’m going to her house later too!”

It can be tough to remember pronouns at first. The best solution is to practice! Correct pronoun use is an easy step toward showing respect for people of every gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominative (subject)</th>
<th>Objective (object)</th>
<th>Possessive determiner</th>
<th>Possessive Pronoun</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional pronouns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>He laughed</td>
<td>I called him</td>
<td>His eyes gleam</td>
<td>That is his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>She laughed</td>
<td>I called her</td>
<td>Her eyes gleam</td>
<td>That is hers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonbinary pronouns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>They laughed</td>
<td>I called them</td>
<td>Their eyes gleam</td>
<td>That is theirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spivak</td>
<td>Ey laughed</td>
<td>I called em</td>
<td>Eir eyes gleam</td>
<td>That is eirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ze (or zie)</td>
<td>Ze (or zie)</td>
<td>I called hir</td>
<td>Hir eyes gleam</td>
<td>That is hirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and hir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources

SpeakOUT! Speakers Bureau Project: Educating the campus about sexual orientation and gender identity through panel discussions in classes, residence halls, Greek houses, and other university and local settings. These panel presentations combine personal stories with educational information. [http://www.ohio.edu/lgbt/programs/speakout.cfm](http://www.ohio.edu/lgbt/programs/speakout.cfm)

SafeZone 201:
- Transgender & Gender Variant Identities
- Bisexual & Pansexual Identities
- Religion, Gender, and Sexuality
- Queer Identities and Relational Violence
- LGBT 101 for Healthcare Settings
- Allyship and Suicide Awareness
- *Being developed*: Polyamorous & Non-Monogamous Relationships: Myths & Realities; LGBT Identities and International Communities; Intersecting Identities: Race/Ethnicity and Sexuality; Understanding Asexuality and Empowering Ace Allies

Athens Campus LGBTQA Organizations
- Asterisk: Athens Area Trans* Advocates.
- Ally: Serving as OHIO’s version of a Gay-Straight Alliance.
- LGBT Commission of Student Senate
- LGBT Commission of Graduate Student Senate:
- Open Doors: Ohio University's LGBTQQA Student Union:
- OUT@WORK:
- OUTgrads & Non-Trads:
- Society of LGBT Alumni and Friends

Regional Campus LGBT Organizations
- Southern ~ Gay Straight Alliance
- Zanesville ~ L.G.B.T.A. Alliance
- Chillicothe ~ Stray Cats and SAGE (Students Advocating for Gender Equality)
- Lancaster / Pickerington ~ G.E.S.S. (Gender Equality Solidarity Society)

Campus Resources
- Gender Neutral Housing
- LGBTQ Studies Certificate

Resources available through Counseling and Psychological Services / Campus Care
- SPECTRUM: A support group for Gender Variant-Transgender-Gender Queer students & community members. Offered by OU's Counseling & Psychological Services.
- Healing Connections

CONTACT INFORMATION AT: [http://www.ohio.edu/lgbt/involved/campus.cfm](http://www.ohio.edu/lgbt/involved/campus.cfm) or email [lgbt@ohio.edu](mailto:lgbt@ohio.edu)
Campus and Community Allies

- Division for Diversity and Inclusion
- Women's Center
- Multicultural Center
- Career and Leadership Development Center
- University College / Learning Community Programs
- Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- Diversity Studies
- Alumni Association
- Dean of Students Office
- Residential Housing
- Office of Community Standards
- Office for Institutional Equity
- OU Survivor Advocacy Program
- OU Survivor Advocacy Outreach Program
- Hollaback Appalachia
- My Sister's Place
- PFLAG Athens Area (Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays)
- SuBAMUH (Susan B. Anthony Memorial Unrest Home)
- United Campus Ministry (UCM) ~ Center for Spiritual Growth & Social Justice
- Hillel at Ohio University
- Sojourners Care Network
- Athens Public Library

Ohio LGBT Organizations

Equality Ohio: “Equality Ohio advocates and educates to achieve fair treatment and equal opportunity for all Ohioans regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.” For more information visit: http://www.equalityohio.org

TransOhio: TransOhio serves the Ohio transgender and ally communities by providing services, education, support and advocacy which promotes and improves the health, safety and life experience of the Ohio transgender individual and community. For more information visit: http://www.transohio.org

Heartland Trans* Wellness Group: “A Cincinnati, Ohio based project dedicated to creating accessible, affirming community resources for Midwestern trans*, queer, and LGBTQPIA people. Heartland Trans* Wellness Group provides accessible, inclusive, and affirming resources to community members and service providers through comprehensive educational programming, community building, creative cultural growth, and socially just activism. For more information visit: http://transwellness.org

Buckeye Region Anti-Violence Organization (BRAVO): BRAVO works to eliminate violence perpetrated on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identification, domestic violence, and sexual assault through prevention, education, advocacy, violence documentation, and survivor services, both within and on behalf of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender communities. For more information visit: http://www.bravo-ohio.org

Frederick Center: The Frederick Center for Professional Development is a collaboration of educators who share a passion for social equality. We believe we can create a world in which people live lives free from discrimination and injustice. We use our own 'lived experiences' to engage professionals in the social issues that matter most. For more information visit: http://www.thefrederickcenter.com
National Resource Roundup

The listing below is far from being an exhaustive list, however, it provides a good starting point for individuals interested in the dynamics of gender, identity, expression, and sexuality.

Gender Identity
- FORGE
- National Center for Transgender Equality
- Transgender Law Center
- Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund
- World Professional Association for Transgender Health
- YES Institute

Sexual Orientation
- All Things Bi
- American Institute of Bisexuality
- Asexual Awareness Week
- Asexual Visibility and Education Network
- BiNet USA
- Bisexual Organizing Project
- Bisexual Resource Center
- Sexuality Education Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
- The Kinsey Institute

Intersex
- Organization Intersex International in the United States of America (OII-USA : Intersex in America)
- The Intersex Society of North America (ISNA)

Youth and Campus Focused
- Advocates for Youth / Amplify your Voice
- Ambiente Joven
- Break the Cycle
- Campus Pride
- Coalition for Positive Sexuality
- COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere)
- Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals
- Courage Campaign
- Draw Your Line
- FIERCE
- Gay Teen Resources
- GLSEN (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network)
- It Gets Better
- Make It Better
- Oasis Magazine
- Operation Shine America
- Trans Student Educational Resources
- TransKids
- TransYouth Family Allies
- Trevor Project
- TrueColors
- Youth Guard
Race and Ethnicity / International
• Asian Pacific Gays and Friends
• Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
• Audre Lorde Project
• Blacklight
• Brown Boi Project
• Causes in Common
• Council for Global Equality
• Gay Asian Pacific Support Network
• Global Respect In Education Campaign
• Immigration Equality
• International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
• International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

Activism
• ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union)
• Center for American Progress
• GetEQUAL
• GLAAD
• Human Rights Campaign
• Lambda Legal
• National Center for Lesbian Rights

Family Focused
• Families Like Mine
• Family Acceptance Project
• Family Diversity Project
• Family Equality Council
• PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
• SAGE (Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders)

Faith/Religious
• Affirmations (Mormon)
• Believe Out Loud (Christian)
• Call To Action (Catholic)
• Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry
• Coalition of LGBT Concerns (UCC)
• Dignity USA (Catholic)
• Emergence International (Christian Science)
• Equally Blessed (Catholic)
• Fellowship of the Spiral Path
• Fortunate Families (Catholic)
• Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association (Vaishnava and Hindu)
• Institute of Welcoming Resources (Christian)
• Integrity (Episcopalian)
• Interfaith Alliance

• International Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association
• International LGBT Association
• International LGBTQ Youth and Student Organization
• National Black Justice Coalition
• National Council of La Raza
• National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance
• Northeast TwoSpirit Society
• Queer Women of Color Media Wire
• Unid@s: The National Latin@ LGBT Human Rights Organization

• National LGBTQ Taskforce
• Out and Equal
• Queer Rising
• Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project (QUIP)
• Southerners On New Ground
• Sylvia Rivera Law Project
• Truth Wins Out
The end of training, but the beginning of the ongoing journey of creating a campus environment inclusive, supportive, and celebratory of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and queerness.