Vancouver Community College

Manual for Positive Space Participants
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Message from the Vice-President Academic, Students & Research:

VCC has a long history of providing relevant and meaningful learning experiences, and supporting students to be successful academically, personally, and in the workplace. Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone – students, faculty, and staff -- is an important ingredient in the mix of activities that lead to positive outcomes.

VCC’s Positive Space initiative aims to raise awareness of diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity. Providing education and creating a forum for open dialogue around these important issues is essential to building a safe, inclusive college community.

By supporting Positive Space, you will be playing a role in enriching and celebrating VCC’s diverse community. It is also an opportunity to gain the skills needed to address issues of inequity, discrimination and bias. This manual will help you learn more about VCC’s Positive Space initiative and how you can contribute.

Sincerely,

Kathryn McNaughton, PhD
Vice-President Academic, Students & Research
WELCOME

Welcome to Positive Space at Vancouver Community College. We greatly appreciate your willingness to become a visible support person, helping to foster a more accepting and inclusive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, faculty and staff at VCC.

Positive Space exists at other universities and colleges across North America. Many of the materials and the orientation exercises in this manual have been adopted/adapted from other campaigns and some we have created ourselves. In the interest of making this orientation process as relevant and helpful to everyone as possible, we would welcome any feedback you can offer us.

Given that everyone comes to this role with vastly differing levels of knowledge and awareness about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered issues on campus, we hope that this orientation will accomplish a number of things: We would like to:

- Provide you with the opportunity to meet and make connections with others participating in the campaign;
- Answer some of your questions about Positive Space, and about your role as support person;
- Provide a forum for raising awareness about LGBT issues on campus and in general. Having participated in this session, you should feel free to contact us, or others taking part in this campaign, for support, advice and encouragement.

Thank you again for your commitment to Positive Space and to LGBT issues at VCC.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Vancouver Community College’s Positive Space would like to acknowledge the generous support of...

- The past Human Rights Office, Vancouver Community College;
- Vancouver Community College Faculty Association;
- Students’ Unions of Vancouver Community College;
- Canadian Federation of Students, Local 73 and 76;

Also many thanks to...

- Zoro Mihajlovic for designing our logo;
- UBC Positive Space Campaign, Manual for Resource Persons, and the Malaspina University-College’s Positive Space Alliance Manual, which was used as a model and adopted and adapted for our own use.

Thanks to the VVCFA who first found our guest presenter from UBC to offer our first workshop.
WHAT IS THE POSITIVE SPACE?

INTRODUCTION

Vancouver Community College’s Positive Space seeks to raise awareness of diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity, and to challenge the patterns of silence that continue to marginalize lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals in our society. Although there have been some significant changes in attitudes and behaviours toward LGBT individuals in recent years, many are still uncomfortable identifying their sexual orientation to co-workers or colleagues, or to fellow students or instructors, for fear that they will be ridiculed or ostracized. Much still needs to be done to foster a truly inclusive community.

Positive Space promotes the creation of a space defined by equality: free from discrimination and hate. It is a public proclamation of support and affirmation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning members of our community, working to make our campus a more welcoming place for all. Similar campaigns exist at universities and colleges across Canada, including at the University of Toronto, York University, the University of Calgary, Queen’s University, Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia.

By joining VCC’s Positive Space, you are expressing your commitment to speaking out against the marginalization of individuals that occurs through homophobia, heterosexism and gender identity oppression. Choosing to display a Positive Space symbol in your office, work area or residence room means that you are publicly affirming support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons to be full members of the VCC community.
OBJECTIVES OF POSITIVE SPACE

- To increase the visibility and contribute to the development of positive, supportive people and spaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, staff and faculty at VCC;
- To increase awareness, affirmation and education around gender identity and sexual diversity issues;
- To develop a community of resource people who are knowledgeable about gender identity and sexual orientation issues and resources, and are willing to support their lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered colleagues, classmates and co-workers;
- To provide on-going educational and professional development sessions for the campus community on issues related to sexual orientation and gender diversity;
- To increase awareness and open up discussion on often suppressed, silenced issues and create networks of support across campus; and
- To help foster a more visibly welcoming, safer, non-exclusionary campus community, one that is enriched and enlivened by its diversity.
THE ORIGIN OF OUR POSITIVE SPACE SYMBOL

Our Positive Space emblem is an integration of ideas and images that were adopted from emblems that appealed to us. The final design came from Zoro Mihajlovic an employee at VCC who works in Media Services.

The Rainbow Flag, created in 1978 for San Francisco’s Gay Freedom Celebration, depicts the colours of the rainbow. The rainbow colours, which have become a universal emblem for unity within diversity (or diversity within unity), remains a powerful symbol of pride within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities.
Questions & Answers

1. Why single out sexual orientation and gender diversity issues?

Positive Space acknowledges that there are a variety of equity issues that merit public discussion and widespread institutional support. However, sexual orientation and gender identity issues are frequently omitted from public policy and educational strategies. Often, issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are spoken of solely in a negative manner, or are avoided as a result of fear or embarrassment. Many bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer and transgender people frequently encounter a hostile environment, and can assume negative views of their sexuality and gender identity as a result.

There is still widespread reluctance to speak of sexual and gender diversity. In contrast, talk of emotional and sexual bonds between heterosexuals is routine (e.g. ‘My wife and I are going to the party.’ or ‘My boyfriend and I had a great time on the weekend.’). It is not the same for bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer and transgendered individuals. They often cannot talk openly about the person or people they care most about, with whom they are intimate, or even with whom they spend time. Doing so may mean a threatened job, a lost friendship, ridicule, even violence. The goal of VCC’s Positive Space is to break this pattern. Through the use of educational tools such as information sheets, seminars, brochures and stickers the campaign aims to make issues of sexual orientation and gender diversity more visible.

2. What are the objectives?

Positive Space takes an affirmative, positive approach to creating a campus that is free of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. It is also aimed at encouraging a widespread and visible commitment to welcoming sexual and gender diversity on campus and at making talk of diversity more open and less unusual.
3. **What Positive Space is NOT intended to do?**

Positive Space is not intended to establish a counselling network on campus beyond that which is already in place. It does not aim to embarrass people into asserting that they are open about sexual orientation and gender diversity issues. It is not intended to encourage finger pointing at those who do not become part of it or to suggest that all those who are part of Positive Space are bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer or transgender.

4. **Why is Positive Space needed?**

Many of society’s attitudes and behaviours towards sexual and gender diversity have changed over the past few years; however, stereotypes and prejudices remain widespread. Members of the bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender community continue to be marginalized and silenced. Positive Space recognizes that much still has to be done. It gives members of the College community an opportunity to take a visible stand and to show their support.

5. **If I participate in Positive Space, will people think I’m bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer or transgender?**

Although some may assume that anyone who takes a stand in support of equality for bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer or transgender people must be a member of that community, Positive Space is intended to challenge that assumption. Many of the Positive Space committee members and many employees and students show their support by putting up posters and stickers are heterosexual. This campaign welcomes people of all sexual orientations and genders working together for equality.

6. **Should I assume that those who do not actively participate in Positive Space are not positively disposed to gender and sexual diversity?**

This is not a safe assumption. There may be those within the university-college community who have not yet heard of Positive Space. Others may feel positively about Positive Space but may not have control over the type of literature and stickers they post in their area. Some people may be supportive but not yet comfortable speaking openly about diversity. Still others may not be in the habit of displaying materials on their door.
ROLES OF A POSITIVE SPACE PARTICIPANT

Everyone who participates in Positive Space at VCC is required to participate in an orientation session. The purpose of the orientation is to bring to light issues that affect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students, staff and faculty, and to introduce participants to resources that exist both on campus and in the community. Once you have completed the orientation, you will receive a Positive Space symbol (in the form of a poster) to display in your work, study, or living space. The symbol indicates that your space is a place to be open about issues of sexual orientation or gender identity without fear of homophobia or harassment.

What Will Be My Responsibilities as a Positive Space Participant?

1. Display a Positive Space symbol:
   - Display a Positive Space symbol someplace where it is readily visible, preferably at the entrance to your work, study or living space. Please make sure that you have notified anyone with whom you share space of your intention to participate in Positive Space. (Please take the symbol with you if you are moving to a different space).
   - The symbol is to be displayed by those who have completed the Positive Space Orientation. Please do not give your symbol to anyone else.
   - Report any graffiti, damage or removal of the symbol to the Positive Space committee so that it can be replaced.

2. Participate in the Vancouver Community College Positive Space:
   - Be willing to be a compassionate listener, but not a counsellor. Know where to refer people if they require more in-depth assistance.
   - Take advantage of workshops and further training opportunities offered throughout the school year to participants in Positive Space.

3. Support
   - Be willing to explain to others the significance of the Positive Space symbol, what it's about, how they can become involved.

What Does Displaying the Positive Space Symbol Mean?

- That you believe that systemic and personal discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is wrong;
• That you will be sensitive to the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people on campus;
• That you will respect the privacy of anyone who contacts you about issues to do with Positive Space;
• That you will not condone homophobia, transphobic or heterosexist language or actions in your work, study or living space.

It Does NOT Mean:

• That you are expected to be a counsellor;
• That you are automatically assumed to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender;
• That you discriminate against heterosexual students, staff or faculty;
• That you are a radical political activist.

What Can I Expect as a Positive Space Participant?

• That lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students, staff and faculty might feel that they can speak and act more openly around you;
• That you may be a role model for others;
• That your actions may influence others and encourage them to be more open and supportive towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals;
• That you might learn more about issues affecting the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people;
• That by participating in VCC’s Positive Space, you have made a personal contribution to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment on campus.
GUIDELINES FOR POSITIVE SPACE PARTICIPANTS

1. Respect each individual’s privacy. If issues arise that you need to discuss with someone else (for advice, information, possible referral) please do so without identifying the person.

2. Use language that is appropriate to the person who has approached you. Try not to use labels to describe someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity if they have not first used the term to refer to themselves. Use the terminology with which the person feels most comfortable, as long as it is respectful.

3. Support each other. Please ask for assistance from the Positive Space Committee if you have any questions, comments or concerns. Feel free to also consult with other campaign participants.

4. Do not take on more than you can handle. If someone contacts you who is in an emergency situation, in crisis or in need of counselling, please refer him or her to the appropriate resource.

5. As a Positive Space participant, be sure to maintain appropriate boundaries in your contact with students and coworkers. Trust your instincts and strive to keep interactions within your comfort zone. Remember, you can always refer someone to another resource if you do not feel comfortable with the topic or do not feel able to provide the assistance being requested.
CONFIDENTIALITY

Positive Space can only be effective if people believe that they can discuss their concerns and seek advice or assistance in a safe environment, one in which their privacy is respected. They must be able to feel that any Positive Space participant they contact is trustworthy. For reasons of personal integrity, safety, and for the integrity of the committee, please keep information shared with you confidential unless you have clear permission to discuss it with others.

There are a few instances where complete confidentiality cannot be assured. If you have reason to believe that a person might harm him/herself or someone else, you have a responsibility to report your concerns.

If a person is threatening harm to themselves, Counselling should be contacted immediately. Either bring the person directly to Counselling or call 604-871-7000.

For emergency situations security should be contacted; 4444

From a cell: 604-871-7000 EXT 4444

If there is a weapon involved or the threat is immanent call 911.

Additional emergency numbers will be supplied separately.
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GAYS & LESBIANS

Gay men and lesbians in Canada have experienced persistent patterns of discrimination and persecution. They have:

- Been treated as mentally ill and subjected to conversion therapies, including electroshock treatment;
- Been targeted by discriminatory laws, including criminal prohibition of same-sex practices;
- Not been permitted (until recently) to participate openly in the Armed Forces;
- Faced discrimination in employment and housing; and
- Been the victims of hate-motivated crimes, anti-gay and anti-lesbian violence, and verbal harassment.

Progress:

- 1969 - the federal government removed criminal sanctions against same-sex practices between consenting adults;
- 1977 - Quebec became the first province to prohibit discrimination against gays and lesbians, followed by most of the other provinces during the 80' and 90's;
- 1979 - prohibitions on the immigration of gays and lesbians were removed;
- 1996 - the federal government amended the federal Human Rights Act to include a prohibition of discrimination against gays and lesbians;
- 2000 – the federal government passed legislation that gives same-sex couples who have lived together for more than a year the same benefits and obligations as heterosexual common-law couples;
- 2003 – MPs pass Bill C-250, which adds “any section of the public distinguished by sexual orientation” to the list of groups protected from hate propaganda (this bill has not yet received royal assent);
- 2003 – Ontario and B.C. courts recognize same-sex marriages as legal and the United Church of Canada votes to recognize same-sex marriages;
• 2005 – Canada becomes the fourth country in the world to recognize same-sex marriage, after the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain.

• 2006 – With the recognition of marriage gays and lesbians are now able to sponsor same sex partners on equal terms and steps were taken to accommodate the barriers created by the lack of recognition of same-sex marriage in other parts of the world.

• Recent changes in legislation and in societal norms have created a growing acceptance of families with same-sex parents, as well as the adoption of children by same-sex couples and awarding custody of children to gays and lesbians.

CONTINUING DISCRIMINATION

• Gay and lesbian books and other forms of media continue to be censored despite court challenges.

• In criminal cases, homosexual advances have sometimes been treated as “provocation”, thus justifying a shorter sentence for an assailant, even when in similar heterosexual advance would not be treated in this way;

• The Criminal Code still discriminates on the basis of sexual orientation as the age of consent for anal intercourse is higher than for vaginal intercourse;

• Hate crimes directed at gay men and lesbians continue to be widespread;

For a more complete Canadian timeline, a world timeline and for updates and more details on any of these issues, see the CBC backgrounder at: http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/samesexrights/

The Egale Canada website also provides excellent background: http://www.egale.ca
**HETEROSEXISM & HOMOPHOBIA**

Although the BC Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation in areas of housing, employment and service provision, oppressive behaviours against lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender individuals still exist. Homophobia and heterosexism are two pervasive issues that LGBT persons face.

**WHAT IS HOMOPHOBIA?**

Homophobia is a term used to describe negative attitudes, feelings and beliefs towards lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgendered individuals and those perceived to be of these sexual orientations or gender identities. Homophobic thoughts and reactions take many forms and can be subtle or blatant. They can involve harassment, prejudicial treatment of, or intolerance toward LGBT persons. Homophobia includes a range of feelings and behaviours from discomfort and fear to disgust, hatred and violence.

According to research, homophobia is often an extension of rigid gender-role stereotyping - fear that the “nuclear” family will be undercut, and that the very fabric of our society will be destroyed by any deviation from the “traditional” social order. Individuals who tend to be homophobic often also hold fixed ideas about how society should be structured and believe that in order to uphold the social order in our Western culture, we must maintain strict role differentiation between males and females, and perpetuate an unequal division of power and status that confers privilege to males. Gender diversity or “difference” with respect to sexual orientation is seen as a threat to traditional power structures.

**WHAT IS HETEROSEXISM?**

Heterosexism refers to an often-institutionalized assumption held by society that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual. Heterosexuality is seen as inherently superior and preferable to all other sexual orientations. Heterosexism, which can be subtle as well as blatant, serves to silence and erase the lives of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered, so that positive images of LGBT culture become difficult to find, if not invisible. Living in a climate where one’s sexual orientation or gender identity is consistently devalued or maligned serves to further isolate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.
**Homophobic Behaviours Include:**

- “Gay-bashing” or physical violence, including sexual violence;
- Making derogatory comments, innuendos, insults, slurs, jokes or threats about sexual orientation or sexual practice;
- Silencing talk of sexual or gender diversity;
- Feeling repulsed by displays of affection between same-sex couples, but accepting affectionate displays between heterosexual couples;
- Forcing people to “come out” or “stay in the closet” (disclose or hide their sexual orientation);
- Linking homosexuality with pedophilia;
- Accusing LGBT persons of “recruiting” others to join their sexual orientation;
- Defacing notices, posters or property with homophobic graffiti;
- Rejecting friends or family members because of their sexual orientation or gender identity;
- Treating the sexual orientations or gender identities of LGBT persons as less valid than those of heterosexuals;
- Behaving as though all LGBT people have AIDS or are responsible for the spread of it;
- Thinking of persons who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual only in terms of their sexuality, rather than as whole, complex persons;
- Being afraid of social or physical interaction with persons who are LGBT;
- Avoiding social situations or activities where you fear being perceived as LGBT;
- Feeling that people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual should not discuss or display their sexual orientation openly while people who are heterosexual may do so freely.
WHAT CAN I DO TO COMBAT HOMOPHOBIA & HETEROSEXISM?

I Can Educate Myself:

- Attend workshops on homophobia, heterosexism and transgender issues;
- Read books and other educational materials that provide me with accurate, up-to-date information;
- See films and attend special events focused on LGBT issues;
- Talk with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered friends, relatives, co-workers or fellow students;
- Learn about LGBT people who have made significant contributions to society;

I Can Recognize My Own Homophobic/Heterosexist Biases:

- Identify ways in which homophobia affects the way I live (e.g. my dress, the friends I choose, my mannerisms, or my behaviour);
- Confront the expectations and beliefs I have about gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals;
- Don’t assume that all my friends, classmates, or co-workers are heterosexual.

I Can Address Homophobic Behaviour Around Me:

- Make it known that homophobic innuendos, jokes, and teasing are offensive and unacceptable to me;
- Work with others to develop guidelines in my residence or workplace that will treat homophobic interactions as unacceptable.

I Can Take Simple, But Effective Steps:

- Use inclusive language;
- In classroom or in casual discussion, encourage inclusion of diversity/difference;
- Encourage the library to purchase literature and other materials by LGBT authors, or featuring LGBT characters;
- Be a supportive ally for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members of the Malaspina University-College community;
- If I am gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, be as “out” as I can safely and comfortably be.
WHAT IS HETEROSEXUAL PRIVILEGE?

Living without ever having to think twice, face, confront, engage, or cope with anything on this page. Heterosexuals can address these phenomena but social/political forces do not require them to do so.

Marrying…which includes the following privileges:
- Public recognition and support for an intimate relationship (e.g., receiving cards or phone calls celebrating your commitment to another person); supporting activities and social expectations of longevity and stability for your committed relationships;
- Joint child custody;
- Paid leave from employment when grieving the death of a spouse;
- Property laws, filing joint tax returns, inheriting from your spouse automatically under probate laws;
- Immediate access to your loved ones in case of accident or emergency;
- Family-of-origin support for a life with a spouse.

Not questioning your normalcy; sexually and culturally:
- Having role models of your gender and sexual orientation;
- Learning about romance and relationships from fiction, movies and television;
- Having positive media images of people with whom you can identify.

Validation from the culture in which you live:
- Living with your partner and doing so openly;
- Talking about your relationships, or what projects, vacations, and family plans you and your lover/partner are creating;
- Expressing pain when a relationship ends from death or separation, and having other people notice and tend to your pain;
- Receiving social acceptance by neighbours, colleagues, and good friends;
- Not having to hide and lie about women/men-only activities;
- Dating the person of your desire in your teen years;
• Working without always being identified by your sexual orientation (e.g., you get to be a farmer, bricklayer, artist, etc., without being labeled the heterosexual farmer, etc.).

**Institutional acceptance:**

• Receiving validation from your religious community, being able to be a member of the clergy;

• Being accepted and included at work, not having your sexual orientation used against you in any way;

• Being employed as a teacher in pre-school through to high school without fear of being fired any day because you are assumed to corrupt children;

• Raising children without threats of state intervention, without children having to be worried which of their friends might reject them because of their parent’s sexual orientation.
MYTH BUSTING - LGBT MYTHS & FACTS

1. It’s Unnatural to Be LGBT

For lesbians, gay men and bisexual people, it is natural to have sexual attractions and relations with members of one’s own gender. Bisexuals can also be attracted to members of the opposite gender. Some transgender people consider themselves homosexual or bisexual and others consider themselves heterosexual. To act on these feelings is natural. Not to act on these feelings would be unnatural, forcing people to hide who they are and causing them great pain. It is the quality of the relationship one is in that is significant, not the gender of one’s partner.

This myth also comes from the belief that sexual relationships are formed for the procreation of children only. In all relationships the decision to have children is complex and needs great consideration. Although many heterosexuals decide to have children, many do not make the same decision or are unable to have children. On the other hand, many LGBT people choose to have children or raise children with their partner. Children raised in these families comment that what is most important in a family is being loved and cared for.

2. LGBT Teachers are Harmful Role Models for Children

Dr. John P. Spiegel, past president of the American Psychiatric Association, says, “Some have feared that homosexual teachers might affect the sexual orientation of their students. There is no evidence to support this thesis.” One does not learn to be LGBT one is LGBT. Most students who are LGBT were raised by heterosexual parents and live in a predominantly heterosexual society.

LGBT people need to provide positive role models and are often unable to do so. According to the Human Rights Code in each province, Canadian teachers cannot be fired from their positions for being LGB. However, many teachers do not feel that they can reveal their sexual orientation because doing so may cause them to suffer consequences such as disciplinary action, lack of support from administrators, or lack of awareness and/or support from parent groups. Transgendered persons are not yet protected by law in any jurisdiction in Canada, although there is pressure to change this in BC.
Positive role models are important for all youth. LGBT role models enable LGBT youth to see that they can be productive members of our society, living healthy, safe lives, realizing their potential. Heterosexual youth also need LGBT role models so that they can learn about differences, about being inclusive, and helping to prevent discrimination and bigotry.

3. **Elementary Children Will Be Confused by Access to Information About Same-Gender Families and LGBT Issues**

Clear, accurate, age-appropriate information should not be confusing to anyone. Some adults underestimate the ability of children to understand unfamiliar concepts. Teaching is about helping students to think critically and to understand the diversity of the world around them. Access to information about families with two moms or dads can only help to promote appreciation and support of all students and the families they live in.

4. **Only Lesbians, Gays & Bisexuals are Attracted to People of Their Own Sex**

Most adults have deep feelings, attractions and/or fantasies about both sexes. Over time, studies have consistently confirmed that both homosexual and heterosexual people have had a variety of sexual experiences with same gender and opposite gender people. Alfred Kinsey’s studies described sexual feelings and behaviour on a continuum to indicate the fluidity of an individual’s sexual identity. He showed that most people move along the continuum at different times of their lives and that only a small part of the population feels they are at either end of the spectrum 100% of the time.

In addition, a great deal of preadolescent sex play is with others of the same sex, as a part of natural exploration of one’s body and sexuality. Homosexuality is not learned. If it were, the percentage of LGB people in the population would be far greater. It is impossible to “make someone homosexual.” Homosexual or heterosexual experiences as an adolescent do not determine a person’s sexual orientation later in life.

5. **People Choose to Be Homosexual**

Most LGB people feel that they did not choose to be LGB. Rather, they were aware of having same-sex feelings at an early age or else these feelings evolved and solidified in their adolescent or adult
years. The choice seems to be whether to live a full and well-balanced life with a same-sex partner, or to suppress their feelings.

Some lesbians say they have chosen to be in lesbian relationships for a variety of reasons, either for political reasons or because they feel emotionally closer to women. These relationships are not always sexual, but can be.

6. There is a Distinct LGB Lifestyle

There is as much variety in LGB lifestyles as there is in heterosexual lifestyles. LGB people can be single, dating or involved in long-term relationships or married. They can be promiscuous, monogamous or celibate. They can have children. They live alone, with their lovers, with their parents and siblings or with friends. They live in cities, suburbs and in the country. They can be rich, middle-class or poor. They can have a variety of occupations. Some are doctors, priests, prostitutes, truck drivers, mathematicians, writers, football players, loggers, politicians, teachers or unemployed. Some are clean-shaven and some have beards. Some are drag queens and some are jocks. Some wear lipstick and some do not. There is no such thing as a distinct homosexual lifestyle, just as there is no such thing as a heterosexual lifestyle. Within all communities, individuals create their own lifestyles.

7. LGBTs are Promiscuous or Somehow More Sexual Than Non-LGBTs

This is a stereotype propagated by the fact that those individuals who are promiscuous are the most visible. As more and more gays and lesbians “come out”, the promiscuous stereotype diminishes. Events such as Pride Day and the Stonewall Festival help LGBT people to identify as a diverse community in the same way that heterosexuals and non-transgender persons do. Moreover, LGBT people are just as capable of stable, monogamous, committed relationships as anyone else. Queer couples often disappear from the urban LGBT communities to live and raise their families in the suburbs or the country where they may be less visible.

Another issue around this myth is that being LGBT is only about sex. LGBT people live full lives, which includes shopping for groceries, doing the laundry, raising children, planting a garden and going to work everyday. Being LGBT is about who you love emotionally, intellectually and sexually and how you identify yourself.
8. **LGBT People are Sad & Lonely, With Nothing to Offer Society**

LGBT people have made major contributions to virtually all fields, from science and medicine to literature, and from architecture to sports. LGBT people are often unrecognized for their contributions or their sexual orientation is unknown. Many LGBT people have been excluded from mainstream culture and treated in unjust ways. Since many legal rights are unavailable to LGBT people, this can lead to anger and a feeling of isolation and alienation from one’s larger culture. A growing sense of pride within the “gay” community has enabled many LGBT people to reach their potential and to fight for their rights.

9. **LGBT People Do Not Value Family**

Less than one third of all Canadian families are traditional “nuclear families”. There are many diverse family structures. Within the LGBT community there is recognition and nurturing of alternate family structures. LGBT people recognize lovers and those involved in long-term relationships as family. LGBT people, who are fortunate enough to not have been rejected from their family of origin, may have strong family ties. Those who have been rejected by their family of origin often work hard to try to re-establish these relationships and to maintain their right to raise their own children or adopt their partner’s children. Rejection often causes deep pain that many LGBT people spend a good part of their life trying to understand and overcome.

10. **LGBT People Can Be Identified by Certain Mannerisms, Clothing or Physical Characteristics**

LGBT people come in as many different shapes, sizes and colours as do heterosexuals. Some LGBT people can be identified by stereotypical mannerisms and characteristics. However, many heterosexuals also display these same mannerisms and characteristics, such as that of the “tomboy” or the “effeminate” male. Today, fewer LGBT people feel they must dress to pass in the mainstream community and some LGBT people choose to make a political statement through their appearance.

Some members of different gay and lesbian subcultures or peer groups may mimic and exaggerate specific behaviours. Because of the lack of open LGBT role models, queer youth sometimes do not know how to “fit in” to the gay community and therefore adopt
stereotypical mannerisms thinking that this is the only way to express themselves. Without a wide general knowledge, queer youth can be powerfully influenced by negative stereotypes.

11. **In a Same-Sex Relationship, One Partner Usually Plays the Masculine Role & the Other One Plays the Feminine Role**

Within the heterosexual community, there are all types of relationships and this is true in same-sex relationships. In the past, when we had only the traditional heterosexual relationship as a model, it was common that same-sex couples would emulate this. Today, most same-sex couples work to develop relationships based on the principles of equality and mutuality, where they are loved and appreciated for “who they are”. Roles are usually based on who likes to do a certain thing and/or who has a talent for doing certain things. It is important that each person’s skills are valued. If there is a power imbalance, based on economics, social status, or education, roles may become entrenched.

12. **We Know What Causes Homosexuality & Bisexuality**

It is not known what causes either heterosexuality or homosexuality. Some believe they are predetermined genetically and research seems to indicate that sexual orientation is determined either before birth or very early in life. Others maintain that all humans are predisposed to all variations of sexual and affectional behaviours and that they learn a preference or orientation. LGBT people are found in practically every culture throughout the world and have been a constant part of society throughout history. Anthropologists C.S. Ford and F.A. Beach studied 76 contemporary societies and showed that 64% of their sample societies considered homosexuality normal and socially acceptable in their culture. In a majority of cultures, heterosexuality and homosexuality coexist. Same-sex relations were, in fact, accepted and considered natural in many European societies until the 13th century, after which same-sex relations were increasingly proscribed by church and state.

It is not the cause that is important, but that people are treated with dignity and respect regardless of their sexual orientation.

13. **LGB People Would Change If They Could**

Most LBG people are happy and proud to be who they are. Even if they could choose to be straight, they would not. Validation, approval and celebration of who they are, by family and friends,
are factors in their comfort, self-esteem and pride.

The feeling that life would be easier or better if one were heterosexual comes from the constant approval and positive reinforcement of heterosexuality and lack of approval and negative reinforcement of homosexuality in our society. Social prejudice, discrimination, alienation and isolation can cause intense stress, conflict, depression and debilitating fears. Some LGB people remain closeted for most of their lives for these reasons. Others will need solid support systems to overcome societal pressure to conform to a strictly heterosexual model.

14. Most LGB People Could Be Cured by Having Really Good Sex With a Person of the Other Gender

There are no cures. There is no illness. Many LGB people have had heterosexual relationships or experiences. These experiences have not changed their orientation. Bisexuals continue to be attracted to both genders, although they may have had very satisfying relationships with the opposite gender. Some gays and lesbians will enter a heterosexual relationship, due to societal pressure and in complete denial of their actual sexual orientation. This can cause a great deal of pain and misery for both partners and for the children involved in these families.

15. The Majority of Pedophiles Are Gay

Sexual abuse of children occurs primarily within the family. Over 95% of abuse that is reported has been perpetrated by a male relative. A child is over 100 times more likely to be sexually molested by a heterosexual relative than by a homosexual (Paediatrics, 1994). Most sexual abuse of children outside the family is committed by pedophiles. Pedophiles do not distinguish between male or female victims; however, girls are victimized twice as often as boys are. The perpetrators are motivated by power and control, not by sexual desire. 90% of all pedophiles self-identify as heterosexuals.

LGBT people are just as concerned as heterosexuals that children are protected from pedophiles. The pedophile myth is the basis of the most damaging charges leveled against queer teachers, to keep them in the closet and out of the classroom.
16. **Most LGB People Could Be Cured by Psychotherapy or “Orientation Reparative Therapy”**

There are no cures. There is no illness. Psychologists, psychiatrists and mental health professionals agree that mental well being and emotional stability are defined as an individual’s ability to live a fully functioning life. They also agree that homosexuality is not an illness, mental disorder or emotional problem.

In the past, biased information was used to describe homosexuality. In 1973, after 35 years of research, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of disorders. Then, in 1975, the American Psychological Association went further to state that, ‘Homosexuality implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability or general social or occupational capacities.” Both associations now urge mental health professionals to help dispel the myth that homosexuality is a mental disorder.

In 1990, the American Psychological Association stated that scientific evidence does not show that conversion therapy works. Changing one’s orientation does not correspond with changing one’s behaviour. To change one’s orientation would require altering one’s emotional, affectional and sexual feelings and reconstructing one’s self-concept and self-identity. Furthermore, the APA pointed out that therapists who undertake this kind of therapy usually come from organizations with an ideological perspective against homosexuality. The APA has specifically stated that “orientation reparative therapy” (conversion therapy) is not recognized as a valid form of therapy.

17. **LGB People Do Not Make Good Parents**

Research has shown that, except for the fact that the children of a homosexual couple are often concerned about being stigmatized by their peers, they show no higher incidence of emotional disturbance than do children of heterosexual couples. Nor are they confused about their own sexual identity. LGB people come from all kinds of families, as do heterosexuals, and there is no correlation between the sexual orientation of parents and that of their children. The chances of a child being LGB are the same whether they are raised by LGB parents or by heterosexual parents: 7 – 10%.
18. **LGB Teenagers & Children Do Not Exist**

LGB children may not identify themselves, but many LGB adults report having had a sense of difference from other children, from a very early age, as early as 5-12 years old. Both heterosexual and LGB teens are acutely aware of their sexuality during their secondary school years, but LGB teens are more likely to do so in fear and isolation.

19. **“I Don’t Know Anyone Who Is Gay”**

LGB people are everywhere. With as many as 10% of people in the population being LGB, we all know people who are LGB. This myth perpetuates the idea that LGB issues need not concern the heterosexual community, because LGBs are “other” or “somewhere else.” In fact, oppression in any form against any minority group is everyone’s business, because it exacts high social costs.

20. **LGBT People Are Predominantly Young, White, & Non-Religious**

History shows that LGBT people are found at all ages and in all cultures, ethnic groups and religions. What is significant is that an LGBT person belonging to two or more groups that are considered minorities in our culture will suffer from two or more forms of oppression. Sometimes an LGBT person may be forced to choose between their ethnic culture and their sexual orientation, for allegiance and identification, if the two seem incompatible.

As well, this myth is damaging for those who are outside the described myth. For example, a religious person may feel that they would have to give up their religion to be LGBT. In fact, some religions reject people who are LGBT, but there are many that are very supportive and even celebrate human diversity.

21. **Bisexuals Are Going Through a Phase, Confused, Undecided, or Fence-sitting**

Some people go through a transitional period of bisexuality on their way to adopting a lesbian/gay or heterosexual identity. For many others bisexuality remains a long-term orientation. For some bisexuals, homosexuality was a transitional phase in their coming out as bisexuals. Many bisexuals may well be confused, living in a society where their sexuality is denied by homosexuals and heterosexuals alike, but that confusion is a function of oppression.
Fence-sitting is a misnomer; there is no "fence" between homosexuality and heterosexuality except in the minds of people who rigidly divide the two. The most appreciated philosophy from a bisexual perspective is that sexual orientation falls onto a continuum. It is also said by some that they 'love people, not their genders'.

(Credit: http://www.udel.edu/allies/resources/bimyths.html)
# How Homophobic Myths Affect LGBT & Heterosexual Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGBT (QUEER)</th>
<th>HETEROSEXUAL (STRAIGHT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Low self-esteem contributes to feelings of loneliness, isolation, worthlessness, fear, and suicidal thoughts</td>
<td>* Lack of accurate, reliable, truthful information perpetuates negative stereotypes and myths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Internalized homophobia, hate themselves as they perceive the world hates them; think they have no rights; limits full learning potential</td>
<td>* Denial of personal experience that they may know people who are LGBT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Often forced to leave home, and become “at risk” street kids (40% of street youth in Vancouver self-identify as LGBT)</td>
<td>* Lack of support for same-gender friends and family members (such as parents, siblings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Victims of intolerance, harassment, threats and violence</td>
<td>* Strict gender role stereotypes; pressure on kids about how to look, dress and behave; no allowance for individuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Drop out of school – 28% of LGBT students do not graduate, may become victims of poverty</td>
<td>* Kids perceived to be LGBT are harassed, victimized and beaten, often within schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Carry out risky behavior – alcohol and drug abuse, homelessness, unsafe sex, infections with S.T.D.’s, and suicidal</td>
<td>* 97% of all students have experienced homophobic name calling by grade 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Completed suicides – 30% of all youth suicides</td>
<td>* Fear and hatred is taught by silence on the issue – learned bigotry can lead to gay bashing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
HOW HOMOPHOBIA HURTS US ALL
(Adapted from The Centre for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life, Duke University)

You do not have to be LGBT, or know someone who is, to be negatively affected by homophobia. Though homophobia actively oppresses LGBT people, it also hurts heterosexuals.

Homophobia:

- Inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own sex, for fear of being perceived as LGBT.
- Perpetuates negative stereotypes and myths by reinforcing a silence, erasure and a lack of accurate, reliable information about LGBT persons and issues.
- Locks people into rigid gender-based roles and stereotypes that inhibit appearance, behaviour, creativity and self-expression.
- Is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals, those perceived or labeled by others to be LGBT, children of LGBT parents, parents of LGBT children and the friends of LGBTs.
- Compromised human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly, actions that are contrary to their basic humanity.
- Results in the invisibility or erasure of LGBT lives and sexuality in school-based sex education discussions, keeping vital information from students. Such erasures can kill people in the age of AIDS.
- Is one cause of premature heterosexual involvement, which increases the chances 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 others that they are “normal”.
- Discourages all people from developing an authentic self-identity and expressing their own uniqueness.
- Inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits that are not considered mainstream or dominant. We are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned. By challenging homophobia and heterosexism, people are not only fighting oppression for specific groups of people but are striving for a society that accepts and celebrates the differences in all of us.
RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY TO STUDENTS & COWORKERS

Displaying the Positive Space symbol may open the door to discussions, expressions of concern and requests for advice that you might not otherwise receive. For example, a student concerned that one of their instructors is making homophobic remarks in class might come to you for advice on options. A gay co-worker who is feeling excluded in their work environment might feel they can discuss the issue with you safely. These situations may challenge you in new ways in your relationships with students and co-workers.

To meet this challenge it is important to practice effective communication and listening skills, as well as to be knowledgeable of institutional and community resources in order to make appropriate referrals.

The following are some guidelines that may assist you when interacting with others:

- Pay attention to your body language. Approximately 90% of the message is in how it is delivered, rather than the actual words used. Facing a person, giving them your undivided attention, and positive facial expression and body stance are essential.
- Let people express themselves fully before you respond.
- Let people take their own time. They may be sounding you out to see if they can trust you. Ask open-ended questions that allow the other person to guide and control the discussion.
- Ask questions and summarize to ensure that you understand what is being communicated to you and what the person is asking of you.
- Empathize, don’t sympathize. Empathy is demonstrating that you understand the feelings of another person. Sympathy is expressing feelings of pity or sorrow for someone else’s situation.
- Understand that often listening is the most important thing you can do. People do not come to you expecting you to solve their problem but wanting to be heard and possibly to get another’s perspective.
- When asked for advice, provide options for action or for gaining more information, not answers. Remember that there is no “correct” answer that is right for everyone.
• Realize that not every issue has a solution. Sometimes there really is nothing that can be done except to help another person deal with the emotions they are experiencing.

• Make referrals to others as requested and as appropriate.

Our individual skills, experience, and institutional role will impact our comfort level in dealing with more challenging situations. Remember that you are not being asked to act as a counsellor or support person. Pay attention to your own boundaries and comfort level and refer to others as appropriate.
YOU ARE LISTENING / YOU ARE NOT LISTENING WHEN

You are listening when...

- You really try to understand me when I do not immediately make much sense.
- You grasp my point of view even when it differs markedly from yours.
- You realize the time we spend talking has left you a bit tired and drained.
- You allow me the dignity of making my own decisions, even if you think they are wrong.
- You give me enough room to discover for myself why I feel the way I do and enough time to decide for myself what is best.
- You did not take my problem from me (saving) but trusted me to deal with it in my own way (empowering).
- You held back your desire to give me good advice.
- You accepted my gift of gratitude by telling me it was good to know our conversation was helpful.

You are not listening when...

- You say you understand before you know me well enough.
- You have an answer to my problem before you have let me finish speaking.
- You interrupt me.
- You finish my sentence for me.
- You are trying to sort out the details and are not listening to the feelings behind the words.
- You sense my problem is embarrassing and avoid it.
- You tell me about your experience and make mine seem unimportant.
- You refuse my thanks by saying you haven’t done anything.
When & How to Refer

When should I refer?

- Anytime that you are not the right person to assist or provide the information or service. Remember that the Positive Space symbol simply signifies that you are committed to inclusion and equity for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. It does not change or alter your usual role on campus as an employee or student.
- When it is clear that the person is requesting or would welcome the referral.

How do I identify the appropriate resource?

- Be familiar with institutional resources. Students may need information on services such as advising, registration, financial aid, student support, counselling, or disability services. Employees may need information related to human resources, institutional services, union contacts or employee assistance.
- If it is unclear where the person should be referred indicate that you do not know and identify someone else who may be of assistance. Make some telephone calls seeking more information if you have the time. Remember that a referral to a member of the Positive Space Committee is always an option.

Making a referral:

- Once you have identified an appropriate referral, provide the person with information regarding the department, service, employee, or organization.
- Whenever possible, provide the name of an individual who works in that department, service or organization and a contact number.
- Reassure the person that this department, service, employee or organization can assist them with their concern. Sometimes persons can feel that they are “just getting the runaround”.

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What if the person is reluctant to bring a concern to the responsible department or employee?

- Understand that sometimes a person needs to vent but has no desire to take any further action. In such circumstances there may be no need for further action on your part.

- Sometimes a person needs support and encouragement to take the next step. Provide the support and encouragement that you can but remember that it is the other person’s responsibility to determine how they wish to address a concern or solve a problem.

- There are circumstances where you are responsible for bringing concerns/complaints to the attention of the appropriate institutional department, even if the person complaining to you wants no action. This responsibility to report exists when:
  - You have reason to believe that there may be risk of physical harm to another person; or
  - The institution has a legal responsibility to take action (such as with allegations of discrimination, harassment or student/employee safety).
**HOW INCLUSIVE ARE YOU?**

As you read on, be aware of what thoughts, feelings and questions arise when you ask yourself the following questions:

1. Can you think of three positive aspects of life as a LGBT person?
   Can you think of three negative aspects of life as a LGBT person?
2. Have you ever laughed at a “queer” joke?
3. Do you ever intentionally do or say things to try to prevent people from thinking that you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered?
4. Do you believe that a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person could influence another person to become lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender? Do you think someone could influence you to change your sexual and affectional preference or gender identity?
5. If you are a parent, how would you (or do you) feel about having a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered child?
6. Would the knowledge that a professional such as a doctor, physiotherapist or massage therapist was lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered influence your willingness to go to him or her? Would you feel more comfortable if you knew that their orientation made it unlikely that they would be attracted to you?
7. Under what conditions have you or would you go to a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender bar, social club, movie or march?
8. Would you wear a button that says, “How dare you presume I’m heterosexual?” Why or why not?

It is normal to find that you have to some extent internalized the homophobia that exists in our culture. Homophobia may be experienced and expressed by LGBT as well as heterosexual people.

What we want to achieve is to be able to truly celebrate the fact that human beings have different sexual orientations and gender identities. Celebration means:

- Awareness that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people are an indispensable part of society;
- Viewing LGBT people with genuine affection and appreciation;
- Advocating for equity on issues that impact the LBGT community; and
- Attending LGBT functions because they are important community events.
PROMOTING INCLUSION - WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Most of us have grown up in an environment that excludes and makes invisible people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). In everyday conversations and situations, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people are often excluded, though not necessarily with intent or ill will.

Creating inclusion starts with our own awareness of how we participate in the marginalization of LGBT people. As lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and heterosexual people we need to be inclusive in our words and actions. The following are tips for what we can do to express inclusion and respect for lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual students and employees.

- In daily interactions with coworkers and students avoid language that assumes heterosexuality. Give people space to tell you about themselves by asking very open-ended questions. Language that pre-empts possibilities closes the door to open communication. Examples:
  - When a person tells you they are involved with someone or that they have a partner, recognize the possibility that the person may be of the same sex (e.g. “Tell me all about this special person”).
  - Invite people to bring a partner or guest to a function or to dinner, without reference to gender.

- When discussing sexual activity and related subjects, use terminology relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people. Examples:
  - “When did you first engage in sexual activity?” rather than, “When did you first have sexual intercourse?”
  - “It is recommended that women engaged in sexual activity with men use a form of birth control” rather than “It is recommended that all sexually active women use a form of birth control”.

- If you are heterosexual, take steps to actively include students and employees who are open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. For example:
  - If you would normally invite a new colleague or new student you meet for dinner or lunch, do not assume that because he/she is LGBT that they would not welcome such an invitation.
  - When discussing relationships and family issues don’t assume that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons have no perspectives or opinions to offer. They do!
- Acknowledge the person’s sexual orientation and gender identity when appropriate: sexual orientation and gender identity are not “taboo” subjects.

- Develop friendships and have social contact with people whose sexual orientation is different from your own. This will expand your range of friends, increase your awareness of other’s experiences and enhance your comfort level interacting with people who are different from you. It will also serve to challenge stereotypes that may exist, such as that lesbians only spend time with other lesbians, or that they hate men.

- Do not assume all students/employees come from families where traditional male and female genders are represented in the parental unit. This recognizes not only persons brought up in homes with same-sex parents but also those raised in single-parent homes.

- When using examples of activities that many people erroneously associate only with heterosexual people (such as parenting), use examples of persons of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

- Don’t assume that the word “women” refers only to heterosexual women who are born female and that the term “men” refers only to heterosexual men who are born male. Include lesbians, bisexual women and transgender.

- Examples include:
  - In a discussion of women’s or men’s sexuality, include relating with same-sex, opposite-sex and transgender partners;
  - In a list of parent organizations, include groups for same-sex parents and parents of gays, lesbian, bisexual or transgender children.

- Omit discussions and/or questions related to marital status unless there is a specific need for this information. Marital status per se is not a good indicator of whether a person is cohabitating with another adult or has a partner. As lesbian, bisexual, and gay persons have not been able to marry until recently (and it is still before the Supreme Court of Canada), a focus on marital status makes the important relationships in their lives invisible.

- Unless the gender of a person is really relevant, avoid forcing people to identify as male or female. If you must ask about gender, include transgender options as well.

- It is important to refer to a transgender person by the pronoun appropriate to their presented gender. In other words, use the pronoun that he or she wishes you to use. If someone identifies as female, refer to her as “she”. If someone identifies as male, refer to
him as “he”. If you are not sure, ask the person directly which
pronoun she or he would like you to use.

- Make sure that you use parallel terms when comparing gay, lesbian,
bisexual and transgender persons with other groups. For example,
in a comparative setting heterosexual women and lesbian women
are considered parallel terms, whereas the word “women” describes
both groups.

- Do not assume that if a woman is pregnant that she became
pregnant through heterosexual intercourse. She may have become
pregnant through artificial insemination or other means.

- Avoid terms that stigmatize, or place persons who are gay, lesbian,
bisexual or transgendered in inappropriate categories. Examples
include:
  - Discussing sexual activity with a same sex partner as a sexual
deviancy;
  - Listing lesbians, gays, bisexual or transgender persons in a list of
special populations with drug abusers, alcoholics or persons with
mental disabilities. This suggests that gays, lesbians, bisexual
and transgendered persons have a condition that requires
treatment to eliminate or stabilize.

- Recognize that when a person who is gay, bisexual or lesbian
experiences difficulties in their intimate relationships and/or a
separation from a partner that this is just as hurtful as when
heterosexual couples separate or divorce. Support and
understanding are needed at these times.

- Object to jokes and humour that put down or portray bisexual,
lesbian, transgender or gay persons in stereotypical ways.

- Recruit transgender, gay, lesbian and bisexual staff, faculty and
students. View sexual orientation and sexual identity as positive
forms of diversity that are desired in an organization that values
diversity and inclusion.

- Question job applicants about their ability to work with students and
co-workers who are different from them, including students and
employees who are bisexual, lesbian, gay or transgendered.

- Review forms, handouts, and other print material to ensure they are
inclusive of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons. Get
assistance from the Positive Space Alliance with this task.

- Attend Positive Space events and other LGBT community events to
expand your knowledge and comfort level.
**HOMOPHOBIC COMMENTS, SLURS, & JOKES**

**WHAT CAN I DO TO INTERVENE?**

The Anti-Racism Response Training (A.R.T.) program, developed by Dr. I. Ishiyama, is focused on the options for action available to anyone who witnesses a discriminatory event. While his work is focused on racism, the model can be applied to any type of expression of bias or prejudice.

The model identifies four levels of witnessing:

- **Dis-Witnessing:**
  When we dis-witness a discriminatory event we fail to identify it as discrimination and ignore or support the discriminatory actions.

- **Passive Witnessing:**
  As a passive witness we identify the actions as discriminatory but take no external action, as we are unsure of how to intervene, do not feel safe to intervene or do not feel confident to act.

- **Active Witnessing:**
  An active witness not only identifies the discrimination internally, but also actively addresses the discrimination in a visible way.

- **Ethical Witnessing:**
  An ethical witness not only intervenes in the moment but also becomes an active ally in seeking equity and respect for the group experiencing discrimination.

If you want to be an active witness, that is to actively intervene when you witness homophobic comments, slurs or jokes, your intervention can address:

- The “victim” of the discrimination, racism or hate;
- The “offender”, the person whose actions or words were discriminatory, racist or hateful; or
- Other witnesses or bystanders.
Dr. Ishiyama has identified eleven different active witnessing response types that can be used, often in combination, to address a situation. They are:

1. Interrupt, Assertively Interject – “Stop it.” “Wait a moment.”

2. Express upset feelings – “I can’t believe you are saying this!” “I’m surprised to hear you say such a thing”

3. Call it discrimination, or homophobia – “That’s homophobic”, “That is a discriminatory comment”, “What you just said sounds very homophobic”.

4. Disagree – “I disagree with what you just said.” “I don’t think that is true.”


6. Point out how it offends and hurts people – “That’s a hurtful comment.” “Ouch! That hurts.”

7. Put the “offender” on the spot – “What?” “Could you repeat what you just said?”

8. Help the “offender” to self reflect – “Did you really mean to make that hurtful comment?” “You sound really annoyed. What’s going on?”

9. Approaching and supporting the “victim” – “I heard what was just said. Are you OK?”

10. Approaching other witnesses – “Did you hear what I just heard?”

11. Asking others for involvement and assistance – “You are a teacher I can trust. Can I get your help?” “I need to talk to you (supervisor) about what happened today.”

Remember that you do not need to always address the “offender”. There may be circumstances where it would feel unsafe to address him or her or useless (if the person is intoxicated, for example). Supporting the victim and encouraging other witnesses to support the victim is as important and effective as intervening with the “offender” if you want to take a stand against homophobia.
GLOSSARY

**Bisexual**: A person who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with both men and women or persons of all genders. Bisexual persons may not be equally attracted to people of both/all genders.

**Closeted**: (also known as “in the closet”) A metaphor for not disclosing, or being able to disclose, one’s sexual orientation or gender identity. This can be self-imposed or externally imposed.

**Coming Out**: (also referred to as “coming out of the closet”) The process of becoming aware of one’s homosexual, bisexual orientation or transgender identity/status, accepting it and disclosing it to others. Coming out is an on-going process that may or may not include coming out to people in all aspects of one’s life. Some people may be completely “out”, some may be “out” to some people or in some areas of their lives and not others and some may never come out to anyone beside themselves.

**Co-parent**: Refers to gay and lesbian parents raising a child together. Sometimes refers to the non-biological or non-adoptive parent raising a child.

**Gay**: A person who forms sexual and affectionate relationships with those of the same gender; often used to refer to men only.

**Gay / Homosexual**: A man who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with other men; also used as an umbrella term for everyone who has same-sex romantic/sexual attractions or relations. Many lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people find the term “homosexual” to be too clinical and instead opt to use LGBT terminology.

**Gay Bashing**: Physical/sexual violence perpetrated against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered individuals or those perceived to be so. Gay bashing can include verbal, physical and psychological assault and harassment. All LGBT persons are vulnerable to bashing. However, those who look visibly different by society’s standards are especially vulnerable. Transgender persons, particularly those who are transitioning or who are non-operative, are often targets of violence.

**Gender Dysphoria**: The overall psychological term used to describe the feelings of anguish and anxiety that arise from the mismatch between a transgender person’s physical sex and their gender identity and from parental and societal pressure to conform to gender norms.

**Gender Identity**: One’s internal and psychological sense of oneself as female, male, both or neither. A person’s self-concept of their gender may be the same as, or different from, their sex at birth (male, female, or inter-sexed). Thus, adopting the female gender means becoming socially
and culturally female, even if one is biologically male or inter-sexed. A person may also define their gender identity as being more fluid than either male or female. In other words, their gender identity may encompass parts of masculinity, femininity and/or other non-traditional gender expressions.

**Gender Transition**: The process of transitioning to one’s internal gender identity when this gender identity is different from the one typically assigned to one’s physical body at birth. This may or may not involve surgical intervention or taking hormonal medication, which can result in some changes in appearance or behaviour.

**Heterosexism**: Prejudice based on societal values that dictate that everyone is or should be, heterosexual. Intentionally or unintentionally, our society bestows privilege on heterosexuality and heterosexual persons, and devalues, mistreats or discriminates against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender persons and those perceived to be so.

**Heterosexual**: (or “straight”) A person who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with members of a different (“opposite”) sex.

**Homophobia**: Harassing, prejudicial treatment of, or negative attitudes, fear and intolerance toward, LGBT persons and those perceived to be of these sexual orientations or gender identities. It includes a range of feelings and behaviours from discomfort and fear to disgust, hatred and violence.

**Inclusive Language**: The use of gender non-specific language (i.e. “partner” instead of “husband”) to avoid assumptions that limit and to enhance the accessibility of information and services; educational, social service, and health professionals are especially encouraged to use inclusive language.

**Internalized Homophobia**: The experience of shame, guilt, or self-hatred in reaction to one’s own feelings of sexual attraction for a person of the same gender.

**Inter-sexed**: A person who is born with physical and/or chromosomal features in which sex characteristics usually considered to belong to distinctly male or female bodies are combined in a single body. Inter-sexed persons are often subject to surgical intervention at birth (with or without parental knowledge or consent). The term inter-sexed is often encompassed under “transgendered”. However, while there are some areas of overlap with inter-sexed and transgender issues, there are also many areas of distinction.

**Lesbian**: A woman who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with other women.
LGBT: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. It is used throughout this manual for convenience, but please use whichever label a person contacting you feels most identified with.

OP (operative): Non-Op = transgender persons who choose not to undergo sex reassignment surgery and may or may not transition. Pre-Op = those awaiting sex reassignment surgery who may be in the process of transitioning. Post-Op = those who have completed sex reassignment surgery.

Out: To be open about one’s sexual orientation or gender identity in some or all areas of one’s life.

Outing: To disclose the sexual orientation or gender identity of someone else without their permission.

Queer: A once derogatory term reclaimed by some LGBT persons. Often used as an umbrella term to encompass all LGBTs, or refers to political activism or academic inquiry on lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender issues. In some cases, it has been adopted as a self-identifying label for persons who experience their sexuality as more fluid than the individual LGBT labels imply.

Questioning: Persons who are engaging in a process of self-exploration around issues of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Reclaiming Language: The process of taking back terms that were once used as insults and instead instilling them with positive meaning for self-empowerment. Examples in the LGBT communities include queer, fag, dyke and trannie. If you are not a member of the LGBT community, it is often best not to use reclaimed terminology unless you are sure that the terms will be received with your positive intent and not seen as insulting. It is generally seen as safest and most respectful to avoid these terms. If you are LGBT (and out), use of reclaimed language is generally safe, but you may wish to be careful around those just coming to terms with their sexual orientation. Some may not be aware that these terms have been reclaimed. Others may not feel comfortable using particular terms.

Sexual Orientation: One’s sexual, affectional and romantic interests to members of the same gender (homosexual), other gender (heterosexual) or both/all genders (bisexual). Some people experience their sexual orientation as an unchanging, lifelong part of their nature, and others experience it in more fluid ways that change over time or across situations. Whether sexually active or not, everyone has a sexual orientation.

Transphobia: Fear or hatred of someone who is transgender.
What is the difference between transsexual and transgender?

Transsexuals are people who transition from one sex to another. A person born as a male can become recognizably female through the use of hormones and/or surgical procedures; and a person born as a female can become recognizably male. That said, transsexuals are unable to change their genetics and cannot acquire the reproductive abilities of the sex to which they transition. Sex is assigned at birth and refers to a person’s biological status as male or female. In other words, sex refers exclusively to the biological features: chromosomes, the balance of hormones, and internal and external anatomy. Each of us is born as either male or female, with rare exceptions of those born intersex who may display characteristics of both sexes at birth.

**Transgender**, unlike transsexual, is a term for people whose identity, expression, behavior, or general sense of self does not conform to what is usually associated with the sex they were born in the place they were born. It is often said sex is a matter of the body, while gender occurs in the mind. Gender is an internal sense of being male, female, or other. People often use binary terms, for instance, masculine or feminine, to describe gender just as they do when referring to sex. But gender is more complex and encompasses more than just two possibilities. Gender also is influenced by culture, class, and race because behavior, activities, and attributes seen as appropriate in one society or group may be viewed otherwise in another.

Transgender, then, unlike transsexual is a multifaceted term. One example of a transgendered person might be a man who is attracted to women but also identifies as a cross-dresser. Other examples include people who consider themselves gender nonconforming, multigendered, androgynous, third gender, and two-spirit people. All of these definitions are inexact and vary from person to person, yet each of them includes a sense of blending or alternating the binary concepts of masculinity and femininity. Some people using these terms simply see the traditional concepts as restrictive. Less than one percent of all adults identify as transgender.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Sexual orientation, according to the [American Psychological Association](https://www.apa.org), refers to an individual’s enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person.
Transgender people may be straight, bisexual, lesbian, gay, or asexual. Biological factors such as prenatal hormone levels, genetics, and early childhood experiences may all contribute to the development of a transgender identity, according to some researchers.

A significant shift occurred late in 2012, when the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (or the DSM-5) officially changed the term “gender identity disorder” to “gender dysphoria,” to describe the emotional distress that can result from “a marked incongruence between one’s experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender.” In 1973, homosexuality was similarly declassified as a mental disorder. The current change suggests an evolution of thought on the matter of gender that may influence not only how many people see themselves, but also how they are perceived by others.

No matter how they label themselves, many people do not entirely conform to a single, rigid gender definition with most people having traits that don't exactly fit the profile. Even more importantly, some of the traditional gender differences between men and women may be slight. Due to changes in social attitudes, general changes in the perception of gender also occurs over time. A trait considered masculine in one generation may be a feminine norm in the next. A woman wearing pants, for instance, would have been considered manly at one time. And though it may have been unusual in the not-too-distant past, many women earn equal to or more than their husbands today, while their husbands perform more of the household and childcare duties once assigned to women. Ultimately, gender is a shifting ground on which each of us stands.

( Medical Daily: Mar 17, 2014 By Susan Scutti )
Resources

Qmunity  1170 Bute Stree, Vancouver, BC

www.qmunity.ca

Qmunity  604-684-5307
Out On the Shelves Library  (local 104)
Gab Youth Services  (local 108)
Volunteer Services  (local 109)
Education and Outreach  (local 112)
Administration  (local 105)
Operations and Development  (local 102)
LGTB Generations Project  604-684-8449