

How Homophobia Hurts Us All

(Warren J. Blumenfeld, *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992)

You do not have to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or questioning your sexual orientation (GLBTQ) – or know someone who is – to be negatively affected by homophobia. Though homophobia actively oppresses GLBTQ 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 GLBTQ;

Locks people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self-expression;

Is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals; those perceived or labeled by other to be GLBTQ; children of GLBTQ parents; parents of GLBTQ children; and friends of GLBTQ people.

Compromises human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly, actions that are contrary to their basic humanity.

Combined with sex-phobia, results in the invisibility or erasure of GLBTQ lives and sexuality in school-based sex education discussions, keeping vital information from students.

Is one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chances of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Young people, of all sexual identities, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are “normal.”

Prevents some GLBTQ people from developing an authentic self identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress and often times trauma on themselves as well as their heterosexual spouses, and their children.

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.

By challenging homophobia, 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.

Personal Assessment of Homophobia*

(Original by A. Elfin Moses and Robert O. Hawkins, Jr.; edited)

Homophobia may be broadly defined as an unrealistic fear of generalized negative attitude toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or questioning their sexual orientation (GLBTQ) people, and may be expressed by GLBTQ people as well as non-GLBTQ people.

1. Do you stop yourself from doing or saying certain thing because someone might think you are gay or lesbian? If yes, what things?
2. Do you ever intentionally do or say things so that people will think you are non-gay?
3. Do you believe that gays or lesbians can influence others to become homosexual? Do you think someone could influence you to change your sexual orientation and/or affectional preference?
4. If you are a parent, how would you (or do you) feel about having a GLBTQ child?
5. How do you think you would feel if you discovered one of your parents or parent figures, or a brother or sister, were GLBTQ?
6. Are there any jobs, positions, or professions you think GLBTQ people should be barred from holding or entering? If yes, why?
7. Would you go to a physician whom you knew or believed to be GLBTQ if that person were of a different gender from you? If that person were the same gender as you? If not, why not?
8. If someone you care about were to say to you, "I think I am gay," would you suggest that the person see a therapist?
9. Have you ever been to a GLBTQ bar, social club, or march? If not, why not?
10. Can you think of three positive aspects of being GLBTQ? Can you think of three negative aspects of being straight/heterosexual?
11. Have you ever laughed at a "queer" joke?

* NOTE

**This personal assessment is intended to give you something to think about.
It is not necessarily about
*how you answer the questions, but
what motivates you to answer as you do.***

Suggestions for Creating a Non-Homophobic Campus Environment

(Adapted from Buhrke & Douce, 1991)

Object to and eliminate jokes and humor that put down or portray gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBTQ) people in stereotypical ways.

Counter statements about sexual orientation or gender identity that are not relevant to decisions or evaluations being made about faculty, staff or students.

Invite “out” professionals to conduct seminars and provide guest lectures in your classes and offices. Invite them for GLBTQ topics and other topics of their expertise.

Do not force GLBTQ people out of the closet or come out for them to others. The process of coming out is one of enlarging a series of concentric circles and is very individual. Initially the process should be in control of the individual until (and if) they consider it public knowledge.

Don't include sexual orientation information in letters of reference or answer specific or implied questions without first clarifying how “out” the person chooses to be in the specific process in question.

Recruit and hire “out” GLBTQ staff and faculty. View Sexual orientation as a positive form of diversity that is desired in a multicultural setting. Always question job applicants about their ability to work with GLBTQ faculty, staff, and students.

Do not refer all GLBTQ issues to GLBTQ staff/faculty. Do not assume their only expertise is GLBTQ issues. Check with staff about their willingness to consult on GLBTQ issues with other staff members.

Be sensitive to issues of oppression and appreciate the strength and struggle it takes to establish a positive GLBTQ identity. Provide nurturing support to colleagues and students in phases of this process.

Be prepared. If you truly establish a safe and supportive environment, people that you never thought of will begin to share their personal lives and come out in varying degrees. Secretaries, maintenance personnel, former students, and professional colleagues will respond to the new atmosphere.