

Topic 3 — Sexual diversity

Introduction

Australian and international research shows that around 10% of people are same sex attracted, around 4% are gender diverse or transgender, and around 1.7% are intersex. We know that 75% of same sex attracted young people experience some form of homophobic abuse or bullying, and that gender diverse and transgender young people are subject to discrimination that results in negative health and wellbeing. A staggering 80% of young people experienced abuse and bullying while at school.

When it comes to the wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people in schools, research has identified some very important and heartening findings – while there is no question that many LGBTI young people have in the past, and still do, experience violence and discrimination at school – there has been a positive change and teachers can make a significant difference to their welfare. Schools that specifically include homophobia in anti-bullying and wellbeing guidelines have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of young people who are same sex attracted. It's worth finding out if your school does too, so that you can mention this at the end of the session (if the students don't know).

While we have included definitions of gender diversity and transgender in this activity, we have not explored the experience of these young people specifically. The focus is largely on identifying same-sex attracted young people's experiences.

Activities

- 1: Names
- 2: Stepping out

Time

40 minutes

Slides

- S1: Names

ACTIVITY 1: NAMES

Time: 20 minutes

Overview: Students will explore ethical concepts of discrimination based on sexuality and discuss the meaning of homophobia. This session will also be an opportunity to consider possible differences of opinion about sexuality and respecting difference and diversity in individuals and communities.

Key Messages

- Negative language is often used to describe gay, lesbian and bisexual people.
- The language we choose can have a big effect on the people around us.
- Students in schools who have a policy supporting sexual diversity have better health.
- Calling others' derogatory names based on their sexuality or gender identity is a form of discrimination and harassment. It is unfair and unjust.

Preparation and Materials

- large pieces of paper, posted on the walls
- textas

Method

1. Tell the students that today we are talking about sexual diversity. Remind students of the group agreement.
2. Bring their attention to the three large pieces of paper. Explain to the students that the purpose of this session is to explore experiences of discrimination based on sexuality; and to understand the meaning of homophobia. This session will also be an opportunity to consider possible differences of opinion about sexuality and gain consensus that homophobic behaviour is unacceptable.

3. Add the following headings to the paper:

- Words used for same sex attracted boys/men
- Words used for same sex attracted girls/women
- Words used for opposite sex attracted men and women

Rule: NO NAMES of people

4. Students can write whatever words they have heard on the paper. Ask:

- What do you notice about the lists? (There are more words for gay and lesbian than for straight people. The words for gay and lesbian tend to be put-downs).
- Which words are offensive? Circle them on the paper.
- Are there any positive ones?
- Why aren't there many terms for heterosexual?(eg We think it's normal so we have not created a lot of insults).

5. Provide definitions (from slides) of the following:

- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Same sex attracted
- Transgender, Intersex (GLBTI)

ACTIVITY 2: STEPPING OUT

Time: 20 minutes

Overview: This activity is about exploring the lives of others and the implications of community attitudes and assumptions. It's a safe way to explore feelings of difference, uncertainty and marginality associated with being attracted to someone of the same sex and to develop empathy with those who experience these challenges on a daily basis.

Key Messages

- Discrimination can have an impact on a person's wellbeing and freedom.
- There are a variety of ways people can be discriminated against.

Preparation and Materials

- Find out if homophobia is included in the bullying policy at this school. Research tells us it makes a difference to the welfare of students if the school has such a policy.
- Slide presentation: *S1: Names*
- Irish anti-bullying video called 'I'll hold your hand'. www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrJxqvalFxm

Method

1. Tell the students: For this activity half the class will imagine that they are in a relationship with someone of the same sex, and half will imagine they are in a relationship with someone of the opposite sex.
2. Divide the class down the middle of the room. The students must answer the following 10 questions and keep a score in their heads. For every question a person answers a definite 'yes' they get one point. If they answer 'no' or 'don't know' - no point. This should be done in silence.
3. Ask:
 - Could you talk to a parent or close relative about this relationship?
 - Could you invite your partner home with you?

- Would you be able to talk to your friends about what you did on the weekend with your partner?
- Would you be able to talk about your love life with a close friend on the train?
- When you go out with a group of friends would you feel comfortable giving your partner a kiss or hug?
- Do you see relationships on TV like yours?
- Could you easily get information about safe sex if you needed it?
- Would you be able to take your partner to the school formal?
- Will you be able to get married in Australia when you are 21?
- Would you and your partner be able to adopt a child when you are 21?

4. Tell the students to stand. Counting backwards tell the students to sit down if they scored 10 points – then 9,8,7,6,5 – look around the room at who is left standing and continue counting backwards - 4,3,2,1,0

5. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Ask students how they felt about the characters represented and seeing others sit down earlier and later than them.
- How did the 'opposite sex' group feel seeing your classmates still standing?
- If you answered 'yes' to a question, was it easy or difficult to say 'yes'?
- Ask the same questions of the same-sex group - how did you feel seeing your classmates sit down so easily?
- If you answered 'yes' to a question, was it easy or difficult to say 'yes' or did you have to think about it?
- How do you think that uncertainty feels for same-sex attracted people?
- Highlight that this experience can be the background of same-sex attracted person's life.

6. Can you give any other examples from the law, the media, or even in school, of homophobia or discrimination?

- Is homophobia included in the bullying policy at this school? Ask: What is the school policy about discrimination/diversity/bullying?

- What should schools do, what could students do?

7. We are going to finish the session with an example about what students can do. This is an Irish anti-bullying video called 'I'll hold your hand'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrJxqvalFxm>

HOMEWORK: Find one Australian-based website, or from your state or territory, or a local service that a young person could go to if they wanted to get support. All students must report back in the following session.

More Teaching Resources

All Of Us is a collection of short videos and teaching activities designed by Minus18 and Safe Schools Coalition Australia to assist students in understanding gender diversity, sexual diversity and intersex topics. The *All Of Us* resource supports the Health and Physical Education learning area of the Australian Curriculum. It is available online for free download.

www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au

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<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org.au>

Sexuality

1. feelings (who I'm attracted to)
2. behaviour (who I am sexually and romantically involved with)
3. identity (how I see myself)

Young people often realise they are lesbian, gay or bisexual between the ages of 11 and 14.

The average age for coming out is 16 years old.

Many young people may be reluctant to talk about their same sex attraction due to social pressures and homophobia.

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S1: 'NAMES' POWERPOINT



Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Same-sex attracted

People who experience feelings of sexual and/or emotional attraction to others of the same sex.

Transgender

(also trans or trans*)

An umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at birth.

Sistergirls and Brotherboys

Terms used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to describe a person assigned male or female at birth and identifying or living partly or fully as another gender.

Intersex

People who are born with natural variations in genital, chromosomal or other physical characteristics that differ from usual ideas about what it means to be female or male.

Intersex people have the same range of sexual orientations and gender identities as non-intersex people.

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