

# Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth

Grades 9-12, Lesson 7

## Student Learning Objectives

---

The student will be able to ...

1. define ten relevant terms (gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, transgender, cisgender) and the acronym *LGBT* (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender).
2. distinguish among facts and common fallacies (myths/stereotypes) regarding LGBT people.
3. describe at least one strategy for working to end anti-LGBT harassment and violence or to otherwise act as an ally to LGBT people.

## Agenda

---

1. Explain the lesson's relevance and purpose and review the importance of ground rules.
2. Briefly define and distinguish among four key terms on the board.
3. Put a diverse human face on LGBT youth in one of two ways:
  - a. Invite a 30-minute panel of LGBT youth to speak.
  - b. Show the (free, online) three-minute film *This Is Reteaching Gender & Sexuality* and have student volunteers read aloud *LGBT Youth Speak OUT Handout*.
4. Follow with guided discussion or guided writing.
5. Close by asking two or three volunteers to share what they most want to remember a year from now about today's class.
6. Assign homework.

This lesson was most recently edited March 23, 2011.

---

## Materials Needed

---

### Student materials

- **LGBT Youth Speak Out Handout** (one copy per student)
- **Individual Homework: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Youth** (one copy per student)
- **Family Homework: Talking About Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Youth** (one copy per student)

Reminder: The English version is on the last page of this lesson plan. You will find the *Family Homework* in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic at [www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH) – click on “Parents & Guardians.”

### Classroom Materials

- **LGBT Youth, Visual 1: Discussion Questions or Writing Prompts** (Contained in this lesson and also online as a PowerPoint presentation at [www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH). Alternately, you can write the questions on the board or ask them aloud.)

---

## Teacher Preparation

---

### Well in advance ...

- **Arrange a panel** of LGBT youth and young adults, if possible, at least four to six weeks in advance.
  - In King County, Washington, contact the NW Network: [www.nwnetwork.org](http://www.nwnetwork.org)
  - Elsewhere, try the youth groups listed here, some of which offer panels: [www.safeschoolscoalition.org/blackboard-organizations.html](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/blackboard-organizations.html) (click on your state -- some of these agencies offer speakers; others may refer you to groups that do. Or ask your local PFLAG chapter.)

NOTE: Recognize that a panel, while potentially your most valuable tool for debunking myths and demystifying the issue, may raise some community concerns. Therefore it is essential that you know your district’s policies about guest speakers and that you clear the decision with your principal or department chair. It is also important to clarify any expectations with panel members so school rules are followed, like checking in first at the front office.

- **If a panel is not an option, then preview the free online film *Reteaching Gender & Sexuality*** (two minutes, 48 seconds) for use along with the *LGBT Youth Speak Out Handout* in lieu of a panel: [www.putthisonthemap.org/education/reteaching-gender-and-sexuality](http://www.putthisonthemap.org/education/reteaching-gender-and-sexuality)
- **Check that you are able to access the film** (URL above) from your classroom computer. If not, consult with your school district’s IT staff about unblocking it and/or problem-solving how you can show it. You may need to confirm that your district did approve the film as a part of adopting the **FLASH** curriculum.

### The day before the lesson ...

- **Make copies** of Materials Needed (see above).
- **Confirm with panelists** if you plan a panel or **confirm that you are able to access the film** in your classroom.

---

**Standards**

---

**National Health Education Standard**

- **Standard 2:** Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.  
**Performance Indicator 2.12.4:** Evaluate how the school and community can affect personal health practice and behaviors.
- **Standard 8:** Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.  
**Performance Indicator 8.12.3:** Work cooperatively as an advocate for improving personal, family, and community health.

**Washington State Health Education Standard**

- **EALR 3:** The student analyzes and evaluates the impact of real-life influences on health.  
**Component 3.1:** Understands how family, culture, and environmental factors affect personal health.  
**Grade Level Expectation (GLE) 3.1.1:** Analyzes how family and cultural diversity enriches and affects personal health behaviors.

---

**Rationale**

---

This lesson is a crucial part of the **FLASH** curriculum. It was designed to put a human face on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) teens and on children who are gender atypical. The intention of this lesson is to reduce students' belief that LGBT young people are very different from heterosexual young people, even as it allows for each person's uniqueness to be appreciated. Anti-LGBT stigma is still very real.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> There is ample cross-sectional evidence of associations between stigma and sexually transmitted disease (STD)<sup>5</sup> and between what researchers call "enacted stigma" (ostracizing, bullying, harassment, assault) and self-harm and sexual risk-taking.<sup>6,7,8,9</sup>

Among students who are heterosexual and cisgender (gender typical), helping them to perceive their LGBT peers as more human and less "other" should reduce the amount of harassment they engage in or tolerate from classmates.<sup>10,11</sup>

The lesson speaks, too, to those heterosexual, cisgender students who have been the targets of anti-gay harassment themselves. One local study found that four heterosexual teens are bullied as gay for every gay teen who is.<sup>12</sup> The *percentage* bullied in this way is lower among heterosexual teens (6% vs. 8% according to that same CDC-sponsored study<sup>13</sup>) but because they are much more numerous to begin with, their numbers are huge. And having been harassed puts them at higher risk of pregnancy involvement and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), almost as high as the risk for those things among LGBT youth.<sup>14</sup> This lesson strives to reduce the likelihood of their attempting suicide and of feeling the need to "prove" their heterosexuality through premature heterosexual sex and parenting.

Among students who are LGBT (or same-gender attracted or who have same-sex sexual experience) – possibly between three and nine percent of your student body though they may or may not be visible or "out" to you<sup>15</sup> – your matter-of-fact, respectful inclusion of this lesson should reduce their sense of feeling stigmatized and invisible and their internalized homophobia.<sup>16</sup> That, along with a reduction in their experiencing and witnessing bullying, ought to impact the likelihood of their engaging in risk-taking and self-harm.<sup>17</sup> Our hope is that that, in turn, will reduce their disproportionate chances of becoming pregnant or of getting pregnant with someone,<sup>18,19,20,21</sup> of catching STDs,<sup>22,23</sup> and of attempting suicide.<sup>24,25</sup>

One lesson in one classroom may not have enough influence on school climate to effect these improvements in students' health. It may take, additionally, factors such as explicitly inclusive anti-bullying policies<sup>26</sup> and training all the adults (from the bus driver to the principal) to stop anti-gay bullying and talk about it.<sup>27</sup> It may take the presence of support like a gay-straight alliance club.<sup>28</sup> It may take inclusion in other departments (language arts, history) of materials about LGBT people as an unremarkable part of the curriculum.<sup>29</sup> **FLASH** is being evaluated longitudinally and we should have evidence by 2015 of what it can or cannot promise to accomplish. In any case, we (the authors of **FLASH**) believe that whether or not this lesson is sufficient in dosage to actually change a whole school climate of fear, the curriculum as a whole can contribute.

We know that curriculum committees and teachers themselves are sometimes reluctant to use lessons about value-laden issues. But you wouldn't avoid discussing politics just because you had students and families with differing political beliefs. You wouldn't avoid discussing the environment just because people disagreed with one another. Please don't skip this lesson either. We think it's a lesson that both you and your class will find engaging and useful. It is essential to the overall efficacy of the unit.

**Activities**

---

**NOTE:** Instructions to you are in regular font. Suggested script of what to say is in italics. Feel free to modify the script to your style and your students' needs.

**1. Explain the lesson's relevance and purpose and review the importance of ground rules.**

*Today we'll be talking about sexual orientation and gender identity... about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual people and about transgender and people who are not transgendered. From now on, I'll use the acronym LGBT to stand for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender." We'll begin with understanding those words and a few other terms. Then we'll move on to hear from some LGBT youth. And we'll consider discrimination and what people can do to stand up against it.*

*Like the other issues we'll address in this unit, this one has personal meaning to many members of this class. In any class, there probably are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender students. There are also students who have close family members or friends who are LGB or T. And the chances are some people, both gay and straight, have been teased or hurt because someone thought they weren't masculine or feminine enough. I am going to remember that and work hard to protect people's feelings, and I would ask you to do the same.*

*There are also probably differences in values among us. Some people here may believe that homosexual behavior is wrong. Others may think it's no different from heterosexual behavior. Respecting one another's differing opinions will be important.*

**2. Briefly define and distinguish among four key terms.**

*First I want to get us all on the same page with definitions.*

Write these terms on the board as you explain them (see italicized text, below):

**GENDER**

**gender identity**

**gender expression**

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

*Everyone has a **gender** (made up of their gender identity and their gender expression) and everyone has a **sexual orientation**.*

*"**Gender Identity**" refers to how a person feels on the inside, the person's inner sense of being male, female, both or neither. This usually matches with their physical anatomy and the gender that the doctor guessed they were based on their biological sex at birth. When it does match their body, that's called 'cisgender.' Because the majority of people are cisgender, people may not even know there is a word to describe them. Sometimes, on the other hand, a person's body and their identity don't match. Their body may be male, but they feel like a girl or woman on the inside. Or vice versa. They may describe themselves as "**transgender**."*

**“Gender Expression”** refers to how a person walks, talks, dresses and acts. They may fit extreme stereotypes of what it means to be masculine or feminine or they may be anywhere in between the extremes. Or they may be both masculine and feminine, or neither. And it may change from day to day depending upon what they’re doing or how they’re feeling. Most people’s gender expression is roughly consistent with what their culture and generation expect of them. Once again, if they think about it at all, which people often don’t when they’re in the majority, they may call themselves **“cisgender.”** Not everybody is able to, or chooses to, conform to expectations of how a boy or a girl should look or act. If a person doesn’t act like society expects a boy or girl to act, they may consider themselves **“transgender.”**

**“Sexual Orientation”** refers to who a person **likes** ... the genders of the people they feel most sexually or romantically attracted to. The majority of people are primarily attracted to people of another gender. That’s called being **“heterosexual.”** That’s a guy who mostly gets crushes on girls or a girl who mostly would want to date boys. Some people are primarily attracted to people of their own gender; they’re **“gay”** or **“lesbian.”** They mostly get crushes on people or want to be in relationships with people of their own gender. Some people are attracted to people of more than one gender; they might call themselves **“bisexual.”**

*First, I want you to hear directly from some LGBT youth.*

### 3. Put a diverse human face on LGBT youth in one of two ways.

#### a. Host a 30-minute panel of LGBT youth and/or young adults

See page 2 of this lesson for advice about arranging for a panel.

A chance to meet and interact with openly LGBT peers or young adults is a way to put a human face on what may otherwise be an abstract concept of LGBT peers. A diverse panel (ethnically, religiously, and in terms of gender expression) is almost assured to debunk stereotypes. Panels are also a way to make real the issue of homophobia and the resultant isolation, fear, depression, and anger that its victims report. By hearing the voices and stories of real people, homophobia is moved from the intellectual to the personal domain, and it becomes increasingly difficult for compassionate human beings to ignore or discount the need for anti-homophobia action in their schools. It is also the most effective strategy to ensure that LGBT students feel welcome and understood in your classroom.

You may want to discuss possible questions with the students ahead of time.

We suggest you introduce a panel this way:

*Today’s guests are here to share their stories. They’ll talk a little bit about themselves and maybe their schools or their families or what they like to do. Then you’ll be welcome to ask questions. I’ve already explained our class’ ground rules to the panelists. Let me just ask you for your warmest and most respectful attention. I’d like to introduce, \_\_\_\_\_ (call them by name).*

**b. Show the short film *Reteaching Gender & Sexuality* followed by reading the handout *LGBT Youth Speak OUT*.**

If a panel is not an option, show *Reteaching Gender & Sexuality*: [www.putthisonthemap.org/education/reteaching-gender-and-sexuality](http://www.putthisonthemap.org/education/reteaching-gender-and-sexuality). This free two minute, 48 second film is about LGBT youth action and resilience. It was generated to contribute additional LGBT youth voices to the national conversations about LGBT youth lives. *Reteaching Gender & Sexuality* intends to steer the conversation beyond the symptom of bullying, to consider systemic issues and deeper beliefs about gender and sexuality that impact queer youth.

NOTE: The youth in the film introduce the term “queer” as a proud identity. You can talk, after showing it, about the fact that the term is also offensive and a slur in some circles. Even the word “gay” of course can be used as a weapon. See guidance in activity 4, below, for this conversation.

After the film, distribute the *LGBT Youth Speak OUT - Handout*. These are the personal stories of eight young people.

We recommend reading the stories aloud; the handout is at about an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. If you have students who are willing, you can invite them to take turns reading quotes aloud. If not, read them aloud yourself.

Ask students, as they read or listen, to highlight a word, phrase, or passage that particularly moves or strikes them.

**4. Follow the panel or the film with guided discussion or guided writing.**

Clarify the meaning and place of the term, “**Queer**”:

*Before moving on from definitions, there’s one more word we should discuss. The word “queer” is one that, historically, has been used as a slur or put down against people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Did the people you heard from just now (in the film or the handout) seem to consider it derogatory? Were they offended by it?*

Let students respond.

*Right: Nowadays, some people use the word as an identity. What did they seem to mean by it?*

Again, let them respond.

*When it’s used respectfully, as an identity, it can include folks who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. But I need to remind you that all the words we’ve discussed today can be used as weapons. So I need to make sure you still understand that I won’t tolerate any of these words being used as put downs in this classroom or in our school.*

Next you have two choices: writing or discussion.

Show **LGBT Visual 1: Discussion Questions or Writing Prompt**. You will find it in this lesson for use with a document camera and also, as a PowerPoint slide, online ([www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH)). If you prefer, you can write the questions on the board. Allow students five or six minutes of writing time to respond to one or more of them. Alternately, you can pose the questions aloud and facilitate discussion (see notes, below), instead of the writing activity.

NOTE: You may need to define “ally”. An ally is someone from a historically more powerful group who stands up with or for someone from a marginalized group. Like a Christian who volunteers to paint over the graffiti on a mosque. Or a white person who objects when a friend uses the “n” word. Or a man speaks up when he sees his guy friend mistreat a woman. Here it means someone who stands up for LGBT people’s rights and dignity.

- 1) *Based on real people you know (protecting their privacy by leaving out their names, of course) and given what you just heard, how do you think people know what their gender identity is? How do they know if they’re supposed to be a boy or a girl?*

**Some possible answers**, if you are guiding the discussion and need to elaborate on students’ brief answers, include these:

- It’s something they usually figure out by about age 2 or 3.
- If they’re cisgender, they might have felt at home in the body they were born with, even as a toddler.
- If they’re transgender, they might have felt uncomfortable in the body they were born with, even as a toddler.
- They might feel like they’re always wearing a mask or costume, trying to be someone they aren’t.
- It might be something they knew from as soon as they could talk.
- It might be something they figured out more gradually as they realized how they were when they were just being themselves.

- 2) *What about sexual orientation? How do people figure out if they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight?*

**Some possible answers:**

- They pay attention to who they get crushes on, who makes their stomach flip, who they most want to like them.
- It might be something they realize around puberty or even before.
- It might be that they don’t know for a much longer time.
- Some people don’t start getting crushes until after high school.
- Even then, it sometimes changes over time.
- They might realize that it feels phony to act like they like people of another (“the opposite”) sex in a romantic way.
- They might realize they’re straight because the idea of same-sex dating feels sort of uncomfortable or as if it wouldn’t be very fun.
- They might realize that they’re gay or lesbian because the idea of dating someone of another gender (the “opposite sex”) feels sort of uncomfortable or as if it wouldn’t be very fun.

- 3) *What myths or stereotypes about LGBT people did you used to believe that you're starting to realize aren't true?*

**NOTE:** If you plan to assign homework, it will include students' giving thought to this question. So you may choose to skip it now.

**Some possible answers:**

- That all LGBT people are white.
  - That LGBT youth are very different from other teens.
  - That lesbian and gay people are attracted to every person of their own sex.
  - That bisexual people are attracted to everybody.
  - That people become LGB or T because they're molested.
  - That all LGBT people are unhappy and lonely and wish they weren't gay.
  - That transgender people just act or dress the way they do to attract attention; that they are doing it to make other people uncomfortable.
  - That same-sex relationships are just about sex rather than love and friendship.
- 4) *What could be done to make school a more positive place for the students telling these stories? What could you do to be more of an ally?*

**Some possible answers:**

- Say something when you hear people making anti-LGBT jokes or see them making anti-LGBT gestures.
  - Object when you hear people use "gay" as if it meant something negative.
  - Stick up for people when you overhear someone harassing or threatening them.
  - Express your support for them on the spot or, if you just can't, in private later.
  - Refuse to forward disrespectful texts, emails, pictures, etc.
  - Clue an adult to what is going on; it often flies under their radar.
  - Organize with other students and/or adults to demand that harassment get investigated and harassers disciplined. That includes students who harass and also adults who harass or who go along with it.
  - Write in the school paper or blog or make an art project or an exhibit about LGBT people who have contributed important things to the world, such as Bayard Rustin, Eleanor Roosevelt, Susan B. Anthony, James Baldwin, Leslie Feinberg, Langston Hughes, and others. See: [www.glbthistorymonth.com](http://www.glbthistorymonth.com)
  - Form or join a gay-straight-alliance to support LGBT students and your LGBT friends and family.
- 5. Close by asking two or three volunteers to share what they most want to remember a year from now about today's class.**
- 6. Assign homework.**
- a. *Individual Homework: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Youth*
  - b. *Family Homework: Talking About Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Youth*
- Reminder: The English version is on the last page of this lesson plan. You will find the *Family Homework* in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic at [www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH) – click on "Parents & Guardians."

---

## Related Activities for Integrated Learning

---

### FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCE or SOCIAL STUDIES

Use the 35-minute film and curriculum *Dealing With Difference: Opening Dialogue about Lesbian, Gay & Straight Issues*. This video and print curriculum package is designed to foster healthy dialogue among students about LGBT issues while informing everyone of the serious effects anti-LGBT harassment and bullying can have on all students. The package costs \$139.95 as of this printing:

[www.hrmvideo.com/items.cfm?action=view&item\\_id=2484&type=&search\\_keywords=Difference](http://www.hrmvideo.com/items.cfm?action=view&item_id=2484&type=&search_keywords=Difference)

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Use the 15-minute film and curriculum *It Takes a Team Educational Campaign for LGBT Issues in Sports*. This \$10 kit includes posters, safe zone stickers, DVD and teachers' manual:

[www.wsfecomm.com/shop/wsfProductDetails.aspx?item\\_no=6&item\\_grp\\_no=5&Categoryid=17&Shop\\_Group\\_ID=17](http://www.wsfecomm.com/shop/wsfProductDetails.aspx?item_no=6&item_grp_no=5&Categoryid=17&Shop_Group_ID=17)

### SOCIAL STUDIES or CIVICS

Hold parliamentary hearings about criminalization of same-sex relations in a fictional new democracy using the lesson plan *Is it a Crime to Be Gay? Debating Tolerance in a New Democracy* from the Human Rights Resource Center at the University of Minnesota:

[www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/TB3/act4/act4f.html](http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/TB3/act4/act4f.html)

### MUSIC

Appropriate in 12<sup>th</sup> grade in most schools – uses language too raw for most younger classes: Use the 60-min. film *Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (see a 4:40 preview online) to address manhood, hypermasculinity, misogyny and homophobia in hip-hop culture and the culture at large. Available digitally for \$50 for one week's unlimited use or \$150 on DVD: [www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=226](http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=226) Educator's Guide: [http://archive.itvs.org/outreach/classroom/hiphop/itvs\\_classroom-hiphop.pdf](http://archive.itvs.org/outreach/classroom/hiphop/itvs_classroom-hiphop.pdf)

---

This lesson was adapted, with permission, from a lesson entitled "Activity 7: Youth Dealing With Homophobia, Stories From Real Life. What Can We Do?" from the curriculum *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights: A Human Rights Perspective* from the Human Rights Resource Center, University of Minnesota, published collaboratively with Amnesty International USA, and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). Available online at [www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/TB3/toc.html](http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/TB3/toc.html)

---

# LGBT Youth Speak Out - Handout<sup>1</sup>

## Vickie's Story

My name is Vickie and I'm 18 years old. Take a bunch of different ethnicities and throw them into a blender, I am the product of that. I am a sexual violence peer educator, Gay Straight Alliance peer educator, a mentor, and a member of the Black Achievers program.

I believe that "true love" has no sexual preference/orientation but I do not envision myself spending my life with a male. When I was about 13 I came out to my mother. I didn't say that I was gay or lesbian because all that I knew was that I liked girls. The first thing my mother said was, "Oh...I knew when you were 8." I thought that meant that she was okay with it. Well, from there words like "dyke," (as well as others that I don't care much for) were used on a regular basis in regards to me. I was "outed" to my family and pretty much everyone else I had ever known. Some nights I was kicked out of my house and on those nights I became another child sleeping on park benches.

I am a survivor of many different things: sexual violence, depression, the military, road ragers, myself, and life in general. Life for me has changed a lot since I was 13. I now identify as lesbian and sometimes I am even given some transgender labels. I no longer live with my mother or father but for the first time in my life I actually have "real" parents. I am currently a senior in high school, I love it, and I am ecstatic about living in a dorm next year. I am a varsity cheerleader and softball player but the sport that I enjoy the most is tennis. I believe that every challenge in our lives will change us in some way and I use my experiences as fuel for the fire in me that drives me to do new things.

Sometimes you have to make your own light at the end of the tunnel but you don't have to do it alone.

## Braden's Story

I was raised in a community of 2,000 people, very rural and very sheltered. Diversity in this town is bowling on Tuesdays instead of Saturdays. The word gay is rarely used nicely and the only African-American families that have moved here have been driven out by close-minded locals. As long as I can remember I have spoken my mind, and eventually I told people (sometimes the WRONG people) that I was gay. It wasn't even something I had struggled with, I just knew, I had always known. Unfortunately, many people cannot understand that.

On the second day [of high school] I was walking down the hall and a young male said the word that wounds every gay teenager... "fag." From there, things snowballed. Daily

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of Quinn's Story, who wrote specifically for this lesson, the handout *LGBT Youth Speak Out* was adapted from YouthResource.org and Amplifyyourvoice.org, a project of Advocates for Youth, Washington, DC. [www.youthresource.org](http://www.youthresource.org).

more and more people would use those hate words "fag, homo, queer, sissy, etc," on one occasion I was asked if I thought I was a [racist term] because I had worn all black that day. Eventually things moved to violence and pranks. The word "Faggot" (it was misspelled by the way) was written on the locker next to mine, only because they made a mistake of whose locker it was. There are more things that happened, but I really do not think it is necessary to name them all.

The school did "the best they could do" (as they put it). In my mind little was done. One day in February, I was attacked in the hallway, I do not remember much of it, as my head was hit on the locker several times and I must have blacked out or something. That was the last day of school for me.

For a month I stayed in bed, scared, depressed, angry, and even suicidal at times. The school did not offer to help with schooling, or even make the effort to call and see how I was doing. In retrospect, I need to thank a lot of people for keeping me alive. I was lucky. So many innocent teenagers go through this same kind of thing, many end their own lives because of the ignorance out in the world.

### Quinn's Story

In terms of my gender, I have always felt different. When I was younger I was called a tomboy, which I was very proud of. I was often asked if I was 'a boy or a girl'. I'd always felt like those of us who embraced those words the most, tomboys and such, never really were girls to begin with. We were always something else entirely. But for the first fifteen years of my life, I always did what was expected of me and I said that I was a girl.

When I was fifteen I started identifying as transgender and telling a few people that I was a boy. But that never felt right either. One thing I've struggled with is the expectations and assumptions people put on me. I'm expected to be a boy or a girl, a stereotypical boy or girl. I'm a genderqueer person, someone who doesn't identify within the binary system of gender (where the only choices are male or female). I've never felt the need to fit a stereotype. So, while I dress in a more masculine way and go by a gender-neutral name, strangers often assume I'm a girl, and call me 'she'. This happens almost everyday. And while I don't feel male, I still ask people I know to refer to me by male or gender-neutral pronouns (he, they). It's extremely exhausting having your identity questioned every single day. It's exhausting worrying about the questions that could come up if you do manage to summon up enough courage to tell a total stranger that you don't use female pronouns and this is why. In contrast, the times I hear 'he' or 'young man', it can make my whole day better.

I want to see people like me, gender benders and breakers of all kinds, celebrated for our identities. I want to see you questioning your assumptions and asking questions. I want to see my people's history pulled out of the cracks where it's been pushed aside and taught in schools. I want you to be able to express yourself to the fullest and be respected for it. And I will keep fighting, writing, questioning, educating myself and others, listening, playing music, telling stories, singing songs, and expressing myself, 'til we're all free.

### Andrea's Story

When I was in 10th grade I finally realized that maybe I was different.

Soon, though scared, I came out as bisexual to a couple guy friends. I was worried about losing my female friends, so I kept my orientation a secret from them. However, after breaking up with my then-boyfriend, he decided to out me to all my friends. It was an attempt to hurt me, but it actually was one of the best things that could have happened to me.

Once he told everyone, I could not hide anymore. A few friends were freaked out and did not treat me the same, but most people accepted me for who I was. It really was not even an issue to most people. After seeing the acceptance from my friends, I got the courage to tell my mom and my aunt. Coming out to them was so great and untraumatic that both my mom and I cannot really remember how it happened. My mom and my aunt are completely accepting, and I love them dearly for it. Being outed made me face my orientation and showed me that I did not have to be ashamed of it.

Since going off to college, I looked at my orientation and decided that I was more comfortable calling myself lesbian rather than bisexual. I am not one for labels, but I feel better with this one. I am out at my job, and at school. I do not mean that when I meet people, I say, "Hi. I am Andrea, and I'm gay!" Nevertheless, I do not hide my orientation. I refuse to play the "pronoun game" and hide in fear. I treat it as a natural part of me, and as not a big deal, and thus people do the same when dealing with me.

---

### David's Story

I was 15 when I decided to come out. I had always known something was different. I had girlfriends but never wanted to do anything sexual -- not even kiss them. Online, I had looked at gay stuff just wondering about it since I never knew anyone gay.

Then I thought "I may be gay." So I ended up telling my friend and she was perfectly fine with it.

About a week after I told my friends I planned on telling my mom. Of course, I thought of the worst possible thing would happen. So we were coming back from my foot operation and I told her. And I told her I didn't want to tell dad because he may not be accepting.

She told me she wanted me to so that they could talk openly about it. So after we got home she made me go to the store with him. And I just told him. And his exact words were "So? I still love you." I was shocked. Here I had been worried sick about my parents beating me up and kicking me out of the house.

Then I had a date with my first boyfriend. We were both 15, so of course my dad drove us. It was so cool. I felt good about it and knew it was what I wanted, but we ended up breaking up about one month after getting together.

Then I hooked up with my next boyfriend and we went to the movies. That lasted 6 months. He would come see me everyday and hang out with me and my family. He

ended up spending Christmas with my family and I spent New Year's Eve with him and his friends. Everyone was really accepting of us. It was shocking.

I am lucky. I am out at work, and I do find the occasional person that has a problem with it. But I just stay away from them. It's really cool because as long as you don't hit on them they won't bother you. That is what I have found in life.

---

## Shin's Story

Hi there! My name is Shin, I'm 23, and an Asian-American bisexual male. I am a college graduate, with a degree in political science. I work at a non-profit organization that works to protect the civil liberties of everyone in the country.

In many ways, I have always been in the "minority." I was born in a small blue-collar town on the East coast, where my family was the only Asian family for the longest time. Indeed, I am the first in my family to be born in the States. I have an older sister, and for the longest time, I was always following in her footsteps. However, when I was 12, my family, minus my college bound sister, moved to Tokyo, Japan, due to my father's job. There, I was again in the minority - a kid who had spent all his life in the states, and who didn't really know how to speak Japanese. I actually ended up switching from the public schools to an all-male Catholic international school for high school. After high school, I came back to the States for college on the East coast.

It was in college that I truly came out to myself, my friends, my peers, and some members of my family. I found it comforting to find people my age who were in the process of coming out, or had already come out to themselves and their friends and family.

Even now, I find that I am sometimes at odds with myself. Being bisexual often puts me in "neither camp." There are days that I think it would be easier if I just "choose a side," but then I know I wouldn't be fair to myself. For me, it's about the person, not the gender. Yes, true bisexual people do exist - we aren't just steps in the journey of coming out.

## Ben's Story

Hey everyone! My name is Ben, and I'm an 18 year old transboy growing up in eastern Pennsylvania. I am currently a junior at my high school, and I also have a part-time job after school.

I came out as transgendered my freshman year of high school when I asked my teachers to call me by my preferred name, as well as to use masculine pronouns when referring to me. Surely, I thought, this would lessen my feelings of isolation and help me to feel more at home with myself. I received a mixed reaction that was rather confusing. While coming out did help me become more comfortable with myself, my feelings of loneliness did not subside. I found myself repeatedly explaining how I felt, and

constantly attempting to clarify misinterpretations. I felt so misunderstood. Yet, each explanation, though tiring, seemed to give me more confidence. I decided to start a GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) to bring people together in my school. There had to be a few people out there who were supportive, I thought. I was right. The GSA had an amazing turnout, bringing many people together to discuss how they feel and what is going on in our school. I no longer felt alone, and I felt optimistic about the change that our group would cause in our school.

Slowly, my coming out process helped me evolve into the person I am today. I grew more than I ever thought I would. Fortunately, I have the support of my immediate family and a few friends and teachers. With my mom's consent, I began my medical transition by taking testosterone in July. I continue to feel more comfortable and confident with each day that passes. I am forever changed by the events that have taken place, and by the people I have made contact with.

### **Miriam's Story**

My name is Miriam. I grew up in a small town in New Jersey.

Ever since I can remember, I have been attracted to people of all genders. When I was 9 or 10, I realized that this was considered bad, so I tried really hard to be straight. After a year of this, I realized that I could not stop being attracted to girls.

The only person I told at that point was my sister, who was 8. She was very accepting and supportive then, and has been ever since.

In high school, I was afraid to come out, both at school and to my parents. I was dating a boy for most of high school, so it was easy to hide. I was afraid that if people found out, the homophobic students would harass me, the more "liberal" students would think I was just saying it to be trendy, and my parents would think it was just a phase. Looking back, I think that it would have been worth it.

I made the decision that no matter what, I was going to come out when I got to college. Luckily, I went to a school where most people were very accepting, so coming out at school was easy. I told all of my friends, hall mates, professors, teammates (I play ultimate Frisbee.) etc, and I also joined the student organization for LGBT/queer students.

I also came out to my parents. While it didn't go perfectly, it went a lot better than it does for some people, and things have gotten a lot better over time. It really helped me to have the support of my sister, as well as the support of my friends at school. I have found that when I am confident about who I am, people either accept me or keep quiet about it.

LGBT Youth, Visual 1:

## Discussion Questions or Writing Prompts

---

1. Based on real people you know (protecting their privacy by leaving out their names, of course) and given what you just heard, how do you think people know what their gender identity is? How do they know if they're supposed to be a boy or a girl?
2. What about sexual orientation? How do people figure out if they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight?
3. What myths or stereotypes about LGBT people did you used to believe that you're starting to realize aren't true?
4. What could be done to make school a more positive place for the students telling these stories? What could you do to be more of an ally?

# Individual Homework: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Youth

---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Answer these questions in writing, in a couple of paragraphs each. Please use classroom appropriate language, and be thoughtful and respectful in your answers. Turn in your short essays by \_\_\_\_\_.

Credit will be assigned based on how you put thought into your response, not based on whether I agree or disagree with your answers.

1. Do you think it is right or wrong for two guys or two girls to be in a dating relationship? What makes it right or wrong?
2. Did you used to believe any stereotypes about LGBT people that you don't believe any more? What changed your thinking?
3. Do you think it should be legal for two men or two women to get married? Why or why not?
4. Suppose your good friend told you they were transgender. How would you feel? What would you say or do? Why?

# Family Homework: Talking about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Youth

---

**All Family Homework is optional. You may complete an Individual Homework assignment instead.**

**Purpose:** This is a chance to share with one another some of your own (and your family's, your religion's) beliefs about sexuality and relationships. It will also give you a chance to get to know one another a little better.

**Directions:** Find a quiet place where the two of you – the student and the trusted adult (parent, guardian, stepparent, adult friend of the family, best friend's parent, etc.) – can talk privately. Set aside about ten minutes. During this time, please give full attention to one another ... no texting, watching TV and so on.

**ASK THE ADULT:** Do you think it is right or wrong for two guys or two girls to be in an intimate relationship? What makes it right or wrong?

**ASK THE STUDENT:** Did you used to believe any stereotypes about LGBT people that you don't believe any more? What changed your thinking?

**ASK THE ADULT:** Do you think it should be legal for two men or two women to get married? Why or why not?

**ASK THE STUDENT:** Suppose your good friend told you they were transgender. How would you feel? What would you say or do? Why?




---

## Family Homework: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Youth – Confirmation Slip

---

**FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS HOMEWORK IS DUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

We have completed this Homework Exercise.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 student's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 signature of family member or trusted adult

---

**References**

---

- <sup>1</sup> Saewyc, E.M., Skay, C.L., Reis, E., Pettingell S.E., Bearinger L.H., Resnick M.D., Murphy A., Combs L. (2006). Hazards of stigma: The sexual and physical abuse of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents in the U.S. and Canada. *Child Welfare*, 58(2),196-213.
- <sup>2</sup> Reis, B., and Saewyc, E. (1999). *Eighty-three Thousand Youth: Selected findings of eight population-based studies as they pertain to anti-gay harassment and the safety and well-being of sexual minority students*. Safe Schools Coalition of Washington. Retrieved from [www.safeschoolscoalition.org/83000youth.pdf](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/83000youth.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Saewyc, E.M., Singh, N., Reis, E., & Flynn, T. (2000). The intersections of racial, gender, and orientation harassment in school and health risk behaviors among adolescents. [abstract]. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 26, 148.
- <sup>4</sup> Saewyc, E., Poon, C., Wang, N., Homma, Y., Smith, A., & the McCreary Centre Society. (2007). *Not Yet Equal: The health of lesbian, gay, & bisexual youth in BC*. Vancouver, BC: McCreary Centre Society. ISBN #: 978-1-895438-84-5. Retrieved from [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca)
- <sup>5</sup> Frost, D., Parsons, J., Nanin, J. (2007). Stigma, Concealment and Symptoms of Depression as Explanations for Sexually Transmitted Infections among Gay Men. *Journal of Health Psychology*. 12(4), 636-640. doi: 10.1177/1359105307078170
- <sup>6</sup> Saewyc EM, Singh N, Reis E, Flynn T. (2000). The intersections of racial, gender, and orientation harassment in school and health risk behaviors among adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 26, 148.
- <sup>7</sup> Saewyc, E., Bearinger, L., Blum, R., & Resnick, M. (1999). Sexual intercourse, abuse and pregnancy among adolescent women: Does sexual orientation make a difference? *Family Planning Perspectives*, 31, 27-131.
- <sup>8</sup> Saewyc, E., Poon, C., Homma, Y., Skay, C.L.(2008). Stigma Management? The Links Between Enacted Stigma and Teen Pregnancy Trends among Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Students in British Columbia. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 17(3),123-139.
- <sup>9</sup> Bagley, C., & Tremblay, P. (2000). Elevated rates of suicidal behavior in gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 21, 111-117.
- <sup>10</sup> Fineran, S. (2002) Sexual Harassment between Same-Sex Peers: Intersection of Mental Health, Homophobia, and Sexual Violence in Schools. *Social Work*. 47(1), 65-74.
- <sup>11</sup> Tomsen, S., Mason, G. (2001). Engendering homophobia: violence, sexuality and gender conformity. *Journal of Sociology*, 37(3), 257-273.
- <sup>12</sup> Reis, B., and Saewyc, E. (1999). *Eighty-three Thousand Youth: Selected findings of eight population-based studies as they pertain to anti-gay harassment and the safety and well-being of sexual minority students*. Safe Schools Coalition of Washington. Retrieved from [www.safeschoolscoalition.org/83000youth.pdf](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/83000youth.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> Reis, B., and Saewyc, E. (1999).
- <sup>14</sup> Reis, B., and Saewyc, E. (1999).
- <sup>15</sup> Igartua, K., Thombs, B.D., Burgos, G., Montoro, R. (2009). Concordance and Discrepancy in Sexual Identity, Attraction, and Behavior Among Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 45(6), 602-608.
- <sup>16</sup> O'Hanlan, K.A., Cabaj, R.P., Schatz, B., Lock, J., Nemrow, P., (1997). A Review of the Medical Consequences of Homophobia with Suggestions for Resolution. *Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association*, 1, 25-39.
- <sup>17</sup> Hatzenbuehler, M.L. (2009) How does sexual minority stigma “get under the skin”? A psychological mediation framework. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135(5), 707-730.

- 
- <sup>18</sup> Saewyc EM, Pettingell SL, Skay CL. (2004) Teen pregnancy among sexual minority youth in population-based surveys of the 1990s: Countertrends in a population at risk. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 34, 125–126.
- <sup>19</sup> Blake, S.M., Ledsky, R., Lehman, T., Goodenow, C., Sawyer, R., & Hack, T. (2001). Preventing sexual risk behaviors among gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents: The benefits of gay-sensitive HIV instruction in schools. *American Journal of Public Health*. 91, 940–946.
- <sup>20</sup> Saewyc, E.M., Pettingell, S.L., & Skay, C.L. (2004). Teen pregnancy among sexual minority youth in population based surveys of the 1990s: Countertrends in a population at risk. [Abstract] *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 34, 125-126.
- <sup>21</sup> Saewyc, E.M., Singh, N., Reis, E., & Flynn, T. (2000). The intersections of racial, gender, and orientation harassment in school and health risk behaviors among adolescents. [abstract]. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 26, 148.
- <sup>22</sup> Frost, D., Parsons, J., Nanin, J. (2007). Stigma, Concealment and Symptoms of Depression as Explanations for Sexually Transmitted Infections among Gay Men. *Journal of Health Psychology*. 12(4), 636-640. doi: 10.1177/1359105307078170
- <sup>23</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010, September) *HIV and AIDS among gay and bisexual men*. Retrieved from: [www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/docs/FastFacts-MSM-FINAL508COMP.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/docs/FastFacts-MSM-FINAL508COMP.pdf)
- <sup>24</sup> Hikada, Y., Operario, D. (2006). Attempted suicide, psychological health and exposure to harassment among Japanese homosexual, bisexual or other men questioning their sexual orientation recruited via the internet. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. (60), 962-967  
doi:10.1136/jech.2005.045336
- <sup>25</sup> Huebner, D.M., Rebchook, G.M., Kegeles, S.M. (2004). Experiences of Harassment, Discrimination, and Physical Violence Among Young Gay and Bisexual Men. *American Journal of Public Health*. 94(7), 1200-1203.
- <sup>26</sup> Goodenow, C., Szalacha, L., Westheimer, K. (2006, April). School support groups, other school factors, and the safety of sexual minority adolescents. *Psychology in the Schools*. 43(5), 573–589.
- <sup>27</sup> Goodenow, C., Szalacha, L., Westheimer, K. (2006, April).
- <sup>28</sup> Goodenow, C., Szalacha, L., Westheimer, K. (2006, April).
- <sup>29</sup> Blake, S.M., et al. (2001, June). Preventing Sexual Risk Behaviors Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Adolescents: The Benefits of Gay-Sensitive HIV Instruction in Schools. *American Journal of Public Health*. 91(6).