Providing support for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning community

Resource Manual

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Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.

~César Chávez
University Statement of Commitment to Diversity

The Miller School of Medicine is committed to fostering diversity. Diversity enriches the medical environment by building mutual respect and teamwork to prepare students, faculty members and staff for citizenship in an increasingly complex society. It strengthens the environment by providing opportunities for communication between people of varied backgrounds, promoting personal growth and a healthy community by encouraging critical thinking and challenging preconceptions. Furthermore, as a diverse community, the school is better prepared to face the challenges of the future, in advancing medical knowledge with research, and in dealing with the clinical needs of our society.

Mission Statement and Objectives

To advance a learning and working environment in which each student, faculty member, employee and trainee is encouraged and empowered to reach his or her fullest potential regardless of age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, or political background.

To develop a healthcare workplace that will fulfill our commitment to caring for a diverse, local and international community.

The Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs offices was designed:

- To recruit, develop, and retain, committed and diverse academic community able to lead and promote excellence and innovation.
- To assess and monitor measurable outcomes that can serve as markers of progress regarding the hiring, promotion and retention of a diverse faculty and work force.
- To align key systems and processes to reflect and promote diverse academic experiences for medical students.
- To support the continued promotion and professional development of members of the academic community during times of life transition such as childbirth, eldercare and other personal responsibilities and professional transitions such as retirement.
- To support community outreach programs to encourage and mentor middle school and high school, college, medical students and medical residents to enter academics, especially in fields in which diversity is lacking (e.g women and underrepresented minorities in science and engineering).
About Safe Space

Purpose
The purpose of Safe Space training is to provide a safe haven, a listening ear, and visible support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) people at University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. This includes a 1.5-hour interactive workshop that provides participants a chance to learn about issues affecting the LGBTQ community, and provides tools for participants to be informed and effective allies as they go about their daily lives. Our goal is to combat homophobia and heterosexism, and to create a supportive and nurturing environment on the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine campus, where diversity is valued and appreciated.

After completing the Safe Space workshop, participants are given a Safe Space sticker/magnet that identifies them as “someone who is sensitive, supportive, and respectful to the LGBTQ community as well as those questioning their sexual orientation.” Participants can choose to display the sticker in their workplace, where they live on campus, or digitally, in emails and presentations given on campus.

This manual has been adapted from a manual that was sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs, specifically the LGBTQ Advisory Committee and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion at Washington and Lee University. Individuals who contributed time researching information and developing this Safe Space manual include Beth Curry, LPC (University Counselor), De-Anna Clarke ’13 and Jeromey Mann ’14. This training manual is largely influenced by Safe Space programs at a variety of other colleges and universities, including: Texas A&M University, University of Virginia, Duke, Loyola University, Iowa State University, Lynchburg College, University of Missouri, NYU, and others. Our appreciation goes out to individuals involved in each of these programs on campuses across the country.
As a Member of the Safe Space Network...

- Affected students/faculty/staff may censor their speech less, providing a more genuine and realistic exchange in conversations.
- You may gain a fuller picture of people’s lives.
- You will make a personal contribution to improving the campus environment and the lives of our students.
- Students, faculty, and staff may be more at ease when sharing issues pertaining to your job and will anticipate a nonjudgmental attitude in your work.
- You may never notice any difference in the interactions you have with students, faculty and staff but you will make a difference in ways you cannot imagine.
- You will not have to become a counselor or expert, but will provide referrals as needed.
- You will not be the only contact for gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender students.
- You are not likely to hear intimate self-disclosures.
- Others will not automatically assume that you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.
Terminology

**Ally** – Someone who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexual and genderstraight privilege in themselves and others; a concern for the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people; and a belief that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are social.

**Androgynous/androgyne**: Exhibiting approximately equal proportions of masculine and feminine characteristics simultaneously.

**Asexual** – Someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which people choose, asexuality is an intrinsic part of who we are. Asexual people still have the same emotional needs as anyone else, and experience attraction. However, they feel no need/interest to act out that attraction sexually.

**Autosexual** - One whose significant sexual activity is masturbation.

**Bicurious** – A curiosity about having sexual relations with a same gender/sex person.

**Biphobia** – The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals, which is often times related to the current binary standard. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQIAAP community, as well as in general society.

**Bisexual** – A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to male/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others.

**Butch** – A person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but it can also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

**Coming Out** – May refer to the process by which one accepts one’s own sexuality, gender identity, or status as an intersexed person (to “come out” to oneself). May also refer to the process by which one shares one’s sexuality, gender identity, or intersexed status with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.). This can be a continual, life-long process for homosexual, bisexual, transgendered, and intersexed individuals.

**Cross-dresser** – Someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.
**Discrimination** – Prejudice + power. It occurs when members of a more powerful social group behave unjustly or cruelly to members of a less powerful social group. Discrimination can take many forms, including both individuals acts of hatred of injustice and institutional denials of privileges normally accorded to other groups. Ongoing discrimination creates a climate of oppression for the affected group.

**Down Low** – See ‘In the Closet.’ Also referred to as ‘D/L.’

**Drag** – The performance of one or multiple genders theatrically. Clothes are often unusual or dramatic.

**Drag King** – A person who performs masculinity theatrically.

**Drag Queen** – A person who performs femininity theatrically.

**Dyke** – Derogatory term referring to a masculine lesbian. Sometimes reclaimed and adopted affirmatively by lesbians and bisexual women (not necessarily masculine ones) to refer to themselves.

**Fag/Faggot** – Derogatory term referring to someone perceived as non-heterosexual. Historically, gay men were tied together and thrown onto the kindling when witches were burned at the stake. Hence, a faggot is a “bundle of sticks.”

**Femme** – Feminine identified person of any gender/sex.

**FTM / F2M** – Abbreviation for female-to-male transgender or transsexual person.

**LGBTQQIAAP** – A common abbreviation for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersexed, asexual, ally, and pansexual community. Also seen in the form of LGBTQ.

**Gay** – 1. Term used in some cultural settings to represent males who are attracted to males in a romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Not all men who engage in “homosexual behavior” identify as gay, and as such this label should be used with caution. 2. Term used to refer to the LGBTQQIAAP community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

**Gender Binary** – The idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

**Gender Cues** – what human beings use to attempt to tell the gender/sex of another person. Examples include hairstyle, gait, vocal inflection, body shape, facial hair, etc. Cues vary by culture.
Gender Dysphoria (GD) - Medical term for the unhappiness or discomfort which may be experienced by one whose primary sex characteristics do not match one’s gender identity.

Gender Expression - the manner in which individuals "perform" their gender roles. That is to say, an individual may identify as a particular gender, but that individual may express that gender in various ways.

Gender Identity – A person’s sense of being masculine, feminine, androgynous, or other gendered.

Gender Normative / Gender Straight – A person who either by nature or by choice conforms to gender based expectations of society.

Gender roles - Rules assigned by society that define what clothing, behaviors, thoughts, feelings, relationships, etc. are considered appropriate and inappropriate for members of a given sex. Which things are considered masculine, feminine or unisex varies according to location, class, occasion and numerous other factors.

Gender Variant – A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, gender-queer, crossdresser, etc.).

Hermaphrodite – An out-of-date and offensive term for an intersexed person. (see ‘Intersexed Person’).

Heteronormativity – The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

Heterosexism – Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation.

Heterosexual - A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to member of another gender or sex.

Heterosexual Privilege – Those benefits derived automatically by being heterosexual that are denied to homosexuals and bisexuals. Also, the benefits homosexuals and bisexuals receive as a result of claiming heterosexual identity or denying homosexual or bisexual identity.
**HIV / Human Immunodeficiency Virus** – A virus that attacks the immune system (the body’s defense against infection). HIV uses healthy white blood cells to replicate itself, breaking down the immune system and leaving the body more susceptible to illness. Without treatment, most people infected with HIV become less able to fight off germs that we are exposed to every day. Someone who has HIV is called "HIV positive" or "HIV+".

**HIV-phobia** – The irrational fear or hatred or persons living with HIV/AIDS.

**Homophobia** is a range of negative attitudes and feelings towards homosexuality and people who are identified or perceived as being homosexual. Although the suffix -phobia normally refers to irrational fear, definitions of homophobia have expanded to refer also to antipathy, prejudice, contempt, and aversion, as well as irrational fear. It is observable in critical and hostile behavior such as discrimination and violence on the basis of a perceived non-heterosexual orientation. In a 1998 address, author, activist, and civil rights leader Coretta Scott King stated that "homophobia is like racism and anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry in that it seeks to dehumanize a large group of people, to deny their humanity, their dignity and personhood."

Among some of the more discussed forms of homophobia are institutionalized homophobia (e.g. religious homophobia and state-sponsored homophobia), lesbophobia – the intersection of homophobia and sexism directed against lesbians, and internalized homophobia – a form of homophobia among people who experience same-sex attraction regardless of whether or not they identify as LGBT.

Two words originate from homophobia: homophobic (adj.) and homophobe (n.), the latter word describing a person who displays homophobia or is thought to do so.

**Homosexual** – A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to member of the same gender or sex.

**In the Closet** – Refers to a homosexual, bisexual, trans-person or intersex person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers, or society. An intersex person may be closeted due to ignorance about their status since standard medical practice is to “correct,” whenever possible, intersex conditions early in childhood and to hide the medical history from the patient. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet”; for example, a person can be out in their social life, but in the closet at work, or with their family. (also known as ‘Down Low’ or D/L).

**Inclusive Language** - Language that does not assume universal heterosexuality.

**Institutional Oppression** – Arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media, education, religion, economics, etc.

**Internalized Oppression** – the process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate stereotypes applied to the oppression group.
**Intersexed Person** – a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types—for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY.

**Kinsey Scale** - The continuum model devised by Alfred Kinsey in 1948 that plotted sexuality from 0 to 6, zero being exclusively heterosexual and six being exclusively homosexual. It was the first scale to account for bisexuality. A 1954 survey indicated that 70% of all people fell between one and five. It has been criticized for being too linear and only accounting for sexual behavior and not sexual identity.

**Lesbian** – Term used to describe female-identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other female-identified people. The term lesbian is derived from the name of the Greek island of Lesbos and as such is sometimes considered a Eurocentric category that does not necessarily represent the identities of African-Americans and other non-European ethnic groups. This being said, individual female-identified people from diverse ethnic groups, including African-Americans, embrace the term ‘lesbian’ as an identity label.

**Lipstick Lesbian** – Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way, depending on who is using it. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is seen as automatically passing for heterosexual.

**Male Lesbian** – A male-bodied person who identifies as a lesbian. This differs from a heterosexual male in that a male lesbian is primarily attracted to other lesbian, bisexual, or queer identified people. May sometimes identify as gender variant, or as a female/woman.

**Meterosexual/Metrosexual** – First used in 1994 by British journalist Mark Simpson, who coined the term to refer to an urban, heterosexual male with a strong aesthetic sense who spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle. This term can be perceived as derogatory because it reinforces stereotypes that all gay men are fashion-conscious and materialistic.

**MTF / M2F** – Abbreviation from male-to-female transgender or transsexual person.
Oppression – The systematic (supported by society) subjugation of a group of people by another group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

Outing / To “out” someone – To disclose a second person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status to a third person, especially without the second person’s permission. Considered disrespectful and can potentially have very harmful consequences for the second person.

Pansexual – A person whose gender identity is comprised of all or many gender expressions.

Passing – Describes a person’s ability to be accepted as their preferred gender/sex or race/ethnic identity or to be seen as heterosexual.

Polyamory - (from Greek poly [many or several], and Latin amor [love]); the practice, desire, or acceptance of having more than one intimate relationship at a time with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved.

Polysexuality - attraction towards multiple genders and/or sexes.

Pre-operative transsexual (Pre-op TS) - One is who is actively planning to relieve gender dysphoria by aligning one’s sex with one gender identity through Sexual Reassignment Surgery. Usually cross dresses and uses hormone therapy and (if M2F) electrolysis to modify secondary sex characteristics.

Prejudice – A conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members.

Queer – 1. An umbrella term which embraces a matrix of sexual orientations, and habits or the not-exclusively- heterosexual-and-monogamous majority. 2. This term is sometimes used as a sexual orientation label instead of ‘bisexual’ as a way of acknowledging that there are more than two genders to be attracted to, or as a way of stating a non-heterosexual orientation without having to state who they are attracted to. 3. A reclaimed word that was formerly used solely as a slur but that has been semantically overturned by members of the maligned group, who use it as a term of defiant pride. ‘Queer’ is an example of a word undergoing this process. For decades ‘queer’ was used solely as a derogatory adjective for gays and lesbians, but in the 1980s the term began to be used by gay and lesbian activists as a term of self-identification. Eventually, it came to be used as an umbrella term that included gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people. Nevertheless, a sizable percentage of people to whom this term might apply still hold ‘queer’ to be a hateful insult, and its used by heterosexuals is often considered offensive.
Similarly, other reclaimed words are usually offensive to the in-group when used by outsiders, so extreme caution must be taken concerning their use when one is not a member of the group.

**Questioning** – Someone who is questioning their sexual orientation, identity, etc. These individuals may be exploring their feelings or unsure of their own sexuality.

**Same Gender Loving / SGL** – A term sometimes used by members of the African-American / Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent. The term emerged in the early 1990s with the intention of offering Black women who love women and Black men who love men a voice, a way of identifying and being that resonated with the uniqueness of Black culture in life.

**Sex** – A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. Because usually subdivided into ‘male’ and ‘female’, this category does not recognize the existence of intersexed bodies.

**Sex Identity** – How a person identifies physically: female, male, in between, beyond, or neither.

**Sexual Orientation** – The desire for intimate emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender/sex, another gender/sex, or multiple genders/sexes.

**Sex Reassignment Surgery / SRS** – A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person’s ‘sex’. In most states, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance.

**Sexuality** – A person’s exploration of sexual acts, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, and desire.

**Stealth** – This term refers to when a person chooses to be secretive in the public sphere about their gender history, either after transitioning or while successful passing. (Also referred to as ‘going stealth’ or ‘living in stealth mode’)

**Stereotype** – A preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences. Even positive stereotypes can have a negative impact, however, simply because they involve broad generalizations that ignore individual realities.

**Straight** – Another term for heterosexual.
**Straight-Acting** – A term usually applied to gay men who readily pass as heterosexual. The term implies that there is a certain way that gay men should act that is significantly different from heterosexual men. Straight-acting gay men are often looked down upon in the LGBTQIAAP community for seemingly accessing heterosexual privilege.

**Stud** – An African-American and/of Latina masculine lesbian. Also known as ‘butch’ or ‘aggressive.’

**Top Surgery** – This term usually refers to surgery for the construction of a male-type chest, but may also refer to breast augmentation.

**Trans** – An abbreviation that is sometimes used to refer to a gender variant person. This use allows a person to state gender variant identity without having to disclose hormonal or surgical status/intentions. This term is sometimes used to refer to the gender variant community as a whole.

**Transactivism** – The political and social movement to create equality for gender variant persons.

**Transgender** – A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity. See p. 32.

**Transgendered (Trans) Community** – A loose category of people who transcend gender norms in a wide variety of ways. The central ethnic of this community is unconditional acceptance of individual exercise of freedoms including gender and sexual identity and orientation.

**Trans-Hate** – The irrational hatred of those who are gender variant, usually expressed through violent and often deadly means.

**Transition** – this term is primarily used to refer to the process a gender variant person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.

**Transman** – An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as females. Also referred to as ‘transguy(s).’

**Transphobia** – the irrational fear of those who are gender variant and/or the inability to deal with gender ambiguity.
**Transsexual** – A person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

**Transvestite** – Someone who dresses in clothing generally identified with the opposite gender/sex. While the terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘transvestite’ have been used synonymously, they in fact signify two different groups. The majority of transvestites are heterosexual males who derive pleasure from dressing in “women’s clothing”. *(The preferred term is ‘cross-dresser,’ but the term ‘transvestite’ is still used in a positive sense in England.)*

**Transwoman** – An identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transsexuals to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as males.

**Two-Spirited** – Native persons who have attributes of both genders, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with mystical rituals (shamans). Their dress is usually mixture of male and female articles and they are seen as a separate or third gender. The term ‘two-spirit’ is usually considered to be specific to the Zuni tribe. Similar identity labels vary by tribe and include ‘one-spirit’ and ‘wintke.’

**Ze / Hir** – Alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some gender variant persons. Pronounced /zee/ and /here/ they replace “he” and “she” and “his” and “hers” respectively.
Bisexuality

Myths & Realities of Bisexuality

Sexuality runs along a continuum. It is not a static “thing” but rather has the potential to change throughout one’s lifetime, and varies infinitely among people. We cannot fit our sexuality into nice, neat categories, which determine who and what we are. Bisexuality exists at many points along the sexual continuum.

Bisexuality is the potential to feel attracted (sexually, romantically, emotionally) to and to engage in sensual or sexual relationships with people of either sex. A bisexual person may not be equally attracted to both sexes, and the degree of attraction may vary over time. Self-perception is the key to a bisexual identity. Many people engage in sexual activity with people of both sexes, yet do not identify as bisexual. Likewise, other people engage in sexual relations only with people of one sex, or do not engage in sexual activity at all, yet consider themselves bisexual. There is no behavioral “test” to determine whether or not one is bisexual.

**Myth:** Bisexuality doesn’t really exist. People who consider themselves bisexual are going through a phase, are confused, undecided or fence sitting. Ultimately, they’ll settle down and realize they’re actually homosexual or heterosexual.

**Reality:** Some people go through a transitional period of bisexuality on their way to adopting a lesbian/gay or heterosexual identity. For many others, a bisexual orientation remains a long-term orientation. For some bisexual people, same-sex attractions were a transitional phase in their coming out as bisexual. Many people may well be confused, living in a society where their sexuality is denied by gays and straight people, alike, but that confusion is a function of oppression. Fence sitting is a misnomer; there is no “fence” between same-sex or heterosexual orientations except in the minds of people who rigidly divide the two.

**Myth:** Bisexual people are promiscuous hypersexual swingers who are attracted to every woman and man they meet. They cannot be monogamous, nor can they marry or live in traditional committed relationships.

**Reality:** Bisexual people have a range of sexual behaviors. Like lesbian, gay or heterosexual people, some have multiple partners, some have one partner, and some go through periods without any partners. Promiscuity is no more prevalent in the bisexual population than in other groups.
Transgender

Sex, Gender & Bipolarity

In order to understand the difference between someone who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and someone who is transgender, you need to know the difference between sex and gender. Simply put, sex is polarity of anatomy, gender is polarity of appearance and behavior. As one gains familiarity with transgenderism, these definitions quickly break down, but they serve as a good starting point.

Most people think there are just two sexes, male and female. This is not the case. People who are intersexed and people who are transsexual constitute sexes which are neither exactly male nor exactly female.

Likewise, gender is not a simple case of “either/or.” Gender is exhibited by countless signals, from articles of clothing to cosmetics, hairstyles, conversational styles, body language and much more.

Notice, however, that our gender “norms” are not symmetric. Women have won for themselves the right to a wide range of gender expression. Men have not made a corresponding effort. Most men live within a much narrower range of “acceptable” gender.

Though our culture tends to group characteristics into “masculine” and “feminine,” many people find some amount of gender transgression exciting, so there is some crossover between the two categories. Ultimately, gender is a “mix and match” mode of self-expression, and people within our culture are ever finding new ways to express their gender, with exciting subtleties and intriguing implications.

In general, it works best to think of all effects - sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual identity, and any others - as varying along a continuous spectrum of self-expression, rather than in just one of two or three ways.

Sexual Orientation vs. Gender Identity vs. Sexual Identity

Sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual identity are independent of each other. A person may express any variation of each of these in any combination. To discourage the free expression of identity and orientation by an individual is to impose a damaging burden of conformity.

*Sexual Orientation* is which sex you find romantically/erotically attractive: opposite (hetero), same (homo), or both (bi).
**Gender Identity** is how you see yourself socially: man, woman, neither, or a combination of both. One may have a penis but prefer to relate socially as a woman, or one may have a vagina but prefer to relate as a man. One might prefer to be fluid, relating sometimes as a man and sometimes as a woman. Or one might not identify as either one, relating androgynously.

**Sexual Identity** is how you see yourself physically: male, female, or in between. If someone is born female, but wishes to see their body as male in all respects, their sexual identity is male. It is generally rude to speak of such a person as female, since it denies their right to inhabit the social and physical role of their choosing. We call such a person transsexual, whether or not they have had any surgery.

Many female to male transsexuals do not undergo genital surgery, often because of disappointing results or extreme cost. As surgical technique improves, this may change. Since it is healthier for these people to live in accord with their wishes and heartfelt need, we call them men, though they may have a vagina where one would expect to find a penis.
The Trans Umbrella

Important Note: These words are social constructs developed over time. New language is constantly formed to unite community members as well as divide groups by experience, politics, and other group memberships. I use the word “Trans” to serve the purpose of inclusion for all listed below, allies, partners, and families.

Transgender
An “umbrella term” for someone whose self-identification, anatomy, appearance, manner, expression, behavior and/or other’s perceptions of challenges traditional societal expectations of congruent gender expression and designated birth sex.

Transexual
Individuals whose designated sex at birth does not match their personal sex/body identity and who, through sex reassignment surgery and hormone treatments, may seek to change their physical body to match their gender identity. Transexuals can be male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM). Transexuals’ sexual identification can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Crossdressers
People, often heterosexual men, who are comfortable with their birth assigned gender and will privately dress or take on the mannerisms of the “opposite” gender for personal gratification.

Drag Performers
People who dress and theatrically perform like the “opposite” gender for entertainment, play, expression, or eroticism. Males are referred to as Drag Queens and females are referred to as Drag Kings. Some identify as trans and others do not.

Gender Variant/Queer
People who find other gender categories constraining. Their gender identities and/or expression is consciously not consistent with conventional standards for masculine or feminine behavior or appearance. Some identify as a blend, as androgynous, or as neither gender.

Intersex Condition
“Intersex is a socially constructed category that reflects real biological variation in reproductive, sexual, or hormonal anatomy. Though usually thought of as an inborn condition, intersex anatomy doesn’t always show up at birth.

Cisgender: The dominant privileged reality of a person’s affirmation of birth sex assignment, gender based socialization, and aligned perception of others. The term is being used to describe those individuals that are not included in the Trans umbrella or larger community and may or may not identify as Trans Advocates or Allies.

Gender: The social construction of masculinity or femininity as it aligns with designated sex at birth in a specific culture and time period. Gender identity claims individuality that may or may not be expressed outwardly, and may or may not correspond to one’s sexual anatomy.

Sex: The medical assignment of ‘male’ or ‘female’ based upon the external genitalia that an individual possesses at birth. The biological sexes are commonly seen as mutually exclusive, and it is often believed that a person’s assigned sex dictates their gender expression, chromosomal, and hormonal make-up (those born with “male” genitalia should behave in a masculine way and those born with “female” genitalia should behave in a feminine way).

Sexual Identity: A person’s self description of the romantic, sexual, and/or emotional relationships with another or others such as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, etc. Much like gender identifications, sexual identity labels are constantly being created to both unite communities and divide members from others.
LGBTQ Symbols

Rainbow Flag

Use of the rainbow flag by the gay community began in 1978 when it first appeared in the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade. Borrowing symbolism from the hippie movement and black civil rights groups, San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker designed the rainbow flag in response to a need for a symbol that could be used year after year. Rainbows have since become a symbol representing pride for the LGBTQ community even though a couple of stripes have been removed.

Gender Symbols

Double interlocking male and female symbols have been used by gay men and lesbians since the 1970s. Some feminists have also used the double female symbol to represent the sisterhood of women. Today the symbols might be superimposed to show the common goals of gays and lesbians. Superimposed symbols might also denote a heterosexual aware of the differences and diversity between men and women.
Bisexual Flag

The bisexual flag was designed in 1998 to create visibility outside of and within the LGBTQ community. The deep pink represents the possibility of same gender attraction; the royal blue represents the possibility of different gender attraction; the purple represents the possibility of attraction anywhere along the entire gender spectrum.

Red Ribbon

The AIDS ribbon acknowledges the significant impact AIDS has had on the LGBTQ community. While AIDS can impact anyone, there is no denying the impression it has left on the community.
Pink Triangle

In Nazi Germany, Hitler declared all homosexual acts prohibited and any homosexuals caught doing actions outlined, such as kissing, embracing or fantasizing, were sent to death camps and marked with pink triangles (pointed downward). Today, the pink triangle serves as a reminder and a symbol of persecution and oppression of gays and lesbians, and is sometimes turned upright as a gay pride and gay rights symbol.

Black Triangle

Although lesbians were not included in Hitler’s prohibition of homosexuality, this is evidence to indicate that the black triangle was used to designate prisoners with antisocial behavior. Considering that the Nazi idea of womanhood focused on children, kitchen and church, black triangle prisoners may have included lesbians, prostitutes, women who refused to bear children and women with other “antisocial” traits. As the pink triangle is historically a male symbol, the black triangle has similarly been reclaimed by lesbians and feminists as a symbol of pride and solidarity.

Transgender Triangle

The International Foundation for Gender Education is an educational and charitable organization addressing cross dressing and transgender issues. One of the organizations logos, this symbol combines the lavender color and the pink triangle shape with a ring denoting various genders all fused into one.
The Lambda

Chosen by Gay Activist Alliance in 1979 as the symbol of the gay movement, the lambda is the Greek letter “L.” A battle flag with a lambda was carried by a regiment of ancient Greek warriors who accompanied in the battle by their young male lovers and noted for their fierceness and willingness to fight to the death.

Human Rights Campaign Logo

The Human Rights Campaign is the nation’s largest gay and lesbian organization. They work closely with federal laws and guidelines to protect the rights of all LGBTQ people and their allies. Their symbol is a yellow equal sign inside of a blue square to represent equality for all people. The HRC logo is one of the most recognizable symbols of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. It has become synonymous with the fight for equal rights for LGBT Americans.
Cycle of Oppression

**Oppression** is perpetuated in our society and is the exercise of authority of power in a cruel and unjust manner. Defining the following terms and showing the link between them explains the momentum that keeps the cycle going.

**Stereotype** is a preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences. While often negative, stereotypes may also be complimentary. Event positive stereotypes have a negative impact because they are broad generalizations.

The stereotypes we hold form the basis of our prejudices.

**Prejudice** is a conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members.

When a person holding the prejudice also has and uses the power to deny opportunities, resources or access to a person because of their group membership, there is discrimination.
**Discrimination** can take many forms including racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, etc.

Many acts of discrimination build up over time, perpetuated against one relatively less powerful social group by a more powerful social group, leading to a group of people being in a state of oppression.

**Oppression** is the systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group of people with access to social power. The result benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

Because oppression is institutionalized in our society, target group members often believe the messages and internalize the oppression.

**Internalized Oppression** is the “buying into” the elements of oppression by the target group.

When target group members believe the stereotypes they are taught about themselves they tend to act them out and thus perpetuate the stereotypes. This reinforces the prejudice and keeps the cycle going.

CYCLE OF OPPRESSION

Difference

Oppression Institutionalize policy, process or practice

Identify a negative act or charge

Verification or reinforcement

Justification of unjust treatment

Generalize to encompass whole group or class

How it works...
1. A difference is identified or noticed (race, gender, ability, age, sexual orientation, accent, etc.)
2. A negative experience or negative charge occurs
3. This experience is then generalized to encompass the whole group or class
4. The generalization is reinforced by media, friends, family and/or institutions
5. The reinforcement justifies unjust treatment
6. This treatment is then often institutionalized and oppresses the group
Heterosexism

Heterosexuality in Perspective

Heterosexism is the belief/assumption that everyone is heterosexual. And if they aren’t, then they should be. Heterosexism is very prevalent in our culture, from TV shows and music videos to everyday conversations at work or school. And if we turn around questions commonly asked of LGBTQ people, we can see a whole different perspective on sexual orientation.

- What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
- When and where did you first decide that you were a heterosexual?
- Is it possible that your heterosexuality is just a phase you might grow out of?
- Is it possible that your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
- If you have never slept with someone of the same sex and enjoyed it, is it possible that all you need is a good gay lover?
- To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
- Why do heterosexuals seem so compelled to seduce others into their lifestyles?
- Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can’t you just be who you are and keep it quiet?
- With so many child molesters being heterosexual, do you feel safe exposing your child to heterosexual teachers?
- Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
- With the menace of overpopulation, could the world survive if everyone were a heterosexual?

Heterosexuals have the privilege of:
- Being free of fear to hold their partner’s hand in public.
- Going on a date without fear of physical or verbal harm based solely on their sexual identity.
- Joining a club or organization without fear of being rejected based on their sexual identity.
- Playing varsity sports without fear of being removed from the team because of their sexual identity.
- Being free to take their partner to office functions without fear of discrimination.
- Walking into a bar/club with their partner without fear of being verbally or physically abused.
- Interviewing for jobs without fear of discrimination.
- Obtaining insurance and other benefits for their partner.
- Being a member of the dominant culture but still being able to CHOOSE to be an ally for LGBTQ people.
Privileges

Privileges are rights or resources that one group has access to and from which other groups are denied. Some examples of privileges include: insurance benefits, adopting or serving as a foster parent, Social Security and other retirement benefits, tax credits, etc. Essentially, there are numerous privileges that are currently denied to LGBTQ people who are in same-sex relationships.

Marriage is one of the most common privileges that heterosexual people enjoy and LGBTQ are denied. Marriage is a powerful legal and social institution that protects and supports intimate family relationships by providing a unique set of rights, privileges and benefits. In fact, heterosexuals receive more than 1,000 benefits and rights through marriage. Same-sex couples are currently denied the right to legally marry in most of the United States, but this is changing rapidly. One should be cognizant of this and not assume married persons are in a heterosexual relationship.

Civil Unions confer many of the benefits of marriage to couples who are residents of a state that allows for them. However, these unions are not recognized outside of that state. Years of testimony and a fair and open trial have shown that states have no good reason to continue harsh discrimination in civil marriage. Some of the states still have these laws.

Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was passed, limiting the federal definition of marriage to a man and a woman; thus, excluding same-sex couples. Many states (including Texas) have passed their own versions of DOMA, further denying same-sex couples the protections and recognition that heterosexual couples receive. Part of this law was deemed unconstitutional in June 2013, which has opened the door for the marriage equality movement.

Domestic Partnerships are defined as individuals who are in a long-term committed relationship and are responsible for each other’s financial and emotional well-being. Employers usually set their own definitions for domestic partner status, when they decide who is eligible for domestic partner benefits. Such definitions frequently require that the partners have lived together for a certain amount of time, are responsible for each other’s financial welfare, are at least 18 years old and are mentally competent to enter into a legal contract. This is not considered equal to marriage, and is fast becoming archaic.
On a positive note, a growing number of companies and not-for-profit institutions offer same-sex domestic partner benefits to their employees, which extends insurance and other benefits to the employee’s domestic partner. HRC’s Corporate Equality Index chronicles a decade of progress in workplace equality. 2012 marks the first year of more stringent criteria regarding transgender health benefits. CEI has helped transform the American workplace for the better over the past ten years.

The legal landscape for the issue of marriage and recognized same-sex relationships is an actively changing concept. Interested individuals are encouraged to seek out updated information on this topic.

Sources: P-FLAG’s Website, “What is marriage anyway?” (www.pflag.org/education) Human Rights Campaign Website (www.hrc.org)

Marriage Privileges

Because same-sex couples have less access to marriage, at this time, they do not have access to the 1,000+ rights and privileges that heterosexual couples enjoy. This results from the Federal Government recognition of marriages, but there is not state-to-state acceptance in all states. Some of those privileges of marriage include:

Accidental death benefit for the surviving spouse of a government employee
Appointment as guardian of a minor
Award of child custody in divorce proceedings
Beneficial owner status of corporate securities
Bill of Rights benefits for victims and witnesses
Burial of service member’s dependents
Certificates of occupation
Consent to post-mortem examination
Continuation of rights under existing homestead leases
Control, division, acquisition, and disposition of community property
Criminal injuries compensation
Death benefit for surviving spouse for government employee
Disclosure of vital statistics records Division of property after dissolution of marriage
Exemption from regulation of condominium sales to owner-occupants
Funeral leave for government employees
Homes of totally disable veterans exempt from property taxes
Income tax deductions, credits, rates exemption, and estimates
Inheritance of land patents
Insurance licenses, coverage, eligibility, and benefits organization of mutual benefits
Legal status with partner’s children
Making, revoking, and objecting to anatomical gifts
Making partner medical decisions
Nonresident tuition deferential waiver
Notice of guardian ad litem proceedings
Notice of probate proceedings
Right to file action for nonsupport
Right to inherit property
Right to sue for tort and death by wrongful act
Right to support after divorce
Right to support from spouse
Veterans’ preference to spouse in public employment
In vitro fertilization coverage

**Daily Heterosexual Privileges**

- I can be pretty sure that my roommate, hallmates and classmates will be comfortable with my sexual orientation and not take issue with being in close proximity to me.

- If I pick up a magazine, watch TV, or play music, I can be certain my sexual orientation will be represented.

- When I talk about my heterosexuality (such as in a joke or talking about my relationships), I will not be accused of pushing my sexual orientation onto others.

- I do not have to fear that if my family or friends find out about my sexual orientation there be economic, emotional, physical or psychological consequences.

- I did not grow up with games that attack my sexual orientation (i.e. Fag Tag or Smear the Queer)
- I am not accused of being abused, warped or psychologically confused because of my sexual orientation.

- I can go home from most meetings, classes and social outings without feeling excluded, fearful, attacked, isolated, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, stereotyped or feared because of my sexual orientation.

- I am never to speak for everyone who is heterosexual.

- I can be sure that my classes will require curricular materials that testify to the existence of people with my sexual orientation.

- People don’t ask why I made my choice of sexual orientation.

- People don’t ask why I made my choice to be public about my sexual orientation.

- I do not have to fear revealing my sexual orientation to friends/family. It’s assumed.

- My sexual orientation was never associated with a closet.

- People of my gender do not try to convince me to change my sexual orientation.

- I don’t have to defend my heterosexuality.

- I can count on finding a therapist or doctor willing and able to talk about my sexuality.

- I do not worry that people will harass me because of my sexual orientation.

- I have no need to qualify my straight identity.

- My masculinity/femininity is not challenged because of my sexual orientation.

- I am not identified by my sexual orientation.

- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my sexual orientation will not work against me.

- Whether I rent or go to the movie theater, I can be sure I will not have trouble finding my sexual orientation represented.

- I can walk in public with my significant other and not have people double-take or stare.

- I can choose to not think politically about my sexual orientation.
- I do not have to worry about telling my roommate about my sexuality. It is assumed I am a heterosexual.

- I can remain oblivious of the language and culture of the LGBTQ community without feeling in my own culture any penalty for such oblivion.

- I can go for months without being called “Straight”.

- I’m not grouped because of my sexual orientation.

- My individual behavior does not reflect on people who identify as heterosexual.

- In everyday conversation, the language my friends and I use generally assumes my sexual orientation.

- People do not assume I am experienced in sex (or that I even gave it!) merely because of my sexual orientation.

- I can kiss a person of the opposite sex without being watched and stared at.

- Nobody calls me “straight” with maliciousness.

- People can use terms that describe my sexual orientation and mean positive things (i.e., “straight as an arrow” or “standing up straight” or “straightened out”) instead of demeaning terms (i.e., “eww that’s so gay” or “queer”).

- I am not asked to think about why I am straight.

- I can be open about my sexual orientation without worrying about my job.

- I can, all other things being equal, expect to be able to marry my significant other in the church of my choice and in the state of my choice.

- I can be reasonably sure, if I need prayerful counsel and spiritual guidance in my relationship with my spouse or significant other, that I can find a religious-oriented counselor or literature that will cater to me.

- If I decide to pursue a relationship which turns out badly, I can expect that my friends will only admonish me for a lack of discernment at most - they will not use the failed relationship as evidence of my “brokenness”, or use the incident as an opportunity to steer me toward a celibate life, or to change my sexual orientation.

- I can be confident that the loving, nurturing relationship I share with my spouse or significant
other will not be likened to incest, pedophilia or bestiality by others.

- If I ask someone for sincere and frank advice about my relationship, I can be certain that they will not advise me to change my sexual orientation.

- If I have been cohabiting or having premarital sex with my significant other, and a Christian friend decides to rebuke us, I can expect that they will, at most, advise us to refrain from sexual contact until we are married - not that we cease our relationship entirely (provided there are no other issues which would make our relationship inadvisable). In any case, their rebuke will not involve a call for us to change our sexual orientation.

- I can hold hands with (or even kiss) my spouse or significant other in a public place without worrying that people will shy their children away from the "display".

- I don’t have to worry about being separated or uninvited to an event because of the sex of my spouse or significant other.

- I do not have to worry that the legality of my marriage will be put to a vote - a vote in which the majority of those voting to dissolve that marriage are from the religious community.

- I do not have to fear being fired or being pressured to resign from any business due to the discovery of my sexual orientation.

- I will never feel the need to exclude, isolate, hide, suppress or oppress, a part of who I am within my friendships, family or other social circles—and be encouraged to do so, simply because of my sexuality.

- I can be pro-gay - even vocally so; and while a good number of Christians will not support my pro-gay stance, I can be certain that they will, at most, admonish me to change my opinion; they will not demand that I cease any and all intimate relationships I may have with any other persons of my sexual orientation.

- I can go to any church, knowing nothing of their politics or theology, and not dread that the topic of this week's sermon will be the "evil" or the "sin" or the "problem" of my sexual orientation.

- I will never have to worry about a church admonishing or advising my family to disown or repudiate me simply because of my sexuality.
- I do not fear being pressured into treatment or conversion therapy if I am open about my attraction to members of the opposite sex.

- I do not have to fear that doors will be closed on me by businesses, investments, connections, employment or references based on my sexual orientation.

- I know that, all other things being equal, any acts of violence will not be motivated, even in part, by my sexual orientation.

- I can volunteer for children or youth work without being deemed "unsafe" due to my sexual orientation.

- I can be sure that, while growing up, I can expect to be exposed to positive role models who share my sexual orientation.

- I don’t have to worry about my children being taught that their parent’s relationship is an abomination. If I am still growing up, I will not learn that my sexual orientation is an abomination.

- All other things being equal, I can be reasonably certain that the quality of my upbringing or the competency of my parents will not be brought into question because of my sexual orientation.

- Growing up, I can expect to receive guidance about healthy sexual expression and relationships.

- All education and advice concerning family planning, upbringing and child-rearing will be specifically (and often deliberately) tailored to my sexual orientation.

- My sexual orientation is not a barrier to my adopting children through an adoption agency, or fostering children.

- Should I divorce or be separated from my spouse or significant other, and that person should later decide that they wish to change their sexual orientation, or discover that they had been living as a person of the wrong sexual orientation all along, society will likely be more sympathetic to my case, should the custody of our children become an issue, regardless of my
abilities as a parent.

- I can be sure that no Christian church of any denomination will immediately reject me for my sexual orientation.

- Any time I sin (sexually or otherwise), my sin will not be automatically attributed to my sexual orientation.

- I can probably find favorable reviews in many Christian book, film or theatre reviews of books, films or shows featuring intimate, loving relationships between two people of my sexual orientation.

- I do not, if I choose not to, have to be familiar with various biblical interpretations of my sexual orientation, nor will I be expected to justify and reconcile my beliefs with my sexual orientation through biblical exegesis.

- I have the luxury of choosing which denomination I will belong to or which church I will attend based on their doctrinal stance, missionary or charity work, fellowship programs and statement of faith; I am not restricted in my choices based on whether or not the church affirms my sexual orientation.

- If part of my faith involves the belief that same-sex relationships are sinful, then I can openly call all gay Christians to live celibate lives in order to avoid sexual sin - indeed, a vow of celibacy is understood as potentially beneficial in almost all Christian traditions, in certain contexts (Matthew 19:10-12, 1 Corinthians 7:25-35); however, I am under no such compulsion to live a celibate life myself. For me, living a chaste life does not necessarily mean living a celibate life.

- I don’t have to worry about being segregated from others of my gender at Christian events or conferences because my sexuality is known.
Homophobia

Homophobia is a range of negative attitudes and feelings towards homosexuality and people who are identified or perceived as being homosexual. Although the suffix -phobia normally refers to irrational fear, definitions of homophobia have expanded to refer also to antipathy, prejudice, contempt, and aversion, as well as irrational fear. It is observable in critical and hostile behavior such as discrimination and violence on the basis of a perceived non-heterosexual orientation.

In a 1998 address, author, activist, and civil rights leader Coretta Scott King stated that "homophobia is like racism and anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry in that it seeks to dehumanize a large group of people, to deny their humanity, their dignity and personhood."

Among some of the more discussed forms of homophobia are institutionalized homophobia (e.g. religious homophobia and state-sponsored homophobia, lesbophobia – the intersection of homophobia and sexism directed against lesbians, and internalized homophobia – a form of homophobia among people who experience same-sex attraction regardless of whether or not they identify as LGBT.

Two words originate from homophobia: homophobic (adj.) and homophobe (n.), the latter word describing a person who displays homophobia or is thought to do so.

Homophobia can take many forms. Some homophobic people may be subtle in their language and actions, whereas others are overtly hateful and mean. Extreme homophobia can lead to hate crimes and other malicious, hurtful acts against LGBTQ people. Of LGBTQ students, 83.2% report being verbally harassed and 42% report being physically harassed. LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to commit suicide than their straight peers.
Homophobia and You

- Homophobia inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own sex, for fear of being perceived as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.
- Homophobia locks people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self expression.
- Homophobia is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals: those perceived or labeled by others to be gay, lesbian or bisexual; children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents; parents of gay, lesbian or bisexual children; and friends of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals.
- Homophobia compromises human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly, actions that are contrary to their basic humanity.
- Homophobia, combined with sex-phobia, results in the invisibility or erasure of gay, lesbian, or bisexual lives and sexuality in school-based sex education discussion, keeping vital information from students. Such erasures can kill people in the age of AIDS.
- Homophobia is one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chance 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.”
- Homophobia prevents some gay, lesbian and bisexual 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 on their heterosexual spouses and their children.
- Homophobia inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. We are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.
Coming Out

What is “coming out?”
Coming out (of the closet) refers to the lifelong process of someone developing a positive gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (LGBTQ) identity. Working hard to conceal one’s thoughts and feelings is called “being in the closet.” It’s often a long and difficult struggle, particularly in the initial step – admitting/recognizing to oneself that he/she is LGBTQ. This is often the most important and difficult aspect of coming out because it involves much soul searching and introspection as well as a healthy sense of self-appreciation and acceptance.

When the person is comfortable, he/she will often disclose his/her orientation to others (family, friends, coworkers, etc.). Yet, coming out to others isn’t easy, as it often involves risks, especially if the other person has, or is perceived to have, homophobic attitudes.

What might LGBTQ people be afraid of when considering coming out?

- Rejection (loss of friendships)
- Gossip
- Harassment/abuse
- Being disowned by their families
- Loss of financial support
- Being forced to undergo psychotherapy
- Losing their job
- Physical violence
- Losing their children
- Being thrown out of their home

Why come out?
Coming out allows the person to develop as a whole individual, allows for greater empowerment, and is a necessary part of developing a healthy and positive identity. Once “out,” the person is better able to share with others who they are and what is important to them, as well as to develop close and mutually satisfying relationships. Their life becomes more honest and real, and the stress of hiding or keeping a secret and living a double life ends. Isolation and alienation are reduced, allowing for increased interaction with and support from other LGBTQ individuals.

A lifelong process
Coming out is not just a one-time event and does not follow a linear course. For example, each time a person meets new people or starts a new job he/she must decide whether it is safe to come out. In addition, a person might be out to some people (i.e., friends) but closeted around others. Each coming out experience is unique as reactions can be positive or negative.
Coming Out to Families/Friends

Before coming out to their families (particularly parents), LGBTQ individuals should be fully comfortable with their orientation. While each family is unique, many parents go through a range of emotions upon learning their child is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Below are several questions LGBTQ individuals should consider prior to coming out to their parents. More coming out resources can be found on the Parents Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) Web site at: www.pflag.org.

**Are you sure about your sexual orientation?**
Don’t raise the issue unless you’re able to respond with confidence to the question: “Are you sure?” Confusion on your part will increase your parents’ and friends’ confusion and decrease their confidence in your conclusions.

**Are you comfortable with your sexuality?**
If you’re wrestling with guilt and periods of depression, it would be better to wait to tell your parents and friends. Coming out to them may require tremendous energy and strength on your part; it will require a reserve of positive self-image.

**Do you have support?**
In the event that your parents and friends’ reactions devastate you, there should be someone or a group that you can confidently turn to for emotional support and strength. Maintaining your sense of self-worth is critical.

**Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality?**
Your parents and friends may respond based on information they have received from a homophobic society throughout their lifetime. If you’ve done some serious reading on the subject, you’ll be able to assist them by sharing reliable information and research.

**What’s the emotional climate at home?**
If you have the choice of when to tell family, consider the timing. Choose a time when they’re not dealing with such matters as the death of a close friend, pending surgery, or the loss of a job.

**Can you be patient?**
Your parents and friends will require time to deal with this information if they haven’t considered it prior to your sharing. The process may last from six months to two years.
What’s your motive for coming out now?
Hopefully, it is because you love them and are uncomfortable with the distance you feel. Never come out in anger or during an argument, using your sexuality as a weapon.

Do you have available resources?
Homosexuality is a subject most non-gay people know little about. Have available at least one of the following: a book written for parents or friends, a contact for the local or national P-FLAG chapter, or the name of a non-gay counselor who can fairly deal with the issue.

Source: P-FLAG brochure, “Read This Before Coming Out to Your Parents.” (www.pflag.org)

When Someone Comes Out to You

We live in a society that often discriminates against people who are different. We have all been taught to believe that to be “straight” is to be normal. This can cause a great deal of pain for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ) people, as well as those who are questioning. “Coming out,” or disclosing their orientation to others, is an important step in LGBTQ people’s self-acceptance.

Like everyone, LGBTQ people accept themselves better if others accept them. Someone who is “coming out” feels close enough to you and trusts you sufficiently to be honest and risk losing you as a friend. It is difficult to know what to say and do to be a supportive friend to someone who has “come out” to you. Below are some suggestions you may wish to follow.

• Thank your friend for having the courage to tell you. Choosing to tell you means that they have a great deal of respect and trust for you.
• Don’t judge your friend. If you have strong religious or other beliefs about homosexuality, keep them to yourself for now. There will be plenty of time in the future for you to think and talk about your beliefs in light of your friend’s orientation.
• Respect your friend’s confidentiality. They may not be ready to tell others right away and want to tell people in their own way.
• Tell your friend that you still care about them, no matter what. Be the friend you have always been. The main fear for people coming out is that their friends and family will reject them.
• Don’t be too serious. Sensitively worded humor may ease the tension you are both probably feeling.
• Ask any questions you may have, but understand that your friend may not have all the answers. You can save some questions for later or, better yet, you can find
some of the answers together.

- If your friend has a partner, include them in plans as much as you would with any other friend.
- Be prepared to include your friend in more of your plans. They may have lost the support of other friends and family; your time and friendship will be even more precious to them. This may include “family” times like holidays or special celebrations.
- Offer and be available to support your friend as they “come out” to others.
- Call frequently during the time right after your friend has come out to you. This will let them know you are still friends.
- Be prepared for your friend to have mood swings. Coming out can be very traumatic. Anger and depression are common, especially if friends or family have trouble accepting your friend’s orientation. Don’t take mood swings personally. Be flattered you are close enough to risk sharing any feelings of anger or frustration.
- Do what you have always done together. Your friend probably feels that coming out will change everything in their life, and this is frightening. If you always go to the movies on Friday, then continue that.
- Talk about other LGBTQ people you know. If your friend knows you have accepted someone else, they will feel more comfortable that you will accept them.
- Learn about the LGBTQ community. This will allow you to better support your friend and knowing about their world will help prevent you from drifting apart.
- Don’t allow your friend to become isolated. Let them know about organizations and places where they can meet other LGBTQ people or supportive allies.
- If your friend seems afraid about people knowing, there may be a good reason. People are sometimes attacked violently because they are perceived as LGBTQ. Sometimes people are discriminated against in such things as housing and employment. If your friend is discriminated against illegally, you can help them in pursuing their rights.
- Don’t worry that your friend may have attractions or feelings for you that you may not share. If they have more or different feelings than you have, these can be worked through. It’s the same as if someone of the opposite sex had feelings for you that you don’t share. Either way, it’s probably not worth losing a friend over.
- It’s never too late. If someone has come out to you before and you feel badly about how you handled it, you can always go back and try again.
Coming Out – Cultural Issues

African Americans and Coming Out
Coming out can be one of the most challenging events in one’s life, but also one of the most rewarding. Being attracted to someone of the same sex or understanding that one’s gender identity is different from his/her biological sex can be frightening. Some African Americans feel pressure to prioritize their different identities.

For many African Americans, coming out involves additional cultural factors that make the process more challenging but no less rewarding. Some of those challenges include associations with homophobic churches, strong family foundations that emphasize heterosexuality, homophobia in the black community and racism in the broader gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. Thanks, however, to brave LGBTQ African American activists and their allies effecting change in the church and the community, there is more support and acceptance than ever before.

Latinas/Latinos and Coming Out
Although Latina/o Americans come from various cultural backgrounds, many who come out as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender share similar experiences and challenges. Some, who were raised Roman Catholic, must reconcile themselves with the church’s teachings that to act on one’s homosexuality is sinful. Language differences often make finding resources and support difficult, and a lack of LGBTQ Latinas/os in media and entertainment perpetuates invisibility. Fortunately, however, anecdotal evidence suggests that a growing number of Latinas/os are coming out.

Many LGBTQ people of color report that after they come out, they are able to communicate better with their family and friends. Coming out at home, at work, in churches and schools will also further the visibility of LGBTQ people and help ensure that those who are still in the closet know they are not alone.


Resources for LGBTQ People of Color
The Blackstripe for LGBTQ people of African Descent (www.blackstripe.com)
Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (www.gapa.org)
LGBT Youth of Color for all people of color (www.youthresource.com)
The National Latino/a LGBTQ Organization (www.llego.org)
LGBTQ South Asians (www.trikone.org)
The White Ribbon Campaign Japanese Resources (www.wrcjp.org/yourself.html)
Becoming an Ally

To be an effective ally, it is important for people to reflect upon and understand their own beliefs and attitudes about the LGBTQ community. There are four basic levels of becoming an ally:

**Awareness:** Explore how you are different from and similar to LGBTQ people. Gain this awareness through talking with LGBTQ people, attending workshops (such as Safe Space), and self-examination.

**Knowledge/Education:** Begin to understand policies, laws and practices and how they affect LGBTQ people. Educate yourself on the many communities and cultures of LGBTQ people.

**Skills:** This is an area that is difficult for many people. You must learn to take your awareness and knowledge and learn to communicate it to others. You can acquire these skills by attending workshops, role-playing with friends or peers, and developing support connections.

**Action:** This is the most important and frightening step. Despite any potential fears you may have, action is the only way to effect change in the society as a whole.

*Things to keep in mind about becoming an ally:*

- Have a good understanding of sexual orientation and be comfortable with your own.

- Be aware of the coming out process and realize that it is not a one-time event. The coming out process is unique to LGBTQ people and brings challenges that are often not understood by those who are non-LGBTQ.

- Understand that LGBTQ people receive the same messages about homosexuality and bisexuality as everyone else. Thus, they often suffer from internalized homophobia and heterosexism. It is important to recognize the risks of coming out and also to challenge some of the internal oppression.

- Remember that LGBTQ people are also a diverse group. Each community within the larger gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community has unique needs, goals and beliefs.

- A discussion about heterosexism and homophobia quite often includes the topic of HIV and AIDS. Although we recognize that all people are at risk, the reality is that many victims of this dreaded disease have been members of the LGBTQ community. Knowledge and understanding in this area is a key to help eliminate myths and be supportive of those who have lost friends and loved ones.
Definition of Becoming an Ally

What an ally does:

- Uses appropriate language. Learns new terms as language and terminology evolve.
- Confronts inappropriate language and behaviors.
- Supports activities, policies, etc. that address LGBTQ concerns.
- Supports other allies.
- Builds relationships with other oppressed groups.
- Regards people who are LGBTQ as whole human beings.
- Takes responsibility for equalizing power.
- Asks questions.
- Appreciates the risk people who are LGBTQ take in coming out.
- Appreciates the efforts of people who are LGBTQ to point out the mistakes an ally might make.
- Takes risks.
- Educates self on LGBTQ cultures, homophobia, and heterosexism.
- Begins to educate others about LGBTQ cultures, homophobia, and heterosexism.
- Actively participate and identify homophobic & heterosexist institutional practices or individual actions and works to change them.
- Addresses people who are LGBTQ and not their behavior.
- Continues to work on their level of acceptance.
- Acknowledges the risks in our society faced by people who are LGBTQ.
- Supports changes in others.
- Values friendships.
- Becomes knowledgeable on issues which often concern people who are LGBTQ.
- Seeks to act 100% as an ally -- no strings attached.
- Openly and honestly expresses their feelings.

Displaying a Safe Space sticker means:

- I am someone who supports LGBTQ people, and I am courageous.
- I can make a difference in the lives of LGBTQ members of the campus community.
- I am a “safe person” to whom someone who is LGBTQ can freely talk without fear of harassment or discrimination. This means I am committed to providing support and to maintaining confidentiality.
- I will work to confront homophobia and heterosexism by demonstrating my support of people in various ways, such as speaking up when a homophobic joke is told.
planning awareness activities, or just being there.
■ I will work to create a positive environment for ALL people. Even though I may be an ally for the LGBTQ community, my actions mean little if I simultaneously put down other groups on the basis of their race, culture, religion, gender, social status, or physical and mental abilities.
■ I do not have all the answers, but I can provide resources to others and will continue learning about the issues faced by LGBTQ people.

Qualities of an ally:

■ Has worked to develop an understanding of homosexuality/bisexuality and the needs of people who are LGBTQ.
■ Chooses to align with people who are LGBTQ and respond to their needs.
■ Believes that it is in his/her self-interest to be an ally.
■ Is committed to the personal growth required.
■ Is quick to take pride and appreciate success.
■ Expects support from other allies.
■ Able to acknowledge and articulate how patterns of oppression have operated in their own lives.
■ Expects to make some mistakes, but does not use this as an excuse for non-action.
■ Understands that non-LGBTQ allies help initiate change towards personal, institutional, and societal justice and equality.
■ Knows that he/she is responsible for humanizing or empowering their role in society, particularly as their roles relate to responding to people who are LGBTQ.
■ Promotes a sense of community with LGBTQ communities and teaches others about the importance of outreach.
■ Has a good sense of humor.
■ Does not force his/her help on people who are LGBTQ.
■ Assesses her/his own values about equality and how people should be treated.
■ Is patient.
■ Is willing to dismantle heterosexism and homophobia, even if it means giving up certain comforts, privileges, unearned advantages, etc.
■ Supports people who are LGBTQ with time and space and not just words.
■ Shows people who are LGBTQ that support is available, whether they choose to use it or not.
Coming Out as an Ally

Coming Out as Straight Allies
When LGBTQ people acknowledge their sexual orientation or gender identity to themselves or another, it is known as “coming out.” Coming out also applies to our straight allies as they acknowledge that they know and support a LGBTQ person and then take the next step by coming out about it to others. Some make a conscious decision to come out to others, and some experience a defining moment that spurs them to speak out. Other straight allies may not even know gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people but are motivated by the injustice and discrimination they face.

“Guilt by Association”
Some people find that coming out to others as the friend or family member of someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is intimidating – not unlike how some LGBTQ people feel when coming out. Other heterosexuals hesitate to come out due to the idea that if you are outspoken about LGBTQ issues or people, you must be one yourself.

Parents as Allies
It has been said that when gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender children come out, their parents go in the closet. Part of this angst is borne from the misconception that having a LGBTQ child means that the parents must have done something wrong in how they raised the child. One way parents can overcome some of their negative feelings is by educating themselves about the issues and talking with other parents of LGBTQ children. Through groups such as Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) parents are able to realize that they aren’t the only ones and can move from reacting to the news to acting on behalf of their child.
Most parents, once they are more comfortable with their gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender child, take their next step and come out to others. It may be when a family friend innocently asks when a son or daughter is “finally going to get married,” or when a relative tells an anti-gay joke at the family reunion. Some parents stop their journey once they have come out to family, while others come out to everyone possible.

Why Come Out as an Ally?
Coming out as a straight ally may be an extremely challenging experience, but many find that it is unexpectedly rewarding. Some may think that advocating on behalf of LGBTQ equality is solely the responsibility of those who are affected by the inequality.

Like LGBTQ people, straight allies will find that coming out is not a one-time event, but rather a lifelong journey. For more resources on being a straight ally, visit: www.hrc.org/ncop/straightallies.
How Allies Can Help

Allies play a crucial role in the lives of LGBTQ people. Here are a few things you can do to help support the LGBTQ community:

■ Remember that not everyone is heterosexual/straight.
■ Use inclusive language. Use “partner,” or other gender-neutral terms, instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” when talking to others.
■ Stress that everything brought to you is confidential.
■ Confront homophobic and anti-gay jokes and comments.
■ If you are unable to remain impartial, refer a LGBTQ person to another resource or person who can help them. Please do not display a Safe Space sticker on your residence hall door or office.
■ If someone comes out to you, respond with warmth and friendship. Remember that coming out to someone can be very difficult for LGBTQ people, so be honored that he/she chose you to tell.
■ Refresh yourself on your institution’s nondiscrimination policy.
■ Participate in W&L LGBTQ Awareness events.
■ Participate in a Safe Space training workshop and display your Safe Space sticker in your residence hall or office.
■ Familiarize yourself with campus and community resources. Refer people to those resources as necessary.
■ Continue educating yourself about LGBTQ issues by attending related presentations and reading magazines, newspapers and books.

Source: Adapted from “Thirteen Things You Can Do” by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alliance at Iowa State University.
How to be an Ally

- **Know Thyself** – Be aware of what your own thoughts and ideas are on LGBTQ issues. Decide where you stand, and if you can be supportive regarding all facets of LGBTQ issues. If you have not thought seriously about the issues, you can not...

- **Role Model** – Your students need to know what to say, what to do, and how to do it when it comes to creating an inclusive environment for LGBTQ students. Be vocal about your support of the community, and let your students know why you feel that way. This way, you can...

- **Confront Homophobia** – Many heterosexual students harbor a great deal of fear and mythology about their LGBTQ peers. When you become aware of homophobic acts/discussions, confront them. When the opportunity arises to discuss LGBTQ issues, do not shy away from it. In this way, you will help to...

- **Combat Heterosexism** – So often, students assume that everyone they know is heterosexual. That is rarely true. However, in only safe environments do members of the LGBTQ community feel comfortable “coming out.” Whenever you see that students are assuming heterosexuality, work to address it, because using inclusive language is a first step to creating a safe environment. Know that heterosexism is connected to all other forms of...
Oppression – Appreciating diversity within your organization usually starts with a conversation about how the members are all the same, and then how the members are all different. How does your group reach out to those who are different from them racially, economically, culturally, etc? Is there any attempt? If not…

Do Something – Do not be immobilized by the fear of doing something “wrong” in regards to discussing LGBTQ issues. The more mistakes you make, the more you and your students will learn. Start by seeing what resources are available. From there, do what you can to make everyone feel more connected. Most importantly…

Do not wait for a LGBTQ student to come out to your group to begin discussing these issues. Take the responsibility to start the discussion now.
University Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation


It is the policy of the University of Miami that no person within the jurisdiction thereof shall, on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, veteran status, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination or harassment (including all forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence) under any program or activity of the University, regardless of whether such program or activity occurs on-campus or off-campus.

The aforementioned regulations and policies prohibit retaliation against a person who complains about discrimination in the academic/work environment, files a charge of discrimination, or participates in a discrimination/harassment investigation. Employees, students, applicants and clients of the University have the right to file a grievance when they have reason to believe a violation of these policies may have occurred. Grievances should be directed to the Workplace Equity and Performance Office.

The addresses and telephone numbers of the Workplace Equity and Performance Offices are:

Coral Gables Campus
Gables One Tower, Suite 100 (LC:2903)
Phone: 305-284-3064
Fax: 305-284-6214

Miller School of Medicine
Dominion Tower, Suite 305 (LC: M-845)
Phone: 305-243-7203
Fax: 305-243-6521
How to Report Incidents of Bias

Members of the UMMSM community who have experienced any form of harassment/bias/assault because of their gender identity/sexual orientation or because they support LGBTQ people can report incidents on the MedEdu website, under the Physicianship and Professionalism section, to the Office of Student Affairs, or to the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs

http://mededu.miami.edu/MedEd/PIRS_Dev/PIRS_System/Submit_Incident_Report/Index.htm

Office of Student Affairs: Dr. Robert Irwin
rirwin@med.miami.edu

Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs: Dr. Stephanie Brown
sbrown5@med.miami.edu

LGBTQ Support & Resources

ON CAMPUS

Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs

Committed to developing a healthcare workplace that will fulfill our commitment to caring for a diverse, local and international community.

http://facultyaffairs.med.miami.edu/diversity-and-multicultural-affairs/

Canes Care for Canes

‘Canes Care for ‘Canes is a campus-wide action-oriented initiative that promotes the ideal of a caring and responsible community where students respect and support one another, especially if one is encountering difficulties or challenges and needs assistance.

http://www.miami.edu/sa/index.php/canes_care_for_canes

MedicOUT
MedicOUT aims to create a more supportive environment for LGBTQ individuals both on the medical campus and in the medical community by raising awareness of LGBTQ health issues and advocating for the rights of LGBT patients.

Medicout@gmail.com

UPride

UPride is the undergraduate LGTBQA (and etc.) and straight ally student organization on campus.

upride.studorg@miami.edu

OFF CAMPUS

STATE/LOCAL

Pridelines Youth Services—provides safe space, social support, skills building, leadership development and referrals to mental health, health care and support services for LGBTQ youth and their straight allies.

http://pridelines.org/

Safe Schools South Florida—comprised of education professionals committed to training other education professionals and school staff, youth service provider agencies, parents/guardians, families and communities how to create safer schools and communities where all students can learn and thrive.

http://safeschoolssouthflorida.org/

The Alliance for GLBTQ Youth—committed to providing prevention, early intervention social services, and advocacy to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth, their families, and communities.

http://www.glbtqalliance.com/
**Aqua Foundation for Women**—serves as the funding catalyst for lesbian, bisexual, and transgender wellness and equality in South Florida through grants, scholarships, and initiatives.


**Equality Florida**—largest civil rights organization dedicated to securing full equality for Florida’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.


**SAVE Dade**—South Florida’s leading organization dedicated to protecting people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) against discrimination.


**YES Institute**—prevents suicide and ensures the healthy development of all youth through powerful communication and education on gender and orientation.

[https://www.yesinstitute.org/](https://www.yesinstitute.org/)

**HOTLINES**

The Trevor Helpline: 1-866-4-U-TREVOR (1-866-488-7386)

www.LGBTQNationalHelpCenter.org
  - National Help Hotline: 1-888-843-4564
  - National Youth Talkline (provides phone and email peer counseling through age 25):
    1-800-246-PRIDE(7743)
  - OnLine Peer-Support Chat (IM) available


National AIDS Hotline: 1-800-342-AIDS

**WEBSITES**

**Education**

Consortium of Higher Education Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Resource Professionals:
www.lgbtcampus.org
Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN): Aims to end anti-gay bias in K-12 schools, Resources for teachers, students and allies; Research, curriculum and lesson plan ideas; Links to local GLSEN chapters. www.GLSEN.org.

The Matthew Shepard Foundation: Comprehensive resource for LGBTQ youth: www.matthewshepard.org; www.matthewsplace.com

Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center: www.lyric.org

Crisis and suicide prevention: www.thetrevorproject.org

The Lambda 10 Project: Targeted for LGBT fraternity/sorority students; Great resources for Gay & Greek issues. www.lambda10.org

**News and Current Events**

The Advocate - The national gay & lesbian newsmagazine Internet site: www.advocate.com

Planet Out: www.planetout.com

**Law**

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund: www.lambdalegal.org

Transgender Law & Policy Institute: http://www.transgenderlaw.org/college/index.htm

**Human Rights**

Human Rights Campaign (HRC): Link to National Coming Out Project; News, events, politics; Resources for LGBTQ families and workplace issues. www.hrc.org

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation: www.glaad.org

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force: www.thetaskforce.org
**Transgender**

Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (Gender PAC): www.gpac.org

International Foundation for Gender Education: www.ifge.org

Intersex Society of North America: www.isna.org

**Parents/Family**

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG): Coming out issues & resources for families, friends, allies. www.pflag.org

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE): Resources for kids & parents; Links to nationwide chapters. www.colage.org

**Religion**

Soulforce: www.soulforce.org

DignityUSA: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Catholics: www.dignityusa.org

Metropolitan Community Churches: www.mccchurch.org

Affirmation International (Gay & Lesbian Mormons): www.affirmation.org


**Other**

National Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Centers: Up-to-date LGBTQ headline news; Nationwide listing of LGBTQ community centers. www.lgbtcenters.org

National Campus Pride: Online community for student leaders of LGBTQ organizations; Information on fundraising, leadership, health, coming out, and more. www.campuspride.net

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force: Up-to-date LGBTQ news & great online library. www.ngltf.org