

Best Practices For Discussion of GLBTQ Issues

(adapted from Soulforce)

To help affirm LGBTQ persons, DO:

- learn and use, the individual's preferred terms, names and pronouns.
- treat each individual AS an individual, without regard or reference to their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.
- respect others' privacy rights. Many TGBLQ persons are not "out" fully in all situations / frames of reference, and it is their right to decide how when to inform others. Do not do it for them.
- be aware of the likely societal privileges that come with being heterosexual.
- educate yourself about issues facing BGTGLQ persons.
- assume that LGBTQ persons are present but not "out" in all settings, so as to help create a safe environment for them everywhere.
- remember that many persons will view a rejection of their orientation or gender identity/ expression as a personal rejection, and as a result will respond emotionally.
- Note that the order of the letters in the acronym may vary in precedence to indicate no particular prominence or superiority, as in "GLBTQ" or "QTGBL" and sometimes includes the initial "I" for intersex.

To avoid offending, AVOID:

- referring to sexual orientation or gender identity as a "choice." Science teaches us that persons choose their behavior, but not their orientation or gender.
- specific terms with "loaded" meanings:
 - "sexual preference" implies that sexuality is a choice
 - "homosexual" is an outdated, clinical term
 - "gay lifestyle" – as with heterosexuals, there are many BTGLQ subcultures, so this is by definition a misnomer
 - "It" or "He/She", tranny/ trannie for transgender persons. These are very offensive.
- assuming that everyone is heterosexual or cisgender.
- laughing along with anti-gay, homophobic, transphobic or heterosexist jokes or remarks
- well-meaning statements that are still judgmental and demeaning, such as "I still think you are a good person," or (to a transgender man), "You look like a 'real' man."
- excluding GLBQT persons or their partners from group activities.
- showing nonverbal signs of disapproval or discomfort.
- allowing orientation or gender identity/ expression to color your impression of a person.

Other statements and questions to avoid – generally don't ask personal questions that you would not ask a heterosexual or cisgender person, but specifically avoid:

- To a transgender or gender nonconforming person:
 - Are you “really” a man or a woman?
 - Have you had the surgery yet?
 - Are you gay or straight?
 - Can I see the pictures?
 - What is your real name?
- To a lesbian, gay or bisexual person:
 - Which of you is the “man” and which the “woman”?
 - Have you tried being with the opposite sex?
 - Are you attracted to so-and-so?
 - You don't look gay.
 - Why do you have to flaunt being gay?