

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANSGENDER (LGBT) RESOURCE CENTER

Dealing with Homophobia

Heterosexism is so deeply ingrained in our society we often hardly even notice it. The questions below were put together to help in that awareness and to give you ideas about things you can do to be supportive of lesbians and gay men. These questions are useful both for heterosexual audiences and to help lesbians/gay men/bisexual people look at internalized homophobia.

1. Do you laugh at jokes whose humor depends upon stereotypes (usually negative) of lesbians, gay men or bisexual people? Do you tell these jokes in the classroom? If students make a humorous remark based on a stereotype, do you point that out or do you just laugh?
2. Do you use dehumanizing slang: for example, homos, fags, pansies, dykes, lezzies? Note that queer is seen differently by various sub communities. Some want to reclaim queer as an inclusive word for lesbian, gay, bi and trans people. Others find it as offensive as those in the list above. Others feel that queer acceptable within the LGBT community but not when used by or heterosexuals. An academic area is called queer studies by its proponents. Use queer at your own risk.
3. When you hear of someone being fired or denied promotion or tenure (or limited in any way) because of the person's sexual orientation, especially in your own college or university, do you speak out against that decision and offer your help to the person involved?
4. Are you consciously aware of the group you are generalizing about-for example, when you say "people," do you really mean everyone? When you say "women," do you really mean heterosexual women? If so, do you make the more narrow specification when you teach or write?
5. Do you assume that, because someone speaks in support of gay/lesbian issues, that person is homosexual?
6. Do you identify yourself as heterosexual (or let yourself be assumed so) when homosexuality is a topic of discussion or when confronting people about derogatory remarks? Why? Will you risk making mistakes in what you say about homosexuality, without simultaneously justifying that mistake by stating your heterosexuality?
7. Do you respond to newspapers & other media which put down lesbians, gay men, bisexuals or transgender people?
8. Do you participate in altering city ordinances or other laws which limit the freedom of lesbians, gay men & bisexuals? Do you participate in acquisition of civil rights in employment, housing, public

accommodations, insurance, credit, education, etc. for lesbians, gay men & bisexuals? Do you protest harassment on the basis of sexual orientation by law enforcement officials?

9. When speaking of couples, do you include gay and lesbian couples?
10. Do you assume the person you are speaking to is heterosexual? For example, do you say, "Do you have a girlfriend?" or "Do you have a boyfriend" rather than, "Do you have a lover (or spouse, partner, life-mate)?"
11. Do you respect the need for secrecy of persons you know to be gay, lesbian or bisexual? If someone asks you whether or not Janet Doe is a lesbian, do you say, "You should ask her," even when you know her to be heterosexual? or bisexual? or lesbian?
12. When speaking to students or peers about sexuality, do you present homosexuality and heterosexuality as equally valid orientations? Do you press other adults, faculty, administrators, etc. to do the same?