

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

**Imagine How You'd Feel**  
(10 Minutes)

Purpose: This guided fantasy gives people the opportunity to feel what it's like to be ridiculed, excluded and discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation. In this case, heterosexual orientation. It was developed by students at Cornell University and by M. Rochlin. Feel free to shorten it if you need to.

**EXERCISE** (6 minutes)

Script: We're going to do a guided fantasy now that gives you a chance to feel what it's like to be hated and excluded because of your sexual orientation. The fantasy assumes that you, the listener, are heterosexual. Even if you happen to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning, concentrate on the feelings it touches in you.

I would like you now to concentrate on my voice and how you feel... not what you think. Don't rationalize or intellectualize, simply feel. Ask yourself what emotions are affecting you.

Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Let your body relax. Notice you breathing, in and out, in and out. Relax all the muscles in your body.

I'm going to ask you to imagine a world that's very different from one you currently live in. Because it's different, it requires you to stretch your experience. Let yourself experience and imagine as fully as you can. Rather than judging yourself for what comes up, just notice and record in your mind without editing. If you feel pressure to edit, simply notice that you have the feeling. If you become distracted at any point, just notice that and return to the process. The more you can be with your experience, the more you will get out of this exercise.

Imagine for a while that you live in a society in which the majority of people are lesbian or gay. The entire society is set up for homosexuality – it's the way things are. By the way, having children is no problem: adoption, artificial insemination and other methods are used. Children are raised by parents who are both of the same sex. So, your parents are the same sex, your peers are all lesbian or gay, and everyone you've ever met is gay... but you are heterosexual.

How do you feel having your sexual orientation be in the minority?

How does it feel having to make a decision about admitting your heterosexuality to yourself? To others?

What's the difference between flaunting your heterosexuality and asserting your identity?

How does it feel to hear "straight" jokes from your family and friends?

How does it feel to have religious authorities – perhaps even your own pastor or rabbi – saying your feelings are wicked or sinful?

How does it feel when you can't understand why you have certain desires, desires that involve fantasies about the other sex, that no one around you seems to share?

How does it feel when you turn on the TV or open a magazine and all the ads are for people unlike you? Always those ads about what toothpaste men should use to attract the best men, about the perfect wine for two women in love. Never anything for people of different sexes who are attracted to each other. Nothing for heterosexuals.

How does it feel to think you are the only one attracted to the other sex – no one else in the world is like you? Who do you talk to about it? Who can you risk telling your secret to?

If you are a woman, how does it feel to be asked each time you call home, "When are you bringing your girlfriend home to us?" Or if you are a man, "Where's your boyfriend? Why, I must have dated dozens of boys when I was your age."

How does it feel when everyone always assumes you are gay or lesbian, never allowing for the possibility that you are straight?

How does it feel when not only do you have to hide the fact that you may want a sexual relationship with the other sex, but you have to pretend that you want one with someone of the same sex?

How does it feel to know that you can never raise children because society tells you that you are harmful to children and awards them only to lesbian and gay couples?

How does it feel to know you might lose your job or your apartment or your health insurance just because someone suspects you're heterosexual... and to have no protection from the law?

How does it feel to be assaulted by a hetero-basher, but to not be able to go to the police about it?

How does it feel to be always, always, aware of what you say, of how you act? Aware of things you have to do in order to be considered homosexual? Aware of the things you would never dare do, because you might be suspected of being heterosexual?

What does it feel like to be asked and have to answer questions like these:

What do you think caused your heterosexuality?

When and how did you first decide you were heterosexual?

Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you might grow out of?

Isn't it possible that all you need is a good gay or lesbian lover?

If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn't prefer that?

Your heterosexuality doesn't offend me as long as you don't try to force it on me.

Why do you people feel compelled to seduce others into your sexual orientation?

If you chose to nurture children, would you want them to be heterosexual knowing the problems they would face?

The great majority of child molesters are heterosexual. Do you really consider it safe to expose your children to heterosexual teachers?

Why do you insist on being so obvious, making a public spectacle of your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet?

Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex? Why are heterosexuals so promiscuous?

There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed to help you change if you really want to. Have you considered aversion therapy?

Script: Okay. Now open your eyes.

### **DISCUSSION** (4 minutes)

How did that feel? Any comments or questions you would like to share?

Wait for response.

This exercise invariably stimulates a lot of discussion. If you have time, you might want to finish with a general awareness role play in which participants feel firsthand what it's like to be invisible. Could be a child coming out to parents or a worker coming out on the job.