



Intro to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE)

Target Grade: 6-8

Length: 60 minutes

Learning Objectives: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Differentiate among the three components of SOGIE – sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression
- Name at least 3 sexual orientation identities
- Name at least 3 gender identities
- Name at least 3 forms of gender expression
- Explain how a baby's sex is determined at birth and how it may/may not relate to a person's inside identity
- Understand ways to use affirming language and practices

Standards Met:

- **National Standard GI.8.IC.1:** Demonstrate ways to communicate respectfully with and about people of all gender identities
- **National Standard SO.8.IC.1:** Demonstrate ways to communicate respectfully with and about people of all sexual orientations
- **National Standard SO.8.CC.2:** Define sexual identity and explain a range of identities related to sexual orientation (e.g. heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, two-spirit, asexual, pansexual)
- **New Jersey Standard 2.1.8.SSH.1:** Differentiate between gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation

Materials Needed: Intro to SOGIE slide deck

Preparations: Facilitator should read through the PowerPoint slide deck to familiarize themselves with the content and have it pre-loaded as the students enter the learning space. Facilitator should prepare five identities that they will share with the class as part of the identities activity and adjust the visuals on the corresponding slide as needed.

Procedure:

1. **Introduction** - With slide 2 of the PowerPoint, start by introducing yourself as the instructor with name, job position, and pronouns. Advance to slide 3 and review guidelines for conversation. Facilitators can also ask the classroom if they have any guidelines they would like to add for the conversation for the day. Advance to slide 4 and review the goals for the day's class.
2. **Learning about SOGIE – Identities activity** – Go to slide 5 and tell the class that the first thing they'll be doing is learning about SOGIE. Go to slide 6 and ask, "Can anyone tell me what an identity is?" Field answers from the classroom. After students have responded, say, "An identity is anything that makes us, US! It's something special about you that makes you YOU. We'll be talking a lot about identities today."

Say "Let's begin by exploring some of our own identities." Ask students to think of 5 things or 5 identities that make up who they are (students may write them on a piece of paper if they wish but it is not necessary). Begin by modeling your own identities! Then, give them a few minutes to come up with their identities. Ask for students to share some of their identities that they came up with. After they have shared, ask "What was it like to come up with those things, easy, hard? Were some more important than others?" Field responses from students. Advance to slide 7 and read the takeaway from the identities activity.

3. **Learning about SOGIE – Mini lecture and vocab activity** – Go to slide 8 and say, "SOGIE is a term that stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression. No matter who you are or where you come from, everyone has a sexual orientation, a gender identity, and a way they express that identity. We're going to go a little out of order first, because understanding gender identity will help us understand everything else." Go to slide 9 and say, "When we talk about gender identity, we're really talking about two main ingredients –sex assigned at birth and inside identity." Go to slide 10 and say, "How do we determine this baby's sex? Doctors usually look at one thing in particular – the baby's external sex organs, or genitals."

Ask, "What else could they use to determine this baby's sex?" Allow students time to offer answers if they have any, then say "Some other common characteristics used are internal reproductive organs like ovaries, a uterus, or testes; chromosomes; and the hormones that the body produces." Advance to slide 11 and go over the differences between someone who is assigned female at birth, assigned male at birth, and someone who is intersex. Go to slide 12 and ask, "Now what about that other ingredient – inside identity? That's the way you feel inside, regardless of what your body may look like or what other people think." Go to slide 13 and explain that "In Latin, the root "cis" means "stays the same or not changing." If someone's sex assigned at birth matches who they feel they are on the inside, they may be considered cisgender. So if someone was assigned male at birth and then grows up and feels like a boy, he may identify as a cisgender male. In Latin, the root "trans" means "changing or moving". If

someone's sex assigned at birth does match who they feel they are on the inside – they may consider themselves transgender. Advance to slide 14 and say, “Transgender is a category of genders – kind of like an umbrella! Many different identities fall under this “umbrella” term, including trans men and trans women. Nonbinary people can also fall under this umbrella. Has anyone ever heard the word nonbinary? Does anyone know what it means? Nonbinary just means someone who doesn't feel 100% like a boy or 100% like a girl 100% of the time. It doesn't mean that someone has to feel 50-50, or that they have to identify as a girl or a boy at all. Many nonbinary people feel like their own gender, a totally unique thing that's special to them!”

Ask students if they have any questions about gender identity. Advance to slide 15 and say “Now we're going to talk about gender expression. Gender expression is the way that we express our gender to the world. It's things we do on purpose to make us feel good about our bodies and about the way people see us.” Go to slide 16 and say “Think about the things you wear, the ways you act, and the things you do to show other people what gender you are. What are some examples?” Wait for responses from the classroom, then advance the slide and read through the list of examples of ways people can express their gender.

Go to slide 17 and say “Let's talk about pronouns for a second. We all use pronouns for each other every single day. Every person in this room likely has pronouns, or a way they like to be referred to. Some people use “she/her” which is usually a more feminine pronoun set. Other people use “he/him” which is typically more masculine. Other people use “they/them” which is a more neutral set of pronouns. Some people even use multiple!” Ask students, “How can we find out someone's pronouns?” Wait for responses, then say, “The best way to be sure you're using someone's affirming pronouns is to ask. You never know!”

Go to slide 18 and say “Now sexual orientation is probably the one you all are most familiar with. Sexual orientation describes the attraction we feel to other people.” Go to slide 19 and work through the vocab activity. Ask students if there is anyone who wants to volunteer their definitions before showing the answers.

Go to slide 20 and say “Awesome! We've been over SOGIE and what SOGIE means. Now let's move on!”

4. **Being Affirming** Advance to slide 21 and tell the class that next you'll be covering how to be affirming. Ask if anyone knows what being affirming means. Wait to receive answers from the classroom. Go to slide 22 and ask “Think back to the identities activity we did. How would it feel if someone told you one of your identities was wrong? Would any of them hurt more than the others?” Go to slide 23 and ask, “How would it feel if someone else stood up for you? Or even just took a minute to remember your identities and interests? Pretty good, right?” Go to slide 24 and say “So that's part of being affirming.” Read the rest of the contents of the slide about what being affirming is. Go to slide 25 and ask for examples of how we can be affirming of other's identities. Go to slide 26 and

ask “Why is it so important for us to be affirming?” and field responses. The takeaway here is that we don’t want to contribute in negative ways to other people’s mental health. We want to uplift one another and have everyone feeling safe and comfortable!

Go to slide 27 and ask “What do we do if a friend comes out to us? What do we think it means when someone “comes out” to us?” Once students have answered, ask “How should we react if we are in these scenarios?” Remember, we want to make sure we understand that it’s important to be affirming of all LGBTQ+ identities, especially if a friend has just come out to us! Go to slide 28 and review the do’s and don’t’s of what to do if a friend comes out to us.

Go to slide 29 and say, “Being affirming is SUPER easy – just stick up for people when they’re not around and be respectful. Now let’s talk about messing up.”

5. **What to do when we mess up** – Go to slide 30 and introduce the next section as understanding what to do when you make a mistake with someone’s name or pronouns. Go to slide 31 and say, “It’s important to remember that mistakes are totally normal and natural. Even though we all make mistakes sometimes, when we practice we can avoid them.” Go to slide 32 and ask “Who here has ever made a mistake? It can be any kind of mistake!” Share a mistake that you have made first in order to ease the discomfort in students of having to share a mistake that they’ve made. Wait for student responses, if they feel comfortable providing them. Then go to slide 33 and say “Those mistakes can be really embarrassing, but they can be even more embarrassing if you know that you used the wrong name or pronouns for someone who identifies as trans or nonbinary. We know that different identities can be more important to us, and that not affirming certain identities can be more harmful than others. So when we make a mistake like that, we can STEP UP.” Go to slide 34 and say, " The S stands for Sorry – if someone lets you know you’ve made a mistake, apologize quickly. T stands for Thanks – thank the person for pointing it out. Then E, Edit your language – fix the mistake! The first P stands for Push on – don’t make it a big deal. Then the UP comes afterwards and is totally on you – Understand the mistake, and Practice so it doesn’t happen again!” You can also provide an example, such as this one:

“Here’s an example: Let’s say my friend, who I’ve always called Sam, wants to be called Sarah now. Maybe I’d accidentally say, “I was hanging out with Sam the other day.” If someone sticks up for Sarah lets me know I made a mistake, I’d say, “Oh sorry! Thanks for reminding me. I was hanging out with SARA the other day, and she saw a really weird bug!” Then later, I would reflect and understand that I used the wrong name for Sarah. One way to practice is to think of three things about the person you’re trying to remember, and to say out loud – Sarah has blonde hair, Sarah has brown eyes, Sarah plays soccer!”

Advance to slide 35. Congrats! You’ve made it through every goal! Go to slide 36 and say, “Hopefully, after going through those three sections, we can all agree: that everyone is different! And we should celebrate the differences. That we should affirm people’s identities

and believe them when they tell us who they are! And that mistakes happen! STEP UP and support each other while we learn.”

Go to slide 37 and say, “What if you need help?” Review the information on the slide about hotlines they can call. Also have students list trusted adults they can reach out to – parents, guardians, school counselors, teachers, other community members. Go to slide 38 and thank students for their participation! Make sure to also review your contact information.