

Introduction to Understanding the Rights of LGBT Students

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Objectives

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- ✓ identify and analyze your own belief system
- ✓ familiarize yourself with a glossary of terms as they relate to LGBT students
- ✓ describe what an ally is and how you can become one
- ✓ define your role as an ally
- ✓ list common struggles LGBT students face
- ✓ learn how to create a safe space



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Lesson 2

Introduction

Educators have a unique and powerful ability to impact a student's life in a positive way. In addition to delivering quality education to students, understanding the needs and rights of LGBT students is critical.

Many LGBT students report coming out to a trusted adult who made them feel comfortable and safe. Teachers can take on this role, as well as preventing bullying and reducing depression and anxiety in LGBT students. Teachers are in the ideal role to become not just allies, but also advocates for LGBT students, as well as models for all students and staff.

In the following lessons, educators will learn how to create a safe and supportive environment for LGBT students.



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Progression of the LGBT Movement in the United States

To better understand the LGBT community as a whole, let's look at the history of the movement in the U.S.

December of 1924

1940s

1950s

June 28, 1969

The early 2000s

In Chicago Illinois, Henry Gerber formed the first organization with a primary focus on gay rights, the Society for Human Rights. After being chartered by the state of Illinois and publishing the first publication for homosexuals, the organization dissolves due to political pressure.

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Study Exercise



Click on the choice that best answers the following question.

In which decade did the American Psychiatric Association list homosexuality as a “personal disturbance” in its Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders?

A) 1920s

B) 1940s

C) 1950s

D) 2000s

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Assessing Your Beliefs So You Can Be An Ally

What is an ally? The widely acceptable definition is: a member of the majority or dominant group who works to end oppression by recognizing their own privilege and supporting or advocating for the oppressed population.

For example, a straight person who supports and stands up for the equality of LGBT people. As an educator, it is important that you support all students on their educational journey. Education is not just obtained from the classroom but also from the emotional bonds a student creates with other students, teachers, and administrators along the course of their development.



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Assessing Your Beliefs So You Can Be An Ally

During childhood, we begin to develop a set of beliefs, morals, and values based on the views of our primary caregivers. As infants, we are free of prejudice and judgment. We learn to stereotype and judge other individuals based upon the set of beliefs we are exposed to or learn over time.

If your parents or caregivers are Christian then you may learn about the practices of Christianity. Or if they eat vegetarian then you also may not eat meat as a child or young adult. Throughout childhood and adolescence our opinions and beliefs are often closely aligned with our primary caregivers. Your parents' perceptions and opinions may have been based in part on their parents' experiences and firmly held beliefs.

As adults, we have the ability to analyze our beliefs and judgments and work on shifting those beliefs if we so desire. In order to fully support students, it is important to access your own beliefs, specifically relating to the area of LGBT students. Anti-LGBT bias is everywhere. Name-calling, jokes, and exclusion are just a few of the not-so-subtle biases. Identifying your own, potential Anti-LGBT bias is the first step to becoming an ally.



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Assessing Your Beliefs So You Can Be An Ally

The following questions should inspire you to think about your own beliefs, identify if those beliefs are still important to you, and contemplate if a shift in your beliefs is necessary in order to provide a safe, supportive environment for LGBT students. There are no right or wrong answers. They are simply intended to be thought provoking.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Have you ever used the words "gay, lesbian, queer," or other words in a derogatory way?

Study Exercise

 Click on the choice that best answers the following question.

Which of the following terms refers to a member of the majority or dominant group who works to end oppression by recognizing their own privilege and supporting or advocating for the oppressed population?

A) Heterosexual

B) Advocate

C) Ally

D) Caregiver

Frequently Used Terms

Below is a list of commonly used terms. Look over the list and for each term mark whether you:

1. hear or use the term regularly.

2. need to understand the term more clearly.

3. feel uncomfortable or elicit strong emotion, when you hear the words. These are areas you need to address further.

 When you have attempted all, click the Next Button.

	Hear or use regularly	Need to understand more clearly	Make you feel uncomfortable or elicit strong emotion
Ally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bisexual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cisgender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coming Out	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LGBTQ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pansexual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Queer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender Expression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heterosexual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homosexual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Questioning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transgender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asexual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intersex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lesbian	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Frequently Used Terms

This is a partial list of definitions obtained from the Safe Space Kit from GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network).²

Ally

Asexual

Bisexual

Cisgender

Coming out

Gay

Gender

Gender Expression

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Frequently Used Terms

This is a partial list of definitions obtained from the Safe Space Kit from GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network).²

Heterosexual (or Straight)

Homosexual

Identity

Intersex

Lesbian

LGBT or LGBTQ

Pansexual

Queer

Questioning

Sexual orientation

Transgender

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Study Exercise



Click on the choice that best answers the following question.

Which of the following term describes a condition which a person is born with reproductive/sexual organs that do not match the medical definition of male or female?

A) Bisexual

B) Ally

C) Transgender

D) Intersex

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Study Exercise



Click on the choice that best answers the following question.

Which of the following term describes a condition which a person is born with reproductive/sexual organs that do not match the medical definition of male or female?

A) Bisexual

B) Ally

C) Transgender

D) Intersex

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How Would You Feel?

Imagine not feeling comfortable in your own body. Being in public is awkward and unfulfilling. When you're alone, being yourself feels uncomfortable, even painful. Your mind and heart are filled with frustration, guilt, and confusion. Everywhere you turn you see people who don't look like you. You feel lost, empty, helpless, wrong, and insecure; you believe you don't fit in.

Maybe you have felt this way. Some people who identify as LGBT or Q feel this way or have felt this way. No one should ever feel uncomfortable in their own skin. This is why being an ally is so important. An ally is a friend, a supporter, someone who recognizes their own privilege, great or small, and advocates for someone who needs support.



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How Would You Feel?

Why Become an Ally?

Being an ally is an important role because you have the ability to improve the quality of life an LGBTQ person may experience. Research shows LGBTQ students report greater incidences of bullying, higher rates of depression and anxiety, and greater suicide attempts than other students. An ally can help improve outcomes by simply being open and welcoming to LGBTQ students.

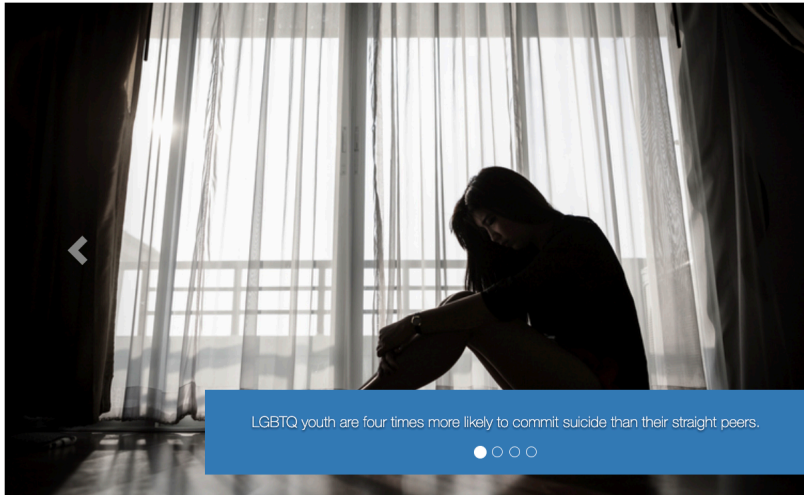


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How Would You Feel?

Suicide Among LGBTQ Youth

An ally can have a direct role in preventing suicide in the LGBTQ community. Here are some statistics on LGBTQ youth suicide that help put the severity of the issue into perspective.



LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to commit suicide than their straight peers.



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Study Exercise



Click on the choice that best answers the following question.

LGBTQ youth are more likely to attempt suicide than non-LGBTQ youth. How likely are LGBTQ to attempt suicide?

- ☐ A) Two times more likely
- ☐ B) Six times more likely
- ☐ C) Four times more likely
- ☐ D) There is no difference.

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Easy Ways to be an Ally

There are four basic requirements to being an ally.

1. Be an active listener.
2. Release judgment.
3. Maintain confidentiality.
4. Be an advocate!

If you are already an educator then you may already possess the requirements of being a great ally.



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Easy Ways to be an Ally

Being an active listener means talking less and listening more. Perhaps it does not even require talking. To be an ally, you may just need to sit quietly and 'hold space' for the person. This can create an unspoken feeling of safety by simply allowing the person to just BE.

Sometimes relationships take time to develop. They require consistency to establish trust. Creating an environment where students feel comfortable to just be themselves is the first step. This is called a safe space. Creating this space is a necessary first step in acknowledging that some LGBTQ individuals may not be comfortable in the traditional school setting.

To learn more about creating a safe space, visit GLSEN.org and download a FREE Safe Space Kit for your school/classroom. You will learn more about implementing the Safe Space Kit in the last lesson of this course.



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Study Exercise



Click on the choice that best answers the following question.

Which of the following are the requirements of an ally?

☒ A) Active listening

☐ B) Talks more than listens

☒ C) Willingness to advocate

☐ D) Both A and C

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Dealing With Anti-LGBT Language and Situations

Unfortunately not everyone will be compassionate, open-minded, and understanding when it comes to LGBTQ students. Teachers, administrators, and students are all guilty of using anti-LGBT language.

It takes education and effort to change the language you may be used to using or overlooking. As an ally, it is not enough to just eliminate anti-LGBT language from your vocabulary. You also have to be an advocate and active bystander when you hear others using derogatory language or insults toward LGBTQ individuals. You may be comfortable with this or this may require a bit of practice but it is easily achievable.



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Dealing With Anti-LGBT Language and Situations

How often have you heard someone say "That's so gay!" Perhaps you have even said those words yourself. Many LGBTQ students report having negative feelings when they hear this word used in school. As an ally you are charged with challenging the person using the word to actually think about what they mean when saying "That's so gay."

If you hear this or other anti-LGBT language you can ask what they mean when they use those words. Often the person using the word "gay" may be attempting to use it as a synonym for bored or lame, which is incorrect and hurtful. Challenge them to use a word that is more specific and appropriate. If the use of the word is to be hurtful then address that by simply saying, "Our school is safe for everyone. Please don't use language that excludes people." This will set an example for not tolerating hurtful words or actions. In addition to that, you automatically create an environment where LGBTQ students feel directly supported.



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Dealing With Anti-LGBT Language and Situations

Read the following words silently in your head. Notice the way each of them makes you feel. Think of other derogatory words you've heard or spoken. After you've read the list sit quietly for a moment and make a commitment to eliminate those words from your vocabulary.

Dyke	Lesbo
Gay	Faggot
Butch	Tranny
Retard	Twinkle Toes
Weirdo	Freak
Moron	He/She/It
Loser	Gay Boy



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Study Exercise



Click on the choice that best answers the following question.

When is it OK to use the term "That's so gay?"

- ☐ A) Anytime
- ☐ B) As long as you referring to something boring
- ☐ C) Only if there are no LGBTQ people around
- ☐ D) Never

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Creating a Safe Space

Developing a safe space is a critical element in supporting all students but specifically marginalized students such as LGBTQ. Establishing the space may be easier than you might think. You may already have some of the elements in place within your classroom or school setting. The following exercise will help you identify what elements you already have and what elements you could easily modify or improve upon to create the ideal space.



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Creating a Safe Space

Exercise

Sit quietly for a moment and think about a place that brings you comfort. A place where you can be yourself and feel comfortable just being. Now ask yourself the following questions and think carefully about each answer:

1 2 3

How does this space feel?

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Creating a Safe Space

How to Create a Safe Space

A safe space can be virtually anywhere. A classroom is ideal because it already has many of the elements. The area need only consist of:

1. a place free from judgement, bullying, or anti-LGBT language
2. someone willing to be an active listener and maintain confidentiality
3. private/quiet area for reflection or conversation

As mentioned in Lesson 5, one effective way to establish a safe space is to download and implement the free Safe Space Kit from the GLSEN.org site.

By using and displaying Safe Space stickers and posters, you are sending a visible message that you are an ally. You are modeling a supportive environment for LGBTQ youth and all students and staff. These simple steps will help you incorporate inclusion in an even and effective way.



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INTRODUCTION TO UNDERSTANDING THE RIGHTS OF LGBT STUDENTS (EDU) EXAMINATION

Please answer the following test questions:

1. How can an ally can show support?

- A. ☐ Using anti-LGBT language
- B. ☐ Setting up a safe space
- C. ☐ Asking someone if they are gay
- D. ☐ Making friends with people

2. If you are a true ally you must be a:

- A. ☐ Teacher
- B. ☐ Counselor
- C. ☐ Student
- D. ☐ An advocate

3. Which state was the first to legalize gay marriage?

- A. ☐ New York
- B. ☐ California
- C. ☐ Massachusetts
- D. ☐ Rhode Island

4. One of the most important aspects of becoming an Ally is:

- A. ☐ Assessing your own belief system
- B. ☐ Telling all your friends you're an Ally
- C. ☐ Hanging up rainbow posters
- D. ☐ Searching for LGBT students

5. When was the first gay rights organization formed?

- A. ☐ 1920s
- B. ☐ 1930s
- C. ☐ 1940s
- D. ☐ 1950s

6. Which of the following defines sexual orientation best?

- A. ☐ The position you prefer during sexual acts
- B. ☐ The inner feelings of who a person is attracted to
- C. ☐ The outward expression of sexual desire
- D. ☐ The inward desire to be gay

7. You can download a free, Safe Space kit from which of the following organization's websites?

- A. ☐ American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
- B. ☐ Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
- C. ☐ The Trevor Project
- D. ☐ Public Broadcasting System

8. A Safe Space can be _____.

- A. ☐ Incorporated into your classroom.
- B. ☐ a fun place to hide if you are LGBTQ.
- C. ☐ an obvious target for child predators.
- D. ☐ located in a cafeteria.

9. A safe place can do which of the following?

- A. ☐ Increase bullying
- B. ☐ Decrease bullying
- C. ☐ Increase the number of gay students a school has
- D. ☐ Decrease the number of gay students a school has

10. What should you do when a student discusses LGBTQ related topics?

- A. ☐ Tell them to talk to a friend or parent.
- B. ☐ Listen and give your values and opinions.
- C. ☐ Tell them it's just a phase.
- D. ☐ Maintain confidentiality.