

## GROUP EXERCISES

**SENTENCE COMPLETION:  
MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES  
(20 minutes)**

*Purpose: This exercise allows spontaneous expression of feelings about homosexuality. Even lesbian and gay participants may be surprised by the intensity of their associations. Thus, it's a good exercise for addressing internalized homophobia.*

Read the following sentences:

**FIRST SENTENCE:** As a parent, if I found out my children were taught by a gay teacher, I would \_\_\_\_\_.

**SECOND SENTENCE:** If a close friend of mine who I assumed was straight told me (s)he was gay, I would feel \_\_\_\_\_.

**THIRD SENTENCE:** When I think of two people of the same sex making love to each other I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

**FOURTH SENTENCE:** As a parent, if I learned my child was lesbian or gay, I would \_\_\_\_\_.

**FIFTH SENTENCE:** If someone of my own sex made a sexual advance to me, I would \_\_\_\_\_.

**SIXTH SENTENCE:** If I were attending a weekend conference and I found out my roommate was gay or lesbian, I would \_\_\_\_\_.

**SEVENTH SENTENCE:** When I think about children who are being raised by lesbian or gay couples, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

**EIGHTH SENTENCE:** What I admire about gay people is \_\_\_\_\_.

**NINTH SENTENCE:** What I don't like about gay people is \_\_\_\_\_.

**TENTH SENTENCE:** Lesbian or gay people make me uncomfortable when \_\_\_\_\_.

**(REPEAT, THEN GET FEEDBACK.)**

People may want to share things they said or how they felt during the exercise.

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## EXERCISE: MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

(5 minutes)

*(Purpose: This exercise gives people a chance to vent their stereotypes and homophobic attitudes. It also allows people to see the depth and degrees of homophobia. Please, when writing the words down, divide the board into two headings, one for gay men, one for lesbians.)*

*Script: We'd like to ask all of you to tell us what words and associations you think of when you hear the words homosexual, lesbian, and gay. These can be things you learned at home, words you heard at school, stereotypes, good things, bad things, anything. Don't worry about hurting our feelings. We won't take it personally.*

We'd like \_\_\_\_\_ (the scribe) to write these down on a new piece of paper. Make two columns, one for gay men, one for lesbians.

*Anybody? (Wait for responses. Encourage more.)*

Okay. What else? Keep going. What do you think of when you think of gay men? Lesbians?

*(At the end of this section, the pad should be full of slurs, stereotypes, one-word associations, etc. You may want to have participants take turns reading through the list.)*

**EXPERIENCING DISCRIMINATION:  
SMALL GROUPS  
(10 minutes)**

*Script:* What we're going to do now is break into small groups. We'd like you to share with your group experiences in your life when you've felt invisible, excluded, or experienced discrimination. Think about how you felt and share that. We'd also like you to think about a time when you had more privilege than another person or group, not necessarily by your own choice. Think about how you felt when you were weaker, think of how you felt when you were stronger.

*1) SMALL GROUPS (6 minutes)*

*Break into small groups. A facilitator should be in each group. You may need to remind people that they are responding to two questions: 1.) Have you had an experience in which you felt invisible or discriminated against? 2.) Have you had an experience in which you had power over another person based on such qualities as race, religion, class, size, etc.? Describe both experiences.*

*2) LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (4 minutes)*

*Script:* We'd like both groups to finish up. What happened in your groups? What sorts of experiences came up?

*(Wait for responses.)*

Okay. Thank you for sharing those experiences. So, most of us know the pain of being left out, excluded, hurt by other people's stereotypes, mistrust, or unfounded beliefs. We'd like to point out that we see a difference between discrimination and oppression. Oppression is systematic discrimination on all levels. This doesn't mean isolated experiences of discrimination are any less painful, but they are not the same as systematic oppression.

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*(Wait for responses.)*

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## 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.)*

### 1) 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 your 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 the 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 not a 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?



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

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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 love?

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.)*

## HOMOPHOBIA

In the clinical sense, homophobia is defined as an intense, irrational fear of same-sex relationships that becomes overwhelming to the person. In common usage, homophobia is the fear of intimate relationships with persons of the same sex.

Below are listed four negative and homophobic and four positive levels of attitudes toward gay and lesbian relationships and people. They were developed by Dr. Dorothy Riddle, a psychologist from Tucson, Arizona.

### Homophobic levels of attitude

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Repulsion</b>  | Homosexuality is seen as a "crime against nature." Gays are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc., and anything is justified to change them (e. g. prison, hospitalization, negative behavior therapy including electric shock).  |
| <b>Pity</b>       | Heterosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is more mature and certainly to be preferred. Any possibility of becoming straight should be reinforced, and those who seem to be born "that way" should be pitied.   |
| <b>Tolerance</b>  | Homosexuality is just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and "grow out of." Thus, gays are less mature than straights and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with children. Gays and lesbians should not be given positions of authority (because they are still working through adolescent behaviors).  |
| <b>Acceptance</b> | Still implies there is something to accept, characterized by such statements as "You're not gay to me, you're a person," "What you do in bed is your own business," "That's fine with me as long as you don't flaunt it." Denies social and legal realities. 84% of people believe being gay is obscene and 70% still believe it is wrong even between consenting adults. Ignores the pain of invisibility and stress of closet behavior. "Flaunt" usually means say or do anything that makes people aware. |

### Positive levels of attitude

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Support</b>      | Basic ACLU approach. Work to safeguard the rights of gays and lesbians. Such people may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware of the climate and the irrational unfairness. |
| <b>Admiration</b>   | Acknowledges that being gay or lesbian in our society takes strength. Such people are willing to truly look at themselves and work on their own homophobic attitudes.                 |
| <b>Appreciation</b> | Value the diversity of people and see gays as a valid part of that diversity. These people are willing to combat homophobia in themselves and others.                                 |
| <b>Nurturance</b>   | Assume that gay and lesbian people are indispensable to our society. They view gays with genuine affection and delight and are willing to be gay advocates.                           |

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### General

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## MAJOR TALKING POINTS REGARDING HOMOSEXUALITY AND RELIGION

When people refer to "the bible" they usually mean the King James Version of the bible.

- There are 105 different versions of "the bible" printed in English.
- There are 350 Protestant denominations in America. Each has their own set of beliefs, and the 105 bibles reflect different and often contradictory translations.
- The bible was written over a period of 1500 years by various authors. Nothing was written as it happened, but was passed down by word of mouth over the years.
- King James, of the "King James Version" was homosexual.
- Out of the 31,176 verses in the bible, **less than .0002%** refer to same sex behavior.
- The word "homosexual" is not in the bible. It was not invented until 1869.
- Christ never said anything about or alluded to homosexuals or homosexuality.
- Many Americans are convinced that Christ spoke English—because the bible is written in English. It is also "written" or printed in every other language.

A brief review of the biblical passages that have been interpreted as being condemning of homosexuality:

Genesis 19: Sodom and Gomorrah. This story has been misused and misinterpreted as being about homosexuals and their destruction. Genesis 18 reveals that Sodom was slated for destruction before any angels appeared to Lot. The bible itself tells why Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed: Ezekiel 16:49 clearly states the "sin" of Sodom—"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. The book of Leviticus has 617 laws that range from dietary prohibitions (no eating of pork, shrimp, oysters, etc—which are an "abomination" to eat), to laws regarding uncleanness, i.e. menstruating women, to the promotion of animal torture and blood sacrifice, to the death penalty for heterosexual adulterers.

Within those 617 laws are the prohibition against a man lying with another man—it is referred to as an "abomination", which refers to "the uncleanness of the Gentiles", and that which is "ritually unclean" for Jews. It does not refer to anything that is intrinsically evil.

Other things that are an "abomination" range from "a false balance" Prov.11:1 to "that which is esteemed highly among men" Luke 16:15.

The Old Testament only has the 2 Levitical references to same sex behavior. Christians are not bound by the 617 Levitical rules of the Old Testament.

There are stories of same sex love and bonding in the Old Testament, and they are presented as being positive: Ruth and Naomi, and Jonathan and David (as in King David).

"Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul" 1 Samuel 18:2. and "Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David" 1 Sam. 19:2.

Ruth's love for Naomi prompted her to say: "Intreat me not to leave thee...for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried." Ruth 1:16,17

The only person who talks about same sex behavior in the New Testament is Paul. In Romans, Corinthians, and 1 Timothy, Paul explains his ideas on sexuality, gender roles, and slavery.

o women he insists that they "remain silent" and "let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence"

Paul exhorted slaves to "be obedient to their masters".

Paul talked about women who were "without natural affection" without having any understanding of sexual orientation. He made other references in those 3 chapters which are all subject to interpretation and different translations:

Example: 1 Corinthians 6:9--"neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate...shall inherit the kingdom of God". That is the quote from the King James Version. The word "effeminate" was changed to "homosexual" in other, more modern translations, even though "effeminate" does not mean "homosexual".

There are no other references to same sex behavior in the bible.

What people of faith fear is that they will lose their bible and their belief system, if they agree to, or work for, equal rights for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.

If women can keep their faith after being told they are made for men, to do their bidding, then to remain silent...and if African-Americans can keep their faith after being told they were only worthy of being servants and slaves, then it could be possible and reasonable to allow people to deal with their doctrines and keep their belief systems intact while working for our legal rights and for social justice.