



### MISSION STATEMENT

The Long Beach City College Safe Zone Program seeks to promote awareness of and respect for the diverse culture of our campus by forming a network of students, faculty and staff committed and trained to provide safe, nonjudgmental and supportive contacts for people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, ages, immigration status and abilities.

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Establish a campus-wide network of easily visible allies who can provide support, information and assistance to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students at LBCC.
- Foster an atmosphere on campus which supports the academic and professional success of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons, as well as their personal and social growth.
- Provide lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students comfortable access to trustworthy, knowledgeable and sensitive people who can provide them a safe and non-discriminatory environment.
- Provide an opportunity for LBCC faculty and staff to demonstrate their support for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or questioning.
- Provide all students on campus an opportunity to respond to instances of discrimination and harassment based on perceived or self-reported sexual orientation.
- Educate members of the campus community on the needs and concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students.
- Assist heterosexual personnel in understanding that homophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation is hurtful to everyone on campus.
- Advance LBCC's progress towards a campus that discourages discrimination and openly celebrates diversity.

### Understanding the “Coming Out” Process

**What is “Coming Out?”** Coming out is a life-long process that begins when a lesbian, bisexual, or gay person recognizes his/her own same sex feelings and shares these feelings with another person. Many people in this society assume that everyone is heterosexual, so gays, lesbians, and bisexuals must decide with whom they would like to share this information.

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**Why come out?** Coming out allows the person to develop as a whole individual, allows for greater empowerment, and makes it easier for an individual to develop a positive self-image. Once “out”, the person is more able to share with others who they are and what is important to them, as well as to develop close and mutually satisfying relationships. Coming out frees the person of the fear of being “found out” and helps them avoid living a double life. Finally, it facilitates interaction with other gay people, giving a sense of community.

**What does coming out entail?** The coming out process varies from person to person depending on numerous factors. There are two commonly used descriptive models of the coming out process. The first is the Coleman Model, developed by Eli Coleman, and contains a five-step generalization of an individual’s progress. The second is a six- step model developed by Vivienne Cass, and is called the Cass Model.

### Coleman’s Model

1. **Pre-coming out-** The individual is not conscious of same-sex feelings because of strong-defense built up to defend against these feelings. Person does feel somewhat different, but does not understand the reason.
2. **Coming out-** Acknowledgement of feelings. Limited disclosure for external validation. May make contact with other gays and lesbians, but avoids telling family and friends.
3. **Exploration-** More interactions with gays and lesbians, adds “experimentation” with new sexual identity. Improved interpersonal skills to make up “developing lag” if coming out occur after adolescence.
4. **First Relationship-** Desire for more stable and committed relationship and less experimentation. Combines emotional and physical attraction.
5. **Integration-** Public and private identities merge into one unified self-concept. Relationships are more mature and the person is better able to meet everyday problems and pressures.

### CASS Model

#### Stage 1- Identity Confusion

- “Who am I?”
- Feeling one is different from peers
- Sense of personal alienation
- Beginning consciousness of same-sex feelings or behavior
- No sharing of inner turmoil

#### Stage 2- Identity Comparison

- Rationalization or bargaining stage: maybe this is just temporary, just a phase
- Sense of not belonging anywhere
- “I am the only one in the world”

#### Stage 3- Identity Tolerance

- “I probably am gay/lesbian”
- Beginning contact with other gay/lesbian people
- Barely tolerates own gay/lesbian identity
- Feelings of not belonging with heterosexuals

#### Stage 4- Identity Acceptance

- Continued and increased contact with other gay/ lesbian people
- Forming friendships
- Beginning to accept a more positive self-image

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- Beginning to feel a sense of belonging

### Stage 5- Identity Pride

- “These are my people”
- Increasing awareness of gap between gay/lesbian and non-gay worlds
- Anger towards non-gay people; rejection of their values and institutions
- Discloses gay/lesbian identity to more people
- Desires to immerse self in gay/ lesbian subculture

### Stage 6- Identity Synthesis

- Anger toward non-gay world mellows
- Realization that some non-gay people are friends, allies, supporters
- Some continuing anger at injustice of society’s attitudes/ treatment
- Gay/ lesbian identity becomes integrated into personality

\* Information from John Carrol University. Retrieved online on June 18, 2008 at [www.jcu.edu](http://www.jcu.edu)

## DEFINITION OF AN ALLY\*

Allies are more than the unofficial ‘gay booster club’. They serve key roles on campus in providing visible support for the LGBT students. Effective allies ensure that all students on campus, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sex, ability/disability, etc. are treated with respect and dignity. Being an effective ally means taking a stand against bias of any kind.

Listen: we know that there are folks who have personal objections to LGBT folks. We’re not trying to convert their thoughts or their core values; however, we do want to ensure that all people are treated with the same respect and dignity, regardless of their individual identity attributes. Allies help in creating a safe and respectful pluralistic community.

### Tips on being an effective ally:

- Understand your baggage. We all have core baggage regarding LGBT issues – even LGBT folks have a bag or two! Ask yourself how your baggage has an effect on the way you interact with LGBT folks.
- Speak up when you hear a denigrating joke about LGBT folks – just the way you would if you heard a denigrating racial joke. We know it’s not easy, but whether we’re in the classroom or out of it, you taking a stand shows us that this community is a caring, respectful one.
- Try using inclusive language in programming and events. This might not be easy or relevant, but for social events, programming geared toward couples and similar types of events, inclusive language lets us know we’re welcome – and by extension included members of this community.
- Learn about LGBT issues. Familiarize yourself with the research in this area. Understand the impact that being LGBT has on students’ academic success. Understand the impact that coming out has on the student’s family system.
- Promote events that identify and celebrate LGBT life.
- Know the resources and safe spaces on campus for students.
- Identify other allies.
- Be vigilant about all forms of discrimination, bias and prejudice. The fight for a respectful and inclusive community is the good fight and it requires constant vigilism.

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### Qualities of a good ally:

- Has worked to develop an understanding of LGBT issues
- Chooses to align with LGBT folks and respond to their needs
- Believes that it is in his/her best interest to be an ally.
- Is committed to personal growth.
- Is quick to take pride in personal success in responding to homophobic attitudes and behaviors.
- Is able to acknowledge and articulate how patterns of fear have operated in their lives.
- Expects to make some mistakes but does not use it as an excuse for non-action.
- Knows that both sides of an ally relationship have a clear responsibility for their own response to the oppression whether or not folks on the other side choose to respond.
- Knows that in the most empowered ally relationship, the persons in the non-oppressed role initiate the change toward personal, institutional and societal justice and equality.
- Knows that s/he is responsible for humanizing or empowering his/her role in society, particularly as that role relates to responding to homophobia.
- Promotes a sense of community with LGBT folks and teaches others about the importance of outreach.

### TIPS FOR WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU THAT S/HE IS LGBT

- The person has spent many hours thoughtfully preparing how and when to share, with a keen awareness of the possible risk of the disclosure.
- There is no way this person can predict your reaction. And, yet wants to share with you an intimate core part of her/himself.
- Remember:
  - The person has not changed, but rather is revealing another dimension to his/her sense of self.
  - It's okay to be shocked.
  - Please don't be silent.
  - Thank the person for sharing.
  - Acknowledge that it was difficult.
  - Reassure that the relationship you two share continues.
- It is okay to ask questions. Some good ones to start with include:
  - How long have you known you were LGBT?
  - Is there someone special in your life?
  - Has it been hard for you to carry this secret?
  - Is there some way I can help?
  - Have I offended you unknowingly?
- Its' ok to ask and listen, but if the person chooses not to answer, their privacy should be respected.
- Continue the relationship.

\*California State University Fullerton Division of Student Affairs

### EFFECTIVE LISTENING/HELPING SKILLS

Remember: Everyone wants to be heard, to feel "listened to" and understood.  
Express concern and desire to help

- Ask about feelings and thoughts
- Suspend judgment
- Try to develop trust (provide environment of warmth and acceptance)
- Use person's name
- Let the person know you are listening (attending behaviors):
- Communicate undivided attention; resist distractions
- Nod
- Paraphrase or repeat essence of person's messages
- Agree when genuine
- Repeat or summarize main ideas ("facilitative listening")
- Listen "between the lines" for the underlying "feeling" message
- Empathize with and "reflect" their feelings ("I understand what you're saying." "I think I know what you're feeling." "I can understand that you're feeling angry; It must be very frustrating.")
- Acknowledge concerns and fears, without supporting misperceptions
- Discourage discussion of any delusion and focus on "here and now"
- Problem-solve (only when the person is ready)
- Explore ways (options) for person to have their needs met
- Break down concerns into manageable problem-solving steps (non-judgmental, solution-oriented approach)
- "Brainstorm" together
- Try to provide a face-saving solution; explore acceptable compromises
- Do not:
  - Argue
  - Interrupt
  - Scold or lecture
  - Offer false reassurances
  - Be overly logical and rational, or try to "fix" the problem before thoroughly understanding
  - Trivialize the circumstances or feelings
  - Try to convince them of their irrationality
  - Overly challenge or confront
  - Invade physical space
- Body language (non-verbal behavior) communicates important messages. The following may be helpful in reducing others' anger and assisting an individual in calming themselves:
  - Eye contact (not too intense)
  - Interpersonal distance (not too close); Respect personal space; Do not move toward an agitated person
  - Restrict body movement to a minimum; Minimize sudden behaviors
  - Maintain an "open" position (do not cross arms or legs; hands unclenched)
  - Maintain same eye level (sit or stand depending on student's position)
  - Speak softly and reassuringly

\*Taken from University of South Florida Counseling Center. Retrieved January 9, 2008 from [http://usfweb2.usf.edu/counsel/b\\_psy/articles/elh\\_skills.htm](http://usfweb2.usf.edu/counsel/b_psy/articles/elh_skills.htm)



## Basic Helping Skills: Techniques for Active Listening

The key ingredient in most helping relationships is the sense on the part of the person being helped that he or she is being **listened** to. The term of **active listening** refers to everything that someone might do in order to be not only listening to a person, but also **letting that person know** that he or she is being listened to.

We all use certain cues to let people know we are listening to them. Examples are: nodding our heads in agreement, saying "Mm hmm," opening our eyes in shared disbelief at something, etc. The following are specific verbal behaviors that carry the process even further, indicating that we are not only listening, but, that we are also thinking actively about what's being said (or shown) to us, regardless of whether we agree or disagree with it.

All of these techniques can be learned and practiced, polished, in fact, into a high art. They range in complexity from simply restating what a person says (actually not so simple!) to reflecting feelings, validating a perception, or confronting an inconsistency.

1. **Restating:** Repeating what a person says using slightly different wording. You can emphasize one part of a message over another, using specific word choices and or vocal tone and emphasis.
2. **Questioning:** Getting more information, clarifying details. This usually ensures that you understand what you've been told, but can also direct attention to as-yet-unconsidered issues.
3. **Focusing:** Stepping back and clarifying exactly what the conversation is about, labeling the larger context in which it occurs. This helps regain perspective about how it all fits together.
4. **Reflecting Feelings:** Identifying what you perceive as the feelings underlying what a person is talking about, or in some cases, what they are talking around. This can alter dramatically the intensity level of the conversation.
5. **Validating:** Legitimizing a person's statements or stance by indicating that it *makes sense* to you, given what you see as the underlying feelings the person seems to have.
6. **Confronting:** Identifying some inconsistency or incongruity between what a person says and how he or she is acting, or between different statements he or she has made.

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## An Historical Overview of Theories of Non-Heterosexual Identity Development in College Students

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Sexuality of college students was central to the work of pioneering student development theorists, but most ignored, or at least did not recognize, gay and lesbian populations in their work. Astin (1977, 1993) made no reference to how gay and lesbian students might change through campus involvement, nor did Chickering (1969) discuss how non-heterosexual students dealt with their particular forms of identity challenges concerning sex. Chickering and Reisser (1993), along with Thomas and Chickering (1984), later updated Chickering's initial vectors model to include examples of the challenges and processes of gay students, and their thinking appears to be shaped by the work of early homosexual identity theorists.

Most of the theories of sexual orientation development were created from research with men. The few theorists who have published on the topic note differences between the developmental patterns of non-heterosexual men and women, in terms of sequence and age of developmental experiences (Burhke & Stabb, 1995; Kahn, 1991). In some respects, lesbian identity development might be more complex than the patterns noted for men; indeed, Brown (1995) noted evidence exists that lesbian identity development is a process with not only several different initial stages, but variations in later stages as well (p. 8). Falco (1991) examined five models of lesbian identity development and came to five stages similar to those found for gay men: awareness of difference, acknowledgment and disclosure of homosexual feelings, sexual experimentation, establishment of a same-sex relationship, and integration of private and social identities. Others have rejected the linearity of this model as not reflective of identity development, for its lack of inclusion of social context, relationships, and openness in one's identity disclosure (Fox, 1995). Bisexual identity development is even less well known or theorized. Weinberg, Williams and Pryor (1994) utilized data from the 1980s to postulate three stages of identity development: initial confusion, finding and applying a label to describe experiences and desires, and settling into the identity.

Despite these shortcomings, several general, inclusive theories of non-heterosexual identity development are currently used by student affairs practitioners and scholars to better serve and understand this collegiate population.

### Early Theories: Stage Models

Vivian Cass' work (1979, 1983/1984, 1984) formed the basis for conceptualizing homosexual development for men and women, starting in the late 1970s. Cass proposed a stage-model of homosexual identity development. The six stages assume a movement in self-perception from heterosexual to homosexual. The first stage is **identity confusion**, where the individual first perceives his/her thoughts, feelings and attractions to others of the same gender. The second is **identity comparison**, where the individual perceives and must deal with social stigmatization and alienation. Cass' third stage is **identity tolerance**, in which individuals, having acknowledged their homosexuality, begin to seek out other homosexuals. **Identity acceptance** comprises stage four; positive connotations about being homosexual foster even further contacts and friendships with other gays and lesbians. In the fifth stage, **identity pride**, the individual minimizes contact with heterosexual peers in order to focus on issues and activities related to his/her homosexual orientation. **Identity synthesis**, the final of Cass' stages, postulates less of a dichotomy for the individual differences between the heterosexual and non-heterosexual communities or aspects of the individual's life; the individual judges him/herself on a range of personal qualities, not just upon sexual identity.

Other stage-based psychosocial gay identity models after Cass (including those of Lee, 1977; Plummer, 1975; and Troiden, 1989) deviated somewhat from the specifics of the actions or events that comprised each individual stage but did not stray from the assumption that the events, as a systemic process, reflected the experience: first awareness of being different or homosexual, self-labeling as homosexual, community involvement with and disclosure to other homosexuals, and identity integration. This final stage, for Cass and the later stage theorists, was the desired

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outcome, something to aim for in one's own coming out. Similar to Chickering's stage development model where the individual's structure around life events and the goal of an integrated social and personal identity, no doubt aided student development practitioners in applying the stage-model proponents' findings and theories to college populations. It is wise to remember, however, that Cass' subjects were not men (nor women), but rather Australian male prisoners in the late 1960s, which calls into doubt the generalizability and transferability of her findings.

Ritch Savin-Williams (1990, 1995, 1998) is another influential stage-theorist of gay identity development. Building from his earlier work with gays and lesbians (1990), he postulated differing developmental trajectories that spring from turning points (developmental challenges or presses). Savin-Williams (1998) outlined eight chronological stages in which the trajectories reflect identity development, tied to specific phenomenological and/or cognitive responses at the turning points: awareness of same-sex attractions; occurrence of first gay sexual experience; occurrence of first heterosexual sexual experience; labeling one's self as gay or bisexual; disclosing one's sexuality to others (but not family members); experience of first gay romantic relationship; disclosing one's sexuality to family members; and fostering a positive identity.

While not every marker might be experienced by a gay youth, nor might the markers always be in this particular order, Savin-Williams (1998, p. 15) noted that the markers do form a common pattern of identity development for young gay men. Significantly for student development practitioners, the means and ranges of ages of experience place these developmental processes within the traditional collegiate years. Savin-Williams' main contribution is the depiction of the broad range of developmental distinctions within these progressive stages or levels of gay identity development.

Ruth Fassinger (1998), whose work is perhaps less well known than Cass or Savin-Williams by student affairs professionals, developed an inclusive model of lesbian/gay identity formation. It, too, is stage based, but it is multi-faceted, reflecting dual aspects of development, both individual sexual identity and group membership identity. The first of Fassinger's four stages is **awareness** (from an individual perspective, being different from heterosexual peers; from a group perspective, the existence of differing sexual orientations among people). The second stage is one of **exploration**: on an individual level, emotions and erotic desires for folks of the same gender; on the group level, how one might fit into gay people as a social class. The third level represents a **deepening commitment** to this changing notion of identity; individually, a personalization of the knowledge and beliefs about same-sex sexuality; on the group level, personal involvement with a non-heterosexual reference group, realizing oppression and consequences of choices of vocalizing and socially participating with non-heterosexuals. The final stage, **internalization/synthesis**, represents an integration of same-sex sexuality into one's overall identity; from the collective perspective, it conveys one's identity as a member of a minority group, across social contexts.

### New Approaches to Non-Heterosexual Collegiate Identities

Theories about how gay and lesbian students experience student development (or do not experience it) have begun to change in focus over the past decade. Despite their shortcomings, the stage theories remain the primary sources for most teaching and learning about how non-heterosexual college students develop sexual orientation identity. While most of the theories used by student affairs practitioners remain stage-based models of development, a few theorists have branched off into other, less incremental, ways of understanding how traditionally-aged non-heterosexual students grow and change during their college years. The major forms of this work, published within the past decade or so, examine identity using non-psychosocial models, including life-span approaches, ethnic/subcultural analyses, and typological models. Anthony D'Augelli summarized the need for change as a revision of our operational definition of sexual orientation must occur, allowing for study of the continuities and discontinuities, the flexibilities and cohesiveness, of sexual and affectional feelings across the life span, in diverse contexts, and in relationship to culture and history (1994a, p. 331).

In his work, D'Augelli (1994a, 1994b) presented a **lifespan model** of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development based on his social constructionist view of sexual orientation. Avoiding the notion of progressive stages, he posited six interactive processes related to lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity formation: exiting heterosexual identity, developing a personal lesbian/gay/bisexual identity status, developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual social identity, claiming an identity as a lesbian/gay/bisexual offspring, developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual intimacy status, and entering a lesbian/gay/bisexual community. Key factors in the formation of identity are personal subjectivities and actions (perceptions and feelings about sexual identity, sexual behaviors, and the meanings attached to them), interactive intimacies (influences of family, peers, intimate partnerships, and the meanings attached to them), and socio-historical connections (social norms, policies, and laws). D'Augelli's lifespan model emerged from his research on gay men's identity in college (D'Augelli, 1991), providing an especially strong link

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between lifespan models of identity development and the student development literature. This model appears sequential, although D'Augelli argued that it is not; nevertheless, it is progressive in its format.

Robert Rhoads (1994, 1997) postulated an **ethnic, cultural identity** for non-heterosexual students. This understanding of identity is neither sequential nor necessarily progressive. An ethnic model of gay identity, he wrote, encourages the development of a community of difference by including diverse members and at the same time advancing a common sense of identity (1994, p. 154). Socialization is the core of this notion of identity formatting, requiring other forms of secondary socialization before it can occur. Rhoads contended that students create and maintain a non-heterosexual contraculture, queer communities comprised of specific structuring elements (i.e., rallies, dances, parties, social and political events, involvement in campus government and activities). Students enter postsecondary institutions and either become involved in the queer contraculture and consequently adopt a queer identity; become involved in the queer contraculture but resist the identity; or reject the contraculture entirely. In this regard, Rhoads considered the population and its identity as an ethnicity: The conceptualization of a gay ethnicity is largely based upon the need to organize a diverse group of people whose strongest bond is their opposition to heterosexuality (1994, p. 160). Students in this model are best understood as cultural workers: actively creating aspects of culture, in response to and defiance of dominant, heterosexual cultural norms.

Rhoads' work was based on a yearlong ethnographic study of gay men at a large public university; its transferability and generalizability (particularly to women) is open to question, as is that of my own work. I recently presented another way of conceptualizing the identities of non-heterosexual college students, a **historical, typological approach** (Dilley, 2002). Through intensive, in-depth interviews with men who attended colleges and universities across the country from 1945 to 2000, I found seven patterns of non-heterosexual male identity: closeted, homosexual, gay, queer, normal, parallel, and denying. The patterns were based on the senses of self of the men with whom I spoke, which I operationalized as the senses of the individual (what the man thought of himself and his identity), his experiences, and most importantly the meanings he made (or did not make) of how those senses and experiences related to each other, and to his own identity. These identities were consequently personally and socially constructed primarily by juxtaposing their identities with publicly and socially expressed identities; originally that was against the norm of heterosexual identity, but over the past five decades the comparison has been not only to heterosexual identity but also to forms of non-heterosexual identity.

My work owes obvious debt to environmental studies of identity. A small number of researchers are mining this area of understanding student development issues among sexual-orientation minorities. For example, Evans and Broido (1999) explored how non-heterosexual students make sense of their coming out experiences in residence halls. Love (1997, 1998) similarly investigated how the cultural environment a Catholic college affected gay or lesbian students' identities, as well as how those students attempted to change their environment. While these projects did not look at identity theories writ large, they transfer attention to the non-psychological or psycho-social aspects of student identity that I find more informative and evocative for student affairs educators and professionals.

### Looking Back, Facing Forward

Theories of sexual identity development among college students have been historically contested. Evans and Levine (1990) noted serious drawbacks to the early theories, including the influence of social and political forces of the 1970s when most were developed, the lack of empirical evidence supporting them, and their focus on gay white men to the exclusion of lesbians, people of color, and bisexuals. Researchers who developed models later attempted to address these concerns. But our work is neither complete nor finished; the final word on non-heterosexual student development, if it is ever to be, has yet to be written.

I find it important to remember that student development theories and identity theories are descriptive, rather than predictive. As often as we say that, it bears repeating. Theory is a tool, used to dig deeper for knowledge and apply what we do know productively. We should use non-heterosexual student development theories to understand issues and challenges faced by our student populations, to plan for appropriate programming for diverse sub-populations, to craft informed policies that are neither ignorantly inclusive nor exclusive, to provide sensitive service that are not presumed upon a singular model of student development and identities, and to watch for students who might need personal interventions.

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## Understanding Heterosexual Privilege

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- I can talk freely about my family life and important relationships to colleagues at work, coparishioners, etc.
- My partner and I can go shopping together, pretty well assured that we will not be harassed.
- I can kiss my partner farewell at the airport, confident that onlookers will either ignore us or smile understandingly.
- I can be pretty sure that our neighbours where we live will be friendly, or at least neutral.
- Our families and church community are delighted to celebrate with us the gift of our love and commitment.
- I can walk into any bookstore, sure that I will find books there that reflects my relational experiences.
- If my partner is seriously ill, I know I will be admitted to the intensive-care unit to visit her.
- If I am unemployed, I know that I have access to health-care coverage through my partner's insurance.
- Books that my children read in school contain stories and pictures of families much like ours.
- Organisations I belong do not feel threatened by my membership.
- I can find appropriate cards for my partner, to celebrate special occasions like anniversaries.
- I grew up feeling that my loves and friendships were healthy and normal.
- If I experience violence on the street it will not be because I am holding hands with my partner.
- We can choose public accommodations when we are travelling without having to worry about whether we are acceptable as a couple.
- If one of us dies, the other can be confident of the support and understanding of family, colleagues, church community, friends. The obituary will not read, "no immediate survivors."
- My partner and I can be confident of being eligible for "married student housing" should one of us decide to go back to school.
- My partner is welcome to attend office parties with me.
- I have always known that there are other people like me in the world.

From Lesbians Working to End Violence in Lesbian Relationships

## **HETEROSEXUAL QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please try to answer the questions as candidly as possible.

1. What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
3. Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
4. Could it be that your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
5. If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, how can you be sure you wouldn't prefer that?
6. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
7. Why do heterosexuals feel compelled to seduce others into their lifestyle?
8. Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet?
9. A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexual men. Do you consider it safe to expose children to heterosexual male teachers, pediatricians, priests, or scoutmasters?
10. With all the societal support for marriage, the divorce rate is spiraling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?
11. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
12. Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don't you fear s/he might be inclined to influence you in the direction of her/his own leanings?
13. With the sexually segregated living conditions of military life, isn't heterosexuality incompatible with military service?
14. How can you enjoy an emotionally fulfilling experience with a person of the other sex when there are such vast differences between you? How can a man know what pleases a woman sexually or vice-versa?
15. Shouldn't you ask your far-out straight cohorts, like skinheads and born-again, to keep quiet? Wouldn't that improve your image?
16. Why are heterosexuals so promiscuous?
17. There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that might enable you to change if you really want to. After all, you never deliberately chose to be a heterosexual, did you? Have you considered aversion therapy or Heterosexuals Anonymous?

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<http://www.safeschoolsnc.com/HETEROSEXUALQUESTIONNAIRE.htm> (2 of 2)6/3/2005  
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## The Gender Centre Inc. Fact Sheet The Transsexual Person In Your Life Responses to frequently asked questions, frequently held concerns

Reviewed July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008

### Section I: Overview

#### What is transsexualism?

Transsexualism is a condition in which a person experiences a discontinuity between their assigned sex and what they feel their core gender is. For example, a person who was identified as "female" at birth, raised as a girl, and has lived being perceived by others as a woman, may feel that their core sense of who they are is a closer fit with "male" or "man." If this sense is strong and persistent, this person may decide to take steps to ensure that others perceive them as a man. In other words, they may decide to transition to living as the sex that more closely matches their internal gender.

#### What is involved in the transition process?

The answer to this question varies depending on the needs and desires of the individual choosing the transition process. An individual may choose any combination of social, medical and legal steps that will help that person achieve the greatest level of comfort with their body and social roles.

Social steps might include asking to be referred to by a different name (perhaps one generally given to people of the "opposite sex") and different pronouns ("she" instead of "he" or vice versa), dressing in clothing traditionally worn by people of the sex they wish to be perceived as, and taking on mannerisms frequently associated with that sex/gender.

Medical steps might include hormonal treatment to achieve an appearance more consistent with the target gender expression, and/or surgery to further modify the appearance. There are a variety of surgical options to alter the transsexual person's body to help them achieve the greatest comfort with their gender expression. The transsexual person may choose some, all, or none of these surgical options.

Many transsexual people also work with the courts in their area to achieve legal recognition of their new name and gender. Steps taken vary depending on the location.

#### What causes transsexualism?

No one knows the answer to this question, although there is much research currently in progress investigating it. Among the theories being investigated are genetic influences, in utero hormonal influences, and other brain structure/brain chemical influences.

Human sex and gender are very complex, and it is unlikely that any simplistic analysis will definitively answer this question.

#### What is the treatment for transsexualism? Is there a "cure?"

Treatments for transsexualism based on attempting to change the individual's sense of their own true gender have proven ineffective. Accepted treatments are based on helping the transsexual person's body and presentation match their inner sense of their gender, usually through hormone treatment and surgery.

#### How common is transsexualism?

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (D.S.M.– IV), fourth edition, says the following (© 1994, American Psychiatric Association):

*Prevalence: There are no recent epidemiological studies to provide data on prevalence of Gender Identity Disorder. Data from smaller countries in Europe with access to total*

## SAFE ZONE TRAINING GUIDE

*population statistics and referrals suggest that roughly 1 per 30,000 adult males and 1 per 100,000 adult females seek sex-reassignment surgery.*

*Because these numbers reflect only people who have sought traditional medical treatment, they do not reflect the total numbers of people who have some experience of gender discontinuity.*

### **Is transsexualism a modern phenomenon?**

While advances in medical science have only in the last few decades made it possible for individuals to transition with the aid of hormones and surgery, transgendered people have existed throughout history in many societies.

Jennifer Reitz's "Natural History of Transsexuality" provides a brief historical overview.

### **Is transsexualism the same as homosexuality?**

No. Transsexualism is about a person's core sense of their gender. This is a separate issue from the gender of the people they are attracted to.

Just like any other individual, a transsexual person may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual. For example, a person raised as a man who transitions to living as a woman may identify as heterosexual, in which case she would seek relationships with men, or lesbian, in which case she would seek relationships with other women.

## **Section II: Responses to common reactions and feelings about transition**

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### **The person I thought I knew is becoming a stranger.**

A person we know who undergoes gender transition will very likely look and sound quite different after their transition. A person we've known as a woman, for instance, may change his hairstyle, grow facial hair, speak with a lower voice, and adopt an entirely new wardrobe. But he's not likely to adopt an entirely new personality or set of values, and our history with this person is unchanged. Think of any person you care about, and ask yourself what qualities you value most about her or him. You are likely to think of qualities which are not gender-specific, such as sense of humor, intelligence, and loyalty. These qualities are not likely to change as a person undergoes gender transition. In fact, a person who undergoes gender transition is in a process of becoming more comfortable with himself or herself, and so their positive qualities are likely to be enhanced.

It can be scary when someone in your life tells you they need to make such a major change, and it's understandable that you may feel you don't know this person as well as you thought. But if you continue to spend time together, you will likely be comforted to find that they are in many ways the same person you have always known.

### **Altering the body through surgery seems like mutilation.**

This is also an understandable response. To those of us who are comfortable with our assigned gender, the idea of altering those parts of our bodies that are most associated with our gender can feel alien, frightening, and disturbing.

Another person's decision to alter parts of their body can feel threatening. It may help to remember that a person undergoing transition from, for instance, a male to female gender expression, is not making a blanket statement about the value of malehood or the validity of your gender expression. She is simply seeking to become more comfortable in her body.

Sex reassignment surgery is the aspect of gender transition that is most difficult for some people to understand, and you may never feel comfortable with it. That's okay. But that discomfort doesn't preclude honoring another person's choice, treating them with respect, and even supporting them through their gender transition.

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### **I can't imagine the person ever seeming to me like the sex they want to be.**

It's hard to let go of our perceptions of someone we've known for a long time. Changes in a person's appearance and behavior can occur gradually, and may be difficult to perceive if you are in regular contact. But if you pay attention to how strangers react to the person, it may help you to see these changes. On the other hand, the gradualness of the change may help you to adapt to the new gender identity step-by-step. You may be surprised, in time, at how completely you accept the person's new chosen gender.

It is true, however, that some people who undergo gender transition will continue to have significant characteristics of their previous gender identity. Some male-to-female transsexuals, for instance, may be unusually tall for women, while a female-to-male transsexual may have small features. It may help if you avoid focusing on these specific things, but rather honor the person's chosen gender, and try to see them as they see themselves.

### **How can I support this person in their transition?**

There are many ways you can be helpful. Perhaps the most important is to convey your intention to be supportive to the person in transition. Let them know you want to be an ally, and ask them what they need from you. Then, to the extent you are able, offer them the support they've asked for.

We can offer a couple of specific ideas as well. First, you can adopt the use of the person's new name (if they've chosen one) and appropriate gender pronouns. This change can be uncomfortable at first, and you may slip up once in a while, but eventually this change becomes habitual and comfortable. This small but very important step will demonstrate that you take the person's decision seriously.

You can also try to maintain your previous relationship with the person, whether that's the intimate relationship of close friends or once-a-month bowling buddies. Gender transition is new territory for many people, and hence can be scary. "Hanging in" with the person in transition despite feelings of discomfort with the process can be a very supportive act.

Also, you may ask the person in transition how you can help in letting others know about their transition. They may want to tell people themselves, or they may be grateful for help "spreading the word." There may be certain contexts—the softball team, a church you both attend, or the workplace—where your assistance in telling others and expressing your support will be appreciated. Let them be your guide in this.

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The Gender Centre Inc. 7 Bent Street (P.O. Box 266) Petersham N.S.W. 2049 Ph: (02) 9569 2366 Fax: (02) 9569 1176

**Web: [www.gendercentre.org.au](http://www.gendercentre.org.au)**

## **RESOURCES**

### **LBCC RESOURCES**

**Psychological/Personal Counseling** - Short-term personal counseling and referrals to campus/community resources. (LAC) A163/x4561 (PCC) GG100 / x3922

**Women & Men's Resource Center** - Re-entry and support services, workshops, study lounge, computer lab and parenting information. (LAC) E119 / x4150 (PCC) DD144 / x3987

**Student Life** - Leadership, clubs, cultural celebrations, and CS card. (LAC) E Bldg / X4226 (PCC) EE157/ x3983

### **COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

#### **The Gay & Lesbian Center of Greater Long Beach**

2017 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Long Beach, CA 90817  
562-434-4455

[www.centerlb.org](http://www.centerlb.org)

The Center Long Beach provides services to support, inform, and connect the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities through programs of information and education, health, and well being, cultural and social activities, and social justice. We offer the following services for youth:

#### **The Center Orange County**

12752 Garden Grove Blvd.  
Garden Grove, CA 92843  
714-534-0862

[www.thecenteroc.org](http://www.thecenteroc.org)

The mission of The Center Orange County is to advocate on behalf of the Orange County LGBT community, and to provide services that ensure its well-being and positive identity.

#### **LA Gay & Lesbian Center**

1624 N. Schrader Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90028  
323-993-7400

[www.lagaycenter.org](http://www.lagaycenter.org)

The L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center provides a broad array of services for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. Health services include free or low cost HIV/AIDS medical care, individual and group counseling, HIV/STD testing and prevention, and alternative insemination. The Center also offers legal, social, cultural, and educational services, with unique programs for seniors, families, and youth, including a 24-bed transitional living program for homeless youth.

## SAFE ZONE TRAINING GUIDE

### Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

Local Chapter Information:

#### **Long Beach**

P.O. Box 8221  
Long Beach, CA 90808  
562-403-1234

[www.lbpflag.org](http://www.lbpflag.org)

#### **Los Angeles**

P.O. Box 24565  
Los Angeles, CA 90024  
310-472-8952

[www.pflagla.org](http://www.pflagla.org)

#### **Orange County**

P.O. Box 28662  
Santa Ana, CA 92799-8662  
714-997-8047

[www.ocpflag.org](http://www.ocpflag.org)

#### **South Orange County**

P.O. Box 1100  
Laguna Beach, CA 92652  
949-459-2834

[www.pflagsouthoc.org](http://www.pflagsouthoc.org)

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