

Straight But Not Narrow:

How to Be an Ally to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning People

There are many different ways of being a safe and supportive ally in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning community. Listed below are just some suggestions:



1. Try not to make the assumption that everyone you meet is heterosexual. Try to be open to the fact that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) people are present in every walk of life, in every community.
2. Use the words "gay" and "lesbian" instead of "homosexual." The overwhelming majority of gay men and lesbians do not identify with or use the word "homosexual" to describe themselves.
3. Use non-gender specific language. Ask "Are you seeing someone?" or "Are you in a committed relationship?," instead of "Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" or "Are you married?" Use the word "partner" or "significant other" instead of "boyfriend/girlfriend" or "husband/wife."
4. Do not assume the sexual orientation of another person even when that person is married or in a committed relationship. Many bisexuals, and even some gay men and lesbians, are in heterosexual relationships. And don't assume that someone who is transgender is gay or that the person will seek to transition to become heterosexual.
5. Do not assume that a LGBTQ person is attracted to you just because they have disclosed their sexual identity. If any interest is shown, be flattered, not flustered. Treat any interest that someone might show just as you would if it came from someone who is heterosexual.
6. Interrupt offensive language, mimicking behavior, or insensitive jokes. Let people know that the language, behavior, and jokes are unacceptable -- even between gay people.
7. Validate people's gender expression. For example, if a male-born person identifies as female, refer to that person as "she" and use her chosen name. If you are unsure how to refer to a person's gender, simply ask that person.
8. Educate yourself about LGBTQ history, culture, and concerns. Read LGBTQ publications such as *The Advocate*, or *Out Magazine*. See movies that are by and about LGBTQ individuals.
9. As a residence hall staff member, include information on your floor bulletin boards that show that you are an ally to all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. This can, and should, be done for any under-represented group and can be done in addition to University non-discrimination policies. Provide on-campus resources that are available.
10. Incorporate LGBTQ issues and individuals into residence hall programming. Many historical and literary figures were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.
11. Raise LGBTQ issues, concerns, and experiences in your family, workplace, school, religious community, and neighborhood. Educate children about families that have two moms or two dads. Establish a LGBTQ welcoming committee in your faith community.
12. Continue to educate yourself about issues facing LGBTQ people. If you don't understand something, look to local or on-line resources, read an article or a book, participate in discussions related to LGBTQ issues and individuals.
13. Understand that the expression of homophobia is an attack upon the spirit, emotions, and sometimes the actual physical being of LGBTQ people. It is also a violation of every person's freedom and human right to be who he or she wants to be.
14. Provide information and referrals of resources for LGBTQ individuals. Refer people to offices, individuals and other resources that have the information that they need.