

## 7.3 Activities

**All 7.3 Activities****Engaging Students**

Become familiar with state laws protecting LGBTQ+ youth and any restrictions on information regarding sexual orientation or gender identity that can be discussed in the classroom. If your school participates in an LGBTQ Safe Zone program, this is a good lesson in which to revisit that with your students.

Be sure to use the terms *gender identity*, *sexual identity* and *sexual orientation*, rather than *sexual preference*.

**Potential Challenges**

During this lesson, be especially attentive to students' needs and the dynamics in the room. This is a lesson in which Class Rights and Responsibilities and the idea of parents being the primary sexuality educators need to be reinforced throughout. As in any lesson, be careful to not impart personal opinions, but do provide perspective. Reinforce messages of respect and safety for all students in the school.

One potential trap when discussing LGBTQ+ identities is to use language such as “them” to refer to gay people, or to say “gay people are... this or that.” Make sure, especially when reviewing definitions, that the discussion does not start making distinctions between “us” and “them.” It is best to use language such as, “People who identify as [straight/gay/lesbian/transgender, etc.],” which places the person before the description. It's also best to avoid generalizations—people who identify themselves as gay are a varied group of individuals, just like people who identify themselves as straight.

**Engaging Students**

This lesson offers an opportunity to reinforce the importance of social awareness and empathy, and to normalize different identities and sexual behaviors. Remember that gender and sexual identity and sexual behavior do not always coincide.

## Activity 7.3-2

**Stereotypes Brainstorm****Facts to Know**

For the purposes of this lesson we are defining stereotypes as, “an oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people.”

### Potential Challenges

This activity is intentionally binary and heteronormative because the goal of the activity is to identify gender stereotypes and explain why they can be harmful.

As students examine and discuss stereotypes, there is a possibility they may internalize these stereotypes and take them personally. It is important to remind students that these stereotypes are not about anyone in the classroom and that you, as the teacher, do not believe them to be true. Reinforce for students that stereotypes are not something they have created; rather they exist in our culture and society and can only be changed when they are named and pushed back against.

Lastly, students may bring up stereotypes that are not “negative”—for example, “girls are pretty” or “boys are good at sports.” It is important to emphasize for students that not all stereotypes are inherently harmful: girls can be pretty and boys can be good at sports. But stereotypes become dangerous when people expect others to only fit into these boxes, and when we tie our self-worth to meeting expectations that may not be achievable.

#### Activity 7.3-3

### Gender and Sexual Identity Vocabulary List

#### Facts to Know

Many of the following vocabulary words build on each other. To make sure students are clear about each word, introduce them in the following order:

- |                          |                       |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Sex Assigned at Birth | 6. Sexual Orientation | 10. Bisexual    |
| 2. Gender Identity       | 7. Straight           | 11. Questioning |
| 3. Transgender or Trans  | 8. Gay                | 12. LGBTQ+      |
| 4. Cisgender             | 9. Lesbian            | 13. Ally        |
| 5. Gender Expression     |                       |                 |

The following are some additional definitions and talking points to include for clarification:

- **Why not define *homosexual*?** The term *homosexual* is an outdated clinical term typically used to classify people based on sexual orientation, and therefore can feel derogatory within the LGBTQ+ community. *Gay* and *lesbian* are more commonly accepted terms.

- **Bisexual:** It is important for students to understand that someone who identifies as bisexual is not attracted to every person.
- **Coming out (of the closet):** Sharing one's identity as a person who identifies as LGBTQ+ with other people.
- **Sex assigned at birth vs. gender identity:** If a student is struggling with the difference between sex assigned at birth and gender identity, explain that sex assigned at birth is dictated by a doctor when a baby is born based solely on the baby's external genitalia (for example, a penis or vulva). Whereas, gender identity is self-identified as that person develops and discovers who they are.
- **Queer:** A word that may be used to describe people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or many other sexual identities. The term "queer" is currently used by some people within the LGBTQ+ community as an affirmation of their sexual and gender identities as different and wonderful, as in, "I'm queer and proud." The term "queer," however, has historically also been a derogatory word used against gay and lesbian people or those suspected of being gay or lesbian. Caution should be exercised in using the word because of this historical association.

## Activity 7.3-4

**Visualization****Engaging Students**

The following is a possible script for the visualization activity:

*"We will be starting class with a visualization. I will be asking about feelings that you may or may not have experienced. Do your best during the activity, and know that you will not have to share any private information."*

*"Please close your eyes and put your head down on your desk. (Note: Some students may not feel comfortable or safe closing their eyes. Allow room for students to choose their own way to comfortably focus on themselves during the visualization.) Focus on yourself and listen silently to my voice as you think about these questions."*

*"I want you to picture someone you are attracted to or have a crush on. This could be a person you know or a celebrity. Again, you're not going to have to share this information. If you've never had a crush on someone, imagine a couple you know, either people in your life or a famous couple."*

*"Now that you've got a person or a couple in mind..."*

- *How does it feel to have a crush on someone? Are there any physical reactions you experience? A flutter in your stomach? Sweaty palms or nerves? Physical excitement? Does it feel like that person is always on your mind?*

- *How is having a crush on someone different from just being friends?*

*“Now picture someone you don’t like very much. Could you make yourself have a crush on that person? How would it feel to force yourself to have feelings for someone that you didn’t really have?”*

*“Please open your eyes.”*

If time allows, after the first visualization is over, have students close their eyes again and lead them through the following exercise:

*“Now imagine a world where you can’t express yourself openly, either physically or emotionally, with the person you love. Imagine you are living in a world where a big part of your identity has to be suppressed. Imagine having to hide a big part of yourself from the world around you and the people in your life whom you care about and who care about you.”*

Ask the following process questions:

- *How would it feel if you couldn’t be yourself around your friends and family? (Be sure to talk about fear, loss of safety, and loss of freedom.)*
- *Would you be able to change the way you felt in order to fit in?*
- *Would you have anyone you could talk to about this?*

## **Lesson 7.3 Resources**

GLBT National Help Center: [www.glnh.org](http://www.glnh.org)

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays: [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network: [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

Human Rights Campaign: [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

Sex, Etc., Glossary: <http://sexetc.org/sex-ed/sex-terms/>

See [www.getrealeducation.org](http://www.getrealeducation.org) for more information and resources.