

## To Learn More

### **GLSEN (Gay-Lesbian-Straight Educators Network)**

Educational issues and support for instructors.

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

### **GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation)**

Activism to fight homophobia and support positive depictions of GLBT people in the media.

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

### **PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays)**

Support for families and advocacy on GLBT issues.

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

# Be an Ally to Gays & Lesbians



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Title No. 061

## Be a Friend

### Treat your GLBT friends like your other friends

- Talk to them about the same things—music, weekends, parties, parents, movies or studies.
- Share the same kinds of pastimes.
- Be physical (or not) just as you are with your other friends.

### Acknowledge your GLBT friends' special concerns

- Ask them about the ways being gay affects their lives.
- Check in with them if there's been an anti-gay incident on campus or in the news.
- Ask if there's anything you can do to show your support.

### Join with others

- Find out if the campus GLBT group offers special programs for allies.
- Check out community agencies and national organizations that are working to end prejudice and discrimination.

If someone asks you to keep a confidence—about sex or anything else—keep it. That's a good idea with all your friends!

## Answers for Allies

Here are 2 questions you might hear and some ways to answer them.

### “Why are gay people so blatant?”

People usually don't ask this question about other groups. (“Why is he always wearing that team sweatshirt?” “Does she have to carry that guitar everywhere she goes?”)

GLBT people want the freedom to be who they are—just as an athlete or musician would. What critics call “blatant” they might call being honest, open and strong.

### “Why do they need special attention?”

GLBT people and their allies don't feel they're asking for special attention. They believe they're taking steps to promote safety and justice for everyone.

Homophobia can result in serious crimes such as assault and murder. It can lead to hurtful behaviors such as harassment or neglect.

## What About Me?

### Will people think you're gay if you “come out” as a GLBT ally?

They might. One great way to show support for GLBT people is to be OK if this happens.

Correct any misunderstandings without getting flustered or defensive. Then people will see that you're comfortable with yourself as well as with GLBT people.

# Straight Allies

are important to **GLBT—gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender—people.**

## What Can Allies Do?

- **Help GLBT people** feel supported and included.
- **Help others** understand more about GLBT experiences.
- **Support** fairness and justice for everyone.
- **Make** the world a safer place.

How do allies do it? They learn about GLBT issues. They learn about themselves. They share their insights with others.

**Want to be one? There are all kinds of things you can do.**

## How to Start

**One of the best ways to be an ally is to learn about GLBT people's lives.**

- **Read** books by or about GLBT people.
- **Research** and write an article or letter for your school paper or website.
- **Attend** a workshop about diversity or homophobia.
- **Read** poetry or stories with GLBT themes.
- **Go** to a GLBT Pride Day parade.

# Ask Questions

**Talk to your friends or family**

- How do they feel about GLBT issues?
- What helps them accept others?
- What makes some people judgmental?

**Ask GLBT people about their experiences**

- What was coming out like?
- Who supports them and how?
- Have they been harassed or discriminated against?

**Ask yourself some questions, too**

- How comfortable are you with GLBT people?
- What are your assumptions? Do you hold any stereotypes?
- What things make it easy for you to be an ally?
- What things might make it hard?
- Are there any questions you'd like to have answered?

Often, hurtful actions against GLBT people are done by people who are confused about their own thoughts and feelings.

# Speak Up

## Think about the words you use

- Ask about “partners” rather than “boyfriends” or “girlfriends.” This shows you accept both same-sex and opposite-sex couples.
- Learn to use the words *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual* and *transgender* with comfort.
- Make GLBT issues part of your everyday conversation, just as you might talk about music, a class or political ideas.

## Let people know you don't want to hear

- offensive slang
- anti-gay jokes
- stereotypical remarks
- put-downs of GLBT people

## Speak out against anti-gay behavior

- Someone putting up posters or writing articles or graffiti.
- Someone playing homophobic music so loud that other people have to hear it.
- Someone harassing a person or group seen as GLBT.

Sometimes this behavior is illegal. Speaking up might mean reporting it to campus police or the administration.

# What's in a Name?

- **Gay men** are attracted to other men. “Gay” can refer to both men and women.
- **Lesbians** are women who are attracted to other women.
- **Bisexuals** are attracted to both men and women.
- **Transgender people** challenge traditional ideas about gender.
  - **Transvestites** are men who dress in women's clothing. They see themselves as men, not women. They may be straight or gay.
  - **Transsexuals** are people who feel they are a different gender than their bodies—a man in a woman's body, or a woman in a man's body. They may be straight or gay. Some have sex-change surgery. Others don't.

**These categories aren't rigid.** Someone who identifies as heterosexual may have same-sex fantasies. A gay man may have been married to a woman in the past. A straight woman may become sexually involved with another woman.