

Different in More Ways Than One.

Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way
to Identity, Sexuality and Respect

Aspetti psicologici e relativi alla salute

Verschiedene Lebensformen

Theory
Glossary
Literature
Adresses

Histoire et culture

Sexualités

La comunità lesbica e gay

Religie

Imprint

Different in More Ways Than One.
Providing Guidance for Teenagers
on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality
and Respect

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Introduction

Who is this book for?

This manual was developed to be used as a tool to combat discrimination especially among young people. It presents advice as well as a variety of methods for training and consciousness-raising sessions. It aims at addressing discrimination based on sexual orientation inside a multicultural society. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and on race or culture share a similar basis – the fear of the “other”- i.e. everything that seems “strange” or “abnormal”. The manual pays special attention to situations involving double discrimination where individuals face discrimination on the grounds of their race or ethnic origin as well as of their sexual preference. Teenagers and young adults are the end-beneficiaries of the manual. It is therefore important to inform educators, teachers and psycho-social counsellors who deal with young people at crucial points (in schools, in the health system, etc.) so that they react to xenophobic and homophobic impulses and address these in a professional way.

In order to develop a user-friendly product, the TRIANGLE partner organisations conducted a needs analysis. In 2002, 377 teachers, youth workers and counsellors in Austria, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands were asked what they needed to fight against discrimination in schools, social work and in counselling. The main problem for teachers was that young people are not always willing to talk openly about homosexuality or that they showed offensive or aggressive behaviour towards homosexual persons in the group. Teachers and youth workers need more information on didactical issues and practical methodology. 65% of the questionnaire’s respondents wanted to know how to teach about homosexuality in a classroom or in other groups of teenagers. 53% needed advice on how to deal with homophobic attitudes in a classroom while 46% replied they did not know how to empower gay and lesbian pupils or clients. In the psycho-social health sector the main problem encountered when counselling gays and lesbians seems to be the professionals’ lack of confidence in their own knowledge about homosexuality in cultural or ethnic minority groups (91%). Counsellors also reported that they find it difficult to adequately recognize problems related to homosexual preference. These respondents replied that they need information about the coming-out process (61%). The counsellors stated that what they most urgently needed to know was how they could adequately address homosexuality in a counselling situation.

The partner organisations involved in TRIANGLE hope that this manual will contribute towards a reduction of discrimination by helping educators, teachers and psycho-social counsellors address these priority areas in a professional manner. The manual, which condenses the knowledge and experience of many experts, is a tool which will help the target group to perceive more clearly the crucial points involved in the fear of the “other” and will help them prevent or react to discrimination. A fundamental part of this process is, of course, that the young people as well as the adults involved in this process should be willing to reflect on their own attitudes. The advice and methods included in this manual will give them ample opportunity to do so.

What is the background of this manual?

In November 2000, the European Council adopted a decision establishing a Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination. The programme, designed to promote measures to prevent and combat discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, has three main objectives:

- to further the understanding of issues related to discrimination;
- to develop the capacity to prevent and address discrimination effectively and;
- to promote and disseminate the values and practices underlying the fight against discrimination.

The Action Programme aimed at supporting the organisations that take part in the prevention of and fight against discrimination by enabling them to compare and contrast their approaches with the experience gained in other regions of the Community. On this basis, the Ministry of Health, Social Affairs, Women and Family of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, together with the Anti-discrimination Unit of the City of Vienna, submitted a proposal for a trans-national exchange action called TRIANGLE: Transfer of Information to Combat Discrimination Against Gays and Lesbians in Europe. The co-operating partners involved in the action came from five countries: Austria, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. Participating organisations include:

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Fürstenwall 25, D – 40219 Düsseldorf, Germany
www.mgsff.nrw.de

Arcigay Nazionale

via Don Minzoni 18, I – 40121 Bologna, Italy
www.arcigay.it

Empowerment Lifestyle Services

Vinkenstraat 116 A, NL – 1013 JV Amsterdam,
The Netherlands
www.empower-ls.com

ProChoix

177, avenue Ledru-Rollin, F – 75011 Paris, France
www.prochoix.org

Rutgers Nisso Groep

Postbus 9022 oder Oudenoord 176-178, NL-3506 GA Utrecht,
The Netherlands
www.rng.nl

SchLAu NRW – Schwul Lesbische Aufklärung in NRW

c/o Jugendnetzwerk Lambda NRW e. V., Wilhelmstraße 67,
D – 52070 Aachen, Germany
www.schlau-nrw.de

Schorer Stichting

Postbus 15830, NL – 1001 NH Amsterdam, The Netherlands
www.schorer.nl

**Wiener Antidiskriminierungsstelle für Gleichgeschlechtliche
Lebensweisen**

Friedrich Schmidt Platz 3, A – 1082 Wien, Austria
www.queer.wien.at

These organisations chose to co-operate on the TRIANGLE project for several reasons. Even now, lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Europe face discrimination on a regular basis. Many Europeans still consider it “natural” and their “right” to despise, harass, or ignore homosexuals. European societies still take it for granted that “everyone” is heterosexual, thus denying the existence of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Many laws and other regulations still deny equal rights to heterosexuals and homosexuals. Negative attitudes and behaviour still stigmatise gays, lesbians and bisexuals in most of Europe. These forms of discrimination deeply affect these individuals’ daily lives. They usually do not even dare to hold hands in public like heterosexuals do. In every social situation, they have to make decisions whether to admit, declare or deny that they are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Any decision to be open about this implies risks: of being shunned, of losing one’s job, of being harassed or intimidated and even of being physically abused.

The TRIANGLE partners felt that on the one hand, the situation of lesbians and gays is improving because of an increasing awareness in many countries and European-level measures to combat discrimination. On the other hand, however, certain aspects of the situation are getting worse. New fears of international terrorism and fundamentalism add to already existent feelings of xenophobia and of rejection of Muslims. Increasing immigration into Europe has led to societies that are more and more intercultural; and the integration of new populations and new ideas often isn’t easy. There are tensions between European-born citizens and newcomers. The generally tolerant attitudes of Europeans towards homosexuals, still quite recent, are not always shared by newcomers. Most importantly, the growing number of people who have a fundamentalist worldview often find it very difficult to accept people who live their homosexuality openly. Conservative Islamic as well as Christian (religious and cultural) leaders regularly declare that homosexuality is a threat to society and some young people who identify to this fundamentalism often take this as a license to disrespect homosexuals or even to resort to violent behaviour. Some of the people coming from such backgrounds who themselves experience homosexual feelings and increasingly fall between two cultures, feel very comfortable in this situation and live this experience as personally enriching. Others do not feel at home among the gay, lesbian and bisexual community, nor do they feel safe among their cultural peers. Thus, European intercultural societies have to deal with some difficult problems concerning homosexuality, lifestyles, religion, and culture. These problems are most visible in the settings of education and psychosocial care. In response to this, the TRIANGLE partners decided to collect methods of good practice that would support workers in this field. They also wanted to provide the professionals in the field with effective and practical tools.



Who wrote the manual?

The authors of this manual come from different institutions and countries. They are experts in the field of combating discrimination, sexual education, counselling, intercultural education and research on sexualities.

Dr. Pascal Belling studied Literary Criticism and Comparative Studies. He works as a senior programme officer in the Ministry of Health, Social Affairs, Women and Family of North-Rhine Westphalia and is responsible for anti-discrimination and diversity policies.

Flora Bolter is a researcher in social science and is a member of the editorial board of ProChoix, a anti-racist and anti-sexist French review.

Peter Dankmeijer is coordinator of Empowerment Lifestyle Services, a company which advises on diversity issues in schools. He develops curricula, informative materials for educators and advises schools on emancipatory policies.

Martin Enders is a certified educationalist and has been working in the field of counselling since 1999 in the KCM gay centre in Münster. Since 2002 he has been one of the speakers of SchLAu NRW and has directed the gay and lesbian education project “andersrum aufgeklärt” in Münster.

Margherita Graglia Graglia is a psychologist. She is responsible for gay and lesbian psychological counselling in Reggio Emilia (Italy). She works both as a trainer and as a consultant in various projects about diversity and education.

Karen Kraan is an educational scientist who specialises in learning and behavioural problems. She works at Schorerstichting (Amsterdam) as program coordinator, trainer, materials developer and consultant in the fields of HIV/STI, sexual identity and sexual diversity.

Adriana Stern Stern is the author of books for children and teenagers. She wrote the stories in this manual. The main topics of her writing are: Jewish life in Germany, violation of children's rights, anti-Semitism, racism, homosexuality. She has been publishing regularly since 1993 (Pias Labyrinth).

Dr. Stefan Timmermanns is a researcher and expert in sex education. He is a board member of the German Association of Sex Education (GSP) and the co-ordinator of the TRIANGLE project.

Mag. Wolfgang Wilhelm an anti-discrimination officer of the City of Vienna, has worked in the field of prevention, counselling and research in the areas of AIDS and disabilities. He has also done pedagogical work with young people via theatre. He is a self-employed mediator, trainer, supervisor and coach.

The scientific research and evaluation of the project was implemented by Rutgers Nisso Groep:

Dr. Floor Bakker is the head of the research department of Rutgers Nisso Groep. She has extensive expertise in the (management of) research in the broad area of sexual and reproductive health.

Dr. Ine Vanwesenbeeck is a senior researcher at Rutgers Nisso Groep. Her expertise is on homosexuality, sex education, and STD/HIV prevention.

Thank you!

We would like to thank all those who made a contribution to our manual from many different countries and in many different ways. Special thanks to Markus Chmielorz and Jürgen Wenke from “Rosa Strippe” for the counselling tools in Chapters 2 and 6 as well as to Gea Zijlstra for her wonderful comments on Chapter 9. Very special thanks to Flora Bolter for proofreading the English version of the manual. We thank Prof. Dr. Georg Auernheimer (University of Cologne) and Prof. Dr. Uwe Sielert (University of Kiel) for their expert opinions. Lela Lähnemann and Lüder Tietz for their extensive feedbacks as well as Monica Luci, Mike Breitbart, Soizick Jaffré and Christoph Singelnstein for their expertise for chapters 8 and 9.

Many thanks as well to all our respondents, experts in the different national linkage boards and those who gave a feedback to the test version of our manual!

How to use the manual

The manual consists of different theme guides and one brochure. This brochure contains the introduction, the theory part and the annex including a bibliography, addresses and a glossary. In the guides you can find more detailed information about certain topics related to the subject of homosexuality. The various chapters are subdivided into sections that are specifically addressed to teachers/educators and to counsellors, with cross-references being made from some educational sections to the counselling sections and vice-versa. This approach reflects the fact that there is a difference between education and counselling, while also enabling the actual overlap between various counselling situations so as to adequately take them into account in the sex education context. This also corresponds to the present discussion among educators and counsellors about their chief fields for action, such as school education and youth welfare. In the actual work with young people in various educational settings these two aspects overlap. The different professions have different competences, for instance, a counsellor will no doubt be more competent to provide individual assistance over the longer term whereas educators/teachers seem to be better equipped to place the issue or problem in question in the context of the group norms and processes and to tackle it by active discussion/ educational work.

The theme guides

Each chapter in the manual is presented as a kind of guide. This method aims at helping the reader to become better oriented on an unknown (or not well known) subject. The chapters of the manual are presented in a certain order. It is however up to you, the reader, to decide for yourself where you would like to start. Users who read the manual systematically from beginning to end will note that some information is repeated in several chapters.

Story telling

Stories play an important role in our lives. From early childhood on, we all enjoy stories or fairy tales. In plays, in movies, in the newspaper gossip columns... almost everywhere, stories are told about different people's lives, their fortunes and misfortunes. Perhaps we all like stories so much because they touch us in a very personal and intimate way. Children suddenly become silent and interested when the teacher starts telling a story. Intuitively, it seems, they hope to learn the answers to their essential questions: where do I come from, where will I go and what am I supposed to do? Listening to stories stimulates our imagination. Sometimes we suffer with the protagonists as if we experienced their feelings personally.

The manual wishes to use the associative and personal effect of the stories to help readers become more intimately involved with different subjects. Discrimination is not only a word but rather an everyday experience for many people. Often we can't imagine what people are going through, what they feel or what they dream of. This changes, however, if we follow other people and see the world through their eyes. We feel with them and we can more easily understand their problems. One result of using stories and relating personally to them may be that we become more engaged in supporting those who are discriminated against and also in supporting their request for respect and equality. This is the intention of the stories used in this manual.

If you are a teacher, educator or counsellor, you can use some of the stories as a starting point for a discussion on the different forms of discrimination and their effects on people. It is the easiest way to talk directly or indirectly) about someone's hidden fears which might be the reason why that person discriminates against others. Working against discrimination doesn't only consist in feeling sympathy for the underdog. It also means coping with one's own fears of being different from norms within our society, with the fear of being excluded or harmed. This is no easy task. Sometimes, we must learn to accept or even respect other people's differences!

Framework

In the “Framework” section, the reader acquires basic information related to the main theme of the chapter. Afterwards, an introduction to the subject is given in the paragraph titled “First of all”. This section is followed by “Basic information”, which aims at providing a short analysis of problems that can arise when dealing with a certain topic in education or counselling contexts. The final section, “What does this mean for me?”, is intended to broaden the reader’s scope by presenting various approaches on how the different problems connected with this topic may be solved. Here the manual lists a variety of strategies that can be used in the professional and perhaps also in the reader’s private life.

Bear in mind

Educating and/ or counselling on a specific subject depend strongly on an individual’s personal views, experiences and values regarding that subject. As such, it is useful for you as a professional to first take a look at your own opinions and values before addressing the target group. Beside the professional way of addressing the subject your personal opinions do have an important influence on the final recommendations you make to clients and how you will present these as possible solutions or advice. Being aware of your personal attitude towards relationships, religion, sexuality, lifestyles, culture, etc., and of how your points of view have evolved, is vital to respect the attitudes and experiences of your pupils or clients. The questions proposed in this part of the chapter should help you explore your own views. However, you have to be careful not to project your own experiences on others. Dealing with the experiences or problems of others may awaken memories of your own feelings in a similar situation. Such memories can influence teaching or counselling in a hidden but important way.

Tools ...

... in education

Exercises are very important for practical educational work. This manual has integrated some exercises as a source of inspiration for a professional's everyday work. Each of the exercises is presented according to a fixed structure. First, the "Aim" of the method is expressed in brief, simple terms. Then the "Method" is described – here one can read how the exercise can be carried out. Finally, a commentary, "Please note" is provided. This section aims at calling the reader's attention to crucial aspects of a particular tool or to complicated elements they should be aware of while using the exercise.

Before undertaking to use the tools in this manual, we would like to call your attention to the following remarks:

- Don't spend only one lesson on a highly personal subject like sexual orientation, but rather try to spread the discussion over several sessions. Young people need time to digest new information and they should be given the opportunity to ask questions during the next lesson. You may want to work together with your colleagues on developing a series of lessons on love and sexuality. Try also to include and not to separate the topic of homosexuality from (hetero)sexuality. If you talk about love and partnership in general you can also mention examples of same-sex love.
- Work on the teenagers' own direct experiences with gays, lesbians and migrants. What do they know about these topics? What is their experience with migrants, gays, lesbians or bisexuals in their family/surroundings?
- Don't underestimate the knowledge of children or teenagers. Even the younger ones can have an unlimited access to TV, films, and Internet and are exposed to the stereotypes provided by them. Children build myths to explain the gaps in their knowledge to themselves and to others. As a result, their knowledge of "differences" is incomplete. Try to help them to order their fragmentary knowledge and provide them new and balanced information. Myths like the notion that one can become gay or lesbian just through mutual masturbation or because one has touched people of the same sex are still strong and may cause irrational but intense fears.
- Consider inviting gay and/or lesbian people to take part in a discussion as experts. In some countries, there are volunteer (peer) projects to educate students on the topic of same-sex partnerships and lifestyles. Contact addresses can be found in the appendix.

Tools ...

... in counselling

In this section, we make a few suggestions to help readers cope with some specific questions gay, lesbian and bisexual clients may have. Although there are many different schools of thought and different counselling approaches, one element which remains common to all is the importance of the relationship between counsellor and client. In order to have an effective relationship, free from personal prejudice, you as the counsellor must have spent time reflecting on your own views on homosexuality. You should ask yourself questions so as to become aware of your own point of view and not to send the client negative messages, in particular through non-verbal behaviour.

Prejudice and stereotypes can be difficult to recognize even in contexts where homosexuality is no longer seen as a disease or deviant behaviour. As a counsellor you should be aware of the following issues (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- do not automatically attribute a client's problems to her or his homosexual orientation
- recognize that a client's psychological symptoms can be influenced by his/her own internalised homophobia.
- be aware of the possible consequences if a lesbian, gay or bisexual person reveals his/her homosexuality to parents, to employers
- be aware of the effects of prejudice and discrimination upon the daily lives of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals
- recognise the possible effects of the multiple forms of social stigma carried by lesbians, bisexuals and gays who come from ethnic minorities. These individuals may face discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity as well as of their sexual orientation.

Another aspect to be considered is the different culturally-accepted definitions of adolescence – what it is, when it starts, etc. When a young male or female client of a different ethnic origin has just migrated to a western country, a counsellor must make an effort to understand the cultural expectations for young people of their gender and age group.

Background

What are sexual identity and orientation?

Sexuality is dealt with differently in the multitude of cultures and nations on Earth. Sex education identifies four functions of sexuality: 1. it provides lust and is an important motor in the reproduction of human life, 2. it can deepen relationships and is a code of intimate communication, 3. it plays an important role in the development of our identity because by experiencing sexuality, our identity as man or woman is confirmed (and we, in turn, confirm others), 4. it can enrich our lives on different levels. For instance, a sexual relationship can result in the conception of a child, or may also lead to other forms of creation (e.g. a house, a book, or another common project). These four functions of sexuality can be identified in relationships between two women, two men or a man and a woman.

Along with age, ethnic origin or social status, gender and sexuality are part of a multitude of aspects that constitute the identity of a person. Sexual identity is part of the basic understanding that a person has of her- or himself as a sexual being – how he/she perceives her- or himself and how he/she wants to be perceived by others. Its components are: the biological sex, psychological sex, gender identity and sexual identity of a person.

The first expression (“biological sex”) means that one is physically a girl/ woman or a boy/ man. In one or two out of 2000 births the biological sex can not be clearly defined. In these cases we talk about “intersexuality”. The second expression, “psychological sex”, refers to a person’s inner conviction of being a woman or a man or both at the same time. For example, some transgendered people don’t regard themselves entirely as being part of one sex. This should not be confused with a transsexual person, who feels that his/her body doesn’t have the right gender and sometimes wishes to make his/her biological sex correspond with this inner identity.

Gender identity refers to the mix of cultural and social norms and expectations on how men and women should behave in a given culture or society. These cultural expectation affect what appearance (clothing, hairstyle, etc.), body language and behaviour are classified as “female” or “male” in different cultures. The discrimination against women almost always concerns gender identity, not sexual identity as such.

Sexual orientation refers to whether one’s sexuality is directed towards women, men or both sexes. The way people feel about their sexual orientation is often quite different from their sexual identity and reflects their personal identity.

Sexual identity, gender identity and sexual orientation identity are not static concepts: they can evolve and change. Throughout history and cultures, people have felt strongly and still have different feelings about these issues. For example, at every moment in history there have been women who have fallen in love with women and had sex with them, as well as men who have fallen in love with men and had sex with them. But they didn’t necessarily identify as “lesbian” or “gay”, because these concepts are relatively new.

Classifying people according to their sexual partners into hetero-, homo- and bisexuals is a cultural phenomenon, and therefore not “natural” or “God given”. From this point of view, it becomes difficult to define exactly who is hetero-, homo- or bisexual. If a woman marries a man after having had a 12-year relationship with another woman, does she suddenly become heterosexual? Should a married man who regularly engaged in mutual masturbation with a friend when they were teenagers declare himself bisexual? Sexuality is much more than “just” sexual intercourse or having an orgasm. Human desire is very complex: every person has his/her own conceptions of love and sex (which are strongly linked to our cultural background and education). Sexual fantasy can differ strongly from real sexual activities, the personal judgement of these activities and how much someone identifies with them. What is respectively identified by society as a “straight”, “bi”, “lesbian” or “gay” varies from one individual to another and in principle can not be standardised.

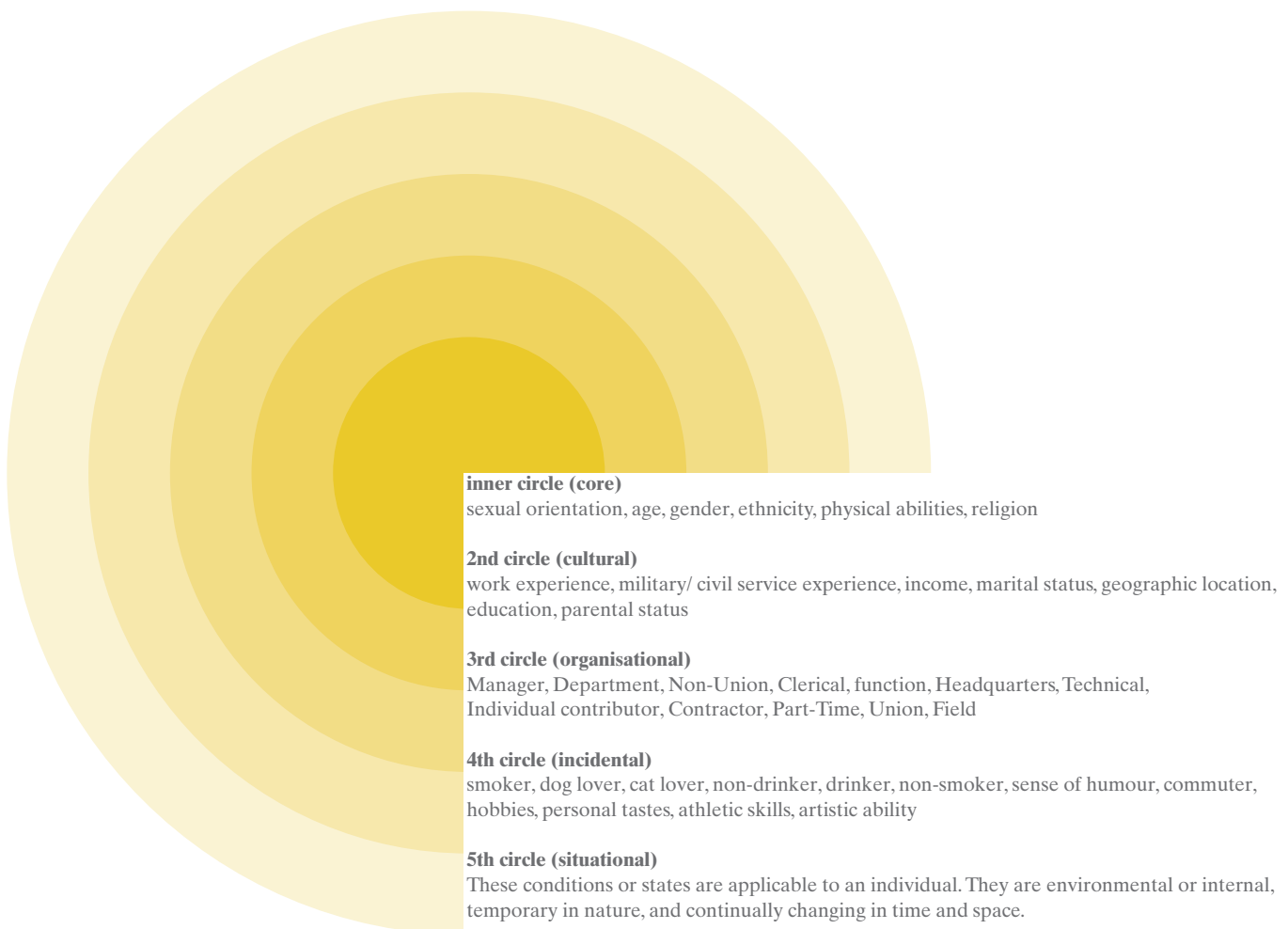
The classification of “homo-“ and “heterosexuality” was created in the 1860s and was partially used to justify why same-sex behaviour wasn’t considered as good as sex with a partner from the opposite sex. The fact that there existed a word to mark a difference in sexual behaviour also made it possible to establish the norm of heterosexuality that could develop much more impact on the individual’s behaviour than before. A new species, “the homosexual”, was born. Talking about this difference became an important instrument to exercise power on the individual for example by condemning the individual because of her or his sexual behaviour. Since the late 19th century there have been several movements in different Western countries to struggle for equal rights for lesbian, bisexual and gay people. Today the way homosexuality is valued in some cultures and societies has changed in a positive way. In a few countries like Belgium, France, Germany, The Netherlands and in Scandinavia, lesbians and gays have the same or nearly the same rights but even there many people still discriminate socially against homosexuals.

Over the last 10 to 20 years, researchers have found that public discussions about different sexual orientations force young people to choose whether they define themselves as hetero- or homosexual. It appears that, today, some young people, boys especially, refrain from having homosexual contacts because they are afraid of being stigmatised as gays or lesbians. Here we are only talking about lesbian and gay teenagers. A defined bisexual identity, like it is formulated by adult bisexuals for themselves, rarely exists for young adults. In a phase where sexual identity is just developing, it is problematic to talk about bisexual teenagers as if they defined themselves as such already. Therefore the formulation “young people who (also) feel attracted by persons of their own sex” would be more appropriate. To facilitate writing and in order to name clearly the existence of lesbian and gay themselves, who identify as and call themselves lesbian or gay, in the following text we chose the expression “lesbian and gay teenagers”

Recent studies on sexuality suggest that, although most people have at least some erotic thoughts or fantasies about both sexes, only a minority actually dares to act on these desires. Today’s western cultures and societies force us to define ourselves either as hetero- or homosexual, and in this context bisexuality is not always seen as an category in its own right. One reason for this is that many people find it extremely difficult to have an in-between identity. Another reason is that homosexual contacts are still scorned by many people and therefore cause fear, especially among teenagers who do not yet feel secure with their own sexual orientation.

Like sexual identity, gender identity and sexual orientation, ethnicity is composed of a multitude of aspects. Current understanding of the individual's identity is not that of a stable definition from childhood on but rather that of an early biographical concept that can change with time although there may be aspects that stay the same. Building up an identity is not only an individual accomplishment. We all use more or less traditional examples and role patterns to get orientation and form an identity that is adapted to us. Identities have the character of a patchwork, because they consist of diverse factors. It is therefore not possible to talk of an essence of for instance Belgians, Muslims, workers or lesbians because the way a person acts is not only determined by one issue exclusively but by multiple aspects at the same time (see figure). Also the concept of "culture" is not seen as a static, homogenous, hermetic and closed system anymore and there are also indications that sexual orientation is more flexible than many of us might think.

Diversity – Different in more ways than one



What is discrimination?

In everyday life homophobia leads to social and legal discrimination. Legal discrimination is the unequal treatment of homosexuals and heterosexuals when it comes to international agreements, national or local laws like a lesser or in-existent acceptance of same-sex partnerships. Social discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of people by institutions, companies, the media or other individuals.

Sexual orientation compared to other discrimination grounds

By discrimination we mean that a person or a group of persons is treated differently than others. Discriminated people bear a so-called “stigma”. People who display this mark or attribute are treated differently because society feels they are less worthy of the same rights or respect as others. Such “stigmas” are for example sex, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability.

However, sexual orientation and religion stand out in this list, because they are not visible in themselves. A person who feels attracted to the same sex has to show this to make the “stigma” visible. It follows that homosexuals can avoid being discriminated against by hiding their feelings. This makes discrimination on sexual orientation different from other grounds of discrimination such as ethnic origin, that cannot always be hidden to others because of skin colour, language or other characteristics.

Negative social attitudes against visible homosexuality result in a certain amount of invisibility of homosexuality, especially in everyday life. Many lesbians, bisexuals and gay men try to avoid negative reactions by behaving according to heterosexist expectations or, in other words, by pretending to be heterosexual. This is called 'passing' or 'acting straight'. Heterosexuals add to this by maintaining silence concerning sexual orientation or even by maintaining a full taboo on discussing it. Lesbians and gays often don't dare to talk about their partner or to show openly their partnership by holding each other's hands in public areas because they are afraid of negative reactions. Such reactions could lead in the worst cases to losing their job or losing a good contact to their family. To live with such a fear for a long time can burden a relationship and even be fatal to it.

Like lesbians and gays, migrants also have to fight against prejudice, because in the view of the majority they differ from norms and conventions or rules. Lesbians and gays are supposed to be incapable of having long-term relationships, sex-oriented, and incapable of looking after children. Ethnic groups are often portrayed as consisting mainly of criminals, or as interested only by the advantages offered by the host society. Such stereotypes can have negative consequences for the members of both groups (ethnic minority or homosexual community) on the work market or if they want to create social contacts with others. Concerning persons of ethnic groups the reasons for their disadvantage are mainly related to their culture (eating habits...) or clothing (headscarf...). Concerning lesbians and gays the reason for discrimination is related to their non-conformity in their choice of partner, migrants who love persons of the same sex and/ or have sex with them often suffer from multiple discrimination. On the one hand many lesbians and gays are prejudiced against them and on the other hand their families don't support them in their lifestyle the way they need to be supported because they think that homosexuality is not reconcilable with their tradition, culture, or religion.

How does discrimination work?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to explain some concepts and terms which are essential for the understanding of how discrimination works. This manual however focuses on the psycho-social aspects of discrimination.

Racism

Racism is an ideological, structural and historic stratification process by which the population of one specific descent (ex. Caucasian descent) intentionally has been able to sustain, to its own best advantage, the dynamic mechanics of upward or downward mobility to the general disadvantage of the population designated as, for instance, “non-white”. The emphasis put on some differences, like skin colour, ethnicity or non-western nationality are used to enforce decisions that contribute to decisive changes in relative racial standing in ways that favour most the populations designated as ‘white.’ The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination very clearly states that discrimination between human beings on the ground of race, colour or ethnic origin is an offence to human dignity and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It seems questionable to call the members of minority cultures who are prejudiced against members of the majority culture of the country they live in “racist”, because their attitude does not lead to the same consequences of privilege or power accumulation. There is a difference between everyday and institutional racism (e.g. disadvantages when searching for an apartment or actual laws of the labour market). The following definitions will show that gays and lesbians are in a relatively similar relationship/position concerning the “dominant culture”.

Homophobia and homonegativity

Homophobia is often defined as fear, aversion, intolerance, and hatred of homosexuality and of homosexuals as well as of their lifestyles or cultures. Researchers explain it as an intense, irrational apprehension because there are no objective reasons to fear lesbians, gays or their way of life. These prejudiced feelings fuel the myths, stereotypes, discrimination and violence against people who are homo- or bisexual. Lesbians, gay and bisexual people who are socialised in a homophobic society often internalise these negative stereotypes and can develop some degree of low self-esteem and self-hatred. This is described as ‘internalised homophobia’.

Some critics have observed that the word “homophobia” can be problematic. Firstly, people with a phobia in a clinical sense (e.g., claustrophobia, agoraphobia) try to avoid the objects of their fear. However, people who express hostility toward lesbians and gay men do not manifest these physiological reactions to homosexuality that are otherwise associated with other phobias. On the contrary, homophobes are sometimes preoccupied in an excessive manner with homosexuality and try to actively combat it. Second, using homophobia implies that anti-lesbian and antigay prejudice is an individual, clinical entity. This however – like in the case of racism – is not true. Homophobia is rather a social phenomenon rooted in cultural ideologies and inter-group relations.

Since the discrimination of lesbians, gay and bisexual persons does not take the clinical form of a “phobia”, social scientists nowadays often prefer to use the term “homo-negativity” or “sexual prejudice”, which refers to the whole range of negative feelings, attitudes and behaviour towards homosexuals. However, most non-scientists, like teachers and counsellors, still prefer the word “homophobia” while using it in the sense of “homo-negativity”. In this manual we will use the word “homophobia” in this sense as well.

Heteronormativity

Here we refer to values and norms; the two are analytically distinguishable, but in fact they form an intertwined framework of ideas about how people should function and how they should behave. On the subject of 'sexual feelings', most people will expect that everyone is heterosexual. On the subject of 'gender', most people will expect that everyone is either “man” or “woman” and will behave according to set gender role patterns. Not being or behaving according to these patterns often creates a lot of insecurity in people, which may lead to negative and discriminatory attitudes and behaviour, as transgender people can testify.

Most people will implicitly rank 'male' features higher than 'female' features, and men who show 'female' traits are thus regarded “as” women and despised in many societies for voluntarily giving up their powerful position. Lesbians are often seen as negligible and suffer from a double discrimination: as women and as homosexual people. These examples should give an idea of the connection between heterosexism, discrimination of lesbians and gays and sexism and show how social norms and values work together and contribute to influence the behaviour of an individual by social exclusion and discrimination. Heterosexuals also suffer from disadvantages produced by heterosexism. They also are being reduced to typical role models. This can lead to conflicts when discussing division of tasks in a partnership (e.g. concerning domestic chores and earning the money). Conforming to a norm causes pressure and prevents people from fully developing their capacities and personality. Men in particular rarely have close friendships with other men and avoid body contact to them in order not to be seen as “sissified” or “gay”.

Concerning 'relationships', most people hope to find a romantic, everlasting, monogamous relationship, a family, and, in extreme cases, believe that sex is only meant to produce children. Finally, many people will be fearful of behaviour or ideas that differ too much from those of their own community. They will denounce behaviour that in their opinion is going 'too far'. They will strive to keep 'deviant' behaviour as invisible as possible.

Now the link between heterosexism and homophobia is obvious. Homophobia is also part of a social and ideological perspective which promotes specific forms of role behaviour and romance, as well as norms for relationships and social organisation. This framework is also called “the norm of heterosexuality” because the prescriptive norm proposes the traditional heterosexual relationship as the only valid lifestyle.

People feel a need for inner coherence and to be socially accepted. One important factor leading to intolerance may be that people feel unsure whether they are able to maintain a socially acceptable identity and status. This insecurity may lead to holding too tenaciously to rigid concepts of identity and related norms. To reassure themselves and others that one's own identity is of the highest value, people may 'punish' others who do not conform and project all kinds of discreditable behaviour and characteristics on to them. Many current ethnic tensions may also be attributed to this process.

Shapes of homophobia

Negative or discriminatory behaviour comes in a range of gradations:

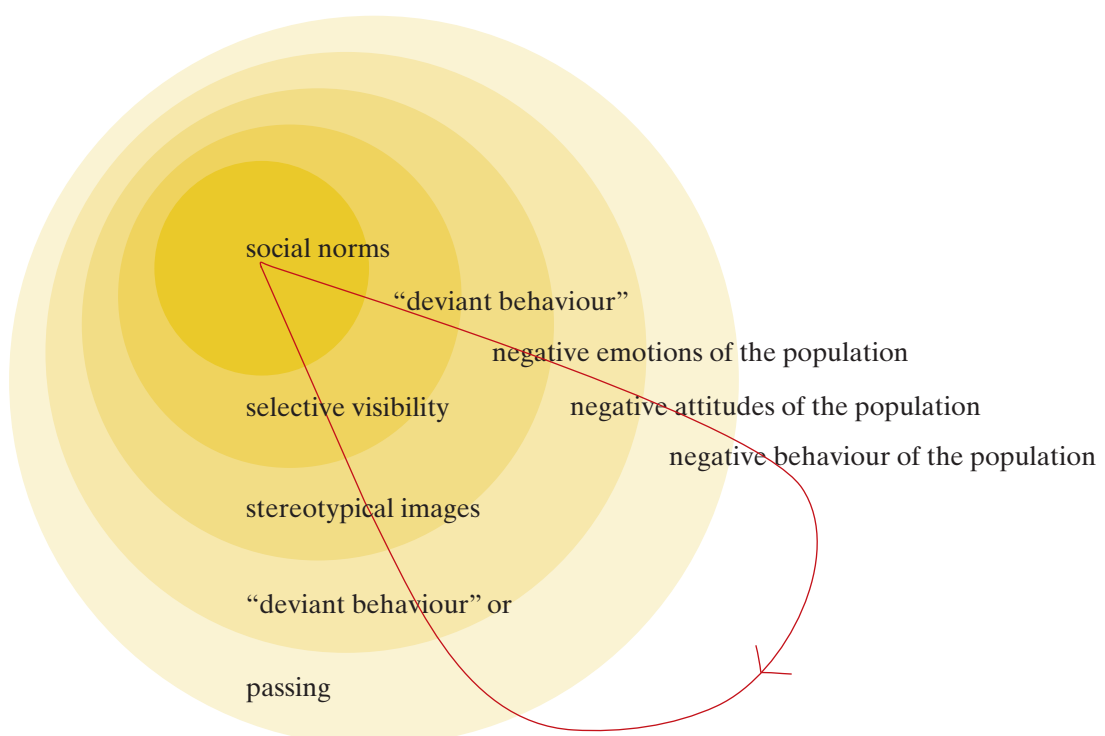
- Social exclusion
- Denial of rights
- Bullying
- Threatening behaviour
- Violence

Social distance and bullying are the forms of discrimination most encountered in the everyday life of homosexuals. Violence is of course the most severe form. Sometimes people are insulted or even physically attacked, their property destroyed and sometimes their organisations, institutions and meeting places are damaged.

A vicious circle strengthening homophobia and racism

Discrimination can be viewed as a vicious circle of events. If a person is different from what is ideologically considered as 'normal', this may cause others to feel uncertainty or even fear. This first primary *emotion* may lead to a negative *attitude*, which in turn may lead to negative *behaviour*. Many gay, lesbian and bisexual people try to avoid such discrimination by "passing"/ "acting straight" or pretending to be heterosexual. This way they become 'invisible' as homosexuals and only those gay men and lesbian women who do not hide are visible. Of course, the people who act most 'deviant' (relative to traditional heteronormative expectations) stand out the most. Forced 'passing' behaviour thus leads to selective images of homosexuality. This serves to promote the general perception of all homosexuals as "deviant", which links to the negative emotions which start off the cycle. As these images are perceived to be more and more deviant, more and more fear and resentment are created. As a result, the chances that negative attitudes and behaviour will follow also increase (see figure 2). As such, the psycho-social process of discrimination can be viewed as a vicious circle that tends to strengthen itself. Discrimination on the ground of ethnic origin can also be explained through this theoretical framework.

The Process of Discrimination



Flexible identities in safe environments

When intolerance is rooted in the act of holding on to rigid concepts of identity and related norms, then an effective counter-measure would be to support the creation and support of “flexible” identities. People with “flexible” identities, as opposed to those with “rigid” ones, are more flexible in terms of changing their behaviour and lifestyle in response to new needs and circumstances. Such people feel safe because they know their self-esteem and their happiness does not depend on the norms of others. Changing circumstances are interesting to them and do not necessarily pose a threat.

In order for more flexible identities to exist, safe conditions must be created. This requires an explicit definition of how people want to deal with each other, with differences and diversity, with things that may be frightening, and what they need in order to feel safe.

Setting objectives

In order for more flexible identities to exist, safe conditions must be created. This requires an explicit definition of how people want to deal with each other, with differences and diversity, with things that may be frightening, and what they need in order to feel safe.

First, it is important to explore which results you want to attain. In general, it is possible to formulate two aims relating to the education and counselling on homosexuality targeted at teenagers and adolescents. The first aim concerns the ‘average’ teenager and could be expressed simply as “less discrimination among young people”. The second aim is directed more towards those teenagers with lesbian, bisexual or homosexual feelings within the larger target group. Here, the specific aim would be to help these young people accept their feelings and to give those feelings a place in their lives which fits into these persons’ social and personal situation.

These aims are very general and it is difficult to measure whether, or to what extent, they have been attained. Consider the following questions: If we say that one aim is to increase self-acceptance, what precisely does this mean? Does it mean that teenagers should be more open about their feelings, or is there another meaning? Does this concern tolerance and acceptance towards “normal” homosexuals or does it include the respect of all types of gay and lesbian lifestyles? Similarly, if it is stated that the aim is “less discrimination”, which specific discriminatory attitudes or behaviour are we referring to? Do we expect teenagers to stop homosexual name-calling after only one education session, or do we expect the participants in such a session to agree that homosexuals should be allowed to marry? These objectives are quite different and some of them cannot be fully attained within the context of the classroom.

General strategies for improvement

The actual battle against intolerance should be fought on all levels of the vicious circle described above. However, in this manual, we focus on what you can do in your own classroom or counselling sessions.

- Debating alternatives to heterosexist social norms so as to question social norms and see when they are dysfunctional, and to correct stereotypes, is a good starting point.
- In individual contacts, it is possible to deal with negative emotions, especially when the fears and anger that are part of these emotions are acknowledged. This is often very difficult for members of discredited groups, because they may feel they have to confront the 'enemy'. Asking them to then to understand the fears and anger of intolerant people places extremely high demands on them.
- For group and media work, it is best to focus on attitude change. This can be done by making people think about whether their negative ideas are based on reality, and whether they are helpful in society.
- In settings where actual behaviour can be controlled, focusing directly on behaviour change, for example by setting ground rules and correcting negative behaviour, may be an option.

It is important to realise that teenagers cannot immediately go from homophobic behaviour to tolerance or even acceptance. Homophobia and heteronormativity are not massive 'entities' that can be changed all at once. Rather they are frameworks with a range of values and norms relating to several themes. Depending on the group, or on the individual, one issue (like sexuality) may be a particular problem, while another may play a less important role. It is important for professionals to learn to look analytically, at themselves and at their students or clients, in order to recognise the areas and phases each are in. Educators in particular, but also counsellors have to set intermediary objectives and support the personal development of their students or clients step by step. For instance in a group where there is considerable resistance against any information about homosexuality, it is unrealistic to aim at attitude change. In such a case, the focus should be first and foremost on raising sensibility on the subject before expecting real involvement from the teenagers. In a group where teenagers are willing to be tolerant and have already made up their opinions in class discussions, it may turn out that focussing on transferring this tolerance into action is not possible and may suddenly meet with resistance. In such cases, it might be that some young people are merely following a social norm when expressing "tolerance", while their own views have not been 'worked through' yet. If this is the case, you should spend some time first on 'appreciating' the tolerant attitude the teenagers want to express (for example by discussing which concrete examples of homosexuality you do or don't accept) and then to put this level of tolerance or acceptance into personal context (for instance when a pupil states that she can understand monogamous homosexual relationships, but not promiscuity, because she herself wants a monogamous relationship.)

Dealing with prejudice

Above all, it is important to tell the truth. It is tempting to 'correct' stereotypical images about homosexuality and bisexuality by trying to deny them. "No, homosexuals do not like to provoke others!" Such a statement does not work, especially when teenagers actually have seen homosexuals by whom they have felt "provoked", and it does not take the teenagers' comment seriously. Although they are exaggerations, stereotypes usually have a basis in reality. For example, some homosexuals make jokes about rigid heterosexual behaviour or mimic exaggerated homosexual behaviour, which they do mainly because they feel intimidated by this type of behaviour and want to make it less threatening. This is a form of self-defence, like minority humour often is, but can also be read as a provocation, even though it has a reason and context. That is why it is strategically better to explore the background of such phenomena than to simply deny the contents of prejudice. This means that educators and counsellors need to have sufficient information about gay, bisexual and lesbian lifestyles. If straight teenagers feel provoked by homosexuals, this must be taken seriously. However, the reason for feeling provoked is linked to heterosexual norms, and not necessarily to the "fact" that one gay or lesbian wants to provoke someone. Even when a homosexual person tries to make a pass at a heterosexual person (we are not referring to sexual harassment here), heterosexuals can learn to refuse this in a calm way without feeling provoked in their sexual identity or orientation.

Dealing with negative behaviour

It is also important to accept that everyone has emotions and personal judgements concerning the subjects of homosexuality and bisexuality. Educators and counsellors should learn to recognise and to map these, especially when the judgements are negative. This can only be done by giving the young people space and by taking a lot of time to explore personal feelings. It is better not to forbid or deny discriminatory/negative comments, but to see them instead as potential discussion topics and use them to explore means of developing new and more respectful behaviour. This implies that educators and counsellors are willing to build up a relationship of trust with the young people.

Dealing with your own feelings

as an educator or counsellor, you should realise that your own feelings and opinions on homosexuality, bisexuality and heterosexism can influence your teaching or counselling. Teenagers will quickly pick up on a teacher's or counsellor's personal bias or on a mental panic when a teenager makes a negative comment.

It is natural for heterosexuals to have difficulty imagining what it is like to be homosexual. You may try to be "tolerant" but at the same time feel "uneasy" when imaging sexual acts between two people of the same sex.

If you notice you feel insecure in relation to the subject of homosexuality, it is better to explore and share those feelings than to deny or hide them.

Dealing with different groups

Different groups react differently during discussions about homosexuality. An individual's age, level of education, local environment, and cultural and/or ethnic background all contribute to determining how they feel and how they formulate their opinions. For some, the fear of not being accepted may be important as well. For others, a religious conviction will have a lot of influence. Effective counselling or education should take these influences into account. Although most teenagers in Europe will have quite heterosexist ideas, the background and origin of these ideas will likely differ and will need to be explored.

One way to do this in either a group or individual situation is to start a session by asking some questions in an association exercise about homosexuality. Such an exercise cuts two ways. It gives the teenagers an opportunity to voice their opinions and air their emotions. It also gives the educator or counsellor a quick overview of the group 'map' of emotions, attitudes and questions concerning sexual preference, gender issues, and sexuality.

Dealing with cultural differences

To overcome the reluctance of teenagers to debate, a comprehensive/ holistic approach offers advantages if the educator or counsellor is able to create an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Then pupils will be open for arguments. A crucial point is that there should be space for them to talk about their expectations, fears and sorrow in the beginning. They absolutely need the possibility to express their stereotypes and prejudice without fearing the consequences. When dealing with different cultures it is also important for educators and counsellors to know the living conditions of their pupils or clients and that they explore them together with them so that teenagers feel taken seriously and accepted.

It might also be helpful to develop a school programme or common declaration of all people involved in one institution where dealing with each other is described as well as mutual respect and banning of discrimination is agreed on. In this context it should be explicitly mentioned that no one has the right to discriminate against a person because of her/ his gender, ethnic origin, age, disability or sexual orientation. Such a declaration should be developed, together with all people concerned, especially the teenagers.

Recommendation for an intercultural dialogue

(quoted from Georg Auernheimer, *Einführung in die Interkulturelle Pädagogik*, 2003)

- Don't take a defensive or missionary position. Get rid of your distrust.
- Separate the person from the "issue". This means you shouldn't make the respect you have for your partner in conversation depend on how you judge her/his different system of norms or perception of the world.
- Don't use an inappropriate standard of value. Don't compare the ideals of your own culture with the different social reality of others.
- Don't fight wars of belief, try to find a solution for each situation instead, or a certain area in life! Eventually go for a third way.
- Take into account that the person in front of you may have experienced discrimination.
- Take into consideration the functionality that many traditional models have (had) for the reproduction of society.
- Accept the struggle for a cultural identity, but defend the rights of the individual.

Suggested strategies for managing heterosexism and homophobia in schooling and youth work
(partially quoted from *Project 10 handbook*, Friends of Project 10, Los Angeles 1989)

- Include lesbian and gay issues in your curriculum by discussing these topics when appropriate, as they apply to specific courses.
- Include gay and lesbian issues in your lesson plans and syllabus as possible discussion topics for the class.
- Include readings which address lesbian and gay issues on required and recommended reading lists.
- Include gay and lesbian issues on a list of possible and required topics for written assignments or class presentations.
- Implement lesson plans to address the issue of homophobic name-calling.
- Develop or obtain specific lesson plans concerning homophobia and heterosexism to implement in your classes.
- Encourage all students to think about, write about and discuss the ways in which homophobia has impacted their lives.
- Educate yourself about lesbian and gay people who have made significant contributions. Acknowledge their sexual orientation as it relates to their contributions which you are discussing in class, e.g. Jane Adams, James Baldwin, Gertrude Stein, Walt Whitman and many others.
- Invite lesbian or gay people, or parents of gays and lesbians as guest speakers when appropriate.
- Be familiar with local gay and lesbian resources and curricular materials like social or political organisations, health care agencies, counselling services, youth groups, readings and film materials and use them in your class.
- Use non-gender specific language like “partner”, “lover”, “person” consistently whenever discussions about relationships or partner-choice situations arise.
- Interrupt anti-gay or anti-lesbian comments by staff and student alike. State that attacks and derogatory jokes, behaviour or other actions against anyone because of perceived difference on the basis of sexual orientation is unfair, offensive and harmful.
- Prominently display pamphlets and resource guides for lesbian, gay and bisexual communities in and around counsellors’ offices.
- Encourage comprehensive professional staff development and training regarding heterosexism and homophobia.

Glossary

Acceptance means to demonstratively advocate for and actively support minorities, marginal groups and non-conformists (see also -> tolerance).

Anti-Lesbian and Anti-Gay Violence There are different kinds of anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence: physical, psychical, sexualized, verbal, and structural violence. In extreme cases, homophobic individuals specifically seek out places where lesbians and gays meet in order to physically attack and hurt them. However, physical violence is usually not planned but is rather spontaneous and most often occurs when violent people recognize gays or lesbians in public. Those responsible often call this violent behaviour “gay bashing”. If someone is a victim of anti-gay violence, most large European cities have special police officers to handle these cases.

Bisexuality -> Sexuality

Christopher Street Day (CSD) -> Stonewall

Coming-out When a lesbian, gay or bisexual person decides to openly show or talk about their homo-/bisexuality, this is called “coming out of the closet” or “coming out”. It is possible to distinguish between an “inner” and an “outside” coming out. When someone starts to identify as gay and eventually accepts his or her homosexuality, this is called the “inner” coming out. When the same person starts to tell and demonstrate to other people that he/she is homosexual, this is called the “outside” coming out. Coming out is always a process and never a definite moment or point in time.

Community the word refers to all gay/lesbian venues in a city, like bars, clubs, discos, centres, etc. The expression “to visit the gay scene” has a similar meaning, and refers in this context to the fact of going to gay/lesbian venues.

Cross-dresser one who cross-dresses, who (regularly or occasionally, fully or partially) wears clothing intended for the other sex. A cross-dresser may be hetero-, homo- or bisexual.

“Cure” of homosexual feelings Some lesbians, gays or bisexuals (and also sometimes their parents) encounter enormous difficulties while living in a heterosexist world and wish to live as a heterosexual instead. But as homo- and bisexuality are not diseases or mental disorders, it is not possible to “cure” such feelings. Some people, often those with strong religious views, think homo-/bisexual desires can be cured and they support their arguments with examples of people who used to live out their homosexual feelings, but who now live a heterosexual life. Some religious organisations use dubious techniques in order to block sexual desire and create a feeling of guilt. But these people may very well only be suppressing their homosexual feelings in order to live a heterosexual life.

Discrimination Means that different people are treated unequally without an objective reason and in our society there is a large scale of different sorts of discrimination. This scale reaches from being called names or bullied, to ignorance of different ways of life as well as to physical violence up to murder. One has to make a difference between structural discrimination such as in legislation, criminalisation and pathologisation, institutional discrimination, e.g. banning gays from certain professions, ignorance, concealment, and individual discrimination like being insulted, psychological or physical violence. - > Heteronormativity, -> Heterosexism, -> Labelling, and -> Gay Marriage.

The new anti-discrimination legislation provides legally enforceable rights for all people in all EU countries for instance the implementation of equal treatment between people regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, or the equal treatment in employment and training. The ban on discrimination – or to put it differently – the ‘principle of equal treatment’ means that there shall be no direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation whatsoever. The expression “direct discrimination” refers to a situation in which one person is treated less favourably than another. Indirect discrimination occurs where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons belonging to one of the minority groups at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons. However, allowances for limited exceptions to the principle of equal treatment have been made, for example to preserve the ethos of religious organisations or to allow special schemes to promote the integration of older or younger workers into the labour market.

Diversity & Diversity Management Diversity refers to any mixture of items characterized by difference and similarities like racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability or sexual orientation and identity. Diversity Management means that companies actively implement diversity policies – that is policies that seeks to encourage a mix of races, sexual orientation and identity, religions, physical disabilities, ages and sexes within the company. Companies who implement those policies can expect benefits like more satisfied colleagues, a better working atmosphere on the short and long term (see <http://www.stop-discrimination.info>).

European Union During their meeting in Amsterdam in 1997, fifteen EU Member States committed themselves to fight against discrimination and to promote equality. Since this date, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation may no longer be used as a basis for discrimination. The European Commission has presented a number of proposals to support Member States as they strive to act against unequal treatment (including Article 13 of the EC Treaty, in effect since 1 May 1999 as well as Directive 2000/78/EC dated 27 November 2000 which establishes general rules regarding equal treatment in working matters).

Gay bashing -> “Anti-Gay Violence”

Gay or lesbian marriage / registered partnership / residence permission Some European countries now have special laws granting legal status to homosexual couples. These laws differ from country to country and many nations still have no legislation on homosexual partnerships whatsoever. But even if laws do exist, they rarely guarantee the same conditions for gay couples as the ones granted to heterosexual couples. A very important aspect of partnership laws for homosexual couples is whether or not the law grants residence permits for bi-national couples, especially if one of them comes from outside Europe. In countries that do not have such laws, lesbians, gays or bisexuals have very little chance to obtain residence permits for their non-European partners.

Gender in contrast to the word “sex” that stands for the biological sex of a person, “gender” means the culturally and socially defined gender role and identity of a woman or a man. In every culture specific tasks and roles are attributed to each gender. The decision whether a man works in order to finance a family and a woman stays at home to raise children is often justified by a constructed concept of “nature”. In reality it is done because of cultural traditions and social conventions.

Heteronormativity and heterosexism mean that heterosexuality is defined as “normality” and ideologically as the only accepted form of sexuality within a society. Heterosexism has effects on a structural, institutional, social and individual level. Heterosexism is the basis for discrimination and even anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence. Heterosexism forces lesbians, gays or bisexuals to repeatedly “out” themselves, as they must constantly re-assess their sexual orientation in a way that heterosexuals are not obliged to do. This is a discrimination that most heterosexual people are not aware of.

Heterosexism is also in law because in many countries there is no or only a “second class” possibility to marry or register a partnership for lesbians and gays. If a person is asked to fill in a questionnaire and then has to choose between the boxes “married”, “single” or “divorced”, this is also an example of heterosexism because it only considers heterosexual kinds of partnership.

Heterosexuality -> Sexuality

Homophobia This describes a group of emotions which include feelings of anxiety, disgust, aversion, anger, discomfort and hate of lesbians, gays and bisexuals. A number of researchers have criticized the term because homophobia is not a classic phobia. In comparison with other phobias like hydrophobia or arachnophobia homosexuals are not the direct source of “fear” or “discomfort”. It is rather a sort of anti-homosexuality or homonegativity that includes cultural values and norms that label homosexuals as something to be feared. In this perspective, homophobia is not a disease to be cured, but rather an attitude which should be positively influenced.

Homo-specific counselling This is a form of counselling which is usually, but not necessarily, given by lesbian or gay counsellors to lesbian or gay clients. This is a useful approach to the counselling process because, as in the counselling of migrants, it is important for many gays and lesbians to know that the counsellor her-/himself is experienced in homosexual topics. Without this source of empathy, gay or lesbian clients often feel that they have to explain feelings or issues that they may not yet understand themselves and are afraid they will not be accepted. While homo-specific counselling does not require that the counsellors be gay or lesbian themselves, they should at least be well-acquainted with the local gay community in order to pass on appropriate advice to their clients. When conducting homo-specific counselling, it is, of course, very important that the counsellor accepts homosexuality as an equal form of sexuality and tries to help the client to live a fulfilling homosexual life.

Internalised homophobia Internalised homophobia is a central theme in working with lesbian, gay and bisexual clients. It is virtually impossible for lesbians, gays and bisexuals not to have internalised at least some negative messages about their sexuality if they have been raised in a western society. These negative messages can result in homosexuals feeling a kind of “self-hatred” towards this part of their own identity. Internalised homophobia can manifest itself in different feelings and emotions like fear of discovery; discomfort around open lesbians, gays and bisexuals, rejection and denigration of all heterosexuals or a feeling of being superior to heterosexuals. Persons with internalised homophobia may believe that lesbians, gays and bisexuals are not different from heterosexuals, yet they may be afraid of being rejected because others perceive them as different. They may be attracted to unavailable people, such as people of another sexual orientation who are unavailable as intimate partners. This can be a form of psychological self-protection against real intimacy. They may have difficulty maintaining long-term relationships, as their internal homophobia can turn against their (homosexual) partner as well.

Intersexuality The sex of a human being is determined by genetics, hormones and psychosocial factors. Differences between chromosomal sex, gonadal sex (ovaries, testes) primary as well as secondary characters of sex, that are controlled hormonally, are called intersexuality. This occurs in one of 2000 births. Sexual identity mostly develops before the 14th month of life but can still change afterwards. Changes in the development of a foetus can influence primary as well as secondary characters of sex and hence lead to intersexuality. Intersexual people can show more often than in the rest of the population a lack of gender identification with their assigned gender or gender identity, a disorder which sometimes leads to the wish to change their sex. Many intersexuals report considerable traumas caused by medical treatments, especially of shame because of being “different”, but also shame due to possible surgical procedures and their consequences (e.g., they lost the capacity to experience sexual pleasure). In some countries there are self-help groups for intersexuals.

Labelling To “label” a person means that a quality, characteristic, or type of behaviour is assigned to a lesbian, gay or bisexual solely on the basis of their sexual orientation. The qualities labelled onto lesbians, gays or bisexuals are frequently the result of stereotypical ideas: for instance, “Gays are ‘effeminate’ men”, “Lesbians have been ‘disappointed’ by men”, “Lesbians behave in a ‘masculine’ way”. The effect of labelling can be very strong on the recipients. If a person is exposed to such kind of labelling for an extended period, she/he may actually start to demonstrate the labelled quality because this is how the individual is treated and it is what the outside environment expects. In a sociological context, this is called a “self-fulfilling prophecy”.

LGBT is a frequently used abbreviation in the international context to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual issues.

Lifestyle A lifestyle is defined as a coherent set of behaviours, perspectives and ideologies held by an individual or a group of individuals. Together, these define the way a person wants to live, so we refer to a subjective interpretation of reality. As such, it is not possible to refer to an “alcoholic lifestyle” when a person is addicted to alcohol, but it is possible to refer to a “same-sex lifestyle” when a person chooses to openly live her or his homosexuality. It is important to know that there is no general definition of gay or lesbian lifestyles. A lifestyle can encompass aspects of identity, sexuality, relationships, work, housing etc., but it is a very individual matter that cannot be related to a group of people in general.

Norm of heterosexuality -> Heteronormativity

Outing Outing means the practice of making the homosexuality of certain public figures known (in the media) against their will. The practice gained media attention in the 1980s and 1990s as radical lesbian and gay activists threatened to publicize the name of those homosexuals who were responsible for homophobic laws or social and clerical attitudes. Not all lesbians and gays approve of outing and some condemn it as infringing the individuals’ right to privacy.

Sexuality Sexuality encompasses any kind of human sexual behaviour. Sexuality implies not only sex acts, but also sexual fantasies, sexual orientation, etc. The three main kinds of sexual orientation are heterosexuality (a preference for sexual activity with someone of the opposite sex), bisexuality (enjoying sexual activity with partners of either sex) and homosexuality (a preference for having sex with someone of the same sex). It is important to note that there are no strict borders between the different kinds of sexual orientation, and they should rather be seen as fluid. The American researcher Alfred Kinsey, for instance, found out in the 1950s that there are very few people who can be considered 100% hetero- or homosexual. These terms only indicate an orientation; they do not describe sexuality in its entirety.

Sexual identity is part of the basic understanding that a person has of her- or himself as a sexual being – how he/she perceives her- or himself and how he/she wants to be perceived by others. This understanding includes four basic components: the biological sex (one is physically a girl/ woman or a boy/ man or has -> intersexual aspects of being a woman and being a man at the same time), the social sex as gender role (look, appearance, body language and behaviour that are classified as “female” or “male” in certain cultures), the psychological sex, which is to say the sexual identity (the inner conviction of being either a woman or a man or both at the same time) and the sexual orientation (to which sex one is erotically attracted). A person is not necessarily consistent concerning these four aspects of her/ his sexual identity (-> cross-dresser/ transvestite, -> sexual orientation, -> transsexual, -> transgender).

Sexual orientation is the sexual attraction felt towards other people. A sexual attraction can be felt towards one's own gender, towards the opposite gender or towards both. Sexuality involves more than just sex – it is not simply a question of whom one chooses have sex with. It also includes emotional needs and the need to feel safe within a relationship with another human being. Researchers have shown that sexual activity, fantasy and identity are not always congruent.

S.T.D. an acronym for Sexually Transmitted Disease (-> S.T.I.)

S.T.I. an acronym for Sexually Transmitted Infection; these can be spread by sexual practices like anal, vaginal or oral sex but also through contact with infectious body fluids. Some common STIs include AIDS, syphilis, hepatitis B, gonorrhoea or genital herpes.

Stereotypes Fixed negative beliefs shared within one social group in relation to another social group, stereotypes are characterised by generalisation and ethno-centrism (exaggerated attribution of positive qualities to one's own group and negative to the external group). There are four kinds of stereotypes regarding homosexuality: stereotypes related to gender non-conformity (for instance on lesbians as "butch"); stereotypes related to the social role (lesbian, gays and bisexuals are said to be deviant and transgressive); stereotypes related to relationships and sexual behaviour (gays are said to be paedophile and promiscuous; lesbians are said to have an immature sexuality); stereotypes related to the causes of homosexuality (a parent of a gay boy had wanted a daughter, a boy's lack of a father figure, sexual abuse ...).

Stigma is a characteristic feature of an individual, for example the colour of the skin, or the sexual orientation. When such a feature marks an individual as different from those of the majority, it can be used as a reason for discrimination. While skin colour is a visible stigma that cannot be hidden, homosexuality is an invisible stigma, which means that one can hardly identify it unless the person openly mentions it him or herself. Invisible stigmas like homosexuality can lead to strong dilemmas. A gay or lesbian person knows that if they "come out", their invisible stigma will be revealed. This could make them more vulnerable, as some people could use the stigma against them.

Stonewall "Stonewall Inn" is the name of a gay pub on Christopher Street in New York City. At the end of the 1960s, gay pubs in the city were often subjected to police raids. On the 27th of June, 1969, the Stonewall Inn was raided, but this time the cross dressers, gays and lesbians defended themselves against the police. This resulted in a huge street riot which lasted for three days. Many of the rioters were transgendered people, often belonging to ethnic minorities. Stonewall was the first time that gays and lesbians fought back and stood up for the right to live their own lives. The Stonewall emblem thus produced a popular re-appropriation of history and a collective memory for homosexuals, making it easier to get rid of stigma and shame, and act as proud citizens whose inalienable rights were being violated. This event marked the beginning of the American gay and lesbian movement. Today, it is commemorated by annual celebrations and gay pride marches in most of the large cities around the world. In European countries, the celebration is commonly referred to as gay pride parade or Christopher Street Day (CSD) that sometimes become absorbed as an institution by mainstream culture. The parades now attract tourists as well as sponsoring businesses.

Subculture and Community The gay and lesbian subculture or community is similar but wider than the term -> scene. The terms subculture and community imply certain gay and lesbian venues like bars and nightclubs as well as counselling services in lesbian and gay centres of the bigger cities but it does not necessarily have a local reference like “the scene”. It also implies any gay or lesbian activities or events. The gay and lesbian subculture developed because there wasn’t much space or acceptance for gays and lesbians within heterosexual mainstream culture. As a result, gays and lesbians started to build up a community for themselves where they could live the way they wanted without being watched by others or judged for being different. It is still a very impressive experience for most gays and lesbians when they visit the community for the first time, since they can see homosexuality as the norm in this community.

Symbols, lesbian and gay There are several symbols, which refer to homosexuality or lesbian and gay life-styles: The two **entwined symbols** denoting the **male** or **female sex** referring to lesbian or gay preference:

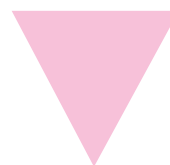
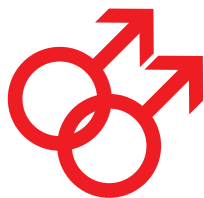
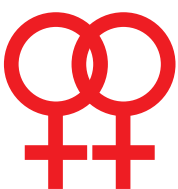
The pink triangle is a reference to the many homosexuals deported and interned in concentration camps by the Nazis. Gay men were forced to wear an inverted pink triangle on their prison clothing to indicate the reason for their internment. In the 1970s gay activists resurrected this symbol because it drew attention to the ongoing discrimination and violence against homosexuals:

The Greek letter lambda was chosen in 1970 by the Gay Activists Alliance to serve as a symbol of gay liberation and was later adopted as an international symbol signifying lesbian and gay rights and protest against the mainstream culture:

Ever since the 1990s, the **rainbow flag** came into use worldwide, signifying the lesbian and gay community. The flag has six stripes and is a symbol of pride in the face of homophobic activities. The American artist Gilbert Baker created the rainbow flag in 1978 and since then it has become the best-known symbol for the gay and lesbian movement worldwide. The six colours from top to bottom symbolize certain aspects of life, which are red for life, orange for health, yellow for sun, green for harmony with Nature, blue for art, and purple for spirit.

There are also symbols used by lesbians only such as the **labrys** (double-headed axe), which refers to the weapons used by the mythical female Amazon warriors. The labrys is associated to the goddess Demeter and served as a ceremonial sceptre.

The **red ribbon** is a symbol of solidarity with people with HIV or AIDS; it also can signify that one remembers the men and women who died of AIDS. It is not a symbol of homosexuality itself. However, as in North America and Europe gay men are part of the groups that are often infected with HIV or died of AIDS it is a symbol that sometimes is held to be a symbol for the lesbian and gay community.



Tolerance In contrast to „acceptance“ tolerance doesn't exactly mean to demonstratively advocate for and actively support minorities, marginal groups and non-conformists , but refers more to an inconspicuous attitude of laissez-faire towards them (from the Latin verb tolerare = bear, endure, suffer). Tolerance describes the tacit non-rejection of people who think, act, live differently and look different. In this regard tolerance is also the weaker and more passive term than acceptance. Tolerance is not necessarily respected and honoured by everyone. One cannot go to court because of intolerance and there are not necessarily sanctions for those who are intolerant. Tolerance only can be claimed to be followed by others on an abstract level and not on a concrete rule of behaviour. Therefore it is not possible to establish it as a compelling code of conduct. It also can be taken back without justification or other formal acts at any time.

Transgender(ed) A generic term for people whose gender identity and/ or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. For some transgendered people, the birth-assigned gender and the internal sense of gender identity do not match. Transgendered people can be female-to-male (FTM), or male-to-female (MTF), or may define themselves as something completely different than either one of these directions.

Transsexuality For a transsexual person the gender identity differs from his/ her biological sex. Transitioning and possible sex reassignment surgery can therefore be desired or already performed. Transexuality must be considered apart from sexual orientation: Transsexual people can be hetero-, bi- or homosexual.



Adresses

ILGA Europe – International Lesbian and Gay Association

avenue de Tervueren 94, B-1040 Brüssel, Belgium
Telephone +32/ 2 732 54 88, Fax +32/ 2 732 51 64
info@ilga-europe.org
www.ilga-europe.org

LesMigras – Lesbian Immigrant Women in Europe

www.lesmigras.de

Kenric

Lesbian social organisation
SAE to: BM Kenric WC1N 3XX
0115 9663638

Freedom Youth Network

for LGBT under 26
SAE: PO Box 393
Chatham ME4 5WD

Gay Teens Resources

Support for young people and their families and for those unsure of their sexuality.
www.gayteens.org

The Queer Youth Alliance

National support and organisation for under 25s.
Email: info@queeryouth.org.uk
http://www.queeryouth.org.uk/

Focus World

A national organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
sae to PO Box 393,
Chatham, Kent, ME4 5WD

Terrence Higgins Trust (THT)

Leading British charity for AIDS and HIV, established in 1982 and providing direct services to groups most affected by HIV and AIDS, gay men and the UK African communities.
Email: info@ttht.org.uk

Metrosexual Health

Extensive and practical information on sex and sexual health, as well as information on booking an appointment for a personal sexual health check-up and costs. Based in Harley Street in London.
http://www.metrosexual.co.uk

Pink Therapy Services

Network for LGBT counsellors.
1 Harley St London W1G 9QD 020 7291 4480

Galop

Assistance to LGB in dealing with homophobic violence & the Police
2G Leroy House 436 Essex Rd N1
3QP 020 7704 6767
Helpline 7704 2040

Gays And Lesbians Sharing Sobriety

for those living with drink problems
01142 880 350

Regard

National organisation of disabled lesbians, gay men and bisexuals
BM Regard London WC1N 3XX
Email: regard@dircon.co.uk or regard@tinsleyviaduct.com

Gemma

Lesbian & bisexual women with/without disabilities
BM Box 5700 WC1N 3XX

Sola

For lesbians in abusive relationships
020 7328 7389
Email: solalondon@hotmail.com

The Samaritans

Registered charity based in the UK and Republic of Ireland that provides confidential support to any person who is suicidal or despairing and that increases public awareness of issues around suicide and depression. Telephone and e-mail addresses are on the front page of this site.
Email: jo@samaritans.org
http://www.samaritans.org.uk

Young Lesbian & Gay Christians

E-group and meetings, support, worship, friendship for under 30's
Email: ylgc_group@yahoo.co.uk

Quest GLB

Catholic group. Nationwide with local groups
BM BOX 2585 WC1N 3XX 020 7792 0234 24hr
ansaphone Email: quest@dircon.co.uk

Links

The editor cannot be held responsible for the contents of the web sites that are mentioned here, and cannot guarantee their accuracy, their completeness, and their availability. Only the providers of these web sites are responsible for the illegal, defective, or incomplete nature of their contents, especially for those remainders that result from the use or neglect of the information which is provided, as opposed to those which directly give access to a specific information.

www.comingoutstories.com

www.eurogayway.org
(European webpage for young gay men)

www.gayhistory.com

www.glbtq.com
(an encyclopaedia of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer culture)

<http://glee.oulu.fi>
(GLEE - European project where teachers can follow a seminary on homosexuality at school and exchange each other)

<http://www.glsen.org/templates/index.html>

www.hosilinz.at/summermeeting
(European youth summer camp at Attersee, Austria)

www.iglhrc.org
(International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission)

<http://www.ihlia.nl/>
(international gay and lesbian archive and information centre)

<http://www.lgbt-education.info>
(beginning in summer 2005)

<http://outcyclopedia.0catch.com/index.html>

<http://www.schools-out.org.uk/>

www.stop-discrimination.info
(the European Commission's campaign against discrimination)

www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology
(Magnus-Hirschfeld-Archive for Sexology)

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The Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, quarterly magazine,
<http://www.haworthpress.com/store/product.asp?sku=J367>
<http://www.jtsears.com/jglie>

Lauretis, Teresa de, 1994, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*, Indiana University Press.

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- Murray, Stephen O.** (2000) *Latin American Male Homosexuality*. Albuquerque.
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Video

"The Celluloid Closet", documentary film about lesbians and gays in Hollywood films.

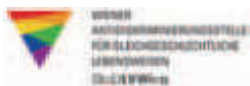
Coming-out und Identitäten

Lesbisch en homospecifieke hulpverlening



empowerMENT
lifestyle services

ProChoix



Beziehungen



Different in More Ways Than One.

Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way
to Identity, Sexuality and Respect

Aspetti psicologici e relativi alla salute

Verschiedene Lebensformen

Theory
Glossary
Literature
Adresses

Histoire et culture

Sexualités

La comunità lesbica e gay

Religie

Glossary

Acceptance means to demonstratively advocate for and actively support minorities, marginal groups and non-conformists (see also -> tolerance).

Anti-Lesbian and Anti-Gay Violence There are different kinds of anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence: physical, psychical, sexualized, verbal, and structural violence. In extreme cases, homophobic individuals specifically seek out places where lesbians and gays meet in order to physically attack and hurt them. However, physical violence is usually not planned but is rather spontaneous and most often occurs when violent people recognize gays or lesbians in public. Those responsible often call this violent behaviour “gay bashing”. If someone is a victim of anti-gay violence, most large European cities have special police officers to handle these cases.

Bisexuality -> Sexuality

Christopher Street Day (CSD) -> Stonewall

Coming-out When a lesbian, gay or bisexual person decides to openly show or talk about their homo-/bisexuality, this is called “coming out of the closet” or “coming out”. It is possible to distinguish between an “inner” and an “outside” coming out. When someone starts to identify as gay and eventually accepts his or her homosexuality, this is called the “inner” coming out. When the same person starts to tell and demonstrate to other people that he/she is homosexual, this is called the “outside” coming out. Coming out is always a process and never a definite moment or point in time.

Community the word refers to all gay/lesbian venues in a city, like bars, clubs, discos, centres, etc. The expression “to visit the gay scene” has a similar meaning, and refers in this context to the fact of going to gay/lesbian venues.

Cross-dresser one who cross-dresses, who (regularly or occasionally, fully or partially) wears clothing intended for the other sex. A cross-dresser may be hetero-, homo- or bisexual.

“Cure” of homosexual feelings Some lesbians, gays or bisexuals (and also sometimes their parents) encounter enormous difficulties while living in a heterosexist world and wish to live as a heterosexual instead. But as homo- and bisexuality are not diseases or mental disorders, it is not possible to “cure” such feelings. Some people, often those with strong religious views, think homo-/bisexual desires can be cured and they support their arguments with examples of people who used to live out their homosexual feelings, but who now live a heterosexual life. Some religious organisations use dubious techniques in order to block sexual desire and create a feeling of guilt. But these people may very well only be suppressing their homosexual feelings in order to live a heterosexual life.

Discrimination Means that different people are treated unequally without an objective reason and in our society there is a large scale of different sorts of discrimination. This scale reaches from being called names or bullied, to ignorance of different ways of life as well as to physical violence up to murder. One has to make a difference between structural discrimination such as in legislation, criminalisation and pathologisation, institutional discrimination, e.g. banning gays from certain professions, ignorance, concealment, and individual discrimination like being insulted, psychological or physical violence. - > Heteronormativity, -> Heterosexism, -> Labelling, and -> Gay Marriage.

The new anti-discrimination legislation provides legally enforceable rights for all people in all EU countries for instance the implementation of equal treatment between people regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, or the equal treatment in employment and training. The ban on discrimination – or to put it differently – the ‘principle of equal treatment’ means that there shall be no direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation whatsoever. The expression “direct discrimination” refers to a situation in which one person is treated less favourably than another. Indirect discrimination occurs where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons belonging to one of the minority groups at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons. However, allowances for limited exceptions to the principle of equal treatment have been made, for example to preserve the ethos of religious organisations or to allow special schemes to promote the integration of older or younger workers into the labour market.

Diversity & Diversity Management Diversity refers to any mixture of items characterized by difference and similarities like racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability or sexual orientation and identity. Diversity Management means that companies actively implement diversity policies – that is policies that seeks to encourage a mix of races, sexual orientation and identity, religions, physical disabilities, ages and sexes within the company. Companies who implement those policies can expect benefits like more satisfied colleagues, a better working atmosphere on the short and long term (see <http://www.stop-discrimination.info>).

European Union During their meeting in Amsterdam in 1997, fifteen EU Member States committed themselves to fight against discrimination and to promote equality. Since this date, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation may no longer be used as a basis for discrimination. The European Commission has presented a number of proposals to support Member States as they strive to act against unequal treatment (including Article 13 of the EC Treaty, in effect since 1 May 1999 as well as Directive 2000/78/EC dated 27 November 2000 which establishes general rules regarding equal treatment in working matters).

Gay bashing -> “Anti-Gay Violence”

Gay or lesbian marriage / registered partnership / residence permission Some European countries now have special laws granting legal status to homosexual couples. These laws differ from country to country and many nations still have no legislation on homosexual partnerships whatsoever. But even if laws do exist, they rarely guarantee the same conditions for gay couples as the ones granted to heterosexual couples. A very important aspect of partnership laws for homosexual couples is whether or not the law grants residence permits for bi-national couples, especially if one of them comes from outside Europe. In countries that do not have such laws, lesbians, gays or bisexuals have very little chance to obtain residence permits for their non-European partners.

Gender in contrast to the word “sex” that stands for the biological sex of a person, “gender” means the culturally and socially defined gender role and identity of a woman or a man. In every culture specific tasks and roles are attributed to each gender. The decision whether a man works in order to finance a family and a woman stays at home to raise children is often justified by a constructed concept of “nature”. In reality it is done because of cultural traditions and social conventions.

Heteronormativity and heterosexism mean that heterosexuality is defined as “normality” and ideologically as the only accepted form of sexuality within a society. Heterosexism has effects on a structural, institutional, social and individual level. Heterosexism is the basis for discrimination and even anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence. Heterosexism forces lesbians, gays or bisexuals to repeatedly “out” themselves, as they must constantly re-assess their sexual orientation in a way that heterosexuals are not obliged to do. This is a discrimination that most heterosexual people are not aware of.

Heterosexism is also in law because in many countries there is no or only a “second class” possibility to marry or register a partnership for lesbians and gays. If a person is asked to fill in a questionnaire and then has to choose between the boxes “married”, “single” or “divorced”, this is also an example of heterosexism because it only considers heterosexual kinds of partnership.

Heterosexuality -> Sexuality

Homophobia This describes a group of emotions which include feelings of anxiety, disgust, aversion, anger, discomfort and hate of lesbians, gays and bisexuals. A number of researchers have criticized the term because homophobia is not a classic phobia. In comparison with other phobias like hydrophobia or arachnophobia homosexuals are not the direct source of “fear” or “discomfort”. It is rather a sort of anti-homosexuality or homonegativity that includes cultural values and norms that label homosexuals as something to be feared. In this perspective, homophobia is not a disease to be cured, but rather an attitude which should be positively influenced.

Homo-specific counselling This is a form of counselling which is usually, but not necessarily, given by lesbian or gay counsellors to lesbian or gay clients. This is a useful approach to the counselling process because, as in the counselling of migrants, it is important for many gays and lesbians to know that the counsellor her-/himself is experienced in homosexual topics. Without this source of empathy, gay or lesbian clients often feel that they have to explain feelings or issues that they may not yet understand themselves and are afraid they will not be accepted. While homo-specific counselling does not require that the counsellors be gay or lesbian themselves, they should at least be well-acquainted with the local gay community in order to pass on appropriate advice to their clients. When conducting homo-specific counselling, it is, of course, very important that the counsellor accepts homosexuality as an equal form of sexuality and tries to help the client to live a fulfilling homosexual life.

Internalised homophobia Internalised homophobia is a central theme in working with lesbian, gay and bisexual clients. It is virtually impossible for lesbians, gays and bisexuals not to have internalised at least some negative messages about their sexuality if they have been raised in a western society. These negative messages can result in homosexuals feeling a kind of “self-hatred” towards this part of their own identity. Internalised homophobia can manifest itself in different feelings and emotions like fear of discovery; discomfort around open lesbians, gays and bisexuals, rejection and denigration of all heterosexuals or a feeling of being superior to heterosexuals. Persons with internalised homophobia may believe that lesbians, gays and bisexuals are not different from heterosexuals, yet they may be afraid of being rejected because others perceive them as different. They may be attracted to unavailable people, such as people of another sexual orientation who are unavailable as intimate partners. This can be a form of psychological self-protection against real intimacy. They may have difficulty maintaining long-term relationships, as their internal homophobia can turn against their (homosexual) partner as well.

Intersexuality The sex of a human being is determined by genetics, hormones and psychosocial factors. Differences between chromosomal sex, gonadal sex (ovaries, testes) primary as well as secondary characters of sex, that are controlled hormonally, are called intersexuality. This occurs in one of 2000 births. Sexual identity mostly develops before the 14th month of life but can still change afterwards. Changes in the development of a foetus can influence primary as well as secondary characters of sex and hence lead to intersexuality. Intersexual people can show more often than in the rest of the population a lack of gender identification with their assigned gender or gender identity, a disorder which sometimes leads to the wish to change their sex. Many intersexuals report considerable traumas caused by medical treatments, especially of shame because of being “different”, but also shame due to possible surgical procedures and their consequences (e.g., they lost the capacity to experience sexual pleasure). In some countries there are self-help groups for intersexuals.

Labelling To “label” a person means that a quality, characteristic, or type of behaviour is assigned to a lesbian, gay or bisexual solely on the basis of their sexual orientation. The qualities labelled onto lesbians, gays or bisexuals are frequently the result of stereotypical ideas: for instance, “Gays are ‘effeminate’ men”, “Lesbians have been ‘disappointed’ by men”, “Lesbians behave in a ‘masculine’ way”. The effect of labelling can be very strong on the recipients. If a person is exposed to such kind of labelling for an extended period, she/he may actually start to demonstrate the labelled quality because this is how the individual is treated and it is what the outside environment expects. In a sociological context, this is called a “self-fulfilling prophecy”.

LGBT is a frequently used abbreviation in the international context to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual issues.

Lifestyle A lifestyle is defined as a coherent set of behaviours, perspectives and ideologies held by an individual or a group of individuals. Together, these define the way a person wants to live, so we refer to a subjective interpretation of reality. As such, it is not possible to refer to an “alcoholic lifestyle” when a person is addicted to alcohol, but it is possible to refer to a “same-sex lifestyle” when a person chooses to openly live her or his homosexuality. It is important to know that there is no general definition of gay or lesbian lifestyles. A lifestyle can encompass aspects of identity, sexuality, relationships, work, housing etc., but it is a very individual matter that cannot be related to a group of people in general.

Norm of heterosexuality -> Heteronormativity

Outing Outing means the practice of making the homosexuality of certain public figures known (in the media) against their will. The practice gained media attention in the 1980s and 1990s as radical lesbian and gay activists threatened to publicize the name of those homosexuals who were responsible for homophobic laws or social and clerical attitudes. Not all lesbians and gays approve of outing and some condemn it as infringing the individuals’ right to privacy.

Sexuality Sexuality encompasses any kind of human sexual behaviour. Sexuality implies not only sex acts, but also sexual fantasies, sexual orientation, etc. The three main kinds of sexual orientation are heterosexuality (a preference for sexual activity with someone of the opposite sex), bisexuality (enjoying sexual activity with partners of either sex) and homosexuality (a preference for having sex with someone of the same sex). It is important to note that there are no strict borders between the different kinds of sexual orientation, and they should rather be seen as fluid. The American researcher Alfred Kinsey, for instance, found out in the 1950s that there are very few people who can be considered 100% hetero- or homosexual. These terms only indicate an orientation; they do not describe sexuality in its entirety.

Sexual identity is part of the basic understanding that a person has of her- or himself as a sexual being – how he/she perceives her- or himself and how he/she wants to be perceived by others. This understanding includes four basic components: the biological sex (one is physically a girl/ woman or a boy/ man or has -> intersexual aspects of being a woman and being a man at the same time), the social sex as gender role (look, appearance, body language and behaviour that are classified as “female” or “male” in certain cultures), the psychological sex, which is to say the sexual identity (the inner conviction of being either a woman or a man or both at the same time) and the sexual orientation (to which sex one is erotically attracted). A person is not necessarily consistent concerning these four aspects of her/ his sexual identity (-> cross-dresser/ transvestite, -> sexual orientation, -> transsexual, -> transgender).

Sexual orientation is the sexual attraction felt towards other people. A sexual attraction can be felt towards one's own gender, towards the opposite gender or towards both. Sexuality involves more than just sex – it is not simply a question of whom one chooses have sex with. It also includes emotional needs and the need to feel safe within a relationship with another human being. Researchers have shown that sexual activity, fantasy and identity are not always congruent.

S.T.D. an acronym for Sexually Transmitted Disease (-> S.T.I.)

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Stereotypes Fixed negative beliefs shared within one social group in relation to another social group, stereotypes are characterised by generalisation and ethno-centrism (exaggerated attribution of positive qualities to one's own group and negative to the external group). There are four kinds of stereotypes regarding homosexuality: stereotypes related to gender non-conformity (for instance on lesbians as "butch"); stereotypes related to the social role (lesbian, gays and bisexuals are said to be deviant and transgressive); stereotypes related to relationships and sexual behaviour (gays are said to be paedophile and promiscuous; lesbians are said to have an immature sexuality); stereotypes related to the causes of homosexuality (a parent of a gay boy had wanted a daughter, a boy's lack of a father figure, sexual abuse ...).

Stigma is a characteristic feature of an individual, for example the colour of the skin, or the sexual orientation. When such a feature marks an individual as different from those of the majority, it can be used as a reason for discrimination. While skin colour is a visible stigma that cannot be hidden, homosexuality is an invisible stigma, which means that one can hardly identify it unless the person openly mentions it him or herself. Invisible stigmas like homosexuality can lead to strong dilemmas. A gay or lesbian person knows that if they "come out", their invisible stigma will be revealed. This could make them more vulnerable, as some people could use the stigma against them.

Stonewall "Stonewall Inn" is the name of a gay pub on Christopher Street in New York City. At the end of the 1960s, gay pubs in the city were often subjected to police raids. On the 27th of June, 1969, the Stonewall Inn was raided, but this time the cross dressers, gays and lesbians defended themselves against the police. This resulted in a huge street riot which lasted for three days. Many of the rioters were transgendered people, often belonging to ethnic minorities. Stonewall was the first time that gays and lesbians fought back and stood up for the right to live their own lives. The Stonewall emblem thus produced a popular re-appropriation of history and a collective memory for homosexuals, making it easier to get rid of stigma and shame, and act as proud citizens whose inalienable rights were being violated. This event marked the beginning of the American gay and lesbian movement. Today, it is commemorated by annual celebrations and gay pride marches in most of the large cities around the world. In European countries, the celebration is commonly referred to as gay pride parade or Christopher Street Day (CSD) that sometimes become absorbed as an institution by mainstream culture. The parades now attract tourists as well as sponsoring businesses.

Subculture and Community The gay and lesbian subculture or community is similar but wider than the term -> scene. The terms subculture and community imply certain gay and lesbian venues like bars and nightclubs as well as counselling services in lesbian and gay centres of the bigger cities but it does not necessarily have a local reference like “the scene”. It also implies any gay or lesbian activities or events. The gay and lesbian subculture developed because there wasn’t much space or acceptance for gays and lesbians within heterosexual mainstream culture. As a result, gays and lesbians started to build up a community for themselves where they could live the way they wanted without being watched by others or judged for being different. It is still a very impressive experience for most gays and lesbians when they visit the community for the first time, since they can see homosexuality as the norm in this community.

Symbols, lesbian and gay There are several symbols, which refer to homosexuality or lesbian and gay life-styles: The two **entwined symbols** denoting the **male** or **female sex** referring to lesbian or gay preference:

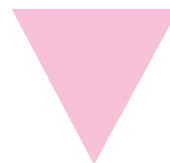
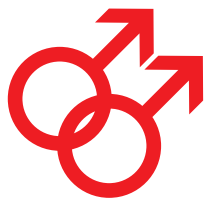
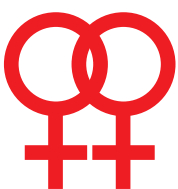
The pink triangle is a reference to the many homosexuals deported and interned in concentration camps by the Nazis. Gay men were forced to wear an inverted pink triangle on their prison clothing to indicate the reason for their internment. In the 1970s gay activists resurrected this symbol because it drew attention to the ongoing discrimination and violence against homosexuals:

The Greek letter lambda was chosen in 1970 by the Gay Activists Alliance to serve as a symbol of gay liberation and was later adopted as an international symbol signifying lesbian and gay rights and protest against the mainstream culture:

Ever since the 1990s, the **rainbow flag** came into use worldwide, signifying the lesbian and gay community. The flag has six stripes and is a symbol of pride in the face of homophobic activities. The American artist Gilbert Baker created the rainbow flag in 1978 and since then it has become the best-known symbol for the gay and lesbian movement worldwide. The six colours from top to bottom symbolize certain aspects of life, which are red for life, orange for health, yellow for sun, green for harmony with Nature, blue for art, and purple for spirit.

There are also symbols used by lesbians only such as the **labrys** (double-headed axe), which refers to the weapons used by the mythical female Amazon warriors. The labrys is associated to the goddess Demeter and served as a ceremonial sceptre.

The **red ribbon** is a symbol of solidarity with people with HIV or AIDS; it also can signify that one remembers the men and women who died of AIDS. It is not a symbol of homosexuality itself. However, as in North America and Europe gay men are part of the groups that are often infected with HIV or died of AIDS it is a symbol that sometimes is held to be a symbol for the lesbian and gay community.



Tolerance In contrast to „acceptance“ tolerance doesn't exactly mean to demonstratively advocate for and actively support minorities, marginal groups and non-conformists , but refers more to an inconspicuous attitude of laissez-faire towards them (from the Latin verb tolerare = bear, endure, suffer). Tolerance describes the tacit non-rejection of people who think, act, live differently and look different. In this regard tolerance is also the weaker and more passive term than acceptance. Tolerance is not necessarily respected and honoured by everyone. One cannot go to court because of intolerance and there are not necessarily sanctions for those who are intolerant. Tolerance only can be claimed to be followed by others on an abstract level and not on a concrete rule of behaviour. Therefore it is not possible to establish it as a compelling code of conduct. It also can be taken back without justification or other formal acts at any time.

Transgender(ed) A generic term for people whose gender identity and/ or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. For some transgendered people, the birth-assigned gender and the internal sense of gender identity do not match. Transgendered people can be female-to-male (FTM), or male-to-female (MTF), or may define themselves as something completely different than either one of these directions.

Transsexuality For a transsexual person the gender identity differs from his/ her biological sex. Transitioning and possible sex reassignment surgery can therefore be desired or already performed. Transexuality must be considered apart from sexual orientation: Transsexual people can be hetero-, bi- or homosexual.



Adresses

ILGA Europe – International Lesbian and Gay Association

avenue de Tervueren 94, B-1040 Brüssel, Belgium
Telephone +32/ 2 732 54 88, Fax +32/ 2 732 51 64
info@ilga-europe.org
www.ilga-europe.org

LesMigras – Lesbian Immigrant Women in Europe

www.lesmigras.de

Kenric

Lesbian social organisation
SAE to: BM Kenric WC1N 3XX
0115 9663638

Freedom Youth Network

for LGBT under 26
SAE: PO Box 393
Chatham ME4 5WD

Gay Teens Resources

Support for young people and their families and for those unsure of their sexuality.
www.gayteens.org

The Queer Youth Alliance

National support and organisation for under 25s.
Email: info@queeryouth.org.uk
http://www.queeryouth.org.uk/

Focus World

A national organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
sae to PO Box 393,
Chatham, Kent, ME4 5WD

Terrence Higgins Trust (THT)

Leading British charity for AIDS and HIV, established in 1982 and providing direct services to groups most affected by HIV and AIDS, gay men and the UK African communities.
Email: info@ttht.org.uk

Metrosexual Health

Extensive and practical information on sex and sexual health, as well as information on booking an appointment for a personal sexual health check-up and costs. Based in Harley Street in London.
http://www.metrosexual.co.uk

Pink Therapy Services

Network for LGBT counsellors.
1 Harley St London W1G 9QD 020 7291 4480

Galop

Assistance to LGB in dealing with homophobic violence & the Police
2G Leroy House 436 Essex Rd N1
3QP 020 7704 6767
Helpline 7704 2040

Gays And Lesbians Sharing Sobriety

for those living with drink problems
01142 880 350

Regard

National organisation of disabled lesbians, gay men and bisexuals
BM Regard London WC1N 3XX
Email: regard@dircon.co.uk or regard@tinsleyviaduct.com

Gemma

Lesbian & bisexual women with/without disabilities
BM Box 5700 WC1N 3XX

Sola

For lesbians in abusive relationships
020 7328 7389
Email: solalondon@hotmail.com

The Samaritans

Registered charity based in the UK and Republic of Ireland that provides confidential support to any person who is suicidal or despairing and that increases public awareness of issues around suicide and depression. Telephone and e-mail addresses are on the front page of this site.
Email: jo@samaritans.org
http://www.samaritans.org.uk

Young Lesbian & Gay Christians

E-group and meetings, support, worship, friendship for under 30's
Email: ylgc_group@yahoo.co.uk

Quest GLB

Catholic group. Nationwide with local groups
BM BOX 2585 WC1N 3XX 020 7792 0234 24hr
ansaphone Email: quest@dircon.co.uk

Links

The editor cannot be held responsible for the contents of the web sites that are mentioned here, and cannot guarantee their accuracy, their completeness, and their availability. Only the providers of these web sites are responsible for the illegal, defective, or incomplete nature of their contents, especially for those remainders that result from the use or neglect of the information which is provided, as opposed to those which directly give access to a specific information.

www.comingoutstories.com

www.eurogayway.org
(European webpage for young gay men)

www.gayhistory.com

www.glbtq.com
(an encyclopaedia of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer culture)

<http://glee.oulu.fi>
(GLEE - European project where teachers can follow a seminary on homosexuality at school and exchange each other)

<http://www.glsen.org/templates/index.html>

www.hosilinz.at/summermeeting
(European youth summer camp at Attersee, Austria)

www.iglhrc.org
(International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission)

<http://www.ihlia.nl/>
(international gay and lesbian archive and information centre)

<http://www.lgbt-education.info>
(beginning in summer 2005)

<http://outcyclopedia.0catch.com/index.html>

<http://www.schools-out.org.uk/>

www.stop-discrimination.info
(the European Commission's campaign against discrimination)

www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology
(Magnus-Hirschfeld-Archive for Sexology)

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<http://www.jtsears.com/jglie>

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Video

"The Celluloid Closet", documentary film about lesbians and gays in Hollywood films.

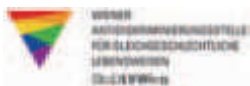
Coming-out und Identitäten

Lesbisch en homospecifieke hulpverlening



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Beziehungen



Different in More Ways Than One.

Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality and Respect

I Coming Out and Identities

Why did he even mention the existence of the sports group to Jan? And he really did come, can you believe it?

Jan makes him so completely confused, it would be better if he had never come to Amsterdam. At first Mark was quite happy to finally have another enthusiastic and talented swimmer in his class, and not to be the only one.

Two young guys are hanging out outside his house in the housing estate, nonchalantly walking around. They were obviously waiting for him. For days now, they have been following him around, yelling stupid comments. I'll just pretend they're not really here. He crosses the street, seemingly indifferent to their taunts, and heads for his door. Peter is standing in his way, with an evil grin on his face. Mark gulps, doesn't see Peter and suddenly bumps into him.

"Hey, you fucking faggot, don't think I'll let one of your kind grope me like that!" sneers Peter, taking one step towards Mark.

"Shut up, damn it!" screams Mark. Peter and Freek back off, bewildered. It doesn't even take two seconds for Mark to turn the key in the lock and open the door. Furious, he slams it shut after him.

"Mark, what's wrong? Your father is trying to recover from his shift!"

Mark doesn't even bother to look at his mother. Could the whole world please leave him alone?

"Mark, I am speaking to you." Mum is holding him by the sleeve.

"You know what? Living in this shitty place is so bloody brilliant!" Mark snaps back at her through clenched teeth. He tears himself loose quickly and runs into his room.

to be continued on the following two pages

I must think about something else. Do my maths homework or perhaps phone Mareike. Irene still thinks that she fancies me. Alright, then...

He stares at the telephone, dials Mareike's number, hears her voice and hangs up right away. He runs back to the door and locks it.

He sees Jan smiling at him and hugging him at the end of the game. A kiss on the right, a kiss on the left, they all say goodbye in the same way. Only Mark's heart starts fluttering madly, his whole body is as though electrified when he feels Jan's body so close to his own. I must have gone completely mad, thinks Mark, hopeless. A bloke shouldn't be able to turn me on like that. It's Mareike's voice, not his hug that should make me feel this way. I can't go to school any more. I must avoid Jan.

"Mark, could I please talk to you after the lesson?" That's the last straw. His mother receiving a letter from the school yesterday – telling her that due to frequent absences Mark might not be allowed to move up into the higher class – was already bad enough. And now the teacher wants something from him. Mark can already imagine what it will be.

He should not have yelled at Jan, let alone push him away so roughly. The fact that Jan had hugged him so enthusiastically when they had won could not excuse his reaction. But the worst was the way in which Jan had looked at him, and then without a word turned on his heel and walked away. Mark's stomach turns over every time he thinks about it. The whole hour long, Mark keeps staring at Jan's empty chair and doesn't manage to think clearly. Jan's face has been haunting his dreams for weeks, turning him on, and his heart starts to beat wildly when he sees Jan, even from a distance.

"We've got to talk, right away," says the teacher to Mark. "Since the school year has started, you have become another person. You play truant, you'll barely let anyone at school talk to you, and now this. I would have thought you'd be pleased to have a fellow swimmer in the class, and that you and Jan would become best friends."

"A super-swimmer he might be, but that's not enough", replies Mark hotly "I just don't want him to touch me like that!"

"Mark, you must apologise to Jan!" The teacher looks at Jan, pensive.

"Having hugged you doesn't mean Jan is gay. And even if he was, I won't tolerate homophobia, or any other type of discrimination."

Homophobia, homophobia, the word is pounding in Mark's head, and suddenly he begins to cry.

"Come on now, what's wrong with you?" The voice of Mr van der Kolk sounds bewildered.

He holds Mark by the shoulders, cautiously. "You have always been such a keen student. And being homophobic simply isn't like you. Jan has enough problems as it is, what with being new in this school and everything. And he likes you, I noticed it from the very first day. Mark, I expect an explanation for your behaviour in front of the whole class. You will face up to your responsibility, is that clear?"

to be continued next page

"Jan likes you, just you." The teacher's voice goes on and on in Mark's head.

"Mark?"

"I can't do it." Mark's voice trembles.

"Then you will have to speak to our school psychologist. This thing with Jan, your absences, all that must be sorted out. Quickly."

The school psychologist looks friendly. "Among other things, I insulted and pushed back a schoolmate, that's why I am here."

Mr de Vries nods almost imperceptibly. "What happened?", he asks as Mark stops speaking.

"Why does he have to touch me when I win?" cries Mark. "If he had only kept his hands to himself." He stops, despaired.

"Is it because he hugged you that you lashed out at him?"

Mark nods silently.

"Perhaps it was important for Jan to show you how proud he was of your performance, because he likes you. There's nothing abnormal about that, Mark, don't you think?"

"No", yells Mark, and runs to the door. "It's absolutely not normal, it's perverse."

Nobody knows what he's going through. Peter and Freek wouldn't hesitate to beat him up, if he ever... Best not to think about it. He must go through ten sittings with the school psychologist – that was the agreement with Mr van der Kolk.

"Nice to see you again", greets him Mr de Vries.

Mark nods silently. How could he make it clear to the advisor, that at night he dreams of Jan, that he even has erections because of him, and that at the same time he would most of all like to shake him off?

"Here you can say anything you want, however crazy it might be", says Mr de Vries quietly, suddenly breaking into Mark's chaos.

"I don't even understand myself. I didn't mean to hurt Jan, but ...".

Desperately, Mark wipes off his tears with his pullover sleeve.

"But he confuses you quite a lot?" The school psychologist's question sounds almost like a statement.

Mark looks at him quickly. How did he understand that? "I think about him all the time", slips out of him so suddenly that he does not have the time to reconsider it.

"You like him so much that it makes you scared, is that right?"

"Yes", whispers Mark in tears. At last he has told someone about it. He takes a quick glance at the psychologist. He still looks ever so friendly.

"You are not the only guy to fall in love with other guys, Mark."

"You don't mean that seriously."

"I know how difficult it is to speak about being in love with boys. But you are not alone. There is even a gay and lesbian group for young people, here in Amsterdam. I am quite sure that they would be happy to meet you. Maybe you'd like to take their brochure "Boys who fancy boys". You just have to call them. Think about it Mark, will you? If you need me give me a call, okay?"

Mark doesn't look at the psychologist. But he nods.

the end

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2 Relationships

Her hands shaking, Almira grabs the telephone. The writing blurs again and again before her eyes. In a few seconds her life has been destroyed, as though by bombs.

“Hello, Julie Bäcker speaking?”

Almira sobs uncontrollably.

“Almira, is that you? Good heavens, what happened?”

“I have to go back to Kosovo.”

A breathless silence at the other end. “My God”, whispers Julie, ages later.

“Stay where you are darling, I will be right there in a moment.”

“They can’t just simply deport you. You’ve been living here for eleven years.

That’s almost half your life” Julie, bewildered, keeps reading over and over the notification from the Aliens’ Registration Office.

“They say the war is over”, whispers Almira. “But my family originally comes from Bosnia, and they’d make my life a living Hell if I went there. And if they ever find out that I’m a lesbian they’ll kill me,” Almira looks at her girlfriend.

“In Kosovo too, people were murdered. I saw them beat up my sister and my cousins, and threaten to kill my uncle. Death awaits me there. There is no further education there for me, no home, no love. Only violence, only destruction. I can’t go back, Julie.”

“No, of course not. We’ll find a way, Almira. I love you, I won’t let you go. Never, do you hear me?”

to be continued on the following two pages

“What happened, Almira? You have been staring at the walls for weeks. You were given a six in three subjects. And I really thought you wanted to achieve something here in Germany. If you continue this way, you’ll never get an apprenticeship”.

“It does not depend on me”, says Almira softly. “I have no future in Germany.”

“Nonsense”, fumes the teacher. “Of course it depends on you. If you really want to achieve something, you will do it. But of course not with this performance. It’s too bad Almira, I was wrong about you.”

If you only knew that I’m a lesbian, you’d probably approve of the deportation notification one hundred percent, thinks Almira and puts away her work, quietly.

“But surely something can be done against a deportation notification,” Julie looks at her classmates defiantly, as they leave the lecture room after the lesson.

“Hey, the war in Kosovo is over, Julie. All these people, they’ve been here long enough. You’d better look for another girlfriend” Georg grins maliciously.

Others nod.

“What kind of people are you?” Julie looks around, shocked. “And you want to become educators?”

“Oh honestly, you only want to prevent this deportation because you fancy her, don’t you?”, pipes up Karin.

“You have simply no idea of what war and trauma can do to a person, even years later”, replies Julie.

“I think you’re overdoing it way too much again, Julie. As always.”

Georg leans back nonchalantly.

“In school nobody understands me. I feel so lonely. The teacher thinks I’m lazy.” Almira shows Julie the messed-up German essay.

“The students are just as bad”, sobs Julie with resignation. “They couldn’t care less what’s going on here.”

“Why don’t we look for help on the Web?”

“Almira honey, that’s a wonderful idea!”

Moments later they sit in front of their computers, with great concentration.

“Support Group for Refugees, here it is” says Julie suddenly. “Exactly what we were looking for.”

“And see here,” laughs Almira. “I’ve found a European Chat for young Gays and Lesbians.”

“Smashing,” smiles Julie. “I’ll call up the Support Group, ok?”

“In the meantime I’ll enter the URL of the Triangle – Chat.”

“Appointment at the Support Group in one hour”, announces Julie.

“The Chat is open.” Fascinated, Almira types something in.

“Show me.” Julie takes a seat next to her.

to be continued next page

<Almira> *hello, I am a lesbian living in Germany, soon to be deported back to Kosovo. What can I do?*

<Mark> *Hey, I'm from the Netherlands. If you have a German girlfriend, marry her. Should be possible, according to the German Life-Partnership Law, if you are both over 18.*

<Julie> *Hey, I'm the girlfriend. Do you really mean it? That would be great. We're both over 18. But we have to go now. Should we keep you posted?*

<Mark> *Absolutely. Nice chatting with you. See ya.*

<Aaron> *I'd also like to be updated. You can meet me here often in the Chat.*

<Almira> *Great. Thx, we'll be back. Cheers.*

"I'm afraid it doesn't look very good for the refugees from Kosovo. Our authorities don't want to understand, that minority groups like Bosnian Muslims still have a hard time there." The counsellor looks steadily at Almira. "What's more, you're a lesbian. Sending you back there is irresponsible."

"If we got married – according to the new Life-Partnership Law – we could avoid deportation?" Julie's voice sounds imploring.

"Yes, that would certainly be possible. According to § 23 of the Aliens' Law, after the marriage Almira would be entitled at first to a limited Residence Permit for three years, then she'd get a limited renewal, and in eight years' time she could apply for German citizenship."

"But what would happen to my parents?", asks Almira.

"It would not prevent your parents from being deported", says the advisor softly.

"I can't stay here without them", sobs Almira. "Without my parents I can't live here."

"You should come here with your parents. We'll do everything we can to save them." The advisor hesitates. "Is it because you're in love that you want to get married, or is it just an attempt to save Almira?"

"I love Almira", replies Julie. "Perhaps I wouldn't have come to this idea without this threat but now I see it as a great opportunity."

"I don't want to lose my parents", whispers Almira. "I don't know if they'll ever understand, me marrying a woman."

"Almira, for you going back to Kosovo would be the end. You've grown up here, you've spent more than half your life in this country, your whole socialisation has taken place here, you're used to this culture, you want to get an education. You love a woman. To have such a life in Kosovo is unthinkable. And then there is the trauma that you and your parents have gone through. There is no chance to get a therapy there. Returning to Kosovo means a whole new trauma for all your family. You told us that some members of your family were badly beaten up and received death threats before your very eyes."

Almira weeps silently. "Both my parents have gone through this. Mum tried to protect me. She is strong. But Dad went to pieces. I cannot leave Mum alone with him. Dad needs us both."

"Do your parents know, that you and Julie want to get married?"

"Perhaps they'd put up with that, but they couldn't stand to be separated from me. For my Dad it would be the end."

"There must be a solution for you and for your parents, Almira. I can't promise you anything. Marrying Julie would certainly save you. And we must save you."

The advisor smiles encouragingly at Almira. "Come tomorrow with your parents. Together we'll fight for them."

the end

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3 Different Lifestyles

“Alexander, do me a favour, give me the invitation to the Parents’ Evening, please. Hans would like to come and he wants to make a note of the date.” Flabbergasted, Alexander stares at his father. “Oh, come on, Dad. Why does Hans have to come with us?”

“We’ve been living together for five years. Hans is like a second father to you, isn’t he?”

“Yes, but – honestly, can’t you go there just with Mum anyway? That’d be miles better, really.”

“Darling, being gay is quite normal. You see Mum only every second weekend and the everyday things, your homework – Hans and I look after everything that concerns you. Don’t we? At your school, they should have gotten the idea by now, Hans is just as responsible for you as I am. He has permission to write letters to the school for you, and to talk to the teachers about your achievements. All in all, he’s more for you than I myself. I don’t want to hide Hans, or disavow him.”

“Yeah, sure, I understand that. But even so, it doesn’t have to become common knowledge. My life’s already stressing enough without this. You always think that accepting homosexuality is easy for every single person on Earth – just because Hans and you know thousands of lesbians and gays. Believe me, the school is a complete desert in this respect. I can already picture the teacher standing in front of me. Her face will be full of spite, she’ll smirk, but why, of course, she’s completely tolerant,” groans Alexander.

“Don’t you think you’re overdoing it a little, Alexander?” His father looks at him closely. “Hans and I’ll get it right. The time will come when your miserable journey through this desert will draw to an end.”

“Okay, then I’ll go and get myself buried. By the way, Hans has pinned the invitation to the Parents’ Evening on the wall,” sighs Alexander.

to be continued on the following two pages

“Good morning everyone”, Mrs Steiner greets her class and glances over the pupils’ heads. Alexander squirms restlessly back and forth on his seat. As his eyes meet those of the teacher, Alex stiffens like a stone pillar.

“Now then,” begins the teacher, drumming her fingers on her desk. “Alexander, wouldn’t you like to tell us something about your two fathers, and about how you manage?”

Thirty-two pairs of eyes are fixed on Alex.

“I manage all right” cries out Alex and his voice sounds squawky, raven-like.

“Two fathers? What does she mean? ”, asks Kathrin, who just doesn’t understand when she’s putting her foot in it.

“Alex?” The teacher raises her voice and looks at him provokingly.

“What does it mean?” Suddenly Alex loses his temper. He stares at his classmates, straight in their eyes. “My father is gay. He loves another man. So I have two fathers and one mother.” He wants to make his voice sound proud, but in reality it trembles suspiciously.

“But it’s perverse”, cries out Erkan. “Revolting. In their place, I would creep in the darkest corner of the earth and pray I become normal again, instead of standing out like that. Yuck!”

“My father’s normal,” says Alexander with a quiet voice.

“Are there other opinions about this?” Mrs Steiner looks around.

“It’s possible to undergo treatment”, remarks Kathrin.

“My father does not have to undergo any treatment,” hisses Alexander.

“He’s absolutely okay, and so is Hans. People like you, who don’t accept this, you are the ones who need a therapy.”

“What do you want?” Erkan stands up menacingly. “What the Hell are you saying? Come here, twit, I’ll show you who’s normal and who isn’t, you revolting faggot.” He grabs Alex by the shoulders and shakes him.

The class is still. Mrs Steiner runs her fingers through her shock of hair, but stays glued on the spot, and drops of sweat form on her brow.

Koray stands up deathly white. “Excuse me” he whispers. “I’m feeling sick.”

“Sissy”, hisses Erkan at him, and spits in despise on the floor between Koray and Alex. “One more perverse word, man, and you’re dead,” Erkan warns Alexander, before slamming a powerful punch at him. Alex resists the blow without dropping to the floor through sheer luck.

“That’s not acceptable, Erkan”, says the teacher, helplessly. “Now you apologise to Alexander and you, Koray please sit down again.”

“Me? Ask a perv for forgiveness?” sneers Erkan. “He’s the one who must apologise to me, Mrs Steiner, just to make matters clear.”

“Nowadays homosexuality is absolutely normal”, says Mrs Steiner uncertainly. “Alexander’s father can’t help it if he’s become that way.”

“Alright, I’m leaving now, that’s quite enough for me, Mrs Steiner,” whispers Alexander. Before Mrs Steiner even tries to say anything, he has already left the room.

to be continued

“It’s really very nice of you, to receive me on such short notice.” Mrs Steiner, embarrassed, stares at the tips of her shoes.

“Mrs Steiner, it seems to me that Alexander is in a very difficult position within his class – didn’t you ever talk about homosexuality in your class before?”

“It’s not part of the teaching programme,” replies Mrs Steiner with an almost defiant look on her face.

“Yes, unfortunately”, admits Mr Wyler, the advisor. “So we’re agreed. Next week I’ll be attending your lessons.”

There’s absolute silence in the class.

“I’m very pleased to be with you today. I won’t bore you with figures, but it’s not quite unavoidable – sorry folks. But you don’t have to write anything for me”, grins Mr Wyler and some of the pupils, boys and girls, grin back at him.

“About one in every ten young people is homosexual. Hmm... in your class that would mean about two pupils. Imagine you couldn’t talk about it to each other, that you always had to hide for fear of being excluded.” Mr Wyler considers the class for a few moments “Some of you must have a very good idea of what it feels like to be excluded, don’t you?”

“But you don’t have to flaunt it – being different, I mean,” says Erkan softly.

“Human beings all differ from one another”, says Mr Wyler. “Surely, there are lesbians and gay men who live openly – who have fought for the right to live like that, to be allowed to marry, and to be able to get common custody for their children. Just as there are homosexuals who tell no-one about their feelings. Some marry a partner of the other gender and live their feelings for the same sex only in secret. There are lesbians and gays who live in communities, some who live together without marrying and others who want to live alone, even if they do have a relationship with someone. Not much difference, really, with respect to heterosexuals.”

“But the important thing is that two human beings truly do love each other.

That’s what’s important”, Alexander dares to say.

“A nice final word for this lesson”, pipes up Mrs Steiner.

“Just in case one of you wants to talk to me about it, I’ll leave my telephone number here.”

In the courtyard Mr Wyler turns around once again. “Hey, you were sitting in that class, right?”

Koray nods. “Thank you, Mr Wyler. Maybe I’m one of those three. I’d like to come to your counselling hour some day.”

“Sure,” says Mr Wyler.

the end

Different in More Ways Than One.

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4 Mental and Social Well-being

Today I'll pay a visit to Chloé in Fontenay. We've been together for more than one year, now, and at last I'll be able to see her home.

I remember the day I first saw Chloé. We had been chatting in a triangle-youth-chat for three whole months before we found out, by chance, that we were almost neighbours. Not France, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy – not at all, just Fontenay and Paris. And it's really only a stone's throw from one another. So, of course, we made a date.

Elsa and Chloé: a meeting in real life

Good heavens, I'd been wracking my brains, wondering if Chloé would be ugly or just really silly –one never knows with chats. I preferred not to tell my mother about this chat thing. It's stupid, really, because I was chatting away on the web, and Mum would never have imagined how dangerous that could have been. But now it doesn't matter anymore, Mum likes Chloé, and that's the only thing that matters.

Hey, I must rush, otherwise I'll never get to Fontenay today. I grab my jacket, glance at the mirror, take the key from the hook and I'm off.

Chloé's father is the real trouble, I think two hours later, feeling uneasy.

"In one hour you must be back, is that clear?", he glares at Chloé.

Chloé's fear freezes me to the bone.

"Come, Chloé." I help her up and run away with her, as fast as I can.

"Is your father always like that?" Pensively, I throw a couple of pebbles into a pond.

Chloé nods warily. "He loves me, that's all." Her voice sounds sad. "I'm his only child – he only means well."

"But it's not right to lock you up in your own home."

"Yeah, I know" Chloé grins, embarrassed.

"You never told me that he spies on you."

to be continued on the following two pages

"You'd never have understood it. Daddy has a heart of gold, if you only get to know him right."

"I can't really imagine that", I whisper.

"Let's not argue about this please. You'll have to drive back just now, and I've been so happy to see you."

I draw Chloé carefully close to me and kiss her lips.

My body is like electrified. I feel her excitement and get flushed all over.

"You disgusting slut." He drags me by the hair, and pushes me roughly towards the pond. "Don't you ever come here again, bitch."

Chloé's desperate eyes meet mine.

And that's the last I saw of her.

"Honey, what's wrong with you?" My mother looks at me worried.

"Why doesn't Chloé come anymore? Did you have an argument?"

"It's not because of her, mum."

"Elsa, I think we ought to speak about this. You've lost at least five kilos in the past weeks. Something's wrong with you. I would just like to know what's getting you down."

"I know mum. Sorry, I must go now. See you later!" Quick, I must get away.

If I look out the window today, everything is grey. Even though the sun is shining. My breakfast tastes like cardboard. The laughter of the others in the schoolyard drones in my ears. I hear them speaking to me, I answer at times. But please don't ask about my feelings. Compared to me, a robot seems almost human. I hang on to schoolwork because nothing else makes any sense.

Of course Mummy's right. But I don't have any time. Last week we wrote a fairytale. Modern and made up by us. My story began this way: "One day an extraterrestrial power put a cheese cover over the world. But nobody noticed it..." The rest of it was quite scary and ended fatally. I got top marks for it, but that does not help me anymore.

"How much does that fairytale have to do with you", Mrs Dupont asks after the lesson. I shrug.

"You've been looking down in the mouth for a few weeks now. Trouble at home?"

I shake my head silently.

"Unlucky in love?"

I look at her, surprised.

"It's about a girl, isn't it?", asks Mrs Dupont softly.

"It's not because of her" I whisper and already the dam has burst. "It's her father", I sob.

"Elsa, I'll give you the telephone number of people who help young gays and lesbians, the Ligne Azur. They can certainly help you. Things will be all right, you'll see."

"How do you know of this hotline?"

"You are not the only lesbian girl in this school." Mrs Dupont winks at me. For the first time in weeks I feel a little glimmer of hope.

to be continued

I tell Marie, my advisor, about the nightmare that has been haunting me for months, and that I can't make out. A monster drags me down into a little pond, and laughs revoltingly.

And suddenly I see the scene very clearly before me.

"Chloé's father – dragged me away by the hair and then insulted me. He pushed me into a pond." For the first time I feel the repulsion again, I had quite forgotten it.

"Goodness gracious, Elsa, Chloé's father grabbed you? I didn't know that. Maybe your nightmare shows how much Chloé's father has hurt you. Have you ever mentioned this attack to anyone?"

Silently, I nod. "Do you think this is why I feel this way? I thought it was because the only thing Chloé talks about these days is suicide, and because I can't help her. I couldn't defend myself against her father. I feel so bad."

"Yes, I can see why. You've seen how much her father can hurt you. Of course you feel helpless. Exactly as helpless as when you want to help Chloé and don't know how to."

"Do you think there is some kind of link between the two?" I ask with a small voice.

"It is very possible, to say the least, Elsa. If Chloé's father hadn't threatened you so much, you could be dealing with the situation much better. Maybe you feel exactly as you did then.

"I felt so ashamed of myself. I felt so dirty. As though he had been covering me in spit from head to toe."

"That's just what he did", says Marie. "Talking about it is a good thing. It's the only way to come out of your helplessness. And once you get over it, then you can start thinking about what you can do for Chloé, okay?"

Everything that Marie says sounds so logical, and simple and good. I had never thought that any one situation could get me so deeply shaken. But Marie is right. I remember, how secure and protected and how open I felt with Chloé. In this situation my defences were down, and of course I was also vulnerable. But I couldn't go on with it after the attack by Chloé's father. Only now can I finally come to terms with that.

the end

Different in More Ways Than One.

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5 Gay-specific Counselling

*“Oh, would you please be so kind as to clean my bedside locker as well.”
Eileen turns around. “I am not the cleaning woman. One day I’ll be your doctor.”*

*“Then please call Dr Mayer. I don’t want to be looked after by a nigger.”
Without a word Eileen lays the enema on the night table and leaves the patient’s room.*

*“Hello Eileen”, beams up Kristin. “Hey, how was your day?”
“My mother thinks I’m not capable of looking after people and patients mistake me for the cleaning woman – it’s been a great day. And how are you?”
Kristin reels back, frightened. Her heart beats wildly. Just don’t say anything wrong again.*

*“I’m so happy to see you,” She tries a little laugh.
“I didn’t make the world,” growls Eileen. “So please don’t blame me.”
“I didn’t mean it that way.” Kristin just wishes she could run away. Why is it always so difficult with Eileen? Don’t they love each other anymore?
“Come on, I have cooked something lovely for us two. Will you set the table?”
Eileen takes Kristin by the arm and kisses her slowly and tenderly. “Better now?” she asks softly.*

*So everything is okay, anyhow. Kristin sighs, relieved.
“Can you please take the fish knife? And the nice wineglasses. And the serviettes don’t match the china at all. Don’t you see?”
“Hey, it doesn’t matter anyway” Kristin throws an angry look at Eileen.
“I prefer to eat this way.”
“A nice-looking table is important for a good meal, Kristin. I don’t enjoy the food if everything is just thrown on the table in any old way.”
“It’s not just thrown there. It’s just my style, not yours.”*

to be continued on the following two pages

“Why don’t you tell your parents that you are a lesbian?” Eileen draws back a bit, away from Kristin, who immediately pulls the cover up to the tip of her nose.

“I’m not ready for it. My parents wouldn’t understand it. I for one haven’t completely understood it yet.”

“But are you sure that you love me?”

“Yes Eileen, I am quite sure. But it doesn’t have to become common knowledge. Do I have to be pigeonholed like that?”

“It’s not a pigeonhole, it’s an identity. Just like my being black. You carry it with you all your life.”

“And like I come from the lower classes”, asks Kristin.

“Why do you always ramble on and on with this idiotic lower classes discussion? You’re not getting downtrodden because of that, are you?”

“No, but everyone gives me to understand that I should be ashamed of myself, because at home we don’t have classic music, I don’t go around in brand-name clothes, and because I don’t understand three-quarters of the foreign words that the teacher uses. And because I’ve never been to the opera, or to a theatre, or to the States during the summer holidays. But I’m not ashamed of my father’s job as a factory worker. I love my family.”

“So what?”

“If I had this kind of reaction when patients take you for the cleaning woman, or when my classmates ask you where you come from, or where you grew up, then probably you would leave me right away.”

“You can’t compare the two things. Completely wrong. Hey, I just need to walk down the street and people yell “nigger” at me. You can’t even imagine how it is, when one feels insecure, all the time and everywhere. Except for Ghana – that’s why I want to go there. You don’t even dare tell your parents that you live with someone like me.”

“It’s not true, Eileen. It’s not because you are black. I can’t make them understand that I love a girl. And I love you, I really do.”

“Really? That’s what counts most of all for me, Kristin. Because I love you too, so much.”

“So it’s all right, isn’t it?”

“Kristin, you have of late been daydreaming a wee bit too much, in my opinion”. Mrs Metz glares sternly over her glasses. “Feeling attracted to girls is a very normal stage of puberty. One should try oneself out. You’ll see, the right boy will come along after all. We all go through this phase. But the school must not be left behind, is that clear?”

“Sometimes I feel so much behind Eileen” Kristin dares to take a glance at the face of the advisor.

“Do you think your feeling can have something to do with the fact that you are a few years younger than Eileen? You’re barely sixteen yet, at that age it’s frequently difficult to be a lesbian. Eileen is a few years ahead of you.”

to be continued next page

"We often argue about silly things", says Eileen. "Things that are really just laughable. What colour should the serviettes be, for instance."

"Perhaps neither one of you dares to think about your feelings for other girls yet, and you project your fear into such little things?"

"But I do know that I love Eileen", protests Kristin. "It's just the rest that's so difficult."

"What do you mean, "the rest", Kristin?"

"Well for one thing, Eileen often gets harassed because of her skin colour. And then she thinks I don't understand her and that I'm not supportive enough."

"And what does that have to do with the colour of the napkins"

"Maybe Eileen opposes me so strongly because I've not told anyone at home that we're together yet."

"Because you don't want them to know that you're dating a nigger." Snaps Eileen angrily.

"This is complete bullshit, Eileen" yells Kristin. "See? Here we go again!"

"You are two very normal girls, just like the others. The fact that you're lesbian, or in your case black, doesn't change anything. But the world around you says that your feelings are wrong, because they should be directed towards boys. This judgement on the part of the people around you makes having a harmonious relationship very difficult."

"I'm not quite sure" wonders Kristin.

"I couldn't care less about 'the people around me'" yells Eileen. "The only thing that interests me is what Kristin thinks of me."

"Okay." The counsellor looks at Kristin. "What is your feeling about this, Kristin?"

"I love Eileen and I think she's absolutely great. But I often feel inferior to her."

"And you Eileen, what do you think of Kristin?"

"Same thing. And sometimes I think that Kristin doesn't understand anything about my problems at work, or anywhere else."

"And how do these fears come about, both of you?"

"I don't know", says Eileen. "That's why we're here."

"That's a pity. We unfortunately have to stop for the moment. If you want, you can come again and we try to track down the reasons."

"I don't think she's understood us." Kristin steps disgruntled on an empty Coke tin.

"There's something jammed up about her, that has nothing to do with us", says Eileen.

"I don't know if she believes us when we tell her we're perfectly happy with being lesbians."

"That's right" smiles Kristin, "Unfortunately, neither do the others"

the end

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6 Sexualities

- <Antonio> *This is a chat for young gays and lesbians, right?*
- <Almira> *Hi Antonio, nice to meet you. Yes you're right. Where do you come from?*
- <Antonio> *Lady, never give out such info in a chat. *stern* I live in Italy.*
- <Almira> *And I in Germany. There are also people from other European countries.*
- <Antonio> *Have you been here long?*
- <Almira> *Yep.*
- <Mark> *Hello there everyone*
- <Koray> *I'm also new to this chat, hi.*
- <Elsa> *Hi guys 😊*
- <Mark> *How are you Elsa? Is everything okay with Chloé, I miss her*
- <Antonio> *A big hello, especially for Koray ;-)*
- <Koray> *Lonely greetings, likewise*
- <Elsa> *Chloé's still not OK, but I'm slowly getting better*
- <Mark> *Sorry for the others, but I must chat with Elsa for a while – if it bothers you we'll retreat to the whisper corner, okay?*
- <Almira> *I'm listening with great interest*
- <Koray> *Joining in*
- <Antonio> *Have got a thousand questions, am sitting on tenterhooks, but I'll be patient ;-)*
- <Mark> *I'm happy to hear that. Elsa, did you get anything out of the counselling?*
- <Elsa> *Yes, the woman is really great. She's been very helpful. I hope that Chloé will come today, then we could decide together how to help her. That would be good. I'm really not feeling as helpless as a few weeks ago. How are you Almira?*

to be continued on the following two pages

<Almira> *The advisor of the support group has spoken with my parents. Now they know that I'm a lesbian and they have accepted it without making a big fuss. The main thing is that they won't lose me. But it's still a long way to go.*

<Elsa> *Sure. I think of you. All the best.*

<Almira> *thx*

<Koray> *I don't understand it all, but I wish you all the best ;-)* What questions do you have? @Antonio

<Antonio> *oops – alright then: I'll spill it all out...*

<Antonio> *I've been living for the last two years with a boy, and I really love him...*

<Mark> *Best of luck*

<Koray> *oh if only I could have such a relationship *blush**

<Antonio> *Be patient guys, the big surprise is on its way *;-)**

<Antonio> *I have been extremely attracted to a girl for the past six months. At first I didn't want to believe it. Admitting to myself that I'm gay was hard enough. And now I have to redefine everything from the start, I just don't know how to do it.*

<Koray> *Are you absolutely sure about that?*

<Antonio> *Yes, absolutely 😊*

<Elsa> *And you still live with your boyfriend?*

<Antonio> *Yes, of course, I love him as well.*

<Mark> *Does your friend know about your feelings for her?*

<Antonio> *To be honest, no.*

<Mark> *Not good, I'd say*

<Elsa> *Does she know about him?*

<Antonio> *Yes, she knows everything*

<Koray> *So what are you going to do?*

<Antonio> *If I only knew... I thought, perhaps you'd have an idea???*

<Mark> *You should speak to your friend*

<Almira> *This here is a chat in which we come together without any counselling. But there are chats – may be also in Italy, I don't really know – in which advisors take part, who could help you.*

<Antonio> *The worst part of it is I don't know if I should stay with my boyfriend any more.*

<Koray> *I understand. I'd be happy if I had fallen in love with a girl – but it looks as though I am hundred percent gay*

<Mark> *Same here – I just don't feel anything for girls 😊*

<Elsa> *I can't understand Mark. I find that only girls are wonderful :-)*

<Almira> *In solidarity with Elsa*

<Antonio> *So what should I tell my boyfriend?*

<Koray> *What about the truth?*

<Antonio> *Yeah, but what's the truth?*

<Mark> *That you're probably bisexual, isn't it?*

<Elsa> *It may sound old-fashioned, but I don't trust people who sleep with blokes and girls at the same time.*

to be continued

<Antonio> *Why not?*

<Elsa> *They want to have it all – without having to decide – I think that's cowardly*

<Mark> *Hey Elsa, why that?*

<Almira> *I understand Elsa – if Julie suddenly came to me saying that she'd fallen in love with a sweet young boy, I'd dump her immediately – and I'd despair at the thought*

<Koray> *If I personally fell in love with a girl I think it would be okay *embarrassed grin* but if my friend did... no way!*

<Mark> *That's right Antonio. What would you say if your friend came to you and told you a thing like that about himself?*

<Antonio> *Sorry, I have to think about all this. I'll be back later. Thx and Bye*

<Antonio> *Hello, I'm back again*

<Aaron> *Hello Antonio 😊*

<Koray> *What have you got to, Antonio, and how are you ?*

<Antonio> *I have spoken with Paolo and told him everything*

Mark> *Holding my breath*

<Koray> *Tell us about it*

<Antonio> *Like Almira predicted, he's left me*

<Mark> *WHAT? Oh, I'm so sorry, Antonio, really*

<Aaron> *What happened? *please explain**

<Antonio> *I'm probably bisexual: I've been attracted to this girl for a long time, but my boyfriend doesn't accept it.*

<Aaron> *I'm sitting in front of the monitor and can only shake my head. What really matters is that two people truly love each other, isn't it?*

<Antonio> *But in my case it's more like three people.*

<Aaron> *What was the problem? Was it because you told him too late, or because it was a woman that Paolo couldn't accept it?*

<Antonio> *Everything I think*

<Julie> *Almira told me about you. The most important thing for me is that everything always be open and that I be informed. Then I can cope with quite a lot fairly well.*

<Antonio> *That's so easy to say, Julie. But I was totally upset, I couldn't find words for my feelings.*

<Julie> *If Almira were to fall in love with a boy I would expect her to tell me about it before starting anything with him.*

<Antonio> *Yeah, right. If only I hadn't started anything with that girl. And what would you do after that, Julie?*

<Julie> *We would then want to decide together how to create a situation in which all involved would feel secure.*

<Antonio> *And do you really think that it would work?*

<Julie> *If there's anything that works at all, then that's the way!*

<Aaron> *I am almost certain that all people basically have the capacity to fall in love with men as well as women. It's just that there is in every person a strong distinction between the two tendencies. There's nothing to condemn, either way. I think it's really a good thing to be able to love different persons. I admire your courage, Antonio.*

<Julie> *Let's keep this in mind as a utopia, and let's help each other on the way there!!*

<Antonio> *Agreed. Thx to you all, guys!*

the end

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7 The Community

This is complete and utter madness.

I would never have met Patrizia if we hadn't been fighting in the school playground and if Mrs. Gazzi hadn't dragged me all the way to her office because of that.

And here I am now, waiting for her, forever in love, with butterflies in my stomach and fluttering nerves. When I picture her face in my mind's eyes, I feel flushed all over. Teresa can picture Patrizia's deep brown eyes as they look at her with a sparkle, and then narrow to thin slits with joy. Teresa breathes deeply, or else she won't be able to stand up because of all the excitement. The others mustn't find out about them, even if they're gay or lesbian themselves. Her sexuality is her business only. As well, of course, as Patrizia's. She looks down at the courtyard. This is where she kissed Patrizia for the first time. During the Techno-Party three weeks ago. Her heart still twinges when she thinks about it. No matter what she does to think about other things, she always ends up longing for her peaceful presence by her side.

Teresa sighs. She'd never have thought the world could be so crazy. Her story with Patrizia is so jumbled-up that no-one could ever make sense of it. Teresa lets her eyes drift across the crowd in the café. The lesbians and gays here are really nice people. Mrs Gazzi was right. There is indeed a gay and lesbian centre here in Bologna and she hadn't even known about it. How ridiculous. Her love affair with Patrizia has started here. The first time she had visited the place, her hands sticky with sweat because of her nervousness, she was thunderstruck when she saw Patrizia sitting by the window, in the back. Patrizia, of all people. She's a lesbian, thought Teresa, between fascination and shock. She had never realised. Patrizia was like a ray of sunshine illuminating her across the room. Teresa didn't look away.

to be continued on the following two pages

She simply asked “So you did find out, in the end” when Teresa, drawn to her as if by magic, finally arrived next to the little café table and Patrizia looked at her, confused.

“I’d never have thought that you...” Teresa doesn’t finish her sentence.

“Lesbians are not all alike” comes the laconic reply from Patrizia. “You have loads of clichés in your head”

“But Franca...”

“She’s my best friend. And she’s straight. So what?”

“So, nothing.” Stumbles Teresa.

“Will you come to the Techno-Party with me next Friday? Just with me?”

Patrizia stares at her for some time, with a little sparkle in her eyes that Teresa will learn to understand later on.

Yes, that’s how it all started.

But that was the end of a long process. Teresa’s memories flashback all the way to it.

The girls of the tenth class are standing together in the schoolyard and, as always, are giggling. The only one that Teresa likes is Patrizia, but she wouldn’t be caught dead ever admitting it. On the contrary, she often taunts Patrizia when she meets her. “So, the little lady has squeezed herself into the supertight jeans again and dipped her little face into the paint box?”

“Quit it Teresa, sod off. Your presence is not welcome here!”

“I just so totally couldn’t care less, Patrizia, you know.”

“Oh come”, says Franca “Just don’t pay any attention to the silly cow. Why doesn’t she just get lost?”

“Do you absolutely have to pipe in? “, growls Teresa. “Cause you’re the one who looks like a real whore.”

“Get lost Teresa, before I lose my temper !” Patrizia’s voice sounds dangerously quiet. “Cut it out, save your provocations for somewhere else, do you hear?”

“I was only telling you how ridiculous you look and how absolutely idiotic your conversation is.” Teresa raises the tone of her voice. “Hey look here, isn’t the boy simply adorable? Yesterday in the courtyard he even smiled at me.” Her tone falls back to normal. “That must have hurt, didn’t it?”

“You’re just jealous because the boys don’t look at you”, counters Franca.

“Wrong Franca, I just won’t let my intelligence go to waste for the sake of a boy. Like you and the other girls do.”

“So why’re you still standing here? If our standards don’t suit you, get lost”. Patrizia pushes Teresa back. That’s the last straw.

“Cut out the bickering. Have you gone completely mad? Patrizia, Teresa, I want you separated immediately” Mrs Gazzzi holds the girls apart, one hand on each.

“She started, she always does”, pants Patrizia.

“Obviously”, sneers Teresa. “I always do.”

“Patrizia is telling the truth. Teresa should leave us alone once and for all”, declares Franca and stares at the maths teacher.

“Teresa, after the lesson please report to me.”

to be continued

"I would like to show you something. It's in my office, okay?"

Teresa has always liked her maths teacher. She understood something about Teresa, that no-one else noticed.

"You really like Patrizia, don't you?"

"I beg your pardon? How can you imagine such a thing?" Teresa feels as though caught off-balance.

"You remind me of myself when I was your age." Mrs Gazzi winks at her.

"Oh really?" Teresa plays it cool.

"Here we are. Come in. Would you like to sit down?"

"You wanted to show me something?"

"Precisely. A brochure about the Gay Games – just one moment." The teacher rummages through the contents of a desk drawer. "What with you being so sporty, I thought, perhaps next year you'd like to take part. They'll certainly need good volleyball players"

"Hey, just a minute" Teresa looks squarely at the teacher "Are you a lesbian?"

"Yes. Does that surprise you? Why don't you go to the Gay and Lesbian Centre, and try to meet other lesbians? You're always hanging out alone."

"I just don't feel like being gawped at like a sex object."

"Who told you that lesbians are like that?"

"Everybody says it."

"So you believe everything they say. In any case it's not true. Gays and lesbians have many interests. They found sports groups, meet for Game Evenings, make politics together – whatever you want, you can share it with them."

"Volleyball would be enough to start with." Teresa turns and turns the brochure in her hands.

"Okay. Then I'll give you the address of the Gay and Lesbian Centre. Do you have Internet?"

"Sure."

"Here are some Websites that could be of interest to you. You can start with these and go on looking from there. My colleague has just told me about a chat for young lesbians and gays, that should be very good. I'll jot it down for you. So you can see what is going on in real life. You'll see, nobody reduces you to a sex object."

"And you? Are you part of the alternative society?"

"Alternative society is perhaps the wrong terms. I have many lesbian and gay friends. Before going to a nightclub, I check very carefully to see if any of my pupils could be there as well. If they are, I don't go in."

"And why not?"

"Look, my job is to teach you. My private life is something else. It's another world, you see. I don't mix the two. It wouldn't be good. You really do depend on me, and that means a big responsibility, which I take very seriously."

"I see. Thank you very much!"

"It's all right. Have fun at your sports."

the end

Different in More Ways Than One.

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8 History and Culture

“My friend from the gay/lesbian Jewish group “Sjallhomo” is probably the only person I can talk to about this,” thinks Aaron to himself as he makes his way to the meeting centre. The thoughts in his head are so mixed up that he can’t make sense of them anymore. He likes his teacher, Mr. Lanssen, who teaches History, Philosophy, and Dutch, Aaron’s favourite subjects. He has often wondered whether his teacher being understanding about so many things has anything to do with being in a wheelchair, and therefore constantly having to fight the stereotypes against disabled people. Since Aaron realised he’s gay, he started being more and more interested in finding out which famous figures in history, philosophy and literature were also homosexual. Could it be that Mr. Lanssen was trying to conceal this important information? Maybe he was crazy to give homosexuality such an important place in his life, but... everything had changed since he realised that he was gay. For many questions, gays see the world through different eyes. That’s why he had to know if any of the free thinkers, freedom fighters or great writers had been gay, too. Their lessons in school didn’t say anything about it. Over the last six months, he had distanced himself more and more from his classes and his classmates. When he’s sitting alone in his room, he has no problems learning things, but his participation to the classes is now close to zero. In History and Philosophy, he had always been a very active student.

“Aaron, I don’t appreciate losing my best pupil’s interventions in our discussions. I’ve noticed for some time now that you haven’t been participating in class. Are you having problems at home, or maybe love problems? We’ve always been able to be open with each other. What’s going on?”

to be continued on the following two pages

“Will my grades stay the same even if you’re not satisfied with my class participation?” Aaron stares at his shoes, embarrassed.

“Of course not. Since I know that something’s troubling you and that that’s why you’ve become so silent, I’d like to make you an offer. Write something on a theme related to Philosophy and History. If you can make a great presentation, you’ll be back on track, OK?”

“Thanks, Mr. Lanssen.”

To go to the university, you have to have good marks on your final exams. But could he risk working his question about possible famous homosexual personalities in History, Philosophy and Literature into his oral presentation? Wouldn’t Mr. Lanssen flunk him immediately?

Aaron is certain that there have always been gays and lesbians throughout history, but that these cases have been hushed up. He just had to find them.

“Shalom, Aaron, you seem to be lost in thought.” Josef takes him in his arms with a big smile. “Is there anything wrong, my love?”

“Oh, Josef, I have to do an oral presentation in front of my class.” And then Aaron tells him the whole story.

The others from “Sjálhomo” come closer, one by one, to listen to him.

“I’ve been wondering which famous women in history were lesbians. It’s important to know, and besides, it’s exciting,” commented Yael.

“Have you already tried the Internet?” asks Dani, who always looks up everything on the Web.

“That’s a good idea,” reflected Aaron. “Can you help me?”

“I’ve already researched your question, Aaron. After all, I’m a student of Philosophy.”

Aaron turns to stare at Josef.

“But you never even told me” exclaims Aaron, surprised.

“Better late than never,” joked Josef. “Now, Aaron, if you want to save your grade in History and Philosophy, I you should choose to study Erasmus of Rotterdam. He was born in 1469 and lived until 1536. He was revolutionary for his time; he was a theologian but also a pedagogue. In reality, he was much more of a humanist than a theologian and he was famous in his own lifetime. He even campaigned for the equality of women. He lead the emancipation movement on various levels. And the best part is that he was gay. Choose him as your essay topic, Aaron. It will be great, you’ll see. I’ll help you.”

“All right,” said Aaron with a smile.

“Mr. Lanssen, I’m preparing my presentation and I wanted to discuss the theme with you. Only if you have time, of course.”

“I’m glad you took up my offer so quickly. What’s the essay about?”

“It’s essentially about Erasmus of Rotterdam. That name must mean something to you.”

“As indeed it should. Erasmus of Rotterdam is still considered to be the founding father of enlightened thought.”

“Did you ever stop to think that maybe Erasmus had a very personal motive for representing the humanistic school of thought?”

“To be honest, no. But you’ve thought about it?”

to be continued

"Yes, that's why I selected him. Did you know that he was gay?"

"Oh...! No, I didn't know that. And you think that his homosexuality gave him the impetus for enlightened thought?"

"Unfortunately, it's too late for me to ask him – it's just a theory. But that's the basis of my essay."

"It's unusual and it will perhaps make you interested in my lessons again."

"That's true, isn't it?"

"Yes, I didn't want to keep my homosexuality a secret from the others any more."

"A very personal motive, then" says Mr. Lanssen with a smile. Even if I agree with your choice of topic, Aaron, I would like you to keep in mind that in Erasmus' time, homosexuality was not as accepted and talked about as it is today, and it definitely wasn't called that way. It's always very tricky to force a definition on someone who can't say anything about it any more. I'll accept your topic with this one limitation, is that okay?"

"I'll have to think about it a little longer, then" answers Aaron.

"May I take a look at what you've already written?"

"The introduction is already finished. The part about Erasmus of Rotterdam still needs to be formulated. And the last part will deal with the link to our modern times. I'll need another week for that."

"That's fine," said Mr. Lanssen, as he began to read.

History is like a field of flowers in the spring, filled with souvenirs of past journeys and biographies telling stories. One can always find what he looks for. The millennia of human history has produced millions of personal stories and in many of them people have asked themselves the same questions about being in love or being proud, being accepted or being persecuted. Such situations have already occurred many times, sometime, somewhere...

For a long time, ancient Greece – the country of Sappho - has been seen by lesbians, gays and bisexuals as a kind of paradise. But even at that time in history, Athens' laws restricted homosexuality. It was felt that men should have a wife and children. In a limited sense, a relationship between a man and a boy was accepted as a part of the boy's education. Sometime this relationship was one of passion, sometimes it was more for educational purposes. But for the lovers, growing up was hard.

The first persecutions of homosexuals began in the time of the early Christians. In ancient Rome, Emperor Augustine (313) subjected gay men to castration; by the end of the century, they were even being burned. Some examples of homosexuality reappear in the 12th century with "amour courtois" (chivalrous love), which was not limited to heterosexual affections. Although we don't know much about the homosexual aspects of amour courtois, the pope declared that such love affairs should not involve homosexual dimensions. This implies that there were indeed chivalrous homosexual affairs before he made his statement.

During the Renaissance, some artists expressed themselves more visibly in a homo-erotic way. The writings of Plato were translated. Although homosexuality was still officially forbidden at this time, some men were gay including Leonardo da Vinci. At 24 years of age, he was persecuted because he had a relation with a boy of 17. Later, he had a relationship with young Caprotti which lasted for 25 years. Michelangelo was proud of his identity and his work was an ode to loving men.

"I just can't wait to see how it continues," said Mr. Lanssen. "I'll finish reading next Friday."

the end

Different in More Ways Than One.

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9 Different Religions

- <Teresa> *Are we going to talk today about religion today?*
- <Aaron> *Yes, that's the topic.*
- <Almira> *I think it's great that you've chosen this subject*
- <Julie> *Before we really start – and also because it's part of the subject: who wants to go to the next Europride among you?*
- <Koray> *If you tell us what it's about, I could think it over *;-)**
- <Julie> *Gays and lesbians from all over Europe meet within the framework of the Gay Pride Parades and organise an intercultural week, on different subjects. One of them could be religion, I think. But I don't want to go there without you.*
- <Koray> *You mean, that we would prepare a given topic, and then organise an event together there?*
- <Julie> *That's right.*
- <Aaron> *Through Internet, without knowing each other?*
- <Almira> *I don't have the feeling, that I don't know you. Think about Elsa and Chloé – they really found each other through the chat.*
- <Aaron> *I'm convinced. *;-)* So, who starts ?*
- <Kristin> *I come from a very religious family. I think that's why I never found the nerve to tell my parents that I am a lesbian.*
- <Koray> *What would happen?*
- <Kristin> *I have no idea. Strict Christians refuse homosexuality.*
- <Julie> *My parents feel that God must have had a reason when He created homosexuality – they think that everything has been created by God, and that's the explanation.*
- <Kristin> *Could be, but God has also allowed evil, my parents would say. Adultery for instance is forbidden, and so is murder.*
- <Julie> *In any case homosexuality is not formally forbidden in the ten commandments*

to be continued on the following two pages

<Kristin> *I should tell that to HuK. Good argument, Julie!*

<Aaron> *What is HuK?*

<Kristin> *The organisation Homosexuelle und Kirche (Homosexuals and the Church). I have been there a few times. They are nice people. They fight for equal rights. They argue for instance, that Jesus never specifically said anything about homosexuality. Neither in a positive nor in a negative sense. They also say that for example Saint Paul could not speak about homosexuality because the concept only appeared in the 19th century. In any case he supported the freedom of choice of partner. *;-)**

<Koray> *Sounds reasonable.*

<Kristin> *Of course, but the strict Christians interpret it differently.*

<Koray> *My parents also don't know that I'm gay – but for me it's not so important and I have other problems, that I think are much harder to cope with.*

<Aaron> *and do they have anything to do with religion?*

<Koray> *It's more about the relationship of the non-Muslim homosexuals with us, as also with the whole Muslim world's reaction to me being gay.*

<Aaron> *Does that mean that you don't belong to any group?*

<Koray> *Yes, that's the way I see it. Just imagine, what would happen if told a non-Muslim gay man that I'm Muslim. He'd be baffled and reply "that can't be: either you're gay or you're Muslim".*

<Kristin> *Why's that?*

<Koray> *I'm afraid it's the same all over the world In Austria in any case I am first and foremost a foreigner – who could never be gay anyway – that's the way many people see it in the gay community . But if I added, on top of it, that I'm Muslim, that's it, there's no way for them I could still be gay.*

<Aaron> *Yes, I can understand that. There are bad stereotypes even in the gay and lesbian community, aren't there?*

<Koray> *I don't know how it is with you Jews. With Christians, at any rate, I have the impression that the family isn't all that important. That's why for most Christians coming out isn't as difficult. But my family is really very important for me, and I for them. The social ties are simply too strong and important for us all – especially if we've been brought up in a different culture. I think that's good. A family should always stick together.*

<Aaron> *@Koray: A Yiddische Mamme should not be underestimated *;-)*. We'll talk about it later. What are you aiming at?*

<Koray> *I think that my family is more important than the nicest gay community (but please don't take it personally). I'll probably get married and still keep my partners. Tell us, Aaron, what happened to your yiddische Mamme?*

<Aaron> *The yiddische Mamme can hardly be ignored. There is this syndrome of over-protection. She always wants the absolute best for her child. Cannot possibly be contradicted. But back to you once again Koray – is there no Muslim gay group near you? Surely you're not the only one?*

to be continued

<Koray> *No, of course I'm not the only one. But I think there is no such organisation here.*

<Aaron> *A friend in Germany told me that he's an activist in the Türk-Gay group – check the Internet as well – they have their own Website.*

<Koray> *Good idea, thanks*

<Almira> *I'm also Muslim; but a Bosnian Muslim. In Kosovo, where I am to be deported, I would probably have to wear a headscarf, and marry. Homosexuality there can even mean death.*

<Koray> *Oh dear, you'd better stay here, then, shouldn't you?*

<Almira> *Yes, I think so. My parents know now that I'm a lesbian. At first I was convinced that they would disown me forever, but they didn't, Koray. Maybe your fear is a bit exaggerated?*

<Koray> *I'll chat with these people of the "Türk-Gay" group and keep you posted, okay?*

<Julie> *Okay Koray – next year, will you go to the Europride?*

<Koray> *I'm working at it *;-)* Aaron, now tell us, it's your turn*

<Aaron> *I'll tell my parents in any case, and I also think that they'll understand. For me it's important to be able to keep on trusting them, and for them to trust me. Secrets would have terrible consequences in the long run. Neither one of them would ever want that. And about Jewishness – it's not a nationality. Just to be clear. Some in our gay-lesbian group are religious, others not. But we're still Jews, because our parents are Jews.*

<Kristin> *Would you like to say something about homosexuality and faith, anyway?*

<Aaron> *Of course. Orthodox people of any religion are against homosexuality, I think. The three religions do not differ at all. But in the Jewish world there is a very strong liberal-progressive current, which makes up about 60%, or perhaps more of all Jews. I suppose it's the same for Christians, and I hope that there is a similar evolution in Islam. But I'm no great expert on the other religions, as I said earlier on, so I think it would be better if the others said something about that, because I can only talk about what happens in Judaism, okay?*

<Kristin> *Sure thing, I'll take care of the liberal Christian enlightenment, shall I? *;-)*. I've also read something about liberal Islam. Many Muslim feminists are fighting for a liberal turn.*

<Aaron> *Thx Kristin. Apart from the fact that men and women have equal rights in liberal Judaism, there is also a great openness with respect to homosexuality. In New York for instance, there are LGBT communities with 3000 members.*

<Julie> *Wow – sounds nice 😊*

<Aaron> *Yes, and in London there is a College in which are trained only those men and women Rabbis who do not have any problems with homo-sexuality. They are carefully checked before they can start.*

<Almira> *Sounds wonderful. Will you tell us about it at our great event at the next Europride?*

<Aaron> *I'd love to, I'll be there.*

the end

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I Coming Out and Identities

Why did he even mention the existence of the sports group to Jan? And he really did come, can you believe it?

Jan makes him so completely confused, it would be better if he had never come to Amsterdam. At first Mark was quite happy to finally have another enthusiastic and talented swimmer in his class, and not to be the only one.

Two young guys are hanging out outside his house in the housing estate, nonchalantly walking around. They were obviously waiting for him. For days now, they have been following him around, yelling stupid comments. I'll just pretend they're not really here. He crosses the street, seemingly indifferent to their taunts, and heads for his door. Peter is standing in his way, with an evil grin on his face. Mark gulps, doesn't see Peter and suddenly bumps into him.

"Hey, you fucking faggot, don't think I'll let one of your kind grope me like that!" sneers Peter, taking one step towards Mark.

"Shut up, damn it!" screams Mark. Peter and Freek back off, bewildered. It doesn't even take two seconds for Mark to turn the key in the lock and open the door. Furious, he slams it shut after him.

"Mark, what's wrong? Your father is trying to recover from his shift!"

Mark doesn't even bother to look at his mother. Could the whole world please leave him alone?

"Mark, I am speaking to you." Mum is holding him by the sleeve.

"You know what? Living in this shitty place is so bloody brilliant!" Mark snaps back at her through clenched teeth. He tears himself loose quickly and runs into his room.

to be continued on page 8 and 9

Framework

First of all

One of the main differences between homophobia and other forms of discrimination like sexism and racism is that homosexual orientation is not visible unless a person decides to make it visible. Social scientists call this phenomenon an “invisible stigma”, as opposed to a “visible stigma” like a person’s sex or race. To avoid possible hostile reactions, lesbians and gays often have to make a decision concerning the visibility of their homosexuality.

'Coming out' is the term used for the way lesbians, gays and bisexuals are open about their feelings. Coming out is viewed as a part of a larger process of identity management - through which people learn how to deal with the social stigma attached to their feelings - which is very important for the development of a strong self-esteem for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. This complex interactive process takes place between the individual and society as a whole.

For lesbian women and gay men coming out is not a decision made once and for all; it is rather a continuous series of decisions which usually starts when a teen acknowledges her/his same-sex attraction as a valid emotion. They then have to make the decision whether or not to come out every time they meet a new person.

Basic information

Puberty is a crucial moment in the self-development of every human being. As heterosexual teenagers start to experience their sexuality and romantic feelings with the other sex, homosexual teenagers feel left out. The social pressure concerning gender roles is extremely strong and people whose identity does not fit the model have the impression that they don't have a place in their everyday world and can feel lonely, confused, “abnormal”. This can sometimes even lead to suicide. In their helplessness, some lesbians and gays feel forced to choose between a hetero/homosexual double life or a public coming out.

This process of coming out is influenced by a number of variables: gender, ethnic group, environment (urban versus rural), values and attitudes of contemporary society, individual aspects and physical ability. The way girls and boys are socialised into traditional gender roles has an influence on their coming out. Many counsellors note that girls often realise their same-sex attraction following an ‘intimate’ or ‘romantic’ crush for another girl, while boys more often realise it following a more explicit feeling of sexual attraction.

Role models for lesbians, gays and bisexuals in general are already not very numerous, but this problem can be even more pronounced for migrants. There are virtually no public figures from ethnic minorities who are openly homosexual for young people to identify with. The lack of role models contributes to feelings of isolation and low self-esteem among many lesbians and gays. Being lesbian and gay while at the same time being a member of an ethnic minority means that one will have to deal with multiple discrimination. A lesbian of colour, for instance, will have to cope with the impact of racism, sexism and homophobia.

However, there is a difference between a minority status linked to one's sexual orientation and that linked to ethnic origin. Lesbian women and gay men are born and grow up in families that hadn't foreseen their sexual orientation and often react to it by showing negative feelings (fear, disgust, hatred, sense of guilt). Parents of gays and lesbians frequently mourn the heterosexual life they had imagined for their child. In the case of ethnic origin, a family may show intense pride in its cultural background and therefore support and empower the child in her/ his identity.

What does this mean for me?

Educators and counsellors should be aware that coming out is a personal choice and a continuous process. As such, it is important to deal respectfully with a young person's decision. In order to provide adequate support, it would be preferable to create a secure and empathic atmosphere in which teens will talk freely about their needs. They should be supported and empowered in managing their feelings and identities.

An important piece of advice is to respect the emotions of the teen and to accept them for what they are. Counsellors and educators should accept the self-definitions of the client or pupil without questioning them. Remember however that there is a small number of people who have sex with others of their own gender but do not define themselves as homosexual. It is therefore important to understand what they mean with the words they use to describe who they are (i.e. why they don't identify as homosexual).

Education

Bear in mind

- What do you think about students coming out of the closet in your class? Is it something you consider important for lesbian and gay pupils? Are you afraid of it? Would you have a positive response to it?
- A teenager should not be forced to come out to her/his classmates. It must be the young person's own decision because it will profoundly affect her or his life.
- Consider the difficulties faced by people of different cultural backgrounds during the coming out process.
- How do you think your students would react to the coming out of one of their classmates? What would the atmosphere in the classroom be like? Would a student dare to show her homosexuality?
- If you think that coming out is in principle no longer a problem in your context, could you identify the 5-10% lesbian and gay students of your school?
- Do you know why your students may react negatively towards this theme? Remember that they are busy trying to build up their own identity, and it is disturbing if they are confronted with someone who is not following the rules of the majority. This then questions the direction of their own development.

Education

Tools

Me / Not Me-Game

Aim: Experience the different layers of being in a majority or minority. Find out similarities and differences.

Method: Prepare a list of words with “who“-questions (for instance, Who has smoked at least once in his/her life? Who has ever taken the bus without paying? Who has ever kissed a girl or woman? Who has ever kissed a boy or man? Who knows personally a lesbian girl/ woman or a gay boy/ man? Who would enter a lesbian café? Who would go to a gay nightclub? and other questions concerning the topics of love, partnership and sexuality). The participants walk through the room and are asked these different questions. Two opposite walls in the room are marked with the possible answers “Me“ and “Not me“, each one on a sheet of paper. An “in between” answer is not possible. The participants are asked before the exercise to choose one side even though it can be difficult. The pupils are asked not to talk or make comments during the exercise. It is more about perceiving the situation created by answering to a specific question and experiencing the picture of people distributed in the room.

The participants have to separate after each question into two groups: On the one side those who answer by “Me“ and all the others on the opposite “Not me“-side. Every participant considers the image, looks at who is on the other side and who is next to him/her, and pays attention to what she or he is feeling inside. Then everybody walks in the room until the next question is asked. Important note: the students should be allowed to lie, which means that nobody is forced to tell the truth when answering a question. Which is why the last question should be: “Who has lied at least once during this game?“ After the questions there should be a group discussion dealing with the feelings of the participants during the exercise, if they noticed something or if they felt surprised at a certain moment, etc.

Please note: In this game pupils can experience the situation of those lesbians, gay men and bisexuals who are hiding an important part of their life. It is important for the teacher to play along and answer the questions by moving to one side of the classroom. The teacher should also finish the session by answering to the last question “Who did not tell the truth at least once during this game?“ by saying “Me“, otherwise most pupils will not dare to say that they lied perhaps once or twice themselves.

V.I.P. Guessing

Aim: To find out why people are interested in the sexual orientations of others.

Method: The pupils have to identify V.I.P.s (Very Important Persons – rock stars, actors, politicians, etc.) that they know are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Where did they get this information? Was the V.I.P.’s career affected after their sexual identity was made public? Was it the V.I.P.’s own decision to come out in public? Why are the pupils interested in that?

Please note: The teacher does not have to know whether the V.I.P.s named by the students are indeed gay/lesbian or not. The exercise is more about how someone knows (or thinks she/he knows) that a V.I.P. is for instance a lesbian and why this is considered to be interesting to others. It is very important to mention that this method is NOT about outing V.I.P.s.

Imagine...

Aim: To understand why the coming out process can be very difficult for lesbians, gays and bisexuals

Method: Pupils divide into small groups of boys or girls. In these groups, they have to imagine what would change in their life if they were gay or lesbian. Give the small groups time to think about this. How would they deal with it? How would their friends react? Are these positive or negative images? Why? Why not?

Please note: This method can be embarrassing for homosexual pupils, especially if they have not come out, so this method should be used carefully. If someone has difficulty imagining being gay, tell them to imagine that everyone was homosexual and only a few people were straight. What would that be like for those few people?

Alternative suggestion: have the students read an extract of an autobiography by a gay or lesbian author.

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the counselling and health care sector.

How do teenagers come to realise that they are gay, lesbian or bisexual?

Most gays, lesbians and bisexuals realise it just the way heterosexual teenagers realise that their romantic feelings and sexual desire are directed towards the other sex. This process starts earlier than one might think, around the onset of puberty. Sometimes it takes more time to acknowledge these feelings, especially if they are repressed.

How does the environment react when a person comes out?

There is no straightforward answer to this, since each situation is vastly different from the next. If a lesbian girl or gay boy thinks that homosexuality is something to be ashamed of there is a good chance that her/his internalised homophobia comes from her or his non-supportive family or environment, and that coming out would be met with hostile reactions. Conversely, if a person is open and feels at ease, the environment will probably respond positively.

Why is someone gay, lesbian, hetero- or bisexual?

To this day, there is no exact scientific answer to the question. The most currently given explanation is a genetic one mixed with some social influences, but nobody is really sure. It seems that sexual orientation is the result of a complex mix of biological, psychological, social and cultural factors. You might want to question the obsession over finding a cause for homosexuality and not for heterosexuality.

How do I deal with a teenager who comes out in the classroom?

It seldom happens that a teenager comes out in class. If it does happen, it would be helpful to talk as frankly as possible about it in front of the class. The student in question should be consulted in advance and asked if this is alright with her or him. When discussing the subject in class, do not refer directly to the pupil who has come out, but speak in more general terms. Increasing people's knowledge about gays, lesbians and bisexuals is a crucial point in combating their exclusion.

I must think about something else. Do my maths homework or perhaps phone Mareike. Irene still thinks that she fancies me. Alright, then...

He stares at the telephone, dials Mareike's number, hears her voice and hangs up right away. He runs back to the door and locks it.

He sees Jan smiling at him and hugging him at the end of the game. A kiss on the right, a kiss on the left, they all say goodbye in the same way. Only Mark's heart starts fluttering madly, his whole body is as though electrified when he feels Jan's body so close to his own. I must have gone completely mad, thinks Mark, hopeless. A bloke shouldn't be able to turn me on like that. It's Mareike's voice, not his hug that should make me feel this way. I can't go to school any more. I must avoid Jan.

"Mark, could I please talk to you after the lesson?" That's the last straw. His mother receiving a letter from the school yesterday – telling her that due to frequent absences Mark might not be allowed to move up into the higher class – was already bad enough. And now the teacher wants something from him. Mark can already imagine what it will be.

He should not have yelled at Jan, let alone push him away so roughly. The fact that Jan had hugged him so enthusiastically when they had won could not excuse his reaction. But the worst was the way in which Jan had looked at him, and then without a word turned on his heel and walked away. Mark's stomach turns over every time he thinks about it. The whole hour long, Mark keeps staring at Jan's empty chair and doesn't manage to think clearly. Jan's face has been haunting his dreams for weeks, turning him on, and his heart starts to beat wildly when he sees Jan, even from a distance.

"We've got to talk, right away," says the teacher to Mark. "Since the school year has started, you have become another person. You play truant, you'll barely let anyone at school talk to you, and now this. I would have thought you'd be pleased to have a fellow swimmer in the class, and that you and Jan would become best friends."

"A super-swimmer he might be, but that's not enough", replies Mark hotly "I just don't want him to touch me like that!"

"Mark, you must apologise to Jan!" The teacher looks at Jan, pensive.

"Having hugged you doesn't mean Jan is gay. And even if he was, I won't tolerate homophobia, or any other type of discrimination."

Homophobia, homophobia, the word is pounding in Mark's head, and suddenly he begins to cry.

"Come on now, what's wrong with you?" The voice of Mr van der Kolk sounds bewildered.

He holds Mark by the shoulders, cautiously. "You have always been such a keen student. And being homophobic simply isn't like you. Jan has enough problems as it is, what with being new in this school and everything. And he likes you, I noticed it from the very first day. Mark, I expect an explanation for your behaviour in front of the whole class. You will face up to your responsibility, is that clear?"

to be continued next page

“Jan likes you, just you.” The teacher’s voice goes on and on in Mark’s head.

“Mark?”

“I can’t do it.” Mark’s voice trembles.

“Then you will have to speak to our school psychologist. This thing with Jan, your absences, all that must be sorted out. Quickly.”

The school psychologist looks friendly. “Among other things, I insulted and pushed back a schoolmate, that’s why I am here.”

Mr de Vries nods almost imperceptibly. “What happened?”, he asks as Mark stops speaking.

“Why does he have to touch me when I win?” cries Mark. “If he had only kept his hands to himself.” He stops, despaired.

“Is it because he hugged you that you lashed out at him?”

Mark nods silently.

“Perhaps it was important for Jan to show you how proud he was of your performance, because he likes you. There’s nothing abnormal about that, Mark, don’t you think?”

“No”, yells Mark, and runs to the door. “It’s absolutely not normal, it’s perverse.”

Nobody knows what he’s going through. Peter and Freek wouldn’t hesitate to beat him up, if he ever... Best not to think about it. He must go through ten sittings with the school psychologist – that was the agreement with Mr van der Kolk.

“Nice to see you again”, greets him Mr de Vries.

Mark nods silently. How could he make it clear to the advisor, that at night he dreams of Jan, that he even has erections because of him, and that at the same time he would most of all like to shake him off?

“Here you can say anything you want, however crazy it might be”, says Mr de Vries quietly, suddenly breaking into Mark’s chaos.

“I don’t even understand myself. I didn’t mean to hurt Jan, but ...”.

Desperately, Mark wipes off his tears with his pullover sleeve.

“But he confuses you quite a lot?” The school psychologist’s question sounds almost like a statement.

Mark looks at him quickly. How did he understand that? “I think about him all the time”, slips out of him so suddenly that he does not have the time to reconsider it.

“You like him so much that it makes you scared, is that right?”

“Yes”, whispers Mark in tears. At last he has told someone about it. He takes a quick glance at the psychologist. He still looks ever so friendly.

“You are not the only guy to fall in love with other guys, Mark.”

“You don’t mean that seriously.”

“I know how difficult it is to speak about being in love with boys. But you are not alone. There is even a gay and lesbian group for young people, here in Amsterdam. I am quite sure that they would be happy to meet you. Maybe you’d like to take their brochure “Boys who fancy boys”. You just have to call them. Think about it Mark, will you? If you need me give me a call, okay?”
Mark doesn’t look at the psychologist. But he nods.

the end

Counselling and Health Care

Bear in mind

- How do you view the effects of discrimination on a lesbian or gay teenager? What does it mean to have homoerotic desires in this particular teenager's cultural background?
- What do you think about sexual orientation? Is 'orientation' for you the same as 'preference', 'identity', 'labelling' or 'behaviour', or do you normally differentiate between these aspects?
- Pay attention to what you are saying next time you talk about homosexuality. Do you feel at ease when using the different terms mentioned above and do you take them into account?
- How would you deal with, for instance, a boy who has sex with other boys yet defines himself as heterosexual? Would you consider him to be a gay boy who does not accept himself or just someone who is searching for his own identity?
- Counsellors may be aware of the challenges facing teenagers in western culture, but what about those facing a gay or lesbian adolescent belonging to an ethnic minority?
- What is your own attitude towards the coming out process? Do you consider it to be important? How do you deal with a lesbian or gay teenager who is afraid of coming out?

Counselling and Health Care Tools

A Lesbian Woman/ A Gay Man Is...

Issue: Internalised homophobia prevents gays, lesbians and bisexuals from feeling at ease with their own identity and forces them to keep their sexual orientation hidden from everybody at all costs.

Practical Advice: Suggest to the teenage client that they say the following sentence out loud: “a lesbian woman/ gay man/ bisexual is...”, and then have them complete it by adding whatever comes into their mind. The client repeats the sentence several times until a variety of statements have come out. This allows the teenager to work on the stereotypes and prejudice they have internalised. For instance, one lesbian teen said to her counsellor: “A lesbian woman is ... not feminine; that’s disgusting”.

Please note: before using this exercise, it is necessary to establish an interaction to help the person feel at ease so that she/ he can be open; it is useful to start by saying that anything the client is going to say is acceptable.

The Two Chairs

Aim: work on an individual’s indecision on whether or not to come out. The purpose of this activity is to investigate the reasons why a person chooses (or does not choose) to come out. It also looks at the feelings related to those reasons.

Method: Put a chair in front of the young person and ask him/her to imagine that a part of him-/herself is seated there. Explain that this is the part which is undecided about whether or not they should come out, and leads him/her to hide their sexual orientation. The client must then address this alter-ego. Afterwards, the client moves and sits on that chair him-/herself and try to explain how they feel after listening to the other self.

Please note: Be sure that the client looks at both the positive and negative sides of their possible coming out.

This exercise may be suitable when a client has already questioned the cognitive aspects involved with coming out but still has problems dealing with the emotional aspects. It cannot, therefore, be used as a starting exercise.

Coming Out in the Family

Aim: to work on the decision to come out.

Method: Let a gay/lesbian client imagine they come out to their family. How would they do it? What would they say? What do they think their parents’ reaction would be? How would they react themselves? How do they feel while doing the exercise?

Please note: Do not try to convince the client that they should come out. Even if this method works well for them, it still has to be the client’s own decision. This exercise is limited to focusing on cognitive aspects.

Counselling and Health Care

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the education sector.

What if a teen asks me as a counsellor whether he/she is gay/lesbian? Are there any indicators?

Lesbian women and gay men are as much a mixed group as heterosexual men and women and homosexuality is not identifiable from physical or personality features. The counsellor should ask the teens what they feel, what they are thinking, so as to support them without judgement or any ready-built answers. It could also be useful to ask them whether they are afraid of being homosexual and if so, why they are afraid of it.

Do people choose to be gay or lesbian?

No. Being homosexual rather than heterosexual is not a choice; a gay or lesbian individual can only decide whether they will come out to others or not.

Are parents to blame for their children's homosexuality?

No, certainly not (and in any case homosexuality is not something you should be ashamed of). Mothers and fathers have no influence on a child's sexual orientation but they can encourage their children's self-esteem and independent sexuality. In fact, gays and lesbians are usually born to heterosexual parents and the children of gay and lesbian couples are often heterosexual.

How should I react if for example a young man has sex with other men but defines himself as heterosexual?

Sexual orientation is composed of erotic attraction, sexual behaviour, sexual fantasies, falling in love, self-definition, and social preference. These dimensions do not always coincide; there are indeed a few people who have sex with others of their own gender but do not define themselves as gay. The counsellor must accept the client's own self-definition without questioning it while at the same time trying to understand the underlying representations.

In any case, self-definition as a gay or lesbian may be irrelevant in some cultures.

“And then I told my best friend that I only feel attracted to women. It was such a hurdle to take to tell her that I’m a lesbian and yet it was such a relief to be open about it. Even today it can still be difficult to tell other people but I now know it makes life easier for you.”

Imprint

Different in More Ways Than One.
Providing Guidance for Teenagers
on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality
and Respect

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Different in More Ways Than One.

Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality and Respect

2 Relationships

Her hands shaking, Almira grabs the telephone. The writing blurs again and again before her eyes. In a few seconds her life has been destroyed, as though by bombs.

“Hello, Julie Bäcker speaking?”

Almira sobs uncontrollably.

“Almira, is that you? Good heavens, what happened?”

“I have to go back to Kosovo.”

A breathless silence at the other end. “My God”, whispers Julie, ages later.

“Stay where you are darling, I will be right there in a moment.”

“They can’t just simply deport you. You’ve been living here for eleven years.

That’s almost half your life” Julie, bewildered, keeps reading over and over the notification from the Aliens’ Registration Office.

“They say the war is over”, whispers Almira. “But my family originally comes from Bosnia, and they’d make my life a living Hell if I went there. And if they ever find out that I’m a lesbian they’ll kill me,” Almira looks at her girlfriend.

“In Kosovo too, people were murdered. I saw them beat up my sister and my cousins, and threaten to kill my uncle. Death awaits me there. There is no further education there for me, no home, no love. Only violence, only destruction. I can’t go back, Julie.”

“No, of course not. We’ll find a way, Almira. I love you, I won’t let you go. Never, do you hear me?”

to be continued on page 8 and 9

Framework

First of all

Contrary to popular myth, lesbian and gay relationships are not essentially different from other types of relationships and offer as much diversity as heterosexual couples (no two couples function in the same way). One difference, though, is the fact that in most societies, homosexual partnerships are far less accepted than heterosexual ones. In most EU member states, there are less or no legal rights for homosexual partnerships. Having to live in a society that considers their couples less worthy than others creates additional obstacles for many homosexuals in their everyday lives.

Another difference comes from the fact that it is impossible in a gay or lesbian couple to function on the basis of the traditional division of gender roles. In a lesbian or gay couple the partners have to find a way to interact together which is not based on standard role patterns, much more than in heterosexual couples. This is a chance and a challenge because it enables both partners to express their individual desires and abilities. The values ascribed to men and women are generally different and entail an unequal social status. It can be difficult for two men or two women to construct a satisfying relationship because of the way that they are expected to behave towards other men or women: more negotiation between the partners is needed, for instance for the division of tasks and household chores.

The effects of a partnership between men or women is not only restricted to the two adults involved. Many children have two mothers or two fathers, inside a “rainbow family”. Recent scientific research shows that these children do not become bi- or homosexual more frequently than other children in heterosexual homes. However, they may experience bullying by their intolerant surroundings.

Basic information

What does partnership mean? The answer is determined by many things like religion, culture, national laws, education, social norms and personal values. In some cultures and societies, the choice of relationship is more influenced by a collective point of view and by family values while in others it can be more influenced by the value of individuality. This cultural difference can have significant implications for some people coming from a conservative cultural background. Such a background tends to put a strong emphasis on family and community whereas society in general has a more “individualistic” thinking. For lesbians and gays coming from such background it can be difficult to live a gay and lesbian way of life while at the same time maintaining a good relationship with their families. The family is more than just the people who raised them; they are also the ones who provide the necessary protection to make the child strong enough to face the challenges of life.

Relationships today are in state of a flux. There are more varied forms of relationships for homo- and heterosexuals than 30 years ago: getting married, staying single, living apart but as a couple, even same-sex registered partnership. Diversity means liberty but it also creates the need to make a choice. Young people ask themselves: How can I know which type of relationship is right for me? Today, laws creating homosexual marriages or partnerships exist in the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands (for more detailed information get in touch with lesbian and gay organisations either local or at European level like ILGA-Europe). But up to now there are only limited possibilities for gay and lesbian couples to move inside the EU and still be recognized as a couple in another country.

What does this mean for me?

For young gays, lesbians or bisexuals, it is very important to meet others who share their experiences in order to get an idea of the different ways one can be involved in a relationship. With this experience, they realise that they can actively create their relationships and develop their own way of life.

- Show through your own attitude that you respect diverse partnerships and consider it as a value to society if two people take care for each other.
- Be sensitive towards same-sex relations between young people, regardless if they are of a romantic or sexual nature or not, and encourage the youngsters to be respectful and friendly when dealing with each other. Be supportive - even brief statements inside the class or in public can be helpful.
- Support the parents of gays, lesbians and bisexuals. If the parents can't accept their children's partner, this places a significant stress on their sons and daughters.
- Sex education should deal not only with biology, but should also focus on the emotional aspects of partnership and gender identities. Try to remember that some of your students may experience difficulties fitting in accepted genders and/or roles. Moreover, sex education should not present homosexual issues separately from heterosexual ones. This only serves to reinforce the division between different forms of sexual orientation and encourages young people to see one as "normal" and the other as "deviant". Instead, sexuality should be presented as encompassing different types of sexual orientation and identities wherein hetero- and homosexuality are but two of many examples.
- When dealing with intercultural questions, the basic principle should be to accept other views, even those that seem strange in your personal opinion: being respectful towards others is the best way people can live together. To insist that young people must come out in order to have satisfying same-sex relationships is counter-productive. Focus instead on offering support and trying to play down the need for clear identification.

Education

Bear in mind

Each of us is involved in many different types of relationships at the same time: with our parents, friends, teachers, etc. Each of these relationships is unique and changes over time. The word “partnership” means something different to everyone. Some want it to be full of excitement, others want to be close to someone, to feel safe and secure, to regain energy. What is right for one person is not necessarily right for another and an arrangement that is suited to a given person today perhaps won’t be as well-suited tomorrow. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to have a relationship. The type of relationships people choose and the way they shape their lives within that relationship must be negotiated between the two partners. You are invited to consider your own relationship and the relationship between two men or two women. Take your time to answer the following questions. It may also be interesting to look at the corresponding paragraph in the counselling section below.

- What do you think defines a happy relationship? What do you think is your partner’s opinion about this? What does your partner think that your opinion is about it?
- Have you ever seen two men or two women kiss or hug each other or hold hands? What was your reaction to this? Why did you react in that way?
- How did you know what you were looking for in a relationship? How did you imagine a relationship looked like day-to-day? What role have examples and traditional role patterns played in the shaping of these images?
- What kind of division of roles or tasks do you practise in your current (or did you practise in a past) relationship? Do you feel comfortable with it? What do you think is your partner’s opinion about this? How has the division of tasks been negotiated?
- What advantages do you see if there are two persons of the same sex in a relationship? What problems can arise?
- How do your personal values affect your teaching?
- How do you imagine fidelity? Do your views have an influence on your lessons?

Education

Tools

Love story

Aim: to explore the representation of gay or lesbian relationships in the media, to educate pupils about the influence of media on public opinion

Method: Find an example of a homosexual love story in a youth magazine (ask your pupils to bring an example to class; if they cannot find a story, a photo can be used to get started). Take a critical look at the content of the story contents and discuss this in class. Questions: What is the general function of a love story in general? How are homosexual relationships represented in this story? What information concerning gays, lesbians and their relationships does it provide? Does it stereotype certain people, certain roles? Etc.

Please note: The exercise works well with pupils aged 14 or older. The exercise fits well inside a larger sequence of lessons about the media. Journalism should be critically analysed in its function and appearance: Who writes texts for magazines? How? Who gives them information? What is “good” journalism?

If the pupils criticise the story as being too conventional or as portraying stereotypes, they can develop their own story with their own photos.

Hetero, Homo, Bi: Pros, Cons, and Stereotypes

Aim: Identifying stereotypes, comparing different forms of partnership

Method: Split the pupils into small groups and distribute a paper divided into the following categories: Man-Woman Relationships, Two-Man Relationships, and Two-Woman Relationships. In the small groups, the pupils are asked to consider the advantages, disadvantages, and commonly known stereotypes for each relationship category. The results should be written on the paper and are then discussed in a plenary session.

Please note: The exercise is appropriate for pupils aged 14 years or older (this exercise works best if they have had relationships of their own or if they have observed the experiences of others). The teacher can go deeper into the pupils’ replies by asking “Where have you seen examples of this?” The stereotypes should be questioned in a critical way and the restrictions of human perception should be explained.

The Joneses, the Johnsons and the Johns

Aim: To recognise that the concept of family can take different forms

Method: There are different families with similar sounding names (for instance Jones, Johnson and John etc.). All families have the same number of members (father, mother, son, daughter, etc.). Every pupil receives a card with an identity written on it (the Johnson father, the Jones daughter, etc.); the identities are memorized and the cards handed back. When the group is given the sign to start, the members of the same family have to find each other and then pose for a family photo. Every family demonstrates its pose in front of the others; the pupils outside the group can then try to guess who represents who in the family. A second round of the exercise is then held. This time some cards are changed unbeknownst to the participants. Some families now have different combinations: in one family there are two mothers or two fathers, others are single-parent families, in another the ex-lover of a family member can be integrated. Possible questions for a group discussion include: What was your reaction when you realised that there were two mothers or two fathers in your group? Do you know someone who lives with two mothers or fathers? What is a family? What is important for you in a family? What different forms of living together do you know of? What is necessary for you to feel “at home”? How do you want to live later in your life?

Please note: The exercise is suitable for pupils aged 11 or older. It is very important that the pupils don't realise that the identities written on the cards have been altered for the second round – to avoid discovery, you might want to use a second set of cards. In the second round, the pupils may initially be irritated if they think the teacher has made a mistake with the identities (“you put too many mothers in one group!”) You may have to tell them this was planned in advance.

Education

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the counselling and health care sector.

Who is the “man” who is the “woman” in a same-sex relationship?

The notion that there is a “man” and a “woman” in a gay or lesbian relationship is a cliché based on heterosexist notions. Because there are two women or two men, people think that one of them has to fit into the role model of the other sex. In a gay or lesbian relationship, the idea of forcing one of the two men into the traditional role of a woman, or one of the two women into the traditional role of a man to describe their behaviour or character does not make sense.

Do same-sex relationships last longer than heterosexual relationships?

Relationships between men and women last for as long or as short as homosexual relationships do. Some can last for only a few weeks while others may go on for many years or even “forever”. The only difference is that a homosexual relationship is rarely encouraged by society or by the partners’ families. This lack of acceptance and external support can make it more difficult for the couple to solve problems within the relationship.

Do gays and lesbians cheat on their partners more often than heterosexuals?

Scientific research has shown that a large majority of young people want to live in a stable relationship and would be happy to grow old with their partner. In this sense, gays, lesbians and bisexuals are no different from heterosexuals. Of course, the ideal of an “everlasting love” is difficult for anyone to reach. People no longer remain with one partner until death like they used to. Instead, people are more likely to change stable partners once, twice, or several times during their lifetime. Researchers call this behaviour “serial” or “sequential monogamy”.

In which ways are same-sex relationships discriminated against?

Same-sex relationships are discriminated against in many ways. They face discrimination in a legal context because in most countries, same-sex couples are not legally recognized. This implies a series of limitations, in inheritance laws, visiting rights in hospitals, or in housing, for example. Society discriminates against lesbians and gays because there are still many people who think that a gay and lesbian lifestyles are not as good as heterosexuals. And they are discriminated against in terms of visibility, since they are only rarely mentioned in schoolbooks for instance.

“What happened, Almira? You have been staring at the walls for weeks. You were given a six in three subjects. And I really thought you wanted to achieve something here in Germany. If you continue this way, you’ll never get an apprenticeship”.

“It does not depend on me”, says Almira softly. “I have no future in Germany.”

“Nonsense”, fumes the teacher. “Of course it depends on you. If you really want to achieve something, you will do it. But of course not with this performance. It’s too bad Almira, I was wrong about you.”

If you only knew that I’m a lesbian, you’d probably approve of the deportation notification one hundred percent, thinks Almira and puts away her work, quietly.

“But surely something can be done against a deportation notification,” Julie looks at her classmates defiantly, as they leave the lecture room after the lesson.

“Hey, the war in Kosovo is over, Julie. All these people, they’ve been here long enough. You’d better look for another girlfriend” Georg grins maliciously. Others nod.

“What kind of people are you?” Julie looks around, shocked. “And you want to become educators?”

“Oh honestly, you only want to prevent this deportation because you fancy her, don’t you?” , pipes up Karin.

“You have simply no idea of what war and trauma can do to a person, even years later”, replies Julie.

“I think you’re overdoing it way too much again, Julie. As always.” Georg leans back nonchalantly.

“In school nobody understands me. I feel so lonely. The teacher thinks I’m lazy.” Almira shows Julie the messed-up German essay.

“The students are just as bad”, sobs Julie with resignation. “They couldn’t care less what’s going on here.”

“Why don’t we look for help on the Web?”

“Almira honey, that’s a wonderful idea!”

Moments later they sit in front of their computers, with great concentration.

“Support Group for Refugees, here it is” says Julie suddenly. “Exactly what we were looking for.”

“And see here,” laughs Almira. “I’ve found a European Chat for young Gays and Lesbians.”

“Smashing,” smiles Julie. “I’ll call up the Support Group, ok?”

“In the meantime I’ll enter the URL of the Triangle – Chat.”

“Appointment at the Support Group in one hour”, announces Julie.

“The Chat is open.” Fascinated, Almira types something in.

“Show me.” Julie takes a seat next to her.

to be continued next page

<Almira> *hello, I am a lesbian living in Germany, soon to be deported back to Kosovo. What can I do?*

<Mark> *Hey, I'm from the Netherlands. If you have a German girlfriend, marry her. Should be possible, according to the German Life-Partnership Law, if you are both over 18.*

<Julie> *Hey, I'm the girlfriend. Do you really mean it? That would be great. We're both over 18. But we have to go now. Should we keep you posted?*

<Mark> *Absolutely. Nice chatting with you. See ya.*

<Aaron> *I'd also like to be updated. You can meet me here often in the Chat.*

<Almira> *Great. Thx, we'll be back. Cheers.*

"I'm afraid it doesn't look very good for the refugees from Kosovo. Our authorities don't want to understand, that minority groups like Bosnian Muslims still have a hard time there." The counsellor looks steadily at Almira. "What's more, you're a lesbian. Sending you back there is irresponsible."

"If we got married – according to the new Life-Partnership Law – we could avoid deportation?" Julie's voice sounds imploring.

"Yes, that would certainly be possible. According to § 23 of the Aliens' Law, after the marriage Almira would be entitled at first to a limited Residence Permit for three years, then she'd get a limited renewal, and in eight years' time she could apply for German citizenship."

"But what would happen to my parents?", asks Almira.

"It would not prevent your parents from being deported", says the advisor softly.

"I can't stay here without them", sobs Almira. "Without my parents I can't live here."

"You should come here with your parents. We'll do everything we can to save them." The advisor hesitates. "Is it because you're in love that you want to get married, or is it just an attempt to save Almira?"

"I love Almira", replies Julie. "Perhaps I wouldn't have come to this idea without this threat but now I see it as a great opportunity."

"I don't want to lose my parents", whispers Almira. "I don't know if they'll ever understand, me marrying a woman."

"Almira, for you going back to Kosovo would be the end. You've grown up here, you've spent more than half your life in this country, your whole socialisation has taken place here, you're used to this culture, you want to get an education. You love a woman. To have such a life in Kosovo is unthinkable. And then there is the trauma that you and your parents have gone through. There is no chance to get a therapy there. Returning to Kosovo means a whole new trauma for all your family. You told us that some members of your family were badly beaten up and received death threats before your very eyes."

Almira weeps silently. "Both my parents have gone through this. Mum tried to protect me. She is strong. But Dad went to pieces. I cannot leave Mum alone with him. Dad needs us both."

"Do your parents know, that you and Julie want to get married?"

"Perhaps they'd put up with that, but they couldn't stand to be separated from me. For my Dad it would be the end."

"There must be a solution for you and for your parents, Almira. I can't promise you anything. Marrying Julie would certainly save you. And we must save you."

The advisor smiles encouragingly at Almira. "Come tomorrow with your parents. Together we'll fight for them."

the end

Counselling and Health Care

Bear in mind

Along with positive feelings, every relationship, even a heterosexual one, includes anger, stress, and different expectations between the partners. Because they are afraid of losing their partner, some people bind themselves too close to them; they want to possess and control their partner. In many partnerships, fidelity has a special importance, yet everyone defines fidelity in a different way. Can someone be called faithful if they spend a lot of time on their own without their partner? And what if someone has a one-night-stand? As people define fidelity differently, this can cause trouble. You are invited to consider your own relationship and the relationship between two men or two women. Take your time to answer the following questions. It may also be useful for you to first have a look at the corresponding paragraph in the education section above.

- When did you first realise that there were different forms of living together than those you learned about in your family? (These can include gay/lesbian relationships, your family's views on love and on relationships, etc.) Are you looking for a partner who corresponds to or differs from these ideals?
- Do you think that lesbian and gay relationships are as fulfilling as heterosexual relationships? If yes, how do you think they manage this? If no, why not?
- Are there problems in relationships which you would describe as typically male or typically female? Are there any typical differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals in dealing with problems in their relationships-? How could these problems be solved?
- What impact can an uncertain legal status have on a relationship? How must it be like for the partners involved to know that a large part of society would rather their relationship didn't exist?
- How do your personal values affect your counseling? How do you view fidelity? What influence does this have on your counseling?

Counselling and Health Care Tools

Question of Scales

Aim: These questions help the couple to formulate their expectations at the beginning of the counselling process.

Method: Independently from each other, two partners give their responses to a series of statements according to a scale graded from 1 to 10 (1 = lowest value, 10 = highest value). First they give their own reply, and then they also indicate what they think their partner would reply. The scales can be prepared on a flip chart by the counsellor before the session. Some examples for possible statements (these need to be reformulated into two phrases – one for each polar opposite):

- the chances that we will be still a couple in one year's time are very low/very high
- the resources we have to cope with a crisis together are many/are few
- after the common counseling sessions, our problem will become bigger/smaller (easier to deal with/more difficult to deal with)
- I can personally contribute few/many things to solve the problem
- My partner can contribute few/many things to solve the problem

Please note: The use of circular questions helps to clarify each partner's point of view (e.g. What do I think? What do I think the other thinks? What do they think I think?) For this to be effective, it is important that counsellors pose the questions in the same way to both partners. The answers to these questions show in which direction client-oriented counselling can continue. If the partners formulate different opinions, it is important to work on their common aims. In the second step, changes can be anticipated by asking the partners what could happen if a rating on the scale changes (i.e. if a rating goes up). A homework assignment for the couple in between sessions could be to ask them to pretend for one or several days that the positive changes had already happened.

Social surrounding as support

Aim: Represent the social surroundings of gay and lesbian couples and work on sources of support in order to find solutions for problems.

Method:

1st step: Set Up

The couple is asked to set up a system with different coloured figures or symbols. These symbols represent themselves and persons belonging to their social surrounding (members of both families, particular persons that are important to one or to both partners, their children, former partners, counsellors, etc).

2nd step: Perception

The partners name the persons they set up during the set-up phase and explain the system from their point of view.

3rd step: Questioning

- How static/ dynamic is the system?
- Where are the limits between the persons in the system?
- Which links exist?
- Who has contributed to stabilising the relationship in the past and how?
- Who was involved in finding solutions to the problems?
- Who supports the fact that the couple has sought out counselling and how?
- Which of the persons identified in the exercise best knows how the partners could cope with their current crisis?
- Who would benefit the most if the partners' relationship was stabilised during the counselling process?

4th step: Anticipating changes

The partners are invited to change the way the relationship is presented in terms of figures and symbols, and to move them to a different place. What exactly would change then?

Please note: This exercise focuses attention on the human resources available to support the couple.

The representation of real persons with neutral symbols should not lead to interpretations of each individual's role. The point of the exercise is to look at the system as a whole.

Counselling and Health Care

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the education sector.

What impact does an unequal legal situation have on same-sex relationships?

Same-sex partnerships do not enjoy the same legal rights as heterosexuals do. This can affect the relationship in many concrete ways. For example, if one of the partners dies, the other can be thrown out of their common apartment if she/he is not the official contractor. A same-sex partner cannot always follow her or his partner to another EU country like in a heterosexual couple, because many member states still deny same-sex couples equal residence or social support rights. Furthermore, same-sex couples are often not encouraged or supported by others and must solve most of their problems by themselves. This lack of acceptance is generally a source of stress for lesbians, gays and bisexuals. It has even more impact if it comes from the closest family members. A hostile surrounding binds the partners closer to each other and leads to isolation. Lesbians often suffer from double discrimination, because women and men are still not treated equally in many societies.

How does the everyday life of same-sex couples differ from that of people in a heterosexual relationship?

It can differ if their family, friends, neighbours, or colleagues have a problem with homosexuality. The fact that homosexual partners usually have to declare or justify their homosexuality in public also makes big a difference compared to heterosexual couples. Homosexuals have to declare and “label” themselves instead of “just going on with their lives” the way heterosexuals can.

How can I help a boy or a girl who is desperately trying to find a same-sex partner?

To help them avoid isolation, it might be a good idea for a young person to join a gay and lesbian youth group because there are many boys and girls with a similar orientation. To join a gay and lesbian sports association, volunteer group, etc., can be helpful if the young person is already beyond the age limit of youth groups. People living in geographically isolated regions may not have such groups in their area. In such cases, however, the Internet can be a help. But be careful when making contacts via the Internet – anonymous users may not be who they claim to be.

Am I gay/lesbian or bisexual if I have been in a relationship with a person of the same sex just once (or twice)?

Most teenagers (boys more frequently than girls) have sexual experiences with the same sex (for example, mutual masturbation). This is common even for those who define themselves as heterosexual. If you fall in love with someone of the same sex, perhaps you are bisexual, which means you can fall in love with men and women. People call someone gay or lesbian if he or she falls in love exclusively with other men or exclusively with other women (see also Chapter 6 “Sexualities”). Nowadays, the need for clear identities seems to be less important. It should be more important for people to listen to their own feelings and to be happy with their partner regardless of that person’s sex.

“I often think some people have very strange ideas about gay relationships – as if they were unlike other partnerships. My partner and I live together, we eat and go out and sleep together. We make plans for our future. Sometimes we have different opinions and we quarrel but my partner really means a lot to me.”

Imprint

Different in More Ways Than One.
Providing Guidance for Teenagers
on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality
and Respect

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Different in More Ways Than One.

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3 Different Lifestyles

“Alexander, do me a favour, give me the invitation to the Parents’ Evening, please. Hans would like to come and he wants to make a note of the date.” Flabbergasted, Alexander stares at his father. “Oh, come on, Dad. Why does Hans have to come with us?”

“We’ve been living together for five years. Hans is like a second father to you, isn’t he?”

“Yes, but – honestly, can’t you go there just with Mum anyway? That’d be miles better, really.”

“Darling, being gay is quite normal. You see Mum only every second weekend and the everyday things, your homework – Hans and I look after everything that concerns you. Don’t we? At your school, they should have gotten the idea by now, Hans is just as responsible for you as I am. He has permission to write letters to the school for you, and to talk to the teachers about your achievements. All in all, he’s more for you than I myself. I don’t want to hide Hans, or disavow him.”

“Yeah, sure, I understand that. But even so, it doesn’t have to become common knowledge. My life’s already stressing enough without this. You always think that accepting homosexuality is easy for every single person on Earth – just because Hans and you know thousands of lesbians and gays. Believe me, the school is a complete desert in this respect. I can already picture the teacher standing in front of me. Her face will be full of spite, she’ll smirk, but why, of course, she’s completely tolerant,” groans Alexander.

“Don’t you think you’re overdoing it a little, Alexander?” His father looks at him closely. “Hans and I’ll get it right. The time will come when your miserable journey through this desert will draw to an end.”

“Okay, then I’ll go and get myself buried. By the way, Hans has pinned the invitation to the Parents’ Evening on the wall,” sighs Alexander.

to be continued on page 8 and 9

Framework

First of all

There are many images of lesbian, gay and bisexual lifestyles, but many of them are distorted and prejudiced. Negative stereotypes of gays, bisexuals and lesbians are usually based on quite traditional views of gender and sexuality.

Stereotypes include the image of gay men as being promiscuous and incapable of long-term relationships, of bisexuals as bigamists who are sexually out of control and of lesbians as radical feminists who are frustrated with men. In Europe, many traditionalist religions consider homosexual orientation as something sinful, or as a lifestyle that is obsessed with seduction, in a way similar to an addiction.

Many of these negative stereotypes are based on a very distorted and biased image of the lesbian and gay community. Opponents of certain lifestyles tend to selectively stress some extreme features which they can then present as scandalous, while forgetting or even denying the positive aspects.

Basic information

For lesbians, gays and bisexuals, it is important to make a difference between the basic feeling of same-sex attraction and the creation of a lifestyle: lifestyles are chosen, feelings and sexual orientation aren't. A 'lifestyle' refers to the way a person wants to live her or his life. A lifestyle can encompass aspects of identity, sexuality, relationships, work, housing, etc, but it is a very individual matter that cannot be related to a group of persons in general. In the EU, gays or lesbians have developed many different 'lifestyles'. For some, the anti-discrimination aspect is paramount. By organising themselves, wearing symbols and promoting equal rights, they live an activist lifestyle. For others, social contact, romance or sex can be the most important aspects. They have developed a subculture of meeting places and events which specifically cater to these needs.

Many people share the desire to have one permanent and 'romantic' monogamous relationship. It is not because a teenager is lesbian or gay that such a relationship is impossible, but this is only one of many options. Contemporary societies, with their social and economic mobility, offer much more diversity and freedom for the individual to express her or his particularities, especially concerning gender roles, than used to be the case. With this greater diversity in identities comes a great need for mutual tolerance, acceptance and flexibility among all people.

As acceptance towards homosexuality increases, lesbians and gays are not forced to hide their homosexuality behind a heterosexual marriage and traditional family, like they used to. As a result, there are more and more lesbian women and gay men who have long-term relationships or raise children. Research shows that children raised in such situations do not lack warmth or role models. However, these children do suffer when laws make good parenting difficult (e.g. by making adoption difficult for gays and lesbian couples) or when significant others treat them in discriminatory ways.

What does this mean for me?

For lesbians, gays and bisexuals as well as heterosexuals, a better balanced perspective of lifestyles and diversity would be beneficial to everyone. This should be considered in the wider context of diversity along the lines of gender, cultural background and other social differences, like age, disability and religion.

First of all, laws and regulations on all levels should provide for more diversity. Consider for a moment how your organisation or the people around you deal with different lifestyles. For instance do application procedures, training and work regulations cater for equal treatment for men and women, for couples and individuals?

Furthermore, counselling should help teens explore their feelings and needs. It should empower them to create their own lifestyle. Finally, education should provide an overview of lifestyles and discuss distorted images. It should encourage teens to make their own choices.

Education

Bear in mind

It is important to acknowledge to yourself and to your students that dealing with differences is not always easy; it is not something that will be learned overnight. Take your time and give pupils space to process new ideas.

As an educator, it is necessary to examine your own opinions about diversity and homosexual/bisexual issues. About 70% of the impact of teaching is linked to your personality. If you teach your pupils about a variety of lifestyles, but at the same time demonstrate that you don't approve of lifestyles which differ from your own, your students will not take you very seriously.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How do you feel about differences in general?
- What lifestyle(s) do you like or prefer? Why?
- Where are your limits and why?
- How do you feel about people who do not approve of your lifestyle? How would you like to be treated by them?
- How do you feel about the diversity in lesbian, gay, bisexual lifestyles and those of other ethnic groups?

As a next step, you should prepare yourself to hear about the feelings and opinions of your pupils. The questions listed above are interesting for them, too. Ask yourself if you can imagine their answers, before you begin to discuss with them.

- What will they think?
- How will they react to the topic of diversity?
- How will you feel while working on diversity with them – comfortable, insecure, threatened?

Education

Tools

Defining normality

Aim: To clarify the relativity of the concepts of “normal” and “abnormal”, “in-group” and “out-group” and to discuss the risks of exclusion based on declaring someone an ‘outsider’.

Method: Collect a series of pictures of different men and women. Ask the pupils to arrange in a line so they constitute a continuum from “normal” to “different”. Discuss where the division between normal and abnormal lies (this will usually differ from person to person). Discuss why this differs. Steer the pupils toward a discussion of the definition of ‘normal’, ‘abnormal’ and ‘different’. Explain the concepts of “in-group”, “out-group”, “insider” and “outsider”. These are all subjective standards. As we define who is an insider and who belongs to the in-group, we automatically exclude others. Discuss the effects of exclusion and how to deal respectfully with differences, including differences relating to sexual preference.

Please note: This exercise is suitable for youngsters who are able to take a step back from their own view and for those who are used to thinking from an individual viewpoint. Those pupils who have formed ‘collective’ cultures will find this difficult and will look to the reactions of others. To counter this, the discussion can focus more on differing group or cultural opinions.

Integration of diversity

Aim: To integrate lesbian, gay and bisexual issues into regular school subjects.

Method: In your subject area (math, history, geography, literature, social sciences, health) try to integrate examples of lesbian, gay and bisexual lifestyles within the regular lesson. For example, in a mathematics exercise, you can use the example of two women living together who have to calculate the number of tiles they need to finish their bathroom. When possible, mention homosexual historical figures or cultural examples of lesbian, gay and bisexual lifestyles (see also the map ‘History and Culture’). In a health curriculum, go into the fun and risks when gay boys and lesbians have to deal with coming out issues.

Please note: This kind of integration is only possible when your school already accepts homosexuality, at least to some extent. Otherwise, mentioning such examples will create quite a stir in the classroom and will require a specific discussion. It is usually necessary to begin with a general discussion on homosexuality before you can use such examples.

Labelling exercise

Aim: To explore the mechanisms of stereotyping and labelling and to find out how labelling reinforces stereotypical behaviour.

Method: Glue a label with a stereotype (e.g. 'lazy', 'rude') on the back of every participant. Don't let the labelled participant see what is written. Pupils may look at other people's labels, but should not reveal them. The participants now have to carry out a simple collaboration exercise (e.g. the group has to choose a recipe and cook a meal. They have to decide who will do the shopping, who will cook, who will do the dishes, etc.). During this exercise, they have to react towards each other in accordance to the stereotype which is on their back, without actually telling each other what is written there. Stop the exercise after a few minutes and discuss the effects. Usually the participants get very frustrated and many start to behave like their label says. This is how stereotypes work. Expand the discussion towards lesbian, gay and bisexual labels.

Please note: This exercise works best when the students know and trust each other to some extent. With new groups, there is a risk of disrespect or giving intentional or unintentional offence. Do not give the most negative stereotypes to people who are already excluded within the group.

Education

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the counselling and health care sector.

How far can I go in teaching other opinions than my own?

You should not teach all “other opinions” – and it is impossible - but it is relevant to know the main social discussions and viewpoints on subjects like sexuality and homosexuality. You are allowed to state an opinion, as long as you create space for pupils to voice their opinions as well.

How do I deal with opposing views to diversity in my group?

Welcome this as an opportunity for discussion. The ground rule is: “all opinions are valid as long as they are expressed with respect for others and defended in a serious way”. Ask the students to explain and explore their positions and promote curiosity about other views.

How do I deal with parents who expect the school to promote their preferred lifestyle?

You need to explain to parents that it is the task of the school to teach respect to all pupils and parents. This includes teaching about how to deal with diversity. Ask the parents how they teach their children to show respect; in turn, share your methods with them.

“Good morning everyone”, Mrs Steiner greets her class and glances over the pupils’ heads. Alexander squirms restlessly back and forth on his seat. As his eyes meet those of the teacher, Alex stiffens like a stone pillar.

“Now then,” begins the teacher, drumming her fingers on her desk. “Alexander, wouldn’t you like to tell us something about your two fathers, and about how you manage?”

Thirty-two pairs of eyes are fixed on Alex.

“I manage all right” cries out Alex and his voice sounds squawky, raven-like.

“Two fathers? What does she mean? ”, asks Kathrin, who just doesn’t understand when she’s putting her foot in it.

“Alex?” The teacher raises her voice and looks at him provokingly.

“What does it mean?” Suddenly Alex loses his temper. He stares at his classmates, straight in their eyes. “My father is gay. He loves another man. So I have two fathers and one mother.” He wants to make his voice sound proud, but in reality it trembles suspiciously.

“But it’s perverse”, cries out Erkan. “Revolted. In their place, I would creep in the darkest corner of the earth and pray I become normal again, instead of standing out like that. Yuck!”

“My father’s normal,” says Alexander with a quiet voice.

“Are there other opinions about this?” Mrs Steiner looks around.

“It’s possible to undergo treatment”, remarks Kathrin.

“My father does not have to undergo any treatment,” hisses Alexander.

“He’s absolutely okay, and so is Hans. People like you, who don’t accept this, you are the ones who need a therapy.”

“What do you want?” Erkan stands up menacingly. “What the Hell are you saying? Come here, twit, I’ll show you who’s normal and who isn’t, you revolting faggot.” He grabs Alex by the shoulders and shakes him.

The class is still. Mrs Steiner runs her fingers through her shock of hair, but stays glued on the spot, and drops of sweat form on her brow.

Koray stands up deathly white. “Excuse me” he whispers. “I’m feeling sick.”

“Sissy”, hisses Erkan at him, and spits in despise on the floor between Koray and Alex. “One more perverse word, man, and you’re dead,” Erkan warns Alexander, before slamming a powerful punch at him. Alex resists the blow without dropping to the floor through sheer luck.

“That’s not acceptable, Erkan”, says the teacher, helplessly. “Now you apologise to Alexander and you, Koray please sit down again.”

“Me? Ask a perv for forgiveness?” sneers Erkan. “He’s the one who must apologise to me, Mrs Steiner, just to make matters clear.”

“Nowadays homosexuality is absolutely normal”, says Mrs Steiner uncertainly. “Alexander’s father can’t help it if he’s become that way.”

“Alright, I’m leaving now, that’s quite enough for me, Mrs Steiner,” whispers Alexander. Before Mrs Steiner even tries to say anything, he has already left the room.

to be continued

“It’s really very nice of you, to receive me on such short notice.” Mrs Steiner, embarrassed, stares at the tips of her shoes.

“Mrs Steiner, it seems to me that Alexander is in a very difficult position within his class – didn’t you ever talk about homosexuality in your class before?”

“It’s not part of the teaching programme,” replies Mrs Steiner with an almost defiant look on her face.

“Yes, unfortunately”, admits Mr Wyler, the advisor. “So we’re agreed. Next week I’ll be attending your lessons.”

There’s absolute silence in the class.

“I’m very pleased to be with you today. I won’t bore you with figures, but it’s not quite unavoidable – sorry folks. But you don’t have to write anything for me”, grins Mr Wyler and some of the pupils, boys and girls, grin back at him.

“About one in every ten young people is homosexual. Hmm... in your class that would mean about two pupils. Imagine you couldn’t talk about it to each other, that you always had to hide for fear of being excluded.” Mr Wyler considers the class for a few moments “Some of you must have a very good idea of what it feels like to be excluded, don’t you?”

“But you don’t have to flaunt it – being different, I mean,” says Erkan softly.

“Human beings all differ from one another”, says Mr Wyler. “Surely, there are lesbians and gay men who live openly – who have fought for the right to live like that, to be allowed to marry, and to be able to get common custody for their children. Just as there are homosexuals who tell no-one about their feelings. Some marry a partner of the other gender and live their feelings for the same sex only in secret. There are lesbians and gays who live in communities, some who live together without marrying and others who want to live alone, even if they do have a relationship with someone. Not much difference, really, with respect to heterosexuals.”

“But the important thing is that two human beings truly do love each other. That’s what’s important”, Alexander dares to say.

“A nice final word for this lesson”, pipes up Mrs Steiner.

“Just in case one of you wants to talk to me about it, I’ll leave my telephone number here.”

In the courtyard Mr Wyler turns around once again. “Hey, you were sitting in that class, right?”

Koray nods. “Thank you, Mr Wyler. Maybe I’m one of those three. I’d like to come to your counselling hour some day.”

“Sure,” says Mr Wyler.

the end

Counselling and Health Care

Bear in mind

If you counsel lesbian, gay and bisexual teenagers or their relatives, it is very important to know your own opinions about different lifestyles. Everyone has their own preferred lifestyle and thinks that others are less appropriate. If you are not aware of your own views on this, you won't be able to counsel lesbian, gay and bisexual teenagers without unconsciously judging certain lifestyles. To be more aware of your own view on the diversity in lifestyles, consider the following questions:

- What kind of lifestyle do you personally prefer?
- Did you 'choose' this lifestyle yourself or were there other factors 'pushing' you to choose it?
- Why have you chosen this certain lifestyle for yourself?
- Who disapproves of your lifestyle? Why? How do you deal with this?
- Which lifestyles are easy for you to respect? Which ones aren't? Why is that?
- What is your more general attitude towards difference and diversity? Does this fit in with your opinion about the issues facing lesbian, gay and bisexual teenagers? If not, why are they different?
- Do you know enough about the issue of lesbian, gay and bisexual teenagers in different cultures?
(This is relevant because a client who grew up in a fundamentalist context will have a completely different approach concerning homosexuality than a client coming from a more liberal family .)

Keep in mind that there are many different ways to enjoy a fulfilling life. Some lifestyles may be totally new to you, so don't be surprised if your clients have original approaches.

Counselling and Health Care Tools

To start off, here is some information about the diversity in lifestyles of lesbian, gay and bisexual teenagers that counsellors should be aware of:

- Lesbian, gay and bisexual teenagers lack positive role models. This may lead them to feel insecure towards homosexual lifestyles.
- On the other hand, to be a lesbian, gay and bisexual teenager can be a positive challenge. If a young person does not fit in with heterosexist role models, they should re-think their lifestyle. They may discover that a lesbian/gay lifestyle can give them much more personal freedom than fixed role behaviour does.
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual teenagers often look for role models that suit them. This may lead to stereotypical gay or lesbian behaviour.
- Show your client that there is no objective rating of lifestyles. It is important to make it clear that the main standard for their lifestyle should be their own happiness.
- Find out about local self-help groups where people with the same lifestyle can meet and exchange experiences.
- Many young lesbian, gay and bisexual teenagers fear that they will not have a family like heterosexuals do. This is often connected to their unhappiness with their current life. Many of them change their opinion when they realise that they can be very happy the way they are.

Two Chairs

Aim: To explore inner needs and external expectations, and the tension between the two.

Method: Arrange two chairs face to face. One chair symbolises external expectations, the other one represents inner needs. The client sits first on one chair, then on the other, and tries to feel only the things that the chair symbolises. How do they feel on the different chairs? What would they tell a person on the other chair?

Please note: Whether you feel comfortable with your lifestyle often depends on the expectations of your environment and whether you try to live up to them or not (this is especially true when you are a lesbian, gay or bisexual teenager).

The Mirror

Aim: To explore self-images.

Method: The client should close his/her eyes and imagine sitting face to face with their own reflection in a mirror. What would he/she criticise about this person's lifestyle? What would he/she admire?

Please note: This method works on two levels: You can relate to the physical look of your client (this is what most teenagers will do at first) or you can relate to characteristics, inner feelings and behaviour, which may be more important for dealing with the subject of lifestyle. You have to make sure that the client visualises him-/herself as the opposite person in order for the method to work.

The Fairy Godmother

Aim: To explore unconscious or oppressed needs and fantasies about the future.

Method: The client should imagine that a fairy godmother comes to him or her and asks how he/she wants to live. How does this feel and what prevents your client from really living like this?

Please note: It is quite important to check if the fears of your client correspond to a reality. Even if they don't, you have to take these fears seriously, otherwise your client will feel misunderstood.

Counselling and Health Care

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the education sector.

How can I avoid judging certain lifestyles if I personally disapprove of them?

In most situations, we are judgemental of another lifestyle because we can't imagine what it is really like. Remember that you don't have to follow other lifestyles, and be aware that some people may find your way of life strange, too. It is only natural for you to prefer one lifestyle over another and not to consider them equal for yourself. Keep in mind that your own opinion towards lifestyles only fits your own life and that things may look completely different from someone else's point of view.

How do I deal with a client who is unhappy with his homosexual lifestyle in general?

People who are unhappy with their homosexual lifestyle often have not had the opportunity to experience it as an alternative way of being happy. They need to know that there is not only one way of living as a homosexual. You can tell them about the diversity of lifestyles and how many different ways there are to live a happy life, outside of the well-known clichés.

How can I help clients to find other people who want to have the same lifestyle?

There are many self-help groups representing different lifestyles in almost every city. Become better acquainted with them; contact your local gay or lesbian centre to find out more information about them.

How can I tell the client about all the possible lifestyles available to them if I don't know them myself?

You do not need to know about all the different types of lifestyles. There are so many that this is virtually impossible and it's up to your client to find out for her-/ himself what she/ he likes anyway. Be supportive of her or him while she/he is questioning. It is enough to show your client that there are many more ways of living than the traditional family with two children and a dog and that there are many ways to live happily.

“My mother is living with her second common-law husband without being married. My sister and her husband have two children. My brother is single. And four weeks ago I met my first girlfriend. How do I want to live my life?”

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4 Mental and Social Well-being

Today I'll pay a visit to Chloé in Fontenay. We've been together for more than one year, now, and at last I'll be able to see her home.

I remember the day I first saw Chloé. We had been chatting in a triangle-youth-chat for three whole months before we found out, by chance, that we were almost neighbours. Not France, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy – not at all, just Fontenay and Paris. And it's really only a stone's throw from one another. So, of course, we made a date.

Elsa and Chloé: a meeting in real life

Good heavens, I'd been wracking my brains, wondering if Chloé would be ugly or just really silly –one never knows with chats. I preferred not to tell my mother about this chat thing. It's stupid, really, because I was chatting away on the web, and Mum would never have imagined how dangerous that could have been. But now it doesn't matter anymore, Mum likes Chloé, and that's the only thing that matters.

Hey, I must rush, otherwise I'll never get to Fontenay today. I grab my jacket, glance at the mirror, take the key from the hook and I'm off.

Chloé's father is the real trouble, I think two hours later, feeling uneasy.

"In one hour you must be back, is that clear?", he glares at Chloé.

Chloé's fear freezes me to the bone.

"Come, Chloé." I help her up and run away with her, as fast as I can.

"Is your father always like that?" Pensively, I throw a couple of pebbles into a pond.

Chloé nods warily. "He loves me, that's all." Her voice sounds sad. "I'm his only child – he only means well."

"But it's not right to lock you up in your own home."

"Yeah, I know" Chloé grins, embarrassed.

"You never told me that he spies on you."

to be continued on page 8 and 9

Framework

First of all

Until the nineteenth century, homosexuality was exclusively considered a question of morality and theology. It then shifted to the medical and scientific arenas and was defined as a pathology: a physiological and psychological illness. Mental health scientists looked for the cause of homosexual orientation and attempted to “treat” homosexuality. The aim of such interventions, called “reparative therapy”, was to change the patient’s physical, emotional and psychological attraction to persons of the same gender into desire for the other sex– in many cases through cruel methods like electroshocks. This of course did not change anyone’s sexual orientation, but frequently had negative and tragic consequences.

The absurdity of the definition of homosexuality as a pathology was officially recognised in 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed homosexuality from its list of disorders. In 1993, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared homosexuality a natural variant of human sexuality. Today, serious mental health associations no longer support “reparative therapy” or any kind of so called “cure” for homosexual orientation, since homosexuality is no longer viewed as an illness or disorder. Since the mid 1970s, the medical and psychological focus has been to support gay men and lesbian women in understanding and accepting their sexual orientation as part of the self. This is done in part through developing strategies to build up a positive self-image and by helping gays and lesbians cope with prejudice and discrimination.

Gays, lesbians and bisexuals from other minority groups must cope with further challenges: they must deal with conflicts arising from their belonging to different communities where they might feel like outsiders. Teenagers from other minority groups may erroneously perceive their sexual orientation as being incoherent with their community’s standards and may therefore believe that they must choose between the two. In a society where gender, origin, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities and religious opinions are all bases for discrimination, teenagers need to learn how to change a stigmatised identity into a positive one.

Basic information

Because of the fear of stigma and real-life discrimination, young people who feel attracted to people of the same sex can be more at risk for a range of psychological problems: chronic stress, depression and suicide risk, victimization and abuse, eating disorders, substance abuse, and psychosomatic disorders are some examples. However, it is important to realise that some teenagers will experience one or more of these risks, while others will not experience any. Homosexual feelings do not always lead to risks!

A main challenge for all adolescents is their own self-acceptance. Some are so afraid of the social stigma of homosexuality that their fear takes on a force of its own and may create psychological problems. In some cases, however, the fear of extremely negative reactions may be realistic, especially within some homophobic communities. Acceptance problems among gays, lesbians and bisexuals can be classified on three levels:

- 1) uncomplicated acceptance problems (young clients, a good social network in place, supportive family and friends);
- 2) complicated acceptance problems (sub-optimal social network, negative self-image, fear of contact with other gay people, internalised homophobia, strict religious family background);
- 3) severe acceptance problems (mental and psychiatric problems like depression, suicide attempts, anxiety disorders. These problems are so severe that they take priority over the acceptance problems and need to be dealt with first).

Visibility is another challenge for young people. Coming out can lead to a critical period; for example, disclosing a homosexual identity to parents may cause tensions within the family. Social networks are very important in order to protect adolescents from developing psychosocial problems. Such networks can be made up of family members, friends, school teachers, etc.

Ethnic and sexual minorities face a multitude of forms of discrimination; they may encounter heterosexism from their families as well as racism from mainstream gay lesbian and bisexual organisation and individuals. Consequently, these teenagers may not find the support they need.

For teenagers, the first sexual experiences may come unexpectedly. Since homosexual experiences are usually not part of sex education in the home and often do not form a part of the school's sex education curriculum, young lesbians and gays are even less informed. Sex education should include aspects that are specific to gays and lesbians. Information on safer sex and general health (good use of condoms and lubricant, general prevention of female cancers) is as important as the information we generally give about contraception. Some gay and lesbian or health organisations offer a specific brochures or presentations in schools.

What does this mean for me?

Gay, lesbian and bisexual adolescents who experience discrimination because of their sexual orientation and/or ethnic identity will benefit from accurate information, peer support, and supportive interventions to assist in the successful acceptance of their sexual orientation.

It is very important to make objective and authentic information available on the topic of homo- and bisexuality. This includes health problem prevention material for young gays/lesbians and bisexuals so that teachers and counsellors can become acquainted with high-risk instances. Another option is to include accurate information about homo- and bisexual experiences in teaching sessions and in school teaching materials which normally only deal with heterosexual experiences.

Support groups are the most valuable resource for gay, lesbian and bisexual adolescents, at least for those young people who face relatively uncomplicated acceptance problems. The socialisation experience for gay, lesbian and bisexual teenagers will include learning from competent gay, lesbian and bisexual adults. The focus should therefore be placed on the importance of social networks for homosexual young people. Teachers and counsellors can play a role in supporting these adolescents by working against social isolation (by informing lesbian, gay and bisexual teens about the existence of other lesbian, gay and bisexual groups), emotional isolation (by creating empathy with the lesbian, gay and bisexual youths) and cognitive isolation (by giving information about homosexuality). In this way, educators and counsellors can help to prevent psychosocial problems.

Counsellors can play an important role in helping clients explore their feelings about HIV and safer sex. If a gay or bisexual teen feels bad about his or her sexuality, he/she probably will not take steps to protect him or herself when having sex. Low self-esteem affects assertiveness in negotiating a safe relationship.

Education

Bear in mind

How can I change my heterosexual pupils' attitude towards homosexuality and, at the same time, support my lesbian, gay and bisexual students? Can I invite a person who is openly lesbian, gay or bisexual to talk to the pupils? Will parents and other teachers criticize this? How would I feel having one pupil in the class who is openly lesbian, gay or bisexual? How would the young people feel? Will this person be mocked, offended or even attacked by the others? How can I make them feel welcome?

Show the class movies which portray positive lesbian, gay or bisexual characters or invite persons who are openly lesbian/ gay/ bisexual to meet the class. There are even project groups specialised in educating pupils on gay and lesbian issues in school or youth care. This can be a winning strategy; in fact, according to Allport's "contact hypothesis", when different groups come into contact with each other, prejudice is definitely reduced. Moreover, this kind of contact can also show a positive role model to lesbian, gay and bisexual teens, which is important for their self-esteem.

How do I feel when my students use the word "faggot" or "dyke" as an insult? When are such words adopted and in what context? Who are they addressed to? What is the intended meaning? Should I ignore it or is it better to intervene?

Even when the word is not meant to offend anybody, it is still true that "faggot" contains an offensive tone which is effectively derogative for all homosexuals. Such words – which are often said automatically and without thinking – can be used as tools. Have the pupils stop to consider why they choose to use one offensive word instead of another. Have them think about who they may be offending when they use such words.

Education

Tools

Talking about “Normality” (group exercise)

Aim: to distinguish between statistical, legal, and moral perceptions of “normality”, in order to demonstrate that “normality” is both a relative and a historical concept. A secondary objective is to remind pupils that homosexuality was once considered a disease and some cultures around the world still believe this to be true, thus affecting the psycho-physical health of the people coming from these cultures.

Method: Every boy/girl must fill in a form where some behaviours or situations are described (e.g. masturbation, homosexual marriage, not eating pork, diseases, disability, age etc.); he/she must say whether these behaviours are “normal” or not.

Please note: this is an introductory exercise.

Brainstorming on Health (group exercise)

Aim: Through this technique, the group is invited to deal with the topic of health and its meaning. Point out that “health” does not only concern the body in itself, but also the quality of the individual’s relationship with the social environment and his/her ability to cope with problems. Stigma can affect self-esteem and can therefore impact one’s health. Stigmatised groups have fewer social resources to handle these problems.

Method: Ask the class for the meaning of the word “health”. Collect all the answers and discuss them first in sub-groups and then all together.

Please note: boys and girls should be familiar with the concepts of “stigma” and “discrimination”.

Socio-Affective Education: “Are we quarrelling well?” (group exercise)

Aim: to teach young people to express their own feelings and to relate with others, in particular with those who are “different”. Psycho-physical health depends on our ability to relate with others.

Method: In order to feel good about ourselves and our relations with others, we need to learn how to behave well when we are having an argument, that is to say, without offending or disrespecting others.

The teacher should ask the class whether it is possible “argue in peace”. If so, what form would this take? One main point in the discussion should be the use of “I” in a quarrel instead of “you”; and thus the use of one’s own feelings as a starting point for a difficult discussion so that the other person does not feel attacked. It is important that everyone can talk freely without any apprehensions or judgement.

Please note: this is an introductory exercise.

Group discussion: The Effects of People's Judgement upon One's Own Well-Being

Aim: The exercise stresses the effects of social judgement.

Method: Read the extract from Toni Morrison's book "The Bluest Eye" where the main character, who is of African origin, says she wants blue eyes. Ask the group why the girl wishes for a different eye colour. Are blue eyes better than brown ones? Where did she learn that blue eyes are better/more "right"? Which doors are opened by having blue eyes? Which advantages are connected with blue eyes?

Please note: Having the pupils read the entire book would be useful, or the story can be read out loud by the teacher who then discusses it with them.

Education

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the counselling and health care sector.

Psychological

What is the emotional impact of a verbal insult?

An Italian proverb says “words hurt more than swords”. In practice, a verbal insult tends to mock, despise and/or deny a part of someone’s identity. This can cause feelings of shame and guilt, and affects the self-esteem of the victim of the insult. In the case of homosexuals, verbal insults affect their sexual identity. This can make the coming out process particularly hard. If a teacher is indifferent to the use of verbal insults, bullies may believe they are authorized to go on using them while the victims feel unprotected.

One of my pupils, who I believe is gay, is going through a hard period but doesn’t talk to me about it; I think he can’t accept himself. Should I refer him to a psychologist?

Sometimes even small acts can provide a lot of support to a pupil. In some cases, an understanding teacher can be of more help than a mental health professional. The teacher may deal with homosexuality while teaching literature, for instance, by presenting a gay or lesbian author, so as to show a positive attitude towards homosexuality in an indirect way. No doubt the pupil will get the message and feel reassured.

Health: Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV prevention

Should I inform gay and bisexual boys about STIs and HIV?

Gay and bisexual boys may be at higher risk for contracting STIs and HIV. However, just informing them of that fact will not help them very much. It is better to give them some practical suggestions. Make sure you stress the positive and joyful aspects of sexuality, even when discussing sexual health. It can be difficult to exchange experiences with other young gays and bisexuals, so young people often have to find out everything for themselves. Young people should think about what they really want; if they don’t want to have anal sex or any other specific practice, they are perfectly entitled to refuse. Each partner’s limits must be respected. If they are considering a particular sex act, it is important to feel they can trust their sexual partner in order to feel relaxed. Encourage the youngsters to use a reliable condom (not the ones which are only good for oral sex, like “fun condoms”) and lots of lubricant. If they are thinking about oral sex, they should be informed that oral sex without a condom can put them at risk of contracting STIs. If a young person becomes infected with an STI or has any other health problem, they should go to a doctor as soon as possible. There is no need for them to feel guilty or ashamed about this – STIs can be treated

Are lesbians at risk for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

While the risk of lesbians contracting HIV or an STI from each other is lower, it is still to be considered. Oral sex during menstruation and the use of sex toys are some ways in which STIs can be transmitted. Another risk is the transmission of an infection or disease from a previous heterosexual contact. Many lesbians mistakenly think they don’t run any risks, even when they actually have heterosexual contacts or use drugs. Because of that, they tend not to go to the gynaecologist’s and therefore are much more likely to contract feminine cancers for instance and not know about it early enough.

“You’d never have understood it. Daddy has a heart of gold, if you only get to know him right.”

“I can’t really imagine that”, I whisper.

“Let’s not argue about this please. You’ll have to drive back just now, and I’ve been so happy to see you.”

I draw Chloé carefully close to me and kiss her lips.

My body is like electrified. I feel her excitement and get flushed all over.

“You disgusting slut.” He drags me by the hair, and pushes me roughly towards the pond. “Don’t you ever come here again, bitch.”

Chloé’s desperate eyes meet mine.

And that’s the last I saw of her.

“Honey, what’s wrong with you?” My mother looks at me worried.

“Why doesn’t Chloé come anymore? Did you have an argument?”

“It’s not because of her, mum.”

“Elsa, I think we ought to speak about this. You’ve lost at least five kilos in the past weeks. Something’s wrong with you. I would just like to know what’s getting you down.”

“I know mum. Sorry, I must go now. See you later!” Quick, I must get away. If I look out the window today, everything is grey. Even though the sun is shining. My breakfast tastes like cardboard. The laughter of the others in the schoolyard drones in my ears. I hear them speaking to me, I answer at times. But please don’t ask about my feelings. Compared to me, a robot seems almost human. I hang on to schoolwork because nothing else makes any sense. Of course Mummy’s right. But I don’t have any time. Last week we wrote a fairytale. Modern and made up by us. My story began this way: “One day an extraterrestrial power put a cheese cover over the world. But nobody noticed it...” The rest of it was quite scary and ended fatally. I got top marks for it, but that does not help me anymore.

“How much does that fairytale have to do with you”, Mrs Dupont asks after the lesson. I shrug.

“You’ve been looking down in the mouth for a few weeks now. Trouble at home?”

I shake my head silently.

“Unlucky in love?”

I look at her, surprised.

“It’s about a girl, isn’t it?”, asks Mrs Dupont softly.

“It’s not because of her” I whisper and already the dam has burst. “It’s her father”, I sob.

“Elsa, I’ll give you the telephone number of people who help young gays and lesbians, the Ligne Azur. They can certainly help you. Things will be all right, you’ll see.”

“How do you know of this hotline?”

“You are not the only lesbian girl in this school.” Mrs Dupont winks at me. For the first time in weeks I feel a little glimmer of hope.

to be continued

I tell Marie, my advisor, about the nightmare that has been haunting me for months, and that I can't make out. A monster drags me down into a little pond, and laughs revoltingly.

And suddenly I see the scene very clearly before me.

"Chloé's father – dragged me away by the hair and then insulted me. He pushed me into a pond." For the first time I feel the repulsion again, I had quite forgotten it.

"Goodness gracious, Elsa, Chloé's father grabbed you? I didn't know that. Maybe your nightmare shows how much Chloé's father has hurt you. Have you ever mentioned this attack to anyone?"

Silently, I nod. "Do you think this is why I feel this way? I thought it was because the only thing Chloé talks about these days is suicide, and because I can't help her. I couldn't defend myself against her father. I feel so bad."

"Yes, I can see why. You've seen how much her father can hurt you. Of course you feel helpless. Exactly as helpless as when you want to help Chloé and don't know how to."

"Do you think there is some kind of link between the two?" I ask with a small voice.

"It is very possible, to say the least, Elsa. If Chloé's father hadn't threatened you so much, you could be dealing with the situation much better. Maybe you feel exactly as you did then.

"I felt so ashamed of myself. I felt so dirty. As though he had been covering me in spit from head to toe."

"That's just what he did", says Marie. "Talking about it is a good thing. It's the only way to come out of your helplessness. And once you get over it, then you can start thinking about what you can do for Chloé, okay?"

Everything that Marie says sounds so logical, and simple and good. I had never thought that any one situation could get me so deeply shaken. But Marie is right. I remember, how secure and protected and how open I felt with Chloé. In this situation my defences were down, and of course I was also vulnerable. But I couldn't go on with it after the attack by Chloé's father. Only now can I finally come to terms with that.

the end

Counselling and Health Care

Bear in mind

A counsellor is trained to work with people from different backgrounds and to carefully diagnose their clients. When it comes to lesbian, gay and bisexual clients, certain problems may be more visible than others. It is easy to forget how some problems may relate to sexual orientation, especially with adolescent clients. It can be useful for you to read about specific psychosocial and health problems gay, lesbian and bisexual clients face in order to broaden their knowledge. Being well informed about the “pink social map” (gay/lesbian subculture) in your area can also be handy.

Think about your own prejudices. Do you believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual people have more psychosocial problems than heterosexuals? Why do you think this is so? What do you know about specific health problems? What are your personal thoughts about lesbian, gay and bisexual sexuality?

Asking your client about his or her perception of being lesbian, gay or bisexual is always better than assuming. Don't forget however that not every young lesbian, gay or bisexual has specific problems with their sexual orientation. Don't make it a problem when it isn't one to begin with.

Can you be a person of reference in the client's social environment without losing your professional distance?

The following tools focus on internalised homophobia and on self-esteem, because these two aspects have to be taken into consideration when promoting gay and lesbian health.

Counselling and Health Care

Tools

In our social climate, where people are automatically assumed to be heterosexual, coming out can be difficult for many lesbians, gays and bisexuals. The counsellor can facilitate the coming out process through the use of respectful language. Do not assume anything about your client's personal life.

Counsellors should in any case strive for an open attitude about sexuality. A first step is to try to normalise remarks about sexuality in general; this should then open the door to talking more specifically about homosexuality and/or bisexuality.

If you suspect that a client's difficulties come from problems linked to their sexual orientation, you can explore this by asking questions. Make sure you ask the questions carefully and don't force the clients into "confessions" about their sexuality.

You can be a significant other in the client's social environment.

You can provide information about safer sex and support groups.

If the client is from another ethnic or cultural background, the problems relating to their sexual orientation can be much more significant because of religious reasons and the influence of the family. Make sure that you provide space for the client to talk about the struggle between family values, religious values and the common norms around (homo/bi) sexuality in the society they live in.

Keep in mind that not every lesbian, gay or bisexual person has a problem with his or her sexual preference. The challenge is to find a balance between ignoring it when it is a problem and stressing it too much when it isn't one. This can be particularly complicated when dealing with a young target group of people who are actively questioning their sexuality in general.

Work on self-esteem

Aim: to investigate the impact of interiorised homophobia

Method: Give a paper to the client and ask her/ him to write down 10 adjectives representing himself.

Afterwards, ask her/ him to write down 10 adjectives representing how he/ she would like to be. Now ask the client to mark every adjective with a positive or negative sign. Examine the meaning of the adjectives, compare the two lists and investigate whether they are connected to sexual orientation.

Please note: This exercise can be used to investigate how the client perceives her- or himself. This does not necessarily imply that sexual orientation is involved. Keep in mind that not every lesbian, gay or bisexual has a problem with his or her sexual preference. The challenge is to find a balance between ignoring it when it is a problem and stressing it too much when it isn't one. This can be particularly complicated when dealing with a young target group of people who are actively questioning their sexuality in general.

Representations about homosexuality

Aim: to help the client recognise the external influences on how she/ he perceives her- or himself as homosexual.

Method: Ask the client the following questions

- What were the social values concerning homosexuality where you were being raised?
- Was it accepted or tolerated?
- Were lesbians or gays estranged or condemned?
- What was the first book, TV show or movie you remember that mentioned lesbians or gays?
- What was the tone of this book, show or movie?
- In which way was the gay or lesbian character portrayed? As a positive or negative figure or role model?

Please note: this proposal can be useful for those clients who show a high level of interiorised homophobia and who stick to stereotyped representations about homosexuality.

Counselling and Health Care

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the education sector.

Is it true that lesbian, gay and bisexuals have more psychological problems than heterosexuals?

If so, why is that?

Lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are no more prone to mental problems than heterosexuals. However, since they usually live in environments which do not accept their identity or lifestyle, they undergo more psycho-social distress. Lesbians, gays, and bisexuals who experienced discrimination in their own families are likely to have more difficulties in coping with stress. Some surveys prove that the attempted suicide rate among young gays is 2-3 times higher than among young heterosexuals.

What do I do with a gay teenager who is very depressed and who, I suspect, has acceptance problems? How should we work on his internalised homophobia?

First of all, it should be determined whether the depression is in fact due to difficulties in accepting oneself (internalised homophobia) or whether there are other factors involved.

Internalised homophobia occurs when a lesbian, gay, or bisexual person internalises the negative messages she/he has received throughout life concerning homosexuality from family, school, church and society in general. If it is determined that such difficulties exist, a useful place to start may be to ask the young person about their parents' opinions concerning homosexuality and how they feel about it. In this way, the internalised stereotypes can be explored. It should be remembered that whenever homosexuality is not accepted for cultural or religious reasons, lesbians, gays and bisexuals find it even more difficult to accept themselves. In such cases, a counsellor can help them to re-think their own culture or religious beliefs from another point of view, without having to deny or to reject them.

Are lesbians, gays and bisexuals from other cultural backgrounds more at risk for psychological problems?

If a gay/lesbian/bisexual person belongs to a culture which considers homosexuality as a disease, a sin or a crime, that person is likely to have more difficulties with self-acceptance as well as less social support from their community. He or she may find it difficult to reconcile different aspects of his or her personality (for example being Catholic and gay at the same time). This can make it harder for them to make contact with institutions which hold other cultural values.

In some families, a son or daughter may feel that he or she is a traitor to his or her own family. As if this were not difficult enough, lesbians/gays/bisexuals from other minorities may run into some obstacles within the homosexual community as well. Like the rest of society, homosexuals can be racist too. In this sense, young people from traditional cultural backgrounds in every country may be at risk for psychological problems.

“There was a time when I was sick with anxiety to tell myself: ‘I Am Gay’. I just had the feeling life was like a long and cold and dark day: joyless, loveless, worthless. At that time I never, ever, could, have imagined that it actually is rewarding to be gay! My goodness, looking back, I must have been so lonely...”

Imprint

Different in More Ways Than One.
Providing Guidance for Teenagers
on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality
and Respect

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Different in More Ways Than One.

Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality and Respect

5 Gay-specific Counselling

"Oh, would you please be so kind as to clean my bedside locker as well." Eileen turns around. "I am not the cleaning woman. One day I'll be your doctor."

"Then please call Dr Mayer. I don't want to be looked after by a nigger." Without a word Eileen lays the enema on the night table and leaves the patient's room.

"Hello Eileen", beams up Kristin. "Hey, how was your day?" "My mother thinks I'm not capable of looking after people and patients mistake me for the cleaning woman – it's been a great day. And how are you?" Kristin reels back, frightened. Her heart beats wildly. Just don't say anything wrong again.

"I'm so happy to see you," She tries a little laugh.

"I didn't make the world," growls Eileen. "So please don't blame me."

"I didn't mean it that way." Kristin just wishes she could run away. Why is it always so difficult with Eileen? Don't they love each other anymore?

"Come on, I have cooked something lovely for us two. Will you set the table?"

Eileen takes Kristin by the arm and kisses her slowly and tenderly. "Better now?" she asks softly.

So everything is okay, anyhow. Kristin sighs, relieved.

"Can you please take the fish knife? And the nice wineglasses. And the serviettes don't match the china at all. Don't you see?"

"Hey, it doesn't matter anyway" Kristin throws an angry look at Eileen.

"I prefer to eat this way."

"A nice-looking table is important for a good meal, Kristin. I don't enjoy the food if everything is just thrown on the table in any old way."

"It's not just thrown there. It's just my style, not yours."

to be continued on page 7 and 8

Framework

First of all

Lesbian and gay teenagers may seek counselling for a variety of concerns. Some of their requests have to do with their sexual orientation: “Am I gay?”; “I’m unhappy”; “I am also attracted to women – am I bisexual?”; “Whom can I tell?”; “How can I cope?”

However, adolescents will more likely not ask directly for counselling, and they do not ask such questions. Their uneasiness with their sexual orientation may be reflected indirectly: through dropping out of school, isolation, drug addiction etc. It is hard to get in touch with those adolescents who do not contact social services themselves; in fact, it is sometimes their family who make the first contact. To complicate things, the families of young people coming from ethnic minorities are often reluctant to get in touch with social services to ask questions related to their children’s sexual orientation.

Schools represent a good context for addressing such issues and for getting in touch with a large number of young people; it is the place where teenagers can be educated to be respectful, while adolescents who are not yet sure of their sexual identity as well as gay and lesbian teenagers – who are hiding their sexual orientation – can be reassured.

Schools are important yet complex settings. As is well known, bullying is extremely common in schools and the victims are often those who belong to socially stigmatised groups (women, ethnic and sexual minorities, people with disabilities, etc.).

Basic information

The invisibility of homosexuality in the curriculum and in health/social services programmes is another factor which can isolate lesbian and gay adolescents. Moreover, the stigmatisation felt by gays and lesbians at school, in health care, or in social service institutions may add to other sources of stress and compromise their psycho-social adaptability.

There are different institutional difficulties which may obstruct homospecific counselling. A teacher proposing this issue may face resistance from both parents and the school administration. Even in the health services, a counsellor who wishes to promote a specific service for the gay, lesbian and bisexual population may run into opposition.

Adolescents constantly manifest their curiosity about sexuality and adults convey their specific values on the subject, both when they talk about it and when they don’t. Therefore, addressing the topic of homo- and bisexuality next to heterosexuality in a professional way in both schools and health services is not the same as “promoting” it. The question of sexual orientation affects all adolescents. Assuming that 5 – 10 % of the total population has a same-sex orientation and that the percentage of same-sex behaviour is even higher, a teacher is bound to have at least one gay, lesbian or bisexual student in the class.

Homospecific counselling may be affected by biased, inadequate or inappropriate practices on the part of the counsellor. Some examples of bad practices and bias in the counselling process include: believing that homosexuality is a form of psychopathology; automatically attributing a client’s problems to her or his sexual orientation; automatically assuming that a client is heterosexual; failing to recognize the client’s symptoms as stemming from internalised homophobia; not recognizing the effects of double or triple discrimination (woman, lesbian and coloured, handicapped).

What does this mean for me?

- Raise awareness on the topic of homosexuality and same-sex-lifestyles among educators and counsellors. Pay more attention to sexuality and related subjects in counselling; promote active training and provide written materials for employees.
- Integrate the acceptance of ethnic and sexual minorities and their lifestyles into your institution's official profile and/or practical approach and advertise this ("diversity management").
- Offer a variety of services: prevention, intervention, education
- Reflect an intercultural approach among educators and counsellors working in the institution
- Network with other professional institutions in order to gain access to the specific knowledge and experience of ethnic and/or sexual minority experts (partners in family support, health care services, education, etc.).
- Network with other self-help and support groups: sexual minorities need these services as they provide positive role models.
- Pay attention to quality standards (i.e. regarding the structure of homospecific counselling: profile, concept, specific communication, co-operation with other professional health care services, etc.)

Education

Bear in mind

Teachers and youth workers should reflect on the following points:

- What is your personal level of acceptance/tolerance regarding the topic of homosexuality and same-sex lifestyles (own point of view/bias, role, “blind spots” etc.)?
- What is your own level of commitment to the topic (try to assess this realistically: how much do I want to get involved in this topic, when and where will I take a clear stand on this topic, etc.)
- What is the general level of acceptance/tolerance regarding the topic of homosexuality and same-sex lifestyles within the institution (the attitude of the school administration, of colleagues, of financiers, of the board, etc.)
- What is the general level of acceptance/tolerance of gay, lesbian and bisexual feelings among the students in the classroom or among the peers in youth centres (e.g. is homo- and bisexuality a subject of discussion or is it taboo; messages about homo- and bisexuality and gender roles)
- What is the general level of acceptance/tolerance of gay or lesbian feelings among parents (and also the attitude of their representative boards, etc.)
- What is the general situation of gay and lesbian pupils in the school or youth group setting when it comes to the relations with their classmates and peers (interaction with other teenagers, teasing, bullying, anti-gay violence and discrimination)

Education

Tools

Ethnic Stereotypes

Aim: to show participants that stereotypes are characterized by ethnocentrism and that people tend to attribute positive traits to their own group and negative traits to others.

Method: Take two pieces of cardboard, draw a shape and then ask the participants to fill in the shapes by answering the question: “It is common knowledge that Moroccans are ...” (Italians are..., the Dutch are ...). The answers should then be discussed in the group. To what extent do these statements correspond to stereotypes? What is the function of a stereotype? Are stereotypes partly true? The discussion can then go on to include stereotypes on gays and lesbians.

Please note: Make it clear that these are just stereotypes and that they can be offensive (this may not be self-evident). If there is only one person representing a particular group in the class – for instance, only one person from Morocco – it would be preferable not to use Moroccans as one of the examples.

Belonging to a Group

Aim: to prove that we all belong to different groups, some of which may be stigmatised. What does it mean, in emotional terms, to belong to a stigmatised group?

Method: Ask the students to think about all the different groups they belong to (e.g. men, Turks, football players, Scouts, brothers, etc.) Give the young people three pieces of paper and ask them to write on each one of them: “Which groups am I proud to belong to?”, “Which groups do I not want to belong to?”, “Which groups am I ashamed to belong to?” The (anonymous) pieces of paper should be hung on the blackboard and then discussed in the group.

Please note: This exercise is not recommended for small groups or other groups where people could be easily recognised. It is very important for the teacher to create a safe and respectful climate in the class before proposing the exercise, since some students may find it difficult to answer the question “which group am I ashamed to belong to?”

How Will I be Welcomed?

Aim: The game allows participants to experience typical feelings and behaviours which are shown when people of different cultures and identities meet (e.g. meetings between immigrants and resident population; meetings between heterosexuals and homosexuals).

Method: The participants sit in a circle while one person volunteers to go out of the room. When he/she comes back, the people in the circle must welcome them in a manner suggested by the leader in the form of a key word (interest, indifference, aggressiveness, openness...). Different participants can play the role of the “newcomer”.

Please note: When choosing a pupil for the role of the “newcomer”, the teacher should select someone who is not stigmatised within the class and has no difficulties integrating into the group.

Education

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the counselling and health care sector.

Is it my job as a teacher to counsel pupils who may be gay or lesbian?

Counselling pupils is not a teacher's primary function. However, it may become necessary for you to intervene in certain cases for various reasons. For example, a pupil may be the victim of a homophobic bully in the class or you may notice a pupil's performance deteriorating and you suspect it may be related to their confusion about homosexuality.

Isn't there a role conflict if I am supposed to be an unbiased teacher on the one hand and an understanding and empathic counsellor on the other?

Yes, but these are reconcilable. First of all, it is important for you to be very clear on these possibly diverging positions and, secondly, that you make this transparent when talking to the pupil in question. You can say that his or her grades / participation / attitude in class / etc. are not up to standard and that it is not possible for you to compromise on such questions. On the other hand, you can offer to talk openly about a problem and to constructively support any means to solve that problem – and that that won't have any effects on your grading.

As a youth worker in a youth centre, I don't feel comfortable counselling teenagers on homosexuality – I'm afraid I will lose the acceptance of the majority of the other young people if they find out.

That is not necessarily the case. Try to assess your own personal level of acceptance regarding the topic of homosexuality and same-sex lifestyles. Generally, it is possible to communicate a standpoint clearly and commandingly without losing your authority if you yourself are confident and unambiguous concerning the topic of homosexuality (refer also to "bear in mind" for education.).

How do I create a setting in which a pupil can talk openly about his/her homosexuality?

By signalling that you are open and unbiased. Then – and this is very important – make sure that you tell the pupil that everything you talk about will be kept in the strictest confidence unless you both agree to speak to another person. It can be helpful to remind the pupil that a confidential talk won't have any effect on grading. Also make sure that you are not observed or overheard by a third party.

Can I talk to my colleagues or to my boss about a counselling session with a specific pupil?

No. You are bound by professional discretion and would severely breach confidentiality if you spoke to others about a specific boy or girl (naming or indicating him/her). If you want to reflect on a counselling session with another person, refer to the pupil in question as a "15-year old girl" or a "13-year old boy". The person you are referring to should not be identifiable through your definition.

“Why don’t you tell your parents that you are a lesbian?” Eileen draws back a bit, away from Kristin, who immediately pulls the cover up to the tip of her nose.

“I’m not ready for it. My parents wouldn’t understand it. I for one haven’t completely understood it yet.”

“But are you sure that you love me?”

“Yes Eileen, I am quite sure. But it doesn’t have to become common knowledge. Do I have to be pigeonholed like that?”

“It’s not a pigeonhole, it’s an identity. Just like my being black. You carry it with you all your life.”

“And like I come from the lower classes”, asks Kristin.

“Why do you always ramble on and on with this idiotic lower classes discussion? You’re not getting downtrodden because of that, are you?”

“No, but everyone gives me to understand that I should be ashamed of myself, because at home we don’t have classic music, I don’t go around in brand-name clothes, and because I don’t understand three-quarters of the foreign words that the teacher uses. And because I’ve never been to the opera, or to a theatre, or to the States during the summer holidays. But I’m not ashamed of my father’s job as a factory worker. I love my family.”

“So what?”

“If I had this kind of reaction when patients take you for the cleaning woman, or when my classmates ask you where you come from, or where you grew up, then probably you would leave me right away.”

“You can’t compare the two things. Completely wrong. Hey, I just need to walk down the street and people yell “nigger” at me. You can’t even imagine how it is, when one feels insecure, all the time and everywhere. Except for Ghana – that’s why I want to go there. You don’t even dare tell your parents that you live with someone like me.”

“It’s not true, Eileen. It’s not because you are black. I can’t make them understand that I love a girl. And I love you, I really do.”

“Really? That’s what counts most of all for me, Kristin. Because I love you too, so much.”

“So it’s all right, isn’t it?”

“Kristin, you have of late been daydreaming a wee bit too much, in my opinion”. Mrs Metz glares sternly over her glasses. “Feeling attracted to girls is a very normal stage of puberty. One should try oneself out. You’ll see, the right boy will come along after all. We all go through this phase. But the school must not be left behind, is that clear?”

“Sometimes I feel so much behind Eileen” Kristin dares to take a glance at the face of the advisor.

“Do you think your feeling can have something to do with the fact that you are a few years younger than Eileen? You’re barely sixteen yet, at that age it’s frequently difficult to be a lesbian. Eileen is a few years ahead of you.”

to be continued next page

"We often argue about silly things", says Eileen. "Things that are really just laughable. What colour should the serviettes be, for instance."

"Perhaps neither one of you dares to think about your feelings for other girls yet, and you project your fear into such little things?"

"But I do know that I love Eileen", protests Kristin. "It's just the rest that's so difficult."

"What do you mean, "the rest", Kristin?"

"Well for one thing, Eileen often gets harassed because of her skin colour. And then she thinks I don't understand her and that I'm not supportive enough."

"And what does that have to do with the colour of the napkins"

"Maybe Eileen opposes me so strongly because I've not told anyone at home that we're together yet."

"Because you don't want them to know that you're dating a nigger." Snaps Eileen angrily.

"This is complete bullshit, Eileen" yells Kristin. "See? Here we go again!"

"You are two very normal girls, just like the others. The fact that you're lesbian, or in your case black, doesn't change anything. But the world around you says that your feelings are wrong, because they should be directed towards boys. This judgement on the part of the people around you makes having a harmonious relationship very difficult."

"I'm not quite sure" wonders Kristin.

"I couldn't care less about 'the people around me'" yells Eileen. "The only thing that interests me is what Kristin thinks of me."

"Okay." The counsellor looks at Kristin. "What is your feeling about this, Kristin?"

"I love Eileen and I think she's absolutely great. But I often feel inferior to her."

"And you Eileen, what do you think of Kristin?"

"Same thing. And sometimes I think that Kristin doesn't understand anything about my problems at work, or anywhere else."

"And how do these fears come about, both of you?"

"I don't know", says Eileen. "That's why we're here."

"That's a pity. We unfortunately have to stop for the moment. If you want, you can come again and we try to track down the reasons."

"I don't think she's understood us." Kristin steps disgruntled on an empty Coke tin.

"There's something jammed up about her, that has nothing to do with us", says Eileen.

"I don't know if she believes us when we tell her we're perfectly happy with being lesbians."

"That's right" smiles Kristin, "Unfortunately, neither do the others"

the end

Counselling and Health Care

Bear in mind

Some specific aspects of homospecific counselling are:

- the client's psycho-sexual history: sexuality in the family, messages about (homo- or bi-) sexuality,
- sexual identity: how your client sees him- or herself in terms of his/her sexuality, gender role and identity,
- the client's level of acceptance of gay or lesbian feelings,
- the history of the client's coming out,
- the gay/lesbian social network,
- lifestyles,
- anti gay/lesbian violence and discrimination ("gay-bashing", "lesbian baiting") – as well as violence and discrimination against transgendered individuals.

It is necessary to think about these aspects in terms of your own personal history, even if you do not identify yourself as a homosexual. It will help you to better understand the client and to understand your own prejudice.

If in fact you are gay or lesbian, you should think about the effect that knowing this may have for your client. Many gays and lesbians lack role models. As a counsellor, you can be very important in this respect. However, the most important thing is how you perceive your own homosexuality: what has your personal development been like? What could be helpful for your client to know about your homosexuality? Remember the client should not completely identify with you. Every gay, lesbian and bisexual person has to develop his or her own personal lifestyle and goes through his or her own version of a personal acceptance process.

Counselling and Health Care Tools

Specific aspects in counselling gays and lesbians and how to address them:

Search for the “Why-Question” (Sexual Identity)

Aim: to help the client, in his/her search for self-definition, distinguish between sexual orientation and identity, do not take the sexual identity of your client as granted.

Method: What does your client call him/herself and which meaning does he/she give to these “labels”? Discuss what experiences your client has had regarding same-sex behaviour. Distinguish between their sexual orientation and expectations in the past, present and future. Discuss role models and identity with the client. Deal with prejudices; they are an indication of internalised homophobia.

Please note: Focus also on the question of how the client thinks others perceive him/her. This serves to bring up key issues such as the importance of external perception and the fear of rejection.

Gay-Bashing

Aim: To counsel victims of gay-bashing, homophobic violence and discrimination.

Method: Has the client ever experienced physical, psychological or verbal attacks; if so were these direct or indirect? Did the attacks involve sexual violence? When did the attack happen and who was the attacker? How does this experience affect being gay or lesbian or being “out”? Discuss the pros and cons of reporting the incident to the police with the client.

Please note: It helps to be familiar with specific counselling skills relating to trauma and violence beforehand. It is usually in gay cruising areas that gay men encounter violence. Therefore, before advising the client to take their case to the authorities, be absolutely sure of the way your local police deals with anti-homosexual violence. Are there specific consultation partners in the police force who understand this form of violence? Are they male or female? A lesbian victim is unlikely to consult a male police officer.

Counselling and Health Care

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the education sector.

How can I recognise, for instance, whether the girl who is standing in front of me is a lesbian?

Basically, you can't. One of the characteristics of homosexuality is that it doesn't show and your client can hide it if he or she chooses to. This is why it is extremely important to have an open attitude, to ask questions, and to create a space where your client can be open about his/her sexual identity or behaviour.

How much should I involve the family in the counselling process?

It depends very much on the importance of the family in the client's life and the level of acceptance or rejection within the family. Ask your client about it and also ask if he/she is willing to do it. Family is an important social environment, but also a vulnerable one.

Do gay men and lesbians need special counselling?

Not always, but they do need specific attention and recognition concerning gay and lesbian issues, for their personal history and for their current situation. This can be done in any kind of therapy. (Refer to sections "Bear in mind" and "Tools".)

Who is better at handling homosexual clients: a counsellor belonging to a sexual minority, or one who is straight?

Both are possible. As a straight counsellor, you should try to ask the right questions and avoid being too vague. As a counsellor from a sexual minority, you have to be aware of the impact you may have as a role model and you should be aware of over-identification issues. If your client raises the issue, you should answer frankly to his/her questions.

“It really helped me when I finally spoke to a counsellor with whom, you know, I didn’t have the feeling I first had to explain ‘what being lesbian is all about’, that there is nothing wrong with it, that it’s OK... Especially since I didn’t really have any answers in the first place. I was full of questions myself! “

Imprint

Different in More Ways Than One.
Providing Guidance for Teenagers
on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality
and Respect

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Different in More Ways Than One.

Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality and Respect

6 Sexualities

<Antonio> *This is a chat for young gays and lesbians, right?*
<Almira> *Hi Antonio, nice to meet you. Yes you're right. Where do you come from?*
<Antonio> *Lady, never give out such info in a chat. *stern* I live in Italy.*
<Almira> *And I in Germany. There are also people from other European countries.*
<Antonio> *Have you been here long?*
<Almira> *Yep.*
<Mark> *Hello there everyone*
<Koray> *I'm also new to this chat, hi.*
<Elsa> *Hi guys 😊*
<Mark> *How are you Elsa? Is everything okay with Chloé, I miss her*
<Antonio> *A big hello, especially for Koray ;-)*
<Koray> *Lonely greetings, likewise*
<Elsa> *Chloé's still not OK, but I'm slowly getting better*
<Mark> *Sorry for the others, but I must chat with Elsa for a while – if it bothers you we'll retreat to the whisper corner, okay?*
<Almira> *I'm listening with great interest*
<Koray> *Joining in*
<Antonio> *Have got a thousand questions, am sitting on tenterhooks, but I'll be patient ;-)*
<Mark> *I'm happy to hear that. Elsa, did you get anything out of the counselling?*
<Elsa> *Yes, the woman is really great. She's been very helpful. I hope that Chloé will come today, then we could decide together how to help her. That would be good. I'm really not feeling as helpless as a few weeks ago. How are you Almira?*

to be continued on page 8 and 9

Framework

First of all

The question of what exactly the difference between gay sex and straight sex is gets often asked. There is a lot of curiosity about the subject. Homosexuality is often reduced to its sexual aspects. People are curious what lesbian women do with each other in bed and why gay men seem to be very sexual beings. The reason is that most people have a fixed idea about sex in their head. It is usually a heterosexual framework of what sexuality is. You learn that as you grow up. Other forms of experiencing sexuality are not in that logical framework and are easily perceived as strange or perverse.

In many cultures, even today sexuality is a taboo. It is something you do in the privacy of your bedroom or for the purpose of reproduction. It is not something you talk about unless it is to joke around. If sexuality is a difficult subject to discuss, sexual diversity is even more difficult. Because there isn't the purpose of reproduction, some people reduce non heterosexual sex to "perversity". Sexuality is often linked to shame, even in the current Western society which is perceived often as "sexualised" due to many TV programs, magazines etc that assume an open attitude towards sex. But the link with sin is, in every culture, easily made.

Sexuality is dealt with differently in the multitude of cultures and nations on Earth. Current sex education curriculum identifies four functions of sexuality: 1. it provides lust and is an important motor in the reproduction of human life, 2. it can deepen relationships and is a code of intimate communication, 3. it plays an important role in the development of our identity because by experiencing sexuality, our identity as man or woman is confirmed (and we, in turn, confirm others), 4. it can enrich our lives on different levels. For instance, a sexual relationship can result in the conception of a child, or may also lead to other forms of creation (e.g. a house, a book, or another common project). These four functions of sexuality can be identified in relationships between two men, two women or a man and a woman.

Basic information

The actual difference between gay sex, lesbian sex and straight sex is not easy to explain. So many people, so many ways of having sex. The traditional penetrative sex between a man and a woman can also take place between two men or two women. Two women can use fingers, vibrators or dildos and two men can have anal and oral intercourse. These are just examples. The fact that gays and lesbians often have penetrative sex has got nothing to do with the "lack" of a penis or vagina, as is often suggested. It has got to do with wanting to feel close to each other and lusting after each other. The only difference with heterosexuals is that having sex can't in itself lead to children. Gays and lesbians have to protect themselves against STIs and HIV, but not against pregnancy. Aside from penetrative sex, all other forms of sexuality exist between gays and lesbians as well.

Generally speaking, gay men are more likely to have sex with more numerous partners than lesbians. This difference doesn't have so much to do with a difference between gay people and straight people, but with differences between men and women and how they experience sexuality. For most women (straight or lesbian), sexuality is more connected to intimacy than for men. Men are more capable of having sex for its own sake than women. This is a difference in gender, not in sexual preference. So if two men or two women have sex with each other the way they experience that sexuality is either "female" or "male" for both partners. In other words, in gay or lesbian sex there is a doubling of male and female sexual experience. And that is specific to gay and lesbian sex about it. So gay men are more likely to have sex with different partners because men are more likely to separate sex from intimacy. Similarly, two lesbians are more likely to be monogamous because women are more likely to want a combination of sex and intimacy. However, bear in mind that there is always a large scale of different behaviour within each sex.

Explaining differences from this gender point of view and not from a gay/straight point of view also makes it easier for heterosexual professionals to deal with questions about gay and lesbian sexuality, because most people can imagine and/or know that there is a difference in the way men and women experience sex, whether they are gay, lesbian or straight.

What does this mean for me?

The ability to even speak about sexuality is the key to improvement. Sexuality is a difficult subject to talk about. It makes everybody vulnerable, because it is an intimate part of life. People are also afraid that if they speak openly or teach about sex in general, others might think that they are talking about their own personal sex life. At the same time young people are experimenting with sexualities and are often very outspoken about sexuality. So it is a subject that should not be ignored because of the taboo. It is a daily reality in most young people's lives.

For all young people, regardless of whether they define themselves as homo-, bi- or heterosexual, it is important to be empowered and to have guidance as they become acquainted with themselves and discover their bodies and sexuality. For those adolescents who have erotic thoughts or feelings for partners of the same sex, support is even more important because their attraction for same-sex partners is normally frowned upon by important social groups.

- When talking about sexuality, the possibility of same-sex experiences is often forgotten or is only briefly mentioned out of political correctness. When speaking about love, sexuality, or partnership, in general, you should also mention the same-sex option in such a way as to make it self-evident that same-sex contacts are an equal and legitimate manner of expressing feelings and/or way of living together among others. Give positive signals to your surroundings that you judge tenderness or erotic relationships between same-sex partners to be of equal value as those relationships between a woman and a man.
- Make sure you are aware of your own vulnerabilities towards (homo)sexuality and try to have a clear picture of how you value your own sexual experiences. Talking about sexuality can be a matter of asking questions.
- Provide information in the form of brochures or leaflets where youngsters can find supplementary information if they have questions regarding sexuality or the addresses of counselling institutions if they feel the need to talk about problems. Be sure that there are also addresses for gays, lesbians and bisexual teens.

Education

Bear in mind

Before you start teaching your class about homosexuality and sexuality in general, it is important to consider several aspects of sexuality yourself. Young boys and girls can be very focused on sexuality, especially during puberty. They tend to think in very black-and-white terms; things are either good or bad. Remember that talking about sexualities requires authenticity and intimacy, so be prepared to be asked personal questions about your own experiences and views. Take the time in advance to think about what information you wish to share and what you do not. You have a right to protect your private sphere just as much as the students have.

To prepare yourself for the sensitive topic of sexuality you can ask yourself the following questions:

- What were you taught about (homo) sexuality, at home and at school?
- What do you personally associate with gay sex and with lesbian sex? What are your prejudices when it comes to sex between two men or sex between two women?
- When were your first sexual experiences? Do you consider them positive or negative?
- Have you had sexual experiences with the same sex? How do you consider them?
- Which place do you give to sexuality in homosexual identities?
- What do you personally consider as an “appropriate” age for young people to have their first sexual experiences?

Education Tools

General remarks

Sex education should not be restricted to biological facts but should also mention emotions. You can gain access to the subject through literature, social sciences (history) or the arts (music, painting, etc.). Try to teach as a team with a colleague of the opposite sex, at least part of the time, and separate the boys and girls if you have the impression that the students don't dare to speak openly in front of each other. After they have spent some time working apart, bring them back together in one group and let the pupils tell each other what they talked about and how they liked working separately.

When discussing sexualities, it is important to include heterosexuality and homosexuality at the same time and not to rank one better than the other. Since young people feel insecure about sexuality, they often talk about it in a very provocative manner. When dealing with this subject, refer to concrete examples and touch on the experiences that the young people have had so far. The reflection on their interests and fears is a part of their sexual experiences, and it is important to remember that everyone has had experiences, not only those who have already had a sexual relationship.

It might be useful to involve lesbian and gay guest speakers, for instance peer projects that offer sex education (see References), but make sure that you do not pass the topic of homosexuality completely on to someone else. The young people could see this as a signal that you avoid treating homosexuality and that you feel embarrassed about it.

Carousel Game

Aim: To overcome shame and to encourage youngsters to talk about sexuality.

Method: Write 25 questions about sex on cards. Make as many sets of these cards as there are pupils.

The questions should be varied: some should ask for facts and some for opinions, ranging from very simple to quite difficult and ranging from very impersonal to very personal. Be sure to include a good number of questions about homosexuality.

Put your students in two's on chairs opposite each other. The chairs should be in a circle or row. Explain the game to the young people: "Each person gets a pack of 25 questions about relationships and sexuality. Please read the first question before you ask it to your partner. Decide if you would like to answer it yourself. If you would not, put the card back in the pack and read the next question. When you find a question that you would answer yourself, read it out to your discussion partner. The partners should not answer right away; they also get the chance to decide if they want to answer the question or not. If not, they say: 'next question'. If they do, they go ahead and answer the question. After one question is answered, the two people swap roles. Now the second partner looks for a question and the first one passes or answers. This goes on until I say 'shift!' I will do this every five minutes. After the shift, everyone sitting in the inner circle (or in a row) will move one place to the right. Then we go on looking for questions with our two new discussion partners." After about half an hour or 5 shifts, stop the game. Ask the pupils how they experienced the game. Was it fun, difficult or both? Can they say something about why they chose not to answer some questions? Be careful to respect all the reasons teenagers might have for this, shame should not become something to be ashamed of!

Please note: During the game, take care that the participants' enthusiasm does not overtake them in such a way that they lose their personal limits. In groups where cultural norms make it difficult for women to talk openly about sex with men, consider doing this game in same-sex sub-groups. An extension of this game could be to ask the girls' group to formulate questions to

the boys and vice-versa. Then, a representative of the girls reads out the group's questions to the boys. The boys retreat and answer the questions as a group. Afterwards, one of them reads out their group's answer. In this way, less attention is placed on the individual, which should circumvent some feelings of shame, while the students can still satisfy their curiosity about how the other sex thinks about important questions.

Sex Education and Homosexuality

Aim: To open up a discussion about homosexuality within sex education; to encourage participation of the pupils in the school programme.

Method: This exercise has three steps. Tell the pupils you want their input in developing better sex education lessons. The first step is to ask the teenagers where they are currently getting their information and opinions about sex. If they only reply by giving factual information (e.g. that you should use a condom), then stress that you would also like to know who helps them form their opinions and feelings about sexual issues. The second step is to focus on their needs for sex education in school. Here too, take care that they do not limit their needs to 'neutral' facts. The third step is to ask how the school should deal with sex education aspects that might be different for minorities. If they don't understand this, give examples from the intercultural context (special needs for girls, boys, specific facts and norms in different cultures) and from sexual minorities (gays, bisexuals, lesbians, transsexuals). If the pupils ask for specific attention to intercultural issues but would like to skip over or pay no attention to the issue of sexual minorities, ask them why and where minorities should get alternative information, if the school does not provide this.

Please note: This exercise will work best in schools that are already paying attention to the larger social situation. If the school is only focusing on cognitive results, elaborating the discussion from facts to opinions and personal growth will be difficult. Be sure that you take the final step; together with your fellow educators, try to find ways to integrate the results of the discussions so as to improve the sex education curriculum, otherwise you are not taking your pupils' input seriously.

From Discrimination to Sexuality

Aim: To open up a discussion about homosexuality without focusing on sex.

Method: This exercise has three steps. The first step is to ask the young people if they can give some examples of discrimination. In an intercultural group, racist examples will probably come up more easily. The second step is to steer the discussion towards gender. Ask for example: "You mention examples of discrimination by people who really don't know each other very well. Is there discrimination as well between people who know each other, like within relationships?" This question will likely bring up examples like the lack of power balance in relationships and the different expectations of men and women. The third step is to steer the discussion towards diversity in relationships. For example you can ask the pupils: "Can such problems be solved by reorganising a relationship?" and "Do you know of examples of 'other' kinds of relationships? How do you think these problems are solved within a lesbian or gay relationship?"

Please note: This exercise demands good discussion skills from the educator; you have to listen closely to the students and adapt to their needs while at the same time nudging and coaxing the discussion in a certain direction. Because this process cannot be planned very well, this might take some time. Schedule at least 1 hour for this discussion.

Education

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the counselling and health care sector.

Is it true that homosexual behaviour exists among animals?

Researchers have observed homosexual behavior in more than 470 species of animals (chimpanzees, dolphins, swallows, butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, fishes and domestic animals like cows, sheep, pigs, rabbits, horses, dogs and cats). It is interesting that sexuality among animals does not only serve for reproduction but also can have social functions. Many animals are sexually active outside the rutting season and are able to feel lust while having sex. Monkeys demonstrate different types of sexual practices, including fellatio. Pairs of male black swans are very successful at rearing the next generation. During the summer period, killer whales spend 10% of their time in homosexual activities. Thirteen species of lizards in the American south-west build exclusive female populations and are able to reproduce on their own. For further information, consult the references listed in the literature section.

I sometimes hear my Arabic-speaking students insult each other with the word "zamel".

This seems to be a sexual insult. What does this mean?

You are right. "Zamel" is an derogative word for a man who takes the passive role when having sex with another man (the same aspect is described by the Turkish word "ibne"). The word refers to the sin of "liwati" which is to be "buggered" (to have anal sex as a "passive" partner). In many cultures, it is considered shameful for an adult man to be "passive" during anal sex, but this is not the case for the man who takes the active role. In Muslim cultures, the concept of an equal relationship between men does not exist, so uneducated people equate "liwat" with "homosexuality" and 'zamel" with "homosexual". A fine-tuned discussion about definitions and differing values in cultures is necessary to explain and explore cross-cultural opinions about same-sex relationships and sexuality.

Who is the "man" and who is the "woman" in a gay or lesbian relationship?

The link between gender and sexual behaviour does exist but be careful not to reinforce stereotypes! Homosexuality is often talked about as a strange, animal or brutish phenomenon between men. Male sex is said to be very "hard" or "dirty" while sexuality between two women is, in general, rarely talked about or it is said to be very soft, sweet and "vanilla". This is partly true, but be careful not to generalise. Refer to the whole range of sexual behaviour in men and women and not only to the standard. Stereotypical images make it difficult for everyone to discover his or her individual sexuality. Teenagers who are insecure about their sexuality tend to look too closely at statistical norms and do not allow themselves or others to deviate too far from these norms.

Do all gays like anal sex and does it hurt?

Anal intercourse is not exclusively practiced by gay men. Some straight people and even lesbians do it as well if they feel comfortable with it. The anal region is very sensitive and can provide pleasure (especially for men if the prostate gland is gently touched). There are many gay men who don't like anal intercourse at all. Some of them try it twice or more often in order to find out if they feel stimulation through it, or use other techniques instead. It is the same as with vaginal penetration, which can also hurt especially if it is practiced in a crude way and the partners don't pay attention. It is also recommended to use a certified condom and lots of water-based lubricant in order to protect each other from STIs and HIV.

<Almira> *The advisor of the support group has spoken with my parents. Now they know that I'm a lesbian and they have accepted it without making a big fuss. The main thing is that they won't lose me. But it's still a long way to go.*

<Elsa> *Sure. I think of you. All the best.*

<Almira> *thx*

<Koray> *I don't understand it all, but I wish you all the best ;-)* What questions do you have? @Antonio

<Antonio> *oops – alright then: I'll spill it all out...*

<Antonio> *I've been living for the last two years with a boy, and I really love him...*

<Mark> *Best of luck*

<Koray> *oh if only I could have such a relationship *blush**

<Antonio> *Be patient guys, the big surprise is on its way *;-)**

<Antonio> *I have been extremely attracted to a girl for the past six months. At first I didn't want to believe it. Admitting to myself that I'm gay was hard enough. And now I have to redefine everything from the start, I just don't know how to do it.*

<Koray> *Are you absolutely sure about that?*

<Antonio> *Yes, absolutely 😊*

<Elsa> *And you still live with your boyfriend?*

<Antonio> *Yes, of course, I love him as well.*

<Mark> *Does your friend know about your feelings for her?*

<Antonio> *To be honest, no.*

<Mark> *Not good, I'd say*

<Elsa> *Does she know about him?*

<Antonio> *Yes, she knows everything*

<Koray> *So what are you going to do?*

<Antonio> *If I only knew... I thought, perhaps you'd have an idea???*

<Mark> *You should speak to your friend*

<Almira> *This here is a chat in which we come together without any counselling. But there are chats – may be also in Italy, I don't really know – in which advisors take part, who could help you.*

<Antonio> *The worst part of it is I don't know if I should stay with my boyfriend any more.*

<Koray> *I understand. I'd be happy if I had fallen in love with a girl – but it looks as though I am hundred percent gay*

<Mark> *Same here – I just don't feel anything for girls 😊*

<Elsa> *I can't understand Mark. I find that only girls are wonderful :-)*

<Almira> *In solidarity with Elsa*

<Antonio> *So what should I tell my boyfriend?*

<Koray> *What about the truth?*

<Antonio> *Yeah, but what's the truth?*

<Mark> *That you're probably bisexual, isn't it?*

<Elsa> *It may sound old-fashioned, but I don't trust people who sleep with blokes and girls at the same time.*

to be continued

<Antonio> *Why not?*

<Elsa> *They want to have it all – without having to decide – I think that's cowardly*

<Mark> *Hey Elsa, why that?*

<Almira> *I understand Elsa – if Julie suddenly came to me saying that she'd fallen in love with a sweet young boy, I'd dump her immediately – and I'd despair at the thought*

<Koray> *If I personally fell in love with a girl I think it would be okay *embarrassed grin* but if my friend did... no way!*

<Mark> *That's right Antonio. What would you say if your friend came to you and told you a thing like that about himself?*

<Antonio> *Sorry, I have to think about all this. I'll be back later. Thx and Bye*

<Antonio> *Hello, I'm back again*

<Aaron> *Hello Antonio 😊*

<Koray> *What have you got to, Antonio, and how are you ?*

<Antonio> *I have spoken with Paolo and told him everything*

Mark> *Holding my breath*

<Koray> *Tell us about it*

<Antonio> *Like Almira predicted, he's left me*

<Mark> *WHAT? Oh, I'm so sorry, Antonio, really*

<Aaron> *What happened? *please explain**

<Antonio> *I'm probably bisexual: I've been attracted to this girl for a long time, but my boyfriend doesn't accept it.*

<Aaron> *I'm sitting in front of the monitor and can only shake my head. What really matters is that two people truly love each other, isn't it?*

<Antonio> *But in my case it's more like three people.*

<Aaron> *What was the problem? Was it because you told him too late, or because it was a woman that Paolo couldn't accept it?*

<Antonio> *Everything I think*

<Julie> *Almira told me about you. The most important thing for me is that everything always be open and that I be informed. Then I can cope with quite a lot fairly well.*

<Antonio> *That's so easy to say, Julie. But I was totally upset, I couldn't find words for my feelings.*

<Julie> *If Almira were to fall in love with a boy I would expect her to tell me about it before starting anything with him.*

<Antonio> *Yeah, right. If only I hadn't started anything with that girl. And what would you do after that, Julie?*

<Julie> *We would then want to decide together how to create a situation in which all involved would feel secure.*

<Antonio> *And do you really think that it would work?*

<Julie> *If there's anything that works at all, then that's the way!*

<Aaron> *I am almost certain that all people basically have the capacity to fall in love with men as well as women. It's just that there is in every person a strong distinction between the two tendencies. There's nothing to condemn, either way. I think it's really a good thing to be able to love different persons. I admire your courage, Antonio.*

<Julie> *Let's keep this in mind as a utopia, and let's help each other on the way there!!*

<Antonio> *Agreed. Thx to you all, guys!*

the end

Counselling and Health Care

Bear in mind

If same-sex lifestyles are a concern in counselling settings, it is important to be aware of many dimensions, including the cultural/historical context. The rise of the middle-class family in Western cultures coincided with the development of specific views on sex roles, love and sexuality. At the same time, the medical term of “homosexuality” was invented to distinguish same-sex behaviour differing from the heterosexual norm and to define it as an illness. Gay and lesbian activists prefer the use of the terms “gay” and “lesbian” to describe their own sexuality. They strive for recognition and acceptance of their claim that their multiple lifestyles involve much more than just the definitions outsiders give of their sexual behaviour.

The communication in counselling settings should not be disturbed. One competence a counsellor needs to have is authenticity, since the counsellor’s own convictions will influence the counselling process. The counsellor’s own positive competences, but also his or her doubts, unanswered questions and “blind spots”, should be the subjects of reflection among colleagues and in supervision. Counsellors should take time to think about the subject of same-sex lifestyles and ask themselves how their own views could have a direct influence on the counselling process.

- What did you learn about same-sex lifestyles in your professional education?
- What do you know about same-sex lifestyles and sexual relationships between men or women? Where do you know this from and with whom do you exchange your knowledge?
- What attitude do you have towards women who have relationships and sex with women? To what extent do these attitudes differ from those you have towards men who have relationships and sex with men?
- Have you had same-sex experiences in your youth as part of your sexual development? How do you judge those experiences today?
- What meaning or value do you think sexuality has for the identity of a lesbian woman? What meaning or value do you think sexuality has for a gay man?
- What experience do you have of counselling lesbian and gay clients?
- Do you think that lesbian and gay clients would prefer to work with a lesbian or gay counsellor? If so, in what way do you think the identity of a lesbian or gay counsellor will affect the counselling setting or process? If not, what would help the counselling process if the counsellor is not gay or lesbian?

Counselling and Health Care Tools

My Body

Aim: An essential part of a man or woman's identity is the image he or she has of his or her own body and the perception and satisfaction of one's own physical needs. The body is the basis of an individual's feelings, thoughts and actions. During puberty, sexual aspects need to be integrated into one's identity. The exercise helps young people become more sensitive to their own feelings and self-image.

Method: Questions for self-reflection

- What role does clothing play for me? What about undressing or being naked?
- How do I react to images of men/ women, gays/ lesbians that I see in public?
- What part of my body do I find the most beautiful?
- What parts of my body are of special importance to me?
- Which parts of my body do I dislike? How do I explain this to myself? How do I handle my feelings?
- What did I learn from my mother and father about how to consider my body? What did I learn from them about nakedness and sexuality?
- How did my mother and father react to my outer appearance? What helped me when I was growing up? What hindered my development?
- Which parts of my body do I connect to lust/ happiness/pain? How do I care for/treat them?
- How has my relationship to my body developed: in my childhood, in puberty, today?

Please note: This exercise can be used by either the client or by the counsellor as a tool for self-reflection. It is helpful to use this method between two sessions as a kind of homework assignment. As the reflection process continues, it is likely that the client will begin to see how the attitudes they learned from their family conflict with their own individual values. For gays and lesbians, this crisis is difficult for two reasons: first, because they lack positive role models and second, because it becomes necessary for them to keep at a distance from the dominant heterosexual norm in order to build up their own identity which, in the beginning, is a negative or anti-identification (non-heterosexual).

Sexuality Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow

Aim: To help the clients reflect on their past, to help them become aware of their current personal assessment and to express their wishes for the future.

Method: You will need one poster-sized paper, one A4 sheet, coloured marker pens, scissors and glue.

The client divides the poster paper into three equal parts by using vertical lines. The first step is to reflect on the following questions: How did I see my sexuality during puberty? How do I see it today? How would I like to see it in the future? One section of the poster is reserved for each question. Let the client write down the answers in their own words. Next, have the client cut off the part of the poster which deals with their wishes for the future. The A4 sheet is then glued between this cut piece and the leftover part of the poster paper (making a link between the present and the future). The answers to the following questions are written on the poster:

- If I think about the future of my sexuality and the form I want it to take, what prevents me from realising this vision?
- What or who could help me to overcome these obstacles?
- Which one of my wishes for the future form of my sexuality has already come true?
- Who could support me in further realising my future vision?

Please note: This method helps the counsellor to get information about the client's view on his or her sexuality. It also clarifies the client's vision of their future and helps them identify the resources available to them to achieve this vision. Based on this information, some aims for future counselling sessions can be defined. In addition, the counsellor can estimate how much they can and want to continue working on the issue of the client's sexuality.

Three-Chairs-Exercise

Aim: To help the client reflect on their sexuality; to find out how the client judges his or her own current approach to living with their sexuality.

Method: In addition to the client's and the counsellor's chairs, three other chairs are needed. As a first step the client is asked to choose three important persons in their life, one in their family, one among their friends with whom they have not had a sexual relationship and one among their partners with whom they have had a sexual relationship. The names of these partners are written on a sheet and placed one on each of the three chairs. In the second step, the client is asked to stand behind each chair for five minutes and to answer the following question: "If I asked this person to say what they thought about how you live with your sexuality and how satisfied you are with your approach, what would they say?"

Please note: For the exercise to work, the client must be willing to get intensely involved with their own sexuality. By changing perspectives, reflecting on one's own sexuality becomes easier. Wanted and unwanted behaviour, attitudes and judgements are more easily identified. Once the exercise is completed, the client should have a better idea of how to improve the way he or she lives with his or her sexuality. He or she should also begin to identify steps to realise these changes.

Counselling and Health Care

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the education sector.

How can I react if a client is dismayed by his or her need to identify him or herself 100% within a certain category of sexual orientation?

People who define themselves as heterosexuals can also have same-sex fantasies or experiences. Similarly, gays or lesbians can have experiences with the other sex. As such, you can help people avoid becoming obsessed with defining their sexual orientation too precisely – support them to think positively if they feel love or attraction for their fellow human beings and encourage them to express these feelings in an appropriate way. Bring more flexibility into sexual categories. The boundaries between hetero-, homo- and bisexuality are fluid. These categories were not invented by “Nature”, but rather by men, and as late as the 19th century. The categories are therefore “artificial” and can be changed if they are no longer suitable to our current needs. One doesn’t have to conform to these definitions simply because they exist. In fact, the opposite is true: definitions need to change in order to fit in with our sexual behaviour and identity.

In particular, people who grew up within a fundamentalist background need help in learning to accept different (often “strange”) views about sexual orientation that seem to be incoherent with sexual behaviour. For example, if a person has sexual relations with both sexes, it is not always useful to insist on identifying this person as bisexual. There are people who identify as heterosexual and have sex with partners of the same sex. There are also people who define themselves as homosexual but have erotic experiences with partners of the opposite sex. You should focus more on supporting them without stressing the need for clear identification. Help them to enjoy the inconsistency of human life.

How should I react if a client who wants to try sex with a same-sex partner tells me that he/she is afraid of specific sexual practices?

Sexuality between two women or two men can be satisfying in multiple ways. Sexual practices are not fixed in a certain programme that has to be followed. Neither heterosexual nor homosexual sex consists of an obligatory set of practices. People of both orientations can experience more or less the same range of practices with or without penetration but nobody can be forced to like every practice. Male-to-male sex is not limited to anal or oral penetration. Similarly, two women can decide on their own if they want anal or vaginal penetration or not. The types of practices or positions that two men or two women want to experience have to be negotiated between them both in a fair and equal partnership, just as between a man and a woman.

How can two women have real sex without a penis?

This is a question often asked by young people. The stereotypical image of penetrative sex with a penis in a vagina is persistent. Boys especially find it very hard to imagine that sex can exist without the insertion of a penis into a vagina. Penetrative sex is not limited to straight sex. Two women can be turned on by penetrative sex. Not because they “lack a penis” but because feeling someone inside you is arousing. On the other hand, penetrative sex is not the only way to experience good sex. Oral or manual stimulation can give just as much pleasure. There is a variety of possibilities and it is a personal choice.

“It annoys me when homosexuality is reduced to its sexual aspects – as if it all were just about sex. Like ‘what do lesbians do with each other in bed?’ I think a lot of people have a set of stereotypical fantasies on what “lesbian sex” is. But sexuality is so much more and so very different for each person...”

Imprint

Different in More Ways Than One.
Providing Guidance for Teenagers
on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality
and Respect

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Different in More Ways Than One.

Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality and Respect

7 The Community

This is complete and utter madness.

I would never have met Patrizia if we hadn't been fighting in the school playground and if Mrs. Gazzi hadn't dragged me all the way to her office because of that.

And here I am now, waiting for her, forever in love, with butterflies in my stomach and fluttering nerves. When I picture her face in my mind's eyes, I feel flushed all over. Teresa can picture Patrizia's deep brown eyes as they look at her with a sparkle, and then narrow to thin slits with joy. Teresa breathes deeply, or else she won't be able to stand up because of all the excitement. The others mustn't find out about them, even if they're gay or lesbian themselves. Her sexuality is her business only. As well, of course, as Patrizia's. She looks down at the courtyard. This is where she kissed Patrizia for the first time. During the Techno-Party three weeks ago. Her heart still twinges when she thinks about it. No matter what she does to think about other things, she always ends up longing for her peaceful presence by her side.

Teresa sighs. She'd never have thought the world could be so crazy. Her story with Patrizia is so jumbled-up that no-one could ever make sense of it. Teresa lets her eyes drift across the crowd in the café. The lesbians and gays here are really nice people. Mrs Gazzi was right. There is indeed a gay and lesbian centre here in Bologna and she hadn't even known about it. How ridiculous. Her love affair with Patrizia has started here. The first time she had visited the place, her hands sticky with sweat because of her nervousness, she was thunderstruck when she saw Patrizia sitting by the window, in the back. Patrizia, of all people. She's a lesbian, thought Teresa, between fascination and shock. She had never realised. Patrizia was like a ray of sunshine illuminating her across the room. Teresa didn't look away.

to be continued on page 8 and 9

Framework

First of all

Many heterosexuals are used to reducing the essence of gays and lesbians to their sexuality, but homosexuality is much more than that. Sexual orientation can influence many aspects of life like daily behaviour and role patterns, interests, friends, and hobbies. As gays and lesbians face discrimination in many aspects of their lives, they have formed their own groups and initiatives all around the world. However, there are countries where the religious or political system itself strongly discriminates against homosexual men and women and tries to ban gay and lesbian organisations. Within the EU, groups of different characteristics and sizes exist in all countries.

Basic information

Usually there will be groups for gays and groups for lesbians, but sometimes the groups are open to both. Some of these take the form of “discussion groups” which concentrate on the coming-out process. Here gays and lesbians can meet to find support; they can discuss individual experiences on their coming out to their families and friends, ideas and fears. Other groups work in political or social areas. They fight for gay and lesbian rights, which means for instance the right to marry or have registered partnerships, or anti-discrimination laws. Still other groups concentrate on the education sector. Members of these groups go to schools to talk with pupils about their coming out and what it is like to be gay or lesbian. Over the past several years, more and more groups have been set up in response to special interests like sports teams or groups that just want to have fun. Lesbian and gay magazines have been created. Today you can find the traditional coming-out groups and gay volleyball or karate groups, lesbian dance groups and much more. These groups can have a normative and somewhat exclusive character and may establish rules or behaviour patterns at times, like how to deal with relationships or one-night stands - but usually they tend to be open to all gays and lesbians and are a good first step on the path into the gay and lesbian community.

Apart from these groups, a lot of bars and restaurants concentrate on gay and lesbian customers. Gays and lesbians can meet their friends at these places, get to know other homosexuals, or go out with their partner. They enjoy the atmosphere in these bars where they as gays or lesbians belong to the majority and therefore don't have to explain themselves and don't feel observed in a suspicious way by other guests.

Taken together, these groups, bars, counselling centres and initiatives are called the gay and lesbian “community” or “subculture” or “scene”. There are many rumours and stereotypes about this community. Many parents, teachers and sometimes even young gays and lesbians themselves don't like it and think it is strange and not serious. They also think this community is a sort of ghetto where they might lose the contact with “normality”. Nevertheless, after having been there once, most gays and lesbians find that they like the different places and institutions of this community. They see that the bars are just ordinary places with a gay/lesbian clientele.

All these locations can in fact be a place of encouragement, a place where social norms are reversed, and a protected space where homosexuals don't have to fear being looked at or called names for kissing their partner in public. For many gays and lesbians, this is the only way to meet other gays and lesbians. It is a place where they can learn about new role patterns for their very personal orientation in life and where they can also see different lesbians and gays who may identify as drag queens, leather gays, butches or femmes. The international lesbian and gay travel-guide “Spartacus” lists bars, restaurants, saunas and other institutions worldwide. These institutions seem to be quite similar to each other and represent a rather international community, but many of these locations typically have white, middle class male guests. Other locations do exist in most countries, the customers of which are more heterogeneous, but they are less visible and therefore sometimes difficult to find.

Although the situation in general is improving, most institutions, groups and bars of the community are based in big cities and are very rare in the countryside. That's why many young gays and lesbians often visit the bigger cities and why many even want to relocate there. They expect the anonymous aspect of the city to protect them from prejudice and discrimination.

What does this mean for me?

Ideally, you yourself should go out into the lesbian and gay scene of your city in order to get an idea of what it is. This is the only way you can recommend young lesbians and gays a location or organisation with a safe conscience, and only if it seems to be appropriate to you. Some homosexual bars are open to everyone, whether man or woman, gay or straight. You can go there, see the location, meet new friends and find a place where diversity is not a slogan but a principle which is practiced daily. If you are not sure whether there is a mixed crowd in this place, just ask beforehand. In the bigger cities, there are even gay and lesbian groups for ethnic minorities where people can get to know other lesbians, gays and bisexuals with the same cultural background, which is very hard to do elsewhere (also see the addresses).

Education

Bear in mind

What do you personally think about the gay and lesbian community? Do you have ideas what it may be like? Why do you think this community exists? What advantages does it have? Many people think they know about the gay and lesbian community because they know a few clichés about it. Get to know the gay and lesbian community in your home town or visit a gay/lesbian organisation and ask about their activities.

For many lesbians, gays and bisexuals the community can have the function of a social network where they are able to meet other lesbians, gays or bisexuals, get to know more about them, and where they spend their spare time. The community is important because in it heterosexism cannot develop its full pressure and also the need to behave in conformity to traditional gender roles is less important. For many lesbians, gays and bisexuals it is a very exciting experience to visit a gay and/ or lesbian party for the first time. Most of them feel comfortable, because everyone there feels the way they do and they do not need to explain or justify themselves. Try to imagine how you would have felt as a teenager if only at a few places of your (or of the closest bigger) city you could be absolutely sure not being criticised for your love or sexual orientation.

The “relatives” that lesbians and gays may chose among those people they meet in the community sometimes turn out to be important friendships in which an uncomplicated and open conversation is possible (this is not always the case with heterosexual people because they rarely experience the same type of discrimination). The exchange of similar experiences and mutual support can help lesbians and gays to cope with negative reactions to their coming out in the family or at the working place.

Education

Tools

Fact and Prejudice Web

Aim: to explore the facts and prejudices surrounding the concept of subculture.

Method: Ask the young people what they think of when they hear the term 'lesbian community' and 'gay community'. Write their comments on the blackboard, forming them into a 'word-web' which shows the association lines. Put negative comments in a different colour from positive comments (e.g. negative = yellow and positive = green). Ask why there are more yellow comments than green ones and explore which of these comments are facts, which are stereotypes (judgements which are not congruent with facts), and which are personal opinions or feelings. Check which facts are known about lesbian or gay community and how the young people learned about them. Explain facts about the local community and its history as you go. Close the session by asking whether the exercise made pupils feel differently.

Please note: Be sure to prepare yourself so that you can provide adequate information about the local community. You may consider inviting speakers from a local gay/lesbian/bisexual organisation to provide the young people with inside information on local activities. Also prepare yourself for questions from pupils about 'separatism' and overt demonstrations of homosexuality. In intercultural groups, such questions can be challenged by exploring the more general dynamic of integration. Most minorities find it helpful to have meeting places or a protected room where they can feel comfortable and assert their identity. Thus they may 'integrate' more easily into their surrounding rather than 'assimilate'.

Gay Pride Parade

Aim: To explore the need for visibility of gays and lesbians.

Method: Show a picture of a gay pride parade and ask the students if they know what it is about. Ask for comments. You will probably get some strong negative remarks (for some students, the visibility of homosexuals is unacceptable). Discuss the effects of discrimination and pride on a person's identity. Explain the history of gay pride (see the section on "History & Culture"). Compare ethnic pride with gay pride.

Please note: Many people are shocked by the very special lifestyles sometimes shown at gay pride events and which, naturally, attract a large amount of media attention. During discussions, take into account the distorting influence of the media and the great diversity in homosexual lifestyles.

It's a Straight World...

Aim: To explore the effects of heterosexism and to place the lesbian/gay/bisexual community in this context.

Method: Explain how everyone is raised to be heterosexual. Tell the students this creates a specific situation for lesbian, gay, and bisexual teens and that this exercise is meant to explore how this may feel to them. Give the pupils a few moments to think about this question: “If the world were not heterosexually oriented, but gay/lesbian-oriented, would you go to a 'straight' bar?” As additional questions, you could ask: “What would the 'normal' gay population think about this?” Let the pupils share their thoughts and feelings. As the dialogue progresses, steer the discussion towards how the pupils would like such a situation to be. Then draw conclusions which relate to the current situation: how should heterosexuals think about lesbian, gay and bisexual community institutions?

Please note: This exercise is only possible within the context of a relatively safe group. You can integrate this exercise into a regular subject by asking the students to draw or paint their feelings (arts) or to write a paper on it (language). This personal approach makes it easier to try this exercise in less safe groups, but it demands more of the pupils’ artistic or language skills.

Education

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the counselling and health care sector.

Why do gays and lesbians create their own places? Isn't that a ghetto?

From a young age, gays, lesbians and bisexuals are raised as heterosexuals and are taught that homosexual feelings and relationships are not valued in our society. In order to build up their own identity and self-esteem, they need their own spaces where they can express their feelings without being afraid of mean looks or insults. Over the last 30 years, the number of these spaces has grown. Today, in most big cities, an individual can remain mainly inside the gay and lesbian community without leaving it. There are shops, bars, discos, sports associations and even services that especially address gay and lesbian clients/customers. For a person who is not used to this community, it may seem like a kind of ghetto-life-style. Of course, the gay and lesbian community is not a ghetto, but it is seen as such, because we live in a society where the heterosexual norm prevails. (See also method "It's a straight world")

How can I learn more about the local gay and lesbian community?

The easiest way is to search for information on the Internet. Another and possibly better way is to visit a local gay/lesbian organisation and ask the members for more information about the kinds of activities they are involved in. This is quite important to gain more understanding of what homosexuality is all about. Most people think the homosexual community is just about sex. For example, if teenagers understand the role a gay/lesbian youth centre plays for homosexual teens, they are on the verge of understanding the difficulties homosexuals face within a heterosexual society.

Am I allowed as a heterosexual to visit places that belong to the homosexual community?

In most places, you definitely are. Gay or lesbian centres are nearly always open for those who are interested and people will usually be pleased to answer your questions. Most gay pubs are open for interested people as well, only some nightclubs are "men only" and some lesbian places are opened only for women, but most social places are open to everyone. If you are not sure, just ask.

She simply asked “So you did find out, in the end” when Teresa, drawn to her as if by magic, finally arrived next to the little café table and Patrizia looked at her, confused.

“I’d never have thought that you...” Teresa doesn’t finish her sentence.

“Lesbians are not all alike” comes the laconic reply from Patrizia. “You have loads of clichés in your head”

“But Franca...”

“She’s my best friend. And she’s straight. So what?”

“So, nothing.” Stumbles Teresa.

“Will you come to the Techno-Party with me next Friday? Just with me?”

Patrizia stares at her for some time, with a little sparkle in her eyes that Teresa will learn to understand later on.

Yes, that’s how it all started.

But that was the end of a long process. Teresa’s memories flashback all the way to it.

The girls of the tenth class are standing together in the schoolyard and, as always, are giggling. The only one that Teresa likes is Patrizia, but she wouldn’t be caught dead ever admitting it. On the contrary, she often taunts Patrizia when she meets her. “So, the little lady has squeezed herself into the supertight jeans again and dipped her little face into the paint box?”

“Quit it Teresa, sod off. Your presence is not welcome here!”

“I just so totally couldn’t care less, Patrizia, you know.”

“Oh come”, says Franca “Just don’t pay any attention to the silly cow. Why doesn’t she just get lost?”

“Do you absolutely have to pipe in? “, growls Teresa. “Cause you’re the one who looks like a real whore.”

“Get lost Teresa, before I lose my temper !” Patrizia’s voice sounds dangerously quiet. “Cut it out, save your provocations for somewhere else, do you hear?”

“I was only telling you how ridiculous you look and how absolutely idiotic your conversation is.” Teresa raises the tone of her voice. “Hey look here, isn’t the boy simply adorable? Yesterday in the courtyard he even smiled at me.”

Her tone falls back to normal. “That must have hurt, didn’t it?”

“You’re just jealous because the boys don’t look at you”, counters Franca.

“Wrong Franca, I just won’t let my intelligence go to waste for the sake of a boy. Like you and the other girls do.”

“So why’re you still standing here? If our standards don’t suit you, get lost”.

Patrizia pushes Teresa back. That’s the last straw.

“Cut out the bickering. Have you gone completely mad? Patrizia, Teresa, I want you separated immediately” Mrs Gazzi holds the girls apart, one hand on each.

“She started, she always does”, pants Patrizia.

“Obviously”, sneers Teresa. “I always do.”

“Patrizia is telling the truth. Teresa should leave us alone once and for all”, declares Franca and stares at the maths teacher.

“Teresa, after the lesson please report to me.”

to be continued

"I would like to show you something. It's in my office, okay?"

Teresa has always liked her maths teacher. She understood something about Teresa, that no-one else noticed.

"You really like Patrizia, don't you?"

"I beg your pardon? How can you imagine such a thing?" Teresa feels as though caught off-balance.

"You remind me of myself when I was your age." Mrs Gazzi winks at her.

"Oh really?" Teresa plays it cool.

"Here we are. Come in. Would you like to sit down?"

"You wanted to show me something?"

"Precisely. A brochure about the Gay Games – just one moment." The teacher rummages through the contents of a desk drawer. "What with you being so sporty, I thought, perhaps next year you'd like to take part. They'll certainly need good volleyball players"

"Hey, just a minute" Teresa looks squarely at the teacher "Are you a lesbian?"

"Yes. Does that surprise you? Why don't you go to the Gay and Lesbian Centre, and try to meet other lesbians? You're always hanging out alone."

"I just don't feel like being gawped at like a sex object."

"Who told you that lesbians are like that?"

"Everybody says it."

"So you believe everything they say. In any case it's not true. Gays and lesbians have many interests. They found sports groups, meet for Game Evenings, make politics together – whatever you want, you can share it with them."

"Volleyball would be enough to start with." Teresa turns and turns the brochure in her hands.

"Okay. Then I'll give you the address of the Gay and Lesbian Centre. Do you have Internet?"

"Sure."

"Here are some Websites that could be of interest to you. You can start with these and go on looking from there. My colleague has just told me about a chat for young lesbians and gays, that should be very good. I'll jot it down for you. So you can see what is going on in real life. You'll see, nobody reduces you to a sex object."

"And you? Are you part of the alternative society?"

"Alternative society is perhaps the wrong terms. I have many lesbian and gay friends. Before going to a nightclub, I check very carefully to see if any of my pupils could be there as well. If they are, I don't go in."

"And why not?"

"Look, my job is to teach you. My private life is something else. It's another world, you see. I don't mix the two. It wouldn't be good. You really do depend on me, and that means a big responsibility, which I take very seriously."

"I see. Thank you very much!"

"It's all right. Have fun at your sports."

the end

Counselling and Health Care

Bear in mind

Ask yourself what you know about the gay and lesbian community, where you got this information and if you have ever joined the community yourself.

When you counsel gays and lesbians, consider that the gay and lesbian community can be a part of the gay or lesbian identity, and might be part of their everyday life. However, some lesbians and gays may not feel comfortable in the community, especially in the commercial part of it because they feel a certain pressure to behave and dress in conformity to most of the others and don't (yet) have enough self-esteem to follow their own inclinations. The lesbian and gay community is not a remedy for the problems of anybody. It can have both positive and negative influences on people. Even those who don't go there often are part of this community and are influenced by its norms and values. They influence the community themselves by not going there and consequently not forming the image of the community. If you are not gay or lesbian yourself, you should at least visit some of the institutions like a counselling centre and some of the more popular bars. Your clients may not want to explain every detail of the gay and lesbian community to you, so make sure to be informed about the locations, trends and the main gay and lesbian activities in your area. If you work in the countryside, make sure you have some contact addresses to pass on to your clients. You can also contact a "coming-out group" that you can recommend to your clients and that can recommend you as a competent counsellor.

Counselling and Health Care

Tools

Think about the following questions:

- What can you offer if your client feels isolated?
- What can you offer if your client is interested in the gay/lesbian community but feels afraid of it?
- In which other parts of life do communities exist?
- Do the activities/services offered in the community of your city meet the cultural and individual background of your client?
- To which specific groups does your client belong besides the group of homosexuals (e.g. religious, ethnic, gender groups, etc.)?
- Are there groups in your area which match the specific background of your client (e.g. a group for Turkish gay people?)

Gay/Lesbian Social Network

Aim: to help the client reflect on his or her position within the gay/lesbian social network.

Method: Try and find out what images your client has of the community, i.e. gay/lesbian venues, bars and clubs. Do they perceive themselves as being part of the community? Why or why not? Do they associate the scene with negative imagery? Does your client meet socially with other gays and lesbians outside the community?

Please note: Bear in mind that gay men and lesbian women from ethnic minorities do not often frequent the community. This may be because they fear they might feel uncomfortable by being once again in a minority position. It can also be due to prejudice and discrimination encountered within the community.

Counselling and Health Care

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the education sector.

Where can I find information about the gay/lesbian community in my area?

You can find many links on the Internet - just search the homosexual counselling centres. But if you plan to refer clients to a specific institution, it's important that you are well-acquainted with them. Get to know more by making personal contact with the counsellors who work in these centres.

How should I deal with clients who have a bad opinion about the gay/lesbian community?

The gay and lesbian community is more than clichés. What are the client's specific interests? It may be they have a negative view because they have not yet found the support structure they are looking for. Point out the diversity within the lesbian and gay community and encourage them to continue looking into new aspects and services of the community (see also Question 1 in the education sector).

When is it better to recommend that a client stays out of the gay/lesbian community?

Generally the community is very supportive, but there can be situations when the client should concentrate on other things. To avoid disappointment, the client should be informed exactly what to find where.

How can I handle a client who is afraid of the gay/lesbian-community?

Don't force a client to visit the community right away. Discuss the client's needs in detail and work on different ways to satisfy them. Visiting the community is only one way of solving problems, and it is neither a "cure-all", nor "the route to happiness". It may take time before a person finds the right club/bar/group which best suits him or her. But making a first visit to the community may be the first step towards defining a new way of life.

“My friends sometimes ask me why we live in a ‘ghetto’, you know, bars, clubs, sport groups, centres or whatever, catering just to lesbians or gays. To them it seems as if we were building a wall around us, excluding others. But that’s not how I see it. The ‘community’ or ‘scene’ is a place where I can express my feelings without being afraid of insults.”

Imprint

Different in More Ways Than One.
Providing Guidance for Teenagers
on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality
and Respect

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Different in More Ways Than One.

Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality and Respect

8 History and Culture

“My friend from the gay/lesbian Jewish group “Sjallhomo” is probably the only person I can talk to about this,” thinks Aaron to himself as he makes his way to the meeting centre. The thoughts in his head are so mixed up that he can’t make sense of them anymore. He likes his teacher, Mr. Lanssen, who teaches History, Philosophy, and Dutch, Aaron’s favourite subjects. He has often wondered whether his teacher being understanding about so many things has anything to do with being in a wheelchair, and therefore constantly having to fight the stereotypes against disabled people. Since Aaron realised he’s gay, he started being more and more interested in finding out which famous figures in history, philosophy and literature were also homosexual. Could it be that Mr. Lanssen was trying to conceal this important information? Maybe he was crazy to give homosexuality such an important place in his life, but... everything had changed since he realised that he was gay. For many questions, gays see the world through different eyes. That’s why he had to know if any of the free thinkers, freedom fighters or great writers had been gay, too. Their lessons in school didn’t say anything about it. Over the last six months, he had distanced himself more and more from his classes and his classmates. When he’s sitting alone in his room, he has no problems learning things, but his participation to the classes is now close to zero. In History and Philosophy, he had always been a very active student.

“Aaron, I don’t appreciate losing my best pupil’s interventions in our discussions. I’ve noticed for some time now that you haven’t been participating in class. Are you having problems at home, or maybe love problems? We’ve always been able to be open with each other. What’s going on?”

to be continued on page 8 and 9

Framework

First of all

Love and sexuality between two men or two women have existed since the beginning of humankind. Only the conditions and forms through which they were experienced were different. On the contrary, lesbian and gay identities are relatively modern. These concepts were only possible after the invention of the term “homosexual”. Today there are multiple identities that exist next to each other and don’t always fit into one special term or expression (e. g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, queer, transgender, etc.)

First of all it has to be said that history as taught in books is a history of men. Therefore we only know of a few examples of women and lesbians in History. The invisibility of lesbians in particular is one of the specific forms of structural discrimination they face. This is the reason why there is a gender imbalance in the examples given in this map.

Because of social prejudice, sexuality between men and between women has for a long time been prosecuted in European history. This prejudice has first been justified with theological arguments, and later pseudo-scientifically.

This is the reason why homosexuality has been declared an illness or mental disorder in the 19th century. Today’s scientific research has proved the opposite: Gays and lesbians are as healthy as heterosexuals (see also chapter “health care”).

Different sources prove that inside European history, there have been women and men who exclusively had sex with persons of the same sex at the latest since the early modern times – although these relationships were characterised as a “sin” and a “crime”, and the death penalty has been used as a punishment for it. Prosecution of homosexual acts has been abolished in all European states – in France in the late 18th century, in other countries during the 20th century. The current term “homosexuality” was created in the 19th century to combat the opinion that homosexuality was a crime. Since the end of the 19th century there have been political and social organisations for homosexual women and men. During the 20th century, women’s liberation as well as the lesbian and gay movement and the general liberalisation concerning sexuality made it possible for more and more homosexual people to develop a positive identity as lesbian or gay.

Basic information

Over time, homosexuality has taken different forms and been expressed in many ways. In some periods of history, and in some current societies, homosexual relationships or homosexual/lesbian contacts have taken the form of same-sex bonding between warriors, mentor relationships, gender mixing and gender swapping, or women assuming the role of men in society. In others, there are ‘gender inscribed systems’ in which one does not talk about ‘homosexuality’ but only makes a distinction between active and passive sex. Usually, in such societies, “passive” sex is less honourable than “active” sex. This prejudice is a carbon copy of the unequal division of gender roles in traditional sexist stereotype. In this construction “passive” men are seen as women and therefore seen as inferior. All these forms differ quite a lot from ‘modern homosexuality’ which means same-sex consenting relationships between adults who identify as gay or lesbian. In such ‘modern’ relationships, the sexual behaviour and the division of tasks is a matter of mutual agreement, not of tradition.

Culturally accepted forms of same-sex relationships

In ancient Greece, same-sex relationships were accepted and encouraged on the condition that they were carried out between older and younger men. Relationships between men were a means of reinforcing the rules and customs of masculine power, of transmitting philosophical knowledge and of reinforcing the bond between warriors. Native Americans had a special respect for the so-called ‘two-spirited’ people, the ‘Berdaches’. These people were neither man nor women. They were often revered experts in the art of medicine. Some Native American cultures consider sexual preferences and gender identity as being non-related. Another conception of same-sex relations may be seen in the original Indian religion where, before the onset of current patriarchal philosophy, aversion against same-sex relations was unknown. There were even homosexual divinities, as can still be seen in temple sculptures and in epic books, poetry and literature.

The influence of the monotheist religions

In countries where the three biggest monotheist religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) are predominant, homosexuality has been strongly stigmatised for millennia. Although same-sex relationships have existed in Europe and the Orient throughout history, Christianity, as well as Islam, deemed such behaviour unlawful, and pushed homosexuality outside the margins of heterosexual norms. Medieval women were sometimes denounced as witches when they were too independent of men, particularly when they lived with other women. In 16th-century Italy, intimate same-sex bonding and sexual relationships among young men were very common, while sex with a woman before marriage was strictly forbidden. In those times, it was quite common for lords, servants and friends to sleep in the same bed. The question of same-sex relationship partly left the realm of theology with the onset of ‘sexual science’ in the 19th century (Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Sigmund Freud, Magnus Hirschfeld).

Even now, people have very different views on same-sex behaviour. Next to open lesbian and gay lifestyles, one can find a lot of ‘unmentioned’ same-sex practices, especially in some Mediterranean regions. In some Islamic cultures, same-sex attraction is seen as natural and very seductive, although it is forbidden by the Koran. As long as Muslims do not show such preferences publicly, a lot of same-sex practice is condoned, especially given the strict taboo on heterosexual sex before marriage. Despite the claims of many fundamentalist activists, homosexuality can in no way be thought of as an entirely novel or as a “Western” or “colonialist” phenomenon.

What does this mean for me?

The historical development of sexual lifestyles (including same-sex relationships) is a relevant discussion topic both in schools and in counselling contexts. Understanding how cultural definitions and identities change over time is useful as a general historic and geographic skill. However, this is not just a philosophical exercise. Historical and cultural definitions help to construct reality. Reflecting on the changes in historical and social development can make young people more aware of the origins of current lifestyles. It can provide insight into how definitions have formed over time. This can help break through the rigid perspectives young people may have on sex and sexual lifestyles and help empower them to make up their own minds.

Education

Bear in mind

Dealing with history is not an objective science. It has often been used as a tool in legitimising or opposing change. But by becoming aware of historical developments and influences, people can recognise how their current situation has been shaped by the past and they can change their situation. What is your view on this?

Many scientists believe that morals, ideals and practices of sexual and gender relationships form an important part of social control. These morals, ideals and practices have changed over time. What is your view on this?

How have historical developments influenced your own sexual and relational experience? Which factors have limited or stimulated your self-consciousness about your gender identity and role, your sexual preference and sexual and relational practice? Which of these aspects would you like to share with your pupils?

Sexuality and homosexuality are an interesting and controversial part of social and cultural history. How do you deal with social and sexual history in your lessons? How do the many forms of homosexuality fit in with this?

What are the most important things you want teenagers to take from your lessons about this?

Education

Tools

Storytelling/Oral history

Aim: to make teenagers aware of the way they were raised to perceive sexuality.

Method: All pupils tell something about how they were raised. Question them on how they learned about gender identity, sex roles and about sexuality. Ask them as well what information they missed and how they compensated. An alternative could be to ask the pupils to interview their parents and grand parents (or guardians) about how they learned this. Have them discuss as well what messages they wanted to give to their own children, what they found difficult about that and whether they think they succeeded. As a second stage, the pupils can discuss which differences they see between these stories. Make them discuss conflicts that may have arisen between caretakers and children, or between people in the same generation. How were these resolved?

Another follow-up can be to ask the students how they want to raise their own children. What will they do when their children have opinions that differ from their own? What if their child thinks she/he has lesbian or homosexual feelings?

Please note: Bear in mind that the student may be embarrassed to disclose some elements about her or his private life or sexual orientation. What's more, for the parents and grandparents, being interviewed on subjects such as sexuality may be a bit disturbing and even confrontational. Prepare the pupils for this beforehand and take care they don't transgress the adults' personal boundaries.

Heroines and Heroes

Aim: to explore the importance of role models in history for people with gay and lesbian feelings.

Method: Ask the students to list famous historical figures they consider as role models. Explore why these people are important: as examples of creativity, independence, strength, honesty and so on. Check which role models are chosen by minority students and explore whether this has something to do with their condition. Then tell the students that having role models is especially important for minorities. Ask them why and help them formulate their opinions. (Because minorities are seen as weak or bad, positive role models help correct negative images.) Expand the discussion to homosexuality by asking which role models are important for lesbians, gays and bisexuals.

You may also choose to discuss historical figures that are important to lesbians, gays and bisexuals (see FAQ). Alternatively, you could show a picture of a non-European role model for lesbians, gays and bisexuals, like Oum Khalsoum (Egyptian singer). You could also discuss more recent examples like Virginia Woolf, Oscar Wilde, Freddy Mercury, Dusty Springfield.

Please note: Depending on the intellectual level and interest of your students, you could go into a more personal discussion about current lesbian, gay and bisexual role models like pop stars or into a more academic and historical discussion about why lesbians, gays and bisexuals feel the need to know about gay or lesbian historical figures – for example, why it was so important for many lesbians, gays and bisexuals to say that homosexuality was 'normal' among the ancient Greeks. Another powerful option is to go deeper into images of gays and lesbian in media or film (for example the documentary 'The Celluloid Closet') and discuss it with the students.

Education

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the counselling and health care sector.

Where can I get information about lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in history?

There is a lot of interesting information on the Internet under www.gayhistory.com. The International Gay and Lesbian Archive and Information Service (www.homodok-laa.nl) can refer you to all kinds of specific information.

Which historical figures were homosexual?

Many. To name a few: Sappho, Socrates, Plato, Alexander the Great, Aristotle, King David and Jonathan of Israel, the Roman Emperors Hadrian, Trajan and Heliogabal, Richard I (the Lionheart) of England, Erasmus, Montezuma II of the Aztecs, Edward II of England, Henry III, King of France and Poland, James I of England, Louis XIII of France, Karl XII of Sweden, Christina of Sweden, Peter I of Russia, Frederic II of Prussia, Christian II of Denmark, King (Statholder) of Holland William III (later King of England too), Alexander I of Russia, Ludwig II of Bavaria and the last Chinese emperor Pu Yi.

However, for most of these examples, it is not very 'historically' relevant that they were homosexual, in the sense that their homosexual feelings or relationships did not in themselves make a difference for history as such. But the same goes for famous heterosexuals in history. Still, for many lesbians, gays and bisexuals such historical figures may be important as role models.

How much do I have to know about sexualities in history and culture in order to teach?

You don't need to know great quantities of information. The most important part is to know and to be able to transfer the diversity of emotions, morals, attitudes and practices over times and places. Of course it helps to have some examples of that at hand. However, such examples can be elicited from the students during the lessons as well.

What happened at the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street?

An important historical turning point in gay rights was the outbreak of riots at the Stonewall Inn a bar for lesbians, gays and transvestites on Christopher Street in New York City. This was the first case of organised resistance by homosexuals against ongoing harassment and raids by the police. The bar was regularly raided and the patrons were insulted and arrested by the police. The police often gave the names of the arrested to family and employers, which often led to social ostracism and to individuals losing their jobs. During a raid in June 1969, the Inn's patrons knocked out a police officer. The next day, the gay movement in New York organised a demonstration which ended in a fight with the police and resulted in full-blown riots going on for several days. This event is celebrated in many countries with an annual gay and lesbian pride demonstration. It is a pity that many people have forgotten that the original resistance was started by transvestites, some of whom were black.

“Will my grades stay the same even if you’re not satisfied with my class participation?” Aaron stares at his shoes, embarrassed.

“Of course not. Since I know that something’s troubling you and that that’s why you’ve become so silent, I’d like to make you an offer. Write something on a theme related to Philosophy and History. If you can make a great presentation, you’ll be back on track, OK?”

“Thanks, Mr. Lanssen.”

To go to the university, you have to have good marks on your final exams. But could he risk working his question about possible famous homosexual personalities in History, Philosophy and Literature into his oral presentation? Wouldn’t Mr. Lanssen flunk him immediately?

Aaron is certain that there have always been gays and lesbians throughout history, but that these cases have been hushed up. He just had to find them.

“Shalom, Aaron, you seem to be lost in thought.” Josef takes him in his arms with a big smile. “Is there anything wrong, my love?”

“Oh, Josef, I have to do an oral presentation in front of my class.” And then Aaron tells him the whole story.

The others from “Sjalthomo” come closer, one by one, to listen to him.

“I’ve been wondering which famous women in history were lesbians. It’s important to know, and besides, it’s exciting,” commented Yael.

“Have you already tried the Internet?” asks Dani, who always looks up everything on the Web.

“That’s a good idea,” reflected Aaron. “Can you help me?”

“I’ve already researched your question, Aaron. After all, I’m a student of Philosophy.”

Aaron turns to stare at Josef.

“But you never even told me” exclaims Aaron, surprised.

“Better late than never,” joked Josef. “Now, Aaron, if you want to save your grade in History and Philosophy, I you should choose to study Erasmus of Rotterdam. He was born in 1469 and lived until 1536. He was revolutionary for his time; he was a theologian but also a pedagogue. In reality, he was much more of a humanist than a theologian and he was famous in his own lifetime. He even campaigned for the equality of women. He lead the emancipation movement on various levels. And the best part is that he was gay. Choose him as your essay topic, Aaron. It will be great, you’ll see. I’ll help you.”

“All right,” said Aaron with a smile.

“Mr. Lanssen, I’m preparing my presentation and I wanted to discuss the theme with you. Only if you have time, of course.”

“I’m glad you took up my offer so quickly. What’s the essay about?”

“It’s essentially about Erasmus of Rotterdam. That name must mean something to you.”

“As indeed it should. Erasmus of Rotterdam is still considered to be the founding father of enlightened thought.”

“Did you ever stop to think that maybe Erasmus had a very personal motive for representing the humanistic school of thought?”

“To be honest, no. But you’ve thought about it?”

to be continued

“Yes, that’s why I selected him. Did you know that he was gay?”

“Oh...! No, I didn’t know that. And you think that his homosexuality gave him the impetus for enlightened thought?”

“Unfortunately, it’s too late for me to ask him – it’s just a theory. But that’s the basis of my essay.”

“It’s unusual and it will perhaps make you interested in my lessons again. That’s true, isn’t it?”

“Yes, I didn’t want to keep my homosexuality a secret from the others any more.”

“A very personal motive, then” says Mr. Lanssen with a smile. Even if I agree with your choice of topic, Aaron, I would like you to keep in mind that in Erasmus’ time, homosexuality was not as accepted and talked about as it is today, and it definitely wasn’t called that way. It’s always very tricky to force a definition on someone who can’t say anything about it any more. I’ll accept your topic with this one limitation, is that okay?”

“I’ll have to think about it a little longer, then” answers Aaron.

“May I take a look at what you’ve already written?”

“The introduction is already finished. The part about Erasmus of Rotterdam still needs to be formulated. And the last part will deal with the link to our modern times. I’ll need another week for that.”

“That’s fine,” said Mr. Lanssen, as he began to read.

History is like a field of flowers in the spring, filled with souvenirs of past journeys and biographies telling stories. One can always find what he looks for. The millennia of human history has produced millions of personal stories and in many of them people have asked themselves the same questions about being in love or being proud, being accepted or being persecuted. Such situations have already occurred many times, sometime, somewhere...

For a long time, ancient Greece – the country of Sappho - has been seen by lesbians, gays and bisexuals as a kind of paradise. But even at that time in history, Athens’ laws restricted homosexuality. It was felt that men should have a wife and children. In a limited sense, a relationship between a man and a boy was accepted as a part of the boy’s education. Sometime this relationship was one of passion, sometimes it was more for educational purposes. But for the lovers, growing up was hard.

The first persecutions of homosexuals began in the time of the early Christians. In ancient Rome, Emperor Augustine (313) subjected gay men to castration; by the end of the century, they were even being burned. Some examples of homosexuality reappear in the 12th century with “amour courtois” (chivalrous love), which was not limited to heterosexual affections. Although we don’t know much about the homosexual aspects of amour courtois, the pope declared that such love affairs should not involve homosexual dimensions. This implies that there were indeed chivalrous homosexual affairs before he made his statement.

During the Renaissance, some artists expressed themselves more visibly in a homo-erotic way. The writings of Plato were translated. Although homosexuality was still officially forbidden at this time, some men were gay including Leonardo da Vinci. At 24 years of age, he was persecuted because he had a relation with a boy of 17. Later, he had a relationship with young Caprotti which lasted for 25 years. Michelangelo was proud of his identity and his work was an ode to loving men.

“I just can’t wait to see how it continues,” said Mr. Lanssen. “I’ll finish reading next Friday.”

the end

Counselling and Health Care

Bear in mind

We all live in a cultural and historical context which determines, at least partly, our thoughts and feelings. The influences of history and culture should be a matter of reflection, above all for those who interact with women and men in the course of their work, such as doctors, psychologists, social workers, etc. Your own personal history has an influence on the way you deal with clients. Many of us are not aware of this and it is often not taught in professional education. Which particular culture do you belong to? Does it have an influence your professional behaviour?

Even scientific theories are subject to historical and cultural changes: for example, until a few decades ago, psychiatry, psychology and psychoanalysis considered homosexuality an illness. This view is no longer considered correct because of new scientific findings and, above all, a new cultural sensibility. What is your opinion on this?

It is not always easy to talk about sexuality in counselling, but it is very important. What were you taught about sexuality when you were growing up? What effects has the history of homosexuality had on your culture? In what ways has it existed in the history of your culture? How has it changed over the years?

In sessions with clients, you might encounter open or internalised homophobia. However, to oppose a culture's homophobia does not mean you should impose the current lesbian and gay culture upon it. Respecting cultural differences should not be confused with non-critical acceptance of the many cultural variations of right and wrong.

Counselling and Health Care Tools

Individual Counselling

Identifying Historical and Cultural Messages about Homosexuality

Aim: to explore historical and cultural messages about homosexuality which are relevant to the client's personal situation.

Method: Give the client something to read about views on homosexuality in history and culture. Ask your client what messages about sexuality and homosexuality he/she has learned when growing up. Explain how their own history or culture influences the way they perceive themselves as being gay or lesbian. Compare this with another story that shows a different view on homosexuality (it is particularly useful if you can find a story from the client's own culture).

Please note: Whichever readings you choose, they should somehow be linked to the client's current situation. It could give examples of role models, it could help to soften rigid opinions or it could give a concrete context to heterosexual norms that limit the client's frame of thinking or behaviour.

An Extended Family Tree

Aim: to explore historical and cultural messages about homosexuality that are relevant to the client's situation.

Method: Let your client draw an 'extended family' tree (with all people who are socially relevant for the client) with these questions:

1. Where does everybody fit in?
2. Where do they come from, where were they born?
3. Which of these people had an important role in teaching you about your history and sexuality?
4. Which of these people gave you messages about homosexuality? What kind of messages?
5. Which members are important to keep in the extended family tree – which of them will support you and your feelings?
6. How can you deal with the people who might not be very supportive or who might be negative?
7. How can you add more people who will support you to your extended family tree?

Please note: This exercise may take several sessions or may be an aspect that returns to sessions several times. Don't push clients to answer the last questions when they are not psychologically ready for it. Some clients with homosexual feelings will feel such a loyalty to their current social network, that it may be difficult for them to imagine alternative choices. Furthermore, in some extreme situations, giving homosexual feelings a place in their life may create a rift with the traditional family.

Advice for intercultural communication

- You can win your client's trust by asking questions about their family. Many non-Western cultures are less Me-oriented.
- Be honest to your client concerning your lack of knowledge about cultural customs.
- Be aware that in some hierarchical cultures counsellors have much more prestige and are seen as more of an authority.

Counselling and Health Care

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the education sector.

How do I deal with cultural differences when communicating with my client?

It is more important to have an open attitude than to have a lot of knowledge. A bit of background information and factual knowledge (for example certain words) can break the ice. Don't be afraid to be honest to your client about the differences and about your knowledge.

Is effective counselling possible when counsellor and client are from different cultures?

Yes, It is. In any case, the counsellor should know the client's culture or have experience with people from different cultural backgrounds. Obviously, understanding is easier when counsellor and client share the same cultural patterns: in this situation the client can feel more comfortable because he/she can leave out obvious and culturally rooted meanings. Sometimes, however, it may be preferable to refer the client to a colleague from the same culture that you know is gay and lesbian friendly.

What can I do in cases of multiple discrimination / double minority (for example being gay and Muslim)?

A case of double minority is particularly difficult when the client's identification as homosexual is in conflict with his/her cultural or religious identification. In such cases, the aim should be to help the client integrate the parts of the two cultures that are in conflict. This then creates a sort of biculturalism, a new personal synthesis of the two cultures, which allows the client to move between the two cultures with the highest degree of adaptation. This flexibility and ability to use a double cultural code permits the client to use the resources of each culture in accordance with different needs and situations. Culture is not something which cannot be changed.

How do I deal with the issue of sexuality with clients who have strong feelings of shame?

Remember that sexuality and shame are always intertwined, in all cultures. Sexuality in general is a difficult but important issue to talk about in counselling gay and lesbian clients. Non-directive questions can be asked or you can ask your client to write down sexuality issues instead of openly speaking about them.

“In school and elsewhere, nobody talks about the fact that same-sex relationships existed in the past, and that they are common in many cultures nowadays. Yet I find it so important to know that there actually were people who used to feel very much the same as I do. I, too, want to know where I come from and where I belong.”

Imprint

Different in More Ways Than One.
Providing Guidance for Teenagers
on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality
and Respect

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Different in More Ways Than One.

Providing Guidance for Teenagers on Their Way to Identity, Sexuality and Respect

9 Different Religions

- <Teresa> Are we going to talk today about religion today?
- <Aaron> Yes, that's the topic.
- <Almira> I think it's great that you've chosen this subject
- <Julie> Before we really start – and also because it's part of the subject: who wants to go to the next Europride among you?
- <Koray> If you tell us what it's about, I could think it over *:-)*
- <Julie> Gays and lesbians from all over Europe meet within the framework of the Gay Pride Parades and organise an intercultural week, on different subjects. One of them could be religion, I think. But I don't want to go there without you.
- <Koray> You mean, that we would prepare a given topic, and then organise an event together there?
- <Julie> That's right.
- <Aaron> Through Internet, without knowing each other?
- <Almira> I don't have the feeling, that I don't know you. Think about Elsa and Chloé – they really found each other through the chat.
- <Aaron> I'm convinced. *;-)* So, who starts ?
- <Kristin> I come from a very religious family. I think that's why I never found the nerve to tell my parents that I am a lesbian.
- <Koray> What would happen?
- <Kristin> I have no idea. Strict Christians refuse homosexuality.
- <Julie> My parents feel that God must have had a reason when He created homosexuality – they think that everything has been created by God, and that's the explanation.
- <Kristin> Could be, but God has also allowed evil, my parents would say. Adultery for instance is forbidden, and so is murder.
- <Julie> In any case homosexuality is not formally forbidden in the ten commandments

to be continued on page 9 and 10

Framework

First of all

It is widely believed that all religions are against homosexuality. Although some religious texts seem to condemn homosexuality, in practice it is mainly fundamentalist and other traditionalist believers who denounce homosexuality. Non-fundamentalists, on the other hand, often have a more tolerant attitude. Many religious texts usually denounce specific forms of male homosexual behaviour. Lesbian behaviour, however, is seldom mentioned. This is linked to the de-sexualisation of lesbians which is part of the specific prejudice against female homosexuality (because of the sexist notion that women “don’t matter”). Lesbians, gays and bisexuals often have problems with the church or with religious beliefs while they are growing up. But many will remain religious, although they sometimes leave their church because of discrimination.

Basic information

The attitude of the Christian Churches towards homosexuality

In its official statements the Roman Catholic Church condemns homosexuality. In its eyes homosexual acts are in contradiction with the Church’s official attitude towards the deeper sense of sexuality which is to procreate life. In this opinion catholic moral theology even today is strongly influenced by a concept of nature that has been fully developed in the 19th century. The current Catechism of the Catholic Church states that there is a predisposition to homosexuality that is not changeable. From this point of view one is supposed to consider people who have this tragic predisposition with “sympathy and respect”. However, concrete homosexual acts are still rejected as they are regarded as a serious sin. Homosexuals should – “perhaps also by means of a selfless (i.e. not sexual) friendship” – live in sexual abstinence.

In the past years in some of the Protestant Churches in Western and Northern Europe a process of discussion on the question of dealing with and pastoral care for lesbians and gays has started. Some national sections of the Protestant Church (including one American branch of the Church of England) are very open and choose lesbians or gays as priests or celebrate blessings of two women or two men. However, there are also so-called evangelical Free Churches and parishes that take a strictly conservative position similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church.

In both confessions there are always single persons, groups or theological directions that differ from official positions and statements – both being more conservative or more liberal (e.g. theology of liberation). One should therefore be very careful in judging a church and take into account the diversity within the institution.

The attitude towards homosexuality in Judaism

In Judaism as with the Christian religions, there is on the question of homosexuality a strong divide between orthodox and liberal movements. On the whole, orthodox movements tend to ban homosexuality, on the basis of the condemnation seemingly expressed in Leviticus XVIII,22, and in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, even with some orthodox movements, it is unclear whether this ban applies to homosexuality as such: some commentators have argued that the ban concerned only prostitution, rape, or sexual intercourse with a man and a woman at the same time. Some American and Israeli Jews have contested, even within orthodox movements, the received interpretation of the texts quoted above.

Reform synagogues are generally more open about homosexuality, and some European Reform rabbis celebrate blessings for gay and lesbian couples (some are even openly gay or lesbian themselves). There are many Jewish LGBT groups, such as Beit Haverim in France and Belgium, Sjalhomo in the Netherlands, Re’uth in Austria (Vienna) and Yachad in Germany, that can offer information and support and defend gay and lesbian rights within Jewish institutions.

The attitude of Islam towards homosexuality

Although Islamic law condemns homosexuality there are many allusions to (male) homoeroticism in Islamic literature. Close body contact, holding hands or kisses between persons of the same sex in the public, often misunderstood by strangers as signs of a homosexual orientation, are a usual behaviour and more likely a result of the segregation between the sexes that leads to the fact that a close contact to one's own sex becomes a matter of course while the other sex stays distant. Because of stronger social restrictions women rarely say anything about sexuality in public and we therefore have very little historical traces concerning this aspect.

Orthodox Islamic notions on homosexuality are nearly always very negative. They contain clear condemnations or awful threatening speeches against this "great sin" that must be punished. But the Koran can also be interpreted in a more liberal way. From no quotation a clear statement on same-sex love as it is known today can be justified. The Hadith, however, mostly take a condemning tone. They are a collection of traditional reports, of which only a few can be attributed to the prophet Mohamed himself, and not all of them have to be respected.

Islamic law (Sharia/ fiqh) poses a problem. Most Islamic schools of law provide death penalty for anal intercourse among men (liwat). This is executed in some Islamic countries. Islamic legislation, at least the criminal law, does not necessarily have a religious value for Muslims, because it has been written by men and not by God. This argumentation may help some Muslim lesbians and gays to reconcile their sexual orientation with their belief. In the last consequence individual belief and personal way of life is a question of individual decision.

Hinduism

Indian culture is marked by a strong social division. Social behaviour is defined by what one may and must do within the limits his or her own caste. Practically no-one is allowed to differ from the norm. In all strata and castes of society, a patriarchal and heterosexist order is predominant, although this order is being eroded in urban centres. Even in the Kamasutra, a courteous erotic manual, the homosexual practices which are described are clearly ranked lower than the straight ones. One must also realise that the majority current of Hinduism assigns sexuality to the realm of the Maia, the world of appearances and illusions, and therefore does not hold it in high esteem. Tantrism, however, offers different perspectives.

Buddhism

The aim of buddhism is to free oneself of dependence. The less one has sex, the less one depends on the world, and therefore the freer one is to discover one's true Self. But this path to the self is something that depends on every individual's choices for him or herself. The only prescriptions concerning sex are exclusively directed towards monks, and not to others. The main recommendation, the basic ethic principle is that one should not harm others—including through sexuality. In the Pali-Canon, the "bible" of Buddhism, homosexuality between monks is condemned, but it is apart from that not conceptualised.

What does this mean for me?

Religion is an important aspect of one's own values system and cultural background. Often a person's religious identity is mainly formed before they become aware of their sexual orientation. Religious belief can be one of the deepest aspects of an individual's personality.

Religious spokespersons sometimes give one-sided views of religion or of the meaning of sacred texts, which can serve to spread social and internalised homophobia. If a fundamentalist way of thinking is expressed one has to reply that constitutionally guaranteed human rights such as the right to develop one's own personality have precedence.

In counselling and education, it is important to show the diversity of different views and to explore what religion means to young people on a personal level.

It is never wrong to clarify personal feelings. Teenagers need to be supported in their choices despite contexts that may morally condemn homosexuality. The difference between religious and cultural specific opinions should be made clear to them. If they do want to take a stand which condemns homosexuality they should bear in mind that tolerance and respect are cardinal human virtues and a basic law of society. Explore how to deal with different views of norms and values and empower teenagers to define their own sense of morality.

Education

Bear in mind

Belief takes many different forms. Fundamentalists believe the holy texts give literal guidelines for a moral life. Non-fundamentalists also take into account that the texts collected in the Holy Scriptures reflect the ideas, opinions and moral judgements from the times in which they have been written. Liberal groups place more emphasis on the personal responsibility of each man and woman to define “proper” and “improper” behaviour. These very different points of view are reflected in the different approaches to teaching about religion. Fundamentalists (and to a lesser degree other traditionalists) tend to teach in an authoritative way. Liberal groups permit more personal choice and may even denounce the role of priests, rabbis or imams who presume the right or duty to tell others what is right and what is wrong. Many people will try to find a middle road between these visions, one which incorporates the rules of the Holy Scriptures with cultural-religious norms and their own personal needs.

Where would you place yourself on this continuum? Where do you think your students fit? What does this imply for your relationship with the young people?

What is your moral view on homosexuality? How do you deal with students who don’t agree with you on such issues?

Note that in many religions, believers have different opinions on many moral questions, e.g. on war and peace, on environmental affairs, on the treatment of refugees, etc., even within more traditionalist groups. When dealing with such topics, people usually show a certain degree of tolerance or acceptance for the different choices of others. Why then is there less room for different choices in matters that have to do with sexuality?

Education

Tools

Write to Christina

Aim: to initiate a discussion about the relationship between homosexuality and the Church and to promote empathy with people's problems.

Method: Tell the pupils this story: "Christina is Catholic and deeply religious. At the same time, she feels very attracted to women. Recently she fell in love with Mary-Ann, and now she has no more doubts about her feelings. But she finds it very difficult to combine these feelings with her religion and the reactions of her parents and some of her friends. She writes anonymously to the Question & Answer column of a national magazine: 'My parents and my own Church condemn lesbian relationships. But I read that in some protestant churches, lesbians can marry. What should I do?'"

Have the students write a letter to Christina where they try to offer help and ideas. Discuss the merits of the different types of advice given.

Please note: The pupils will probably come up with several different types of advice for Christina, ranging from denying her feelings to accepting them. Focus on the pupils' letters. Discuss their opinions about personal feelings and the relation between religion and cultural/social intolerance. This exercise will work best in multi-religious groups.

Tolerance

(you may choose to use another title like Universal Human Rights, Humanitarianism)

Aim: to encourage mutual respect and tolerance in a religious context.

Method: Begin by telling the pupils that the concept of "neighbourly love" is an important virtue in all world religions. Ask them first if they share this value. If they do, ask them to discuss how this relates to lesbians, gay and bisexuals.

Please note: It is advisable to know the arguments and counter-arguments pupils may use in the discussion (for instance, loving your neighbour can imply that you not let her/him sin – the care for your neighbour shouldn't limit her/his freedom of choice). Do not allow the discussion to concentrate on religious texts or on religious rules. Focus instead on the spiritual and 'warm' aspects of religion. It is important to treat pupils as equals in this discussion and not to 'preach tolerance'. Accept negative feelings about homosexuality and explore how pupils deal with these feelings, even if the pupils feel that respect and tolerance are in principle important virtues.

The “Cure”

Aim: To explore the myth that homosexuality can be “cured”.

Method: Start by telling the pupils that some fundamentalist Christians think that homosexuality is a mental disorder that can be “cured”. Ask them what they think of this idea. Let them research this viewpoint as well as alleged therapies for homosexuality by searching the Internet and have them write a paper describing their findings (if you use the search term “gay cure” on the Internet, you will find a range of recent debates on this issue).

Please note: Only try this exercise if the subject has been raised in class because you expose students to fundamentalist propaganda. Provide pupils with balanced information on the so-called cures for homosexuality. Basic information should at least make clear that “changing” homosexual feelings into heterosexual feelings is not possible.

Education

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the counselling and health care sector.

What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

The answer to this question depends on the interpretation and on how one understands the Bible. Two main directions to interpret the Bible have developed. One of them understands the Bible as influenced by its historical, cultural and religious context. Not all interdictions and rules of the Holy Scripture are considered as relevant today: for instance the interdiction to wear textiles of mixed fibres (Lev 19,19) or various rules regarding the obligation to make sacrifices. This school of thought acknowledges the fact that the Israelites kept aloof from other religious cultures by banning everything that was connected with those religions. In this perspective many quotations that are used to denounce homosexuality appear in a different light. The other way to interpret this is a fundamentalist one that takes “literally” even today every word in the Bible, although this way of thinking is not consistently followed throughout the text but only if it fits ideologically and if it helps to support a conservative perception of the world. Regardless of the traditions of interpretation it must be said that it is in theory problematic to ask the above-mentioned question to the bible because the term “homosexuality” and the concept itself date from modern times. The knowledge about a constitutional sexual identity that concerns the whole personality of a person didn’t exist in biblical time.

Two frequently quoted sections in the Bible have been misunderstood for a long time in Christian tradition. The history of Sodom in the book of Genesis is about violating the rights of hospitality and the readiness to resort to violence and not about a manifest homosexual orientation of all inhabitants: it deals with the “sin of xenophobia”. Likewise, the relevant passages by St. Paul (1 Cor 6,9-11; Rom 1,26-27) cannot any longer be construed as an explicit condemnation of same-sex lovers given that St. Paul’s crucial values include humanity and respect for every single person and the acceptance of God’s universal grace.

What does the Koran say about homosexuality?

Contrarily to current opinions, the Koran is not a book of law. In the “holy book” there is no expression for “homosexuality” and also no word for women or men that feel attracted or have sex with partners of their own sex. However, many Muslim scholars and laymen are convinced that the Koran clearly condemns and forbids homosexuality. To prove this, the story of Lot (Arabian: Lût) and his people is often quoted (this story also appears in the bible namely as story of Sodom). However, the Koran does not explicitly mention sex or homosexuality, pederasty or anal intercourse. The men accused are married and can not be compared to gay men (lesbian women) like we understand these words today. As has already been remarked concerning the story of Sodom in the bible, one must realize that the story of Lot is about offences and rape, and about injustice, and violation of the right of hospitality but not about anal intercourse. The subject of the story is therefore not (homo-)sexuality and in no way love and relationship. It follows therefore that this story cannot be used to condemn homosexuality.

How should I deal with religious prejudice in my classroom?

Explain that there is a wide diversity in religious beliefs and attitudes, between fundamentalist and more liberal beliefs, and between religious and cultural beliefs. Start a discussion about diversity in the group. Promote respectful conduct between the pupils and encourage self-reflection and dialogue.

How do I deal with the religious opinions of parents?

Explain to them that the school has the task to give an overview of religious views and to stimulate mutual understanding and respect among the pupils. Tell them you will help the young people to define their own personal relationship with God, Allah or their church and that you will encourage them to discuss this with their parents. Ask the parents for suggestions on how you can effectively deal with topics of religion, diversity and respect with their sons or daughters.

<Kristin> *I should tell that to HuK. Good argument, Julie!*

<Aaron> *What is HuK?*

<Kristin> *The organisation Homosexuelle und Kirche (Homosexuals and the Church). I have been there a few times. They are nice people. They fight for equal rights. They argue for instance, that Jesus never specifically said anything about homosexuality. Neither in a positive nor in a negative sense. They also say that for example Saint Paul could not speak about homosexuality because the concept only appeared in the 19th century. In any case he supported the freedom of choice of partner. *;-)**

<Koray> *Sounds reasonable.*

<Kristin> *Of course, but the strict Christians interpret it differently.*

<Koray> *My parents also don't know that I'm gay – but for me it's not so important and I have other problems, that I think are much harder to cope with.*

<Aaron> *and do they have anything to do with religion?*

<Koray> *It's more about the relationship of the non-Muslim homosexuals with us, as also with the whole Muslim world's reaction to me being gay.*

<Aaron> *Does that mean that you don't belong to any group?*

<Koray> *Yes, that's the way I see it. Just imagine, what would happen if told a non-Muslim gay man that I'm Muslim. He'd be baffled and reply "that can't be: either you're gay or you're Muslim".*

<Kristin> *Why's that?*

<Koray> *I'm afraid it's the same all over the world In Austria in any case I am first and foremost a foreigner – who could never be gay anyway – that's the way many people see it in the gay community . But if I added, on top of it, that I'm Muslim, that's it, there's no way for them I could still be gay.*

<Aaron> *Yes, I can understand that. There are bad stereotypes even in the gay and lesbian community, aren't there?*

<Koray> *I don't know how it is with you Jews. With Christians, at any rate, I have the impression that the family isn't all that important. That's why for most Christians coming out isn't as difficult. But my family is really very important for me, and I for them. The social ties are simply too strong and important for us all – especially if we've been brought up in a different culture. I think that's good. A family should always stick together.*

<Aaron> *@Koray: A Yiddische Mamme should not be underestimated *;-)*. We'll talk about it later. What are you aiming at?*

<Koray> *I think that my family is more important than the nicest gay community (but please don't take it personally). I'll probably get married and still keep my partners. Tell us, Aaron, what happened to your yiddische Mamme?*

<Aaron> *The yiddische Mamme can hardly be ignored. There is this syndrome of over-protection. She always wants the absolute best for her child. Cannot possibly be contradicted. But back to you once again Koray – is there no Muslim gay group near you? Surely you're not the only one?*

to be continued

<Koray> No, of course I'm not the only one. But I think there is no such organisation here.

<Aaron> A friend in Germany told me that he's an activist in the Türk-Gay group – check the Internet as well – they have their own Website.

<Koray> Good idea, thanks

<Almira> I'm also Muslim; but a Bosnian Muslim. In Kosovo, where I am to be deported, I would probably have to wear a headscarf, and marry. Homosexuality there can even mean death.

<Koray> Oh dear, you'd better stay here, then, shouldn't you?

<Almira> Yes, I think so. My parents know now that I'm a lesbian. At first I was convinced that they would disown me forever, but they didn't, Koray. Maybe your fear is a bit exaggerated?

<Koray> I'll chat with these people of the "Türk-Gay" group and keep you posted, okay?

<Julie> Okay Koray – next year, will you go to the Europride?

<Koray> I'm working at it *;-)* Aaron, now tell us, it's your turn

<Aaron> I'll tell my parents in any case, and I also think that they'll understand. For me it's important to be able to keep on trusting them, and for them to trust me. Secrets would have terrible consequences in the long run. Neither one of them would ever want that. And about Jewishness – it's not a nationality. Just to be clear. Some in our gay-lesbian group are religious, others not. But we're still Jews, because our parents are Jews.

<Kristin> Would you like to say something about homosexuality and faith, anyway?

<Aaron> Of course. Orthodox people of any religion are against homosexuality, I think. The three religions do not differ at all. But in the Jewish world there is a very strong liberal-progressive current, which makes up about 60%, or perhaps more of all Jews. I suppose it's the same for Christians, and I hope that there is a similar evolution in Islam. But I'm no great expert on the other religions, as I said earlier on, so I think it would be better if the others said something about that, because I can only talk about what happens in Judaism, okay?

<Kristin> Sure thing, I'll take care of the liberal Christian enlightenment, shall I? *;-)*. I've also read something about liberal Islam. Many Muslim feminists are fighting for a liberal turn.

<Aaron> Thx Kristin. Apart from the fact that men and women have equal rights in liberal Judaism, there is also a great openness with respect to homosexuality. In New York for instance, there are LBGT communities with 3000 members.

<Julie> Wow – sounds nice 😊

<Aaron> Yes, and in London there is a College in which are trained only those men and women Rabbis who do not have any problems with homo-sexuality. They are carefully checked before they can start.

<Almira> Sounds wonderful. Will you tell us about it at our great event at the next Europride?

<Aaron> I'd love to, I'll be there.

the end

Counselling and Health Care

Bear in mind

Physical health

Some people consider that counsellors should be able to partially dissociate themselves from their own religious convictions. What do you think – is this ‘objectivity’ possible for you?

If a counsellor tacitly condemns a client’s moral position, what effect does this have on the ability to listen to a client’s questions? To what extent do you think your religious convictions influence your behaviour towards a client (for example, do you think it is acceptable or viable to advise a client to totally abstain from sexual relations)?

As a counsellor or school doctor, you are probably seen as an authority figure and you may have a strong psychological impact on a young person. Even though you may think this is not very relevant because you mainly take care of physical health, this may be more important than you realise. Consider how you interpret signs of stress, how you deal with questions about (gay or lesbian) safer sex. It is important to be aware of your own religious background and of how religion influences our own morality, even when caring for a person’s physical well-being.

Mental health

Religion becomes part of our moral code in the course of our development; it plays a role in helping us learn what we should or should not do. When religious topics or issues enter the counselling process, it is of the utmost importance for counsellors to recognise their own religious convictions; attempts to appear “neutral” can question the client/ counsellor interaction. The counsellor should ensure that their personal beliefs do not influence the counselling process. For instance, if a client’s conflicts with respect to homosexuality derive from their religious convictions, and if these are echoed by the counsellor’s own beliefs (consciously or unconsciously), this could cause damage to the client’s mental health. Are you able to recognise your own religious convictions? What moral codes are important to you? What role do these codes play in your counselling?

Every counsellor carries her/ his own set of norms and cultural expectations. If in the course of the discussion conflicts around cultural or religious values arise the counsellor might want to discuss them openly. Do you recognise possible unresolved inner conflicts you may have concerning your own religion? How do you deal with them in your sessions? How do you deal with a client who is of another religious denomination than your own? In which situations is it better to continue working with a client who may be difficult to coach, and when is it better to refer them to a colleague of the same religion?

Counselling and Health Care Tools

The Spiritual Guide

Aim: To provide a starting point for exploring religion in the client's life and to identify the problems she/ he is facing. The exercise could provide some possible solutions.

Method: Ask the client to imagine a situation in which, together with a friend, they meet a priest, rabbi, imam or a spiritual guide. Give clients some time to imagine the situation on their own and afterwards ask them to talk about it. What happens during the meeting?

If the client is not able to imagine how the spiritual leader may try to guide them, have them imagine instead that their close friends are asking them critical questions about their life and their needs.

Please note: This exercise can be used in a group as well as in individual counselling. Be aware that for some, the image of a priest, rabbi or imam may evoke negative rather than positive feelings. Let the client choose a character which they consider to be a real spiritual guide.

Balancing Sex and Religion

Aim: To explore the role religion plays in an adolescent's life. The exercise tries to help the client establish a personal balance between the expression of their sexuality and the profession of their religion and values.

Method: Ask the client to talk about the place of religion in their life. Next, investigate the attitude held by relevant religious figures towards homosexuality. Discuss the historical and cultural relativism of religion as a mix of spiritual and social aspects as well as a means of providing social control.

Explore if religion is an important aspect of a person's identity. When religion is a strong and undeniable part of the client's personal identity, suggest they make contact with homosexual religious groups (if possible). This may help the client find a support network and social identification.

Please note: This exercise can be used in group as well as in individual counselling. In a group session, religion can be a central theme and be dealt with by having a discussion with only one client or by discussing the theme among the whole group. Involving the whole group can be useful when religion is a main issue for all the clients.

In this discussion, it is vital to distinguish between religious norms and spirituality. Norms usually address the relationships between humankind, spirituality and its relationship with the divinity. In cases where religious norms are very uncompromising, emphasis should be put on a personal relationship with the divine, without crushing hope or trying to alter norms.

Role Playing in Group Counselling

Aim: to explore possible ways of solving personal dilemmas relating to religion and homosexuality.

Method: Have one client play the role of a lesbian girl and another play the role of priest. The girl wants to talk about the conflicts she is facing and goes to ask for spiritual guidance. (Naturally, a boy can also play this part, or you can vary the exercise by using a bisexual role.) After a few minutes, change roles. The rest of the group observes. Have as many clients as are willing play one of the roles. When the discussion between the girl and the priest seems to offer no new viewpoints, ask the group what they noted and felt as players and as observers.

Please note: If the clients are hesitant to play a lesbian woman or a gay man, take the role of the homosexual yourself first. It will help if you play the role somewhat 'inadequately'; this may encourage others to improve on your performance.

Counselling and Health Care

F.A.Q.s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Please also refer to the F.A.Q.s for the education sector.

How should I approach the situation where a client's religion prohibits homosexual acts?

It is fundamentally important to understand the place that religion occupies in the life of that client in order to understand whether it is possible to distance her-/himself from traditionally outlined behaviour patterns, especially if these are opposed to homosexuality. There is a need for solid therapeutic support to work on conflicts relating to homosexuality. A counsellor needs to understand how many conflicts originate from religious prohibitions and/or from the wider parental and cultural expectations. Explain to the client that not all the texts in the sacred books should be taken literally.

My religious beliefs condemn homosexuality. Should I agree to counsel a lesbian or gay client?

Religious convictions enter into therapy as do all aspects of a counsellor's personal background. If a counsellor has religious convictions that go against homosexuality or homosexual behaviour, he/she should probably abstain from treating homosexual clients and rather refer them to an appropriate colleague. The therapist needs to be aware of ambivalent feelings towards homosexuality.

Is it possible to practice your religious belief and live openly as a lesbian or gay man at the same time?

Yes, it is. Many lesbians, gays and bisexuals are able to reconcile a happy private life and a peaceful relation to their religions. Some have even joined particularly progressive churches or groups (this is especially true for some protestant denominations and liberal Judaism). Sometimes these churches can have blessings for lesbian or gay couples or have openly homosexual priests. There are also secular lesbian and gay organisations, which care about the reconciliation of homosexuality and religion.

“On the topic of homosexuality there is still a wide gulf between everyday life and traditional clerical teachings. I personally find the disapproving attitude of religious leaders towards gay lifestyles dispiriting. Very often I feel I am rejected just because I’m gay – that makes me both angry and sad.”

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