

# Homophobia

## **What Is Homophobia?**

An intense, irrational fear of lesbians and gay men, and the hatred, disgust, and prejudice fostered by that fear. The term is widely used to describe any belief or behavior that indicates fear or hatred of lesbians and gay men.

Homophobia can be experienced at several levels:

- the fear or hatred of persons who are lesbian or gay
- the fear of being perceived as lesbian or gay
- the fear or hatred of one's own attraction to members of the same sex (which is referred to as internalized homophobia)

The fear and hatred which comprise homophobia can be expressed through a variety of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory actions, such as:

- indicating discomfort or disgust toward individuals who are or are perceived as lesbian or gay
- denying equal treatment to individuals who are or are perceived as lesbian or gay
- harassing or engaging in violence against individuals who are or are perceived as lesbian or gay

## Examples of Homophobia:

- Making assumptions about a person being lesbian or gay based on dress, behavior, or personality
- Feeling repulsed by displays of affection between same-sex couples, but accepting affectionate displays between different-sex couples
- Thinking of people who are lesbian and gay only in terms of their sexuality, rather than as whole, complex persons
- Being afraid of social or physical interactions with people who are lesbian or gay
- Avoiding social situations or activities where you might be perceived as lesbian or gay
- Assuming that lesbians and gay men will be attracted to everyone of the same sex