

Action Steps for Interrupting Heterosexism

1. Stop Heterosexist Behavior

- Notice and ask people not to tell heterosexist jokes.
- Notice and stop heterosexist language in yourself and others.
- Establish guidelines and professional expectations. Enforce them gently but firmly.
- No name calling, joking, etc.

2. Educate Yourself

- Go to more workshops.
- Read about LGBT issues (see bibliography).
- Talk about the issue with others.
- Attend LGBT events.
- Go to see films with gay/lesbian characters or themes.
- Join organizations (NGLTF, HRC, NASW gay caucus, etc.).
- Make some LGBT friends.

3. Support Change in Others

- Acknowledge when someone is non-heterosexist.
- Rename heterosexist acts and comments as unfair or unbecoming.

4. Initiate and Prevent

- Plan strategies together as a staff.
- Develop an office policy statement against heterosexism.
- Analyze training materials for heterosexist bias.
- Write to members of the state legislature and Congress to support gay rights legislation and to oppose anti-LGBT rights legislation

5. Model Non-Heterosexist Behaviors

- Don't joke or tease someone for non-traditional gender behaviors.
- Avoid heterosexual credentializing - making a point of your heterosexuality.
- Don't assume that anyone/everyone is /are heterosexual.
- Don't assume that heterosexual relationships take precedence over same-sex ones.
- Use terms like "partner" and "friend," not "boyfriend" or "wife," etc.
- Value same-sex friendships.
- Use neutral examples for pronouns.
- Expand your repertoire of interests to non-traditional ones.

Adapted from Social Issues Training Project, University of Massachusetts, School of Education, 1984.