

7 EASY WAYS TO BE INCLUSIVE:

CREATING AN AFFIRMING ENVIRONMENT FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL and TRANSGENDER MEMBERS OF THE ITHACA COLLEGE COMMUNITY

#1 - Know General Definitions

When talking about gender and sexual orientation, many people want to use correct terminology, but don't have useful definitions. This is especially true when discussing gender. Remember that people use different criteria for identifying these groups and that no one can assume another's identity based on these definitions. To get a general idea of the terms used to talk about gender and sexual orientation, go to the LGBT resource center website in the resource section.

#2 - Include LGBT-themed flyers, posters and publications in your classroom and office.

When you include LGBT-themed materials in your classroom and office without drawing special attention to them, you help to create an atmosphere where LGBT people do not feel excluded or singled out for their gender or sexual identities. For example, hang a poster for LGBT History Month when it occurs in October, the same way you would hang a poster for Black History Month when it occurs in February. If you feel comfortable, you can hang a safe space card in your office. Call the LGBT Center for more information.

#3- Use inclusive language at all times

Using inclusive language means talking in a way that does not specify a gender, sex, or sexual orientation unless it is pertinent to the comment. For example, it is unnecessary to point out that a student is a woman unless the comment is specifically discussing the relevance of gender. You can also substitute the inclusive terms, "partner" or "significant other" instead of specifying "husband/wife/spouse". Here are a few more examples for you to use:

- "are you dating anyone?" instead of "do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?"
- "students turn in their papers" instead of "each student turn in his/her paper"
- refer to the student's "family" instead of "mom and dad" (this includes students who may have single, step or LGBT parents or alternate guardians)

#4 - Remember that you don't know anyone's sexual orientation or gender identity unless they tell you

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people come in all sizes, abilities, colors, styles, political persuasions, religious affiliations, cultural backgrounds, relationships statuses, educational histories and ages. In short, there is just as much diversity among people who identify as LGBT as there is among those who identify as heterosexual.

#5 - Have an inclusive curriculum.

It is important for all students to be able to relate to examples and case studies used in the classroom. In gerontology education, you can make sure to highlight the unique issues and concerns of LGBT elders. In international studies, you can teach your students about ways laws, policy, and societal expectations may impact LGBT people differently depending on the culture in which they live. It may also be helpful to have an expert speak about the issues of LGBT elders, or about the challenges and opportunities that face LGBT people across the globe.

#6 - Confront comments that are heterosexist or gender identity biased when you hear them.

Once you are educated about LGBT people, step in and educate others. Respond when you hear others using non-inclusive language, making derogatory jokes, using incorrect assumptions/stereotypes, voicing misinformation, etc. Tell them why you think their comment was inappropriate and how they can improve it. Feel free to give them a copy of the tip sheet!

#7 - Don't let tension around sexual orientation or gender identity continue to be unaddressed because you don't know what to do.

You are not alone in this process. There is help on campus. The Center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Education, Outreach and Services and the Office of Human Resources have staff and resources to help you and your department work through any issues that may arise.

Center for LGBT Education, Outreach and Services: (607)274-7394
Office of Human Resources- (607) 274-3847

Division of Interdisciplinary and International Studies*

** one in a series of resources promoting LGBT inclusion on campus. This series includes versions tailored for H&S, Park, Business, HSHP, and Music schools available from the LGBT resource center website.*

Resources-

Professional Organizations:

American Society on Aging Lesbian & Gay Aging Issues Network -
www.asaging.org/networks/LGAIN/lgainlinks.cfm?category=hsg

International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission - www.iglhrc.org/site/iglhrc/

International Lesbian & Gay Association - www.ilga.org

NAFSA Association of International Educators Rainbow Special Interest Group -
<http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/>

Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders - www.sageusa.org

The Task Force - Aging Issues Workgroup- www.thetaskforce.org/issues/aging

LGBT Resource Center Books:

Copper, Baba. Over the Hill: Reflections on Ageism Between Women. Crossing Press: 1988.

Ellis, Alan. Gay Men at Midlife - Age Before Beauty. Routledge: 2001.

Miller, Neil. Out in the World: Gay & Lesbian Life from Buenos Aires to Bangkok. Vintage Press; 1993.

Sang, Barbara and Joyce Warshow. Lesbians at Midlife. Spinsters Ink Books: 1991.