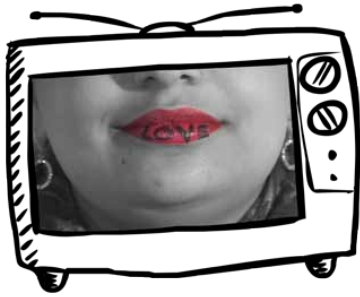


Sexuality Matters

'Metamorphosis':

GRADES
4-12

Exploring Gender and Sexual Identity



This lesson enables students to reflect on how cultural and media influences have contributed to the development of pre-conceived notions of sexuality and gender identity. Students will have an opportunity to engage in activities and discussions that will challenge their thinking, behaviour and understanding of the issues and experiences that LGBTQ people face.

🍎 Lesson developed by James Chamberlain, Anti-homophobia educator.



Estimated Time: 1.5 - 2 hrs (2 class periods)



NOTE: It is important for students to have some prior knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ terminology and definitions and some anti-homophobia education around issues of name-calling and harassment based upon sexual orientation or gender identity (See Definition Jeopardy – see end of lesson) and “Power staircase”.



Goals

- ✓ To better understand the challenges that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) students face in schools and society.
- ✓ To reflect upon and question childhood influences and media messages about sexuality and gender identity
- ✓ To analyze factors contributing to a safe and caring school community (e.g., respect for diversity, prevention of harassment and intimidation)
- ✓ To develop an awareness and appreciation of sexual diversity



Prep/Materials

- DVD player
- Youth MADE Video Metamorphosis
- A class set of What I learned about Sexuality and Gender identity charts on 8 ½ X 14 paper.
- Chart paper
- Felt pens
- Multi-coloured sticker dots (6 colours)
- Student Reflection Journals



Energizer: Step into the circle (10 minutes)



☆ Explain to students that you will be reading numerous statements aloud and they will be asked to step into the circle if the statement is true for them. If the statement does not apply, they should remain in their places. Each person must decide for himself/herself whether or not to self-identify. Explain that they will be doing this activity in silence.

☆ Optional preamble:

Sometimes the 'common ground' and diversity within the group isn't obvious. We're going to get a chance to witness this in (supportive) silence.

☆ Read out the following statements:

Step into the circle...

- If you've ever felt judged because of something you couldn't change about yourself
- If you've ever judged someone else because of something they couldn't change about themselves.
- If you've ever made any homophobic remarks before
- If you care about someone who is LGBTQ
- If you've ever felt alone, like you were the only person going through something
- If you've ever felt supported by friends or family
- If you've ever struggled with being your whole self with your parents/guardians
- If you've ever struggled with being your whole self with your peers
- If you feel comfortable being your whole self in your school

☆ Thank the group for their honesty and their courage in participating in this activity and tell them that some of these statements will be addressed in the following lesson activities.

Activity 1: Anticipatory Guide (50-60 minutes)



1. Ask students to think back to earlier grades and childhood experiences and to write down their initial thoughts about LGBTQ individuals from their earliest memories. You might use a key question to help them frame their writing such as:

What messages did your school, community or culture teach you about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people when you were younger?"

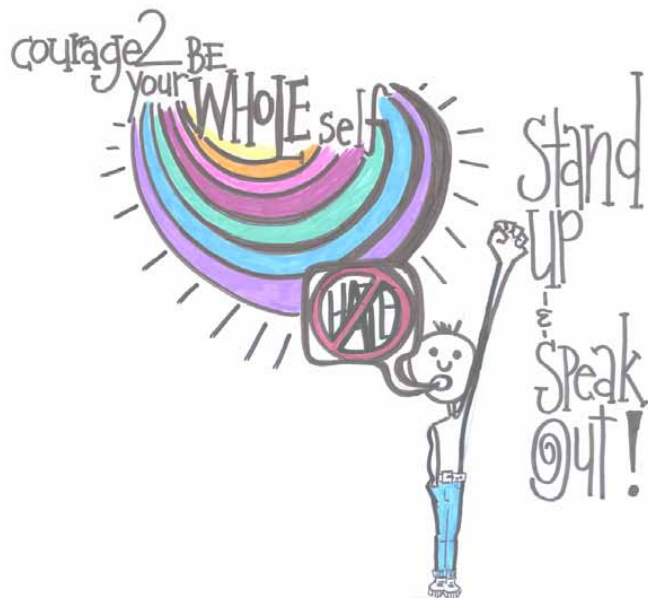
2. Have students do a silent write of one or two paragraphs about what they learned or didn't learn about LGBT people. Ask students to talk in triads about their prior learning. Then ask volunteers to share their thoughts with the class.

3. Encourage students to collectively brainstorm a list about where their information and messages about sexuality came from when they were younger. (i.e. schoolyard, media, family, church, etc.).

Ask students to think critically and analyze the source and if they believe the information was fair. Distribute a copy of the attached chart on legal-sized paper (8 ½ X 14) to each student to track their prior knowledge.

4. Explain how to complete the chart by using a personal example about one message you received about a specific population when growing up. You might use an example based on race, religion, class, age, ability etc. to draw analogies to other forms of oppression without leading the students with your own ideas about sexuality and gender identity.

Ask students to fill out the chart individually prior to watching the *Metamorphosis* video.



What I learned about gender identity...

Message about Sexuality: In a phrase, explain what you were specifically taught about heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender issues and other issues related to gender identity (e.g. masculinity, femininity etc.)

Source: Who or what told or taught these ideas or messages to you?

Message impact: How might these ideas or messages have influenced or impacted your thinking and/or behaviour about sexuality and gender identity?

| Message about Sexuality | Source | Message Impact |
|--|--------|----------------|
| Heterosexuality (opposite gender relationships) | | |
| Homosexuality (same gender relationships) | | |
| Bisexuality (relationships with men and women) | | |
| Transgender Issues (gender identity) | | |
| Other related issues: | | |

After completing their individual charts, invite students to work in small groups to complete a collective chart on a large piece of chart paper. Randomly assign or ask students to select the following group tasks:

- ☆ Recorder—records the group members' responses;
- ☆ Speaker—presents the group's responses to the class;
- ☆ Timekeeper—manages the time and materials and keeps the group on task;
- ☆ Encourager—leads the group discussion, encourages all ideas shared.

Ask the Recorders to recreate the chart onto the chart paper and to fill out the chart during the group discussion. Ask the Timekeepers to keep the group members on task and the Encouragers to facilitate the following discussion questions:

- What were the most common messages about sexuality or gender identity amongst your group members? How did these messages make you feel? How were your sources of information similar or different? Were the messages fair? Explain your thinking.
- How did these messages affect your thinking or behaviour when you first learned them? How did they affect you later in life? How do they affect you now?
- Do you still hear about any of the messages you've discussed? If so, which ones and what are the sources?
- Are there new messages about sexuality or gender identity that you hear today? What are the sources?
- How might media play a role in spreading messages about sexuality and gender identity?

Ask the Speakers to post their group's chart paper on the classroom wall and to share ONE aspect of their group's discussion with the class.

Next, distribute a set of different colour sticker dots to each group. Invite all students to do a 'Gallery Walk', to peruse the information from the other groups' charts. Ask students to place their coloured dot on any information on the charts that is true for them. Debrief this activity by discussing the patterns of dots and the students' common experiences.

Review the Staircase of Power to emphasize the impact that stereotypes have on our thinking and behaviour (Stereotypes+Belief=Prejudice; Prejudice+Action=Discrimination). Ask students how their earliest messages about sexuality and gender identity might relate to the Staircase of Power.



NOTE: Discuss how the messages that we received in our childhood may have perpetuated stereotypes about sexuality and gender identity. Also discuss how people tend to judge or prejudge individuals or groups of people based upon a very narrow set of criteria and misinformation.

Activity 2: Screening *Metamorphosis* (25-30 minutes)



Tell students that they will be watching a video that portrays a young man's struggle to be true to both his traditional culture and his sexuality. His testimonial describes his personal journey through homophobia and the complexities of identity, culture and family expectation. After the screening, engage students in the following debrief activity *Where we stand*.

- ☆ Move the desks against walls to clear a large space in the middle of the classroom
- ☆ Tell students that one side of the room will represent "Strongly agree" and the opposite side "Strongly disagree". The middle of the room represents the 'in between' part of the continuum.
- ☆ Explain that you will be reading out a series of statements and that they will be asked to move to the side of the room that best reflects their belief or understanding of the statement. Challenge students not to follow their friends or try to influence others' opinions and to move to their positions in silence. Let the students know that they are welcome to move from their original position to a new one if they feel that their opinions begin to change during the discussions.
- ☆ After reading out each statement (once the students have settled into their positions) ask a sampling of students from each 'section' to explain why they chose to stand where they are standing.



NOTE: If a student says something particularly provocative, or offensive, try to draw out the opinions, life experiences and knowledge in the room and keep the conversations going between the students rather than responding directly to the student. Use probing phrases such as: "What does everyone think of that comment?" or "How do other people feel about that?" or "Does that ring true for others?" "Would anyone like to respond to that comment?" If the student says something discriminatory or offensive then you will need to intervene and remind students of the need for respectful dialogue and that everyone in the room deserves a safe place to learn. If this approach does not do justice to the subject matter, it is a good idea to inquire further with the student who first spoke from their place of ignorance/privilege/anger. Questions such as, "Are there exceptions to that?" "Where do you think you might have developed that opinion?" or other questions that acknowledge and honour the students' voices and lead into a deeper discussion are often helpful.



Statements:

- ☆ This video opened my mind to a different perspective.
- ☆ It is completely safe for someone to come out in our school.
- ☆ I would be completely comfortable if my best friend came out to me
- ☆ It is completely safe for two boys to hold hands walking down the hall
- ☆ LGBTQ people are well represented in the media
- ☆ Members of our school community (students, teachers, parents, administrators, and trustees etc.) feel safe to be openly queer
- ☆ Social pressures make people hide who they really are in order to be accepted
- ☆ It is the responsibility of school and community leaders to help support youth through the process of discovering 'who they really are'.

Thank the group for their honesty and for their courage in participating and engage them in the following debrief questions.



Activity Debrief:

● For those who stood toward the “agree” side of the room when I made the statement, “Members of our school community (students, teachers, parents, administrators, and trustees etc.) feel safe to be openly queer, give some specific examples from your school community.

● For those closer to the “disagree side of the room”, please explain why you disagree. How do you feel about the last statement, “It is the responsibility of school and community leaders to help support youth through the process of discovering ‘who they really are’”.



Wrap Up: (15 minutes)

☆ Ask students to form their small groups and resume their group tasks. Distribute a piece of chart paper and one of the following questions to each group. Ask them to represent their ideas on the chart paper and to prepare to present them to the class.

☆ Group 1

What messages did the main character receive from peers, school environment, family and culture about homosexuality as a young child? Was this a common message for students in the class?

☆ Group 2

How was the main character treated by his immediate family? How did this make you feel? If you were in this situation, what might you do?

☆ Group 3

How did the main character try to escape from the messages of his family and some members within his community? What do you think he means when he says “I realized that the people I loved loved a lie more than the true me”. Can you relate to this statement in any way?

☆ Group 4

What does ‘being normal’ or fitting into the ‘mainstream’ mean to you? How does this video address these topics? How does this pressure affect your thinking and behaviour? What are some challenges that your peers might face if they don’t ‘fit’ into the heterosexual ‘norm’ of the school?

☆ Group 5

What do you think the main character meant when he said “Hate all looks the same to me”. Does this ring true for you? What does hate look like to you? What does it look like in your school and within your peer group outside of school?

☆ Invite the speaker from each group to present their ideas and facilitate a class discussion for the questions that seem to encourage more dialogue.

After the discussion, invite students to do a silent write in their reflection journals:

- What impacted you most about the video *Metamorphosis*?
- What are three significant things you learned about yourself or others during the lesson activities? What issues around sexuality or heterosexism are you still wondering about?
- What can you do to actively challenge homophobia and transphobia within our school or your peer group?
- What would you share if you were to tell a peer/friend about the impact of media on: your sense of self, your understanding of gender, your ideas about what is and is not beautiful and how you envision ‘success’.
- What are you most proud of? What are you ashamed of? Where do these feelings come from?
- What are the tensions between all the traditional vs. modern, and local vs. cosmopolitan influences in your life?



Assessment & Evaluation

- ✓ Assess that students have honoured the Class Community Agreements during the lesson discussions and activities (*You may also invite students to do self and peer assessments)
- ✓ Observe student engagement and assess how cooperatively students are working together during the small group activities. Look for evidence of active listening, participation and cooperation.
- ✓ Assess that reflection journal responses combine previous experience and learning with frequent references to class activities and discussions
- ✓ Look for evidence in students' reflection journals that students understand:
 - the impact/influence of media on sexuality and gender identity
 - the main messages from the video Metamorphosis
 - how cultural standards of gender identity and sexuality are constructed and represented.
 - their rights to feel safe, valued and respected in their school community and beyond
 - their roles and responsibilities in helping to create a school community that is safe and inclusive.



*You may use the following rubric scale to evaluate the above assessments: Powerful=5; Confident=4; Developing=3; Beginning=2; and Not yet meeting expectations=1.



Follow Up:

☆ That's so gay. Engage students in a discussion around the meaning of this phrase: How many times a day do you hear "that's so gay" at school? When people say "gay" what do they really mean? Brainstorm a list of the negative adjectives that 'gay' tends to describe (e.g. stupid, boring, wrong etc.) and highlight the hurtfulness and harmfulness of this phrase. Discuss what alternate language students could use with others to express their feelings without using the word gay in a pejorative way.

☆ Introduce the Kinsey Scale: 10% of our population is 100% heterosexual; 10% of our population is 100% homosexual; and the other 80% span the spectrum in between. Facilitate a class discussion on these statistics and the challenges that LGBTQ people face.

☆ Deconstructing Normal : Draw a box on the board and ask what is normal? fill in answers inside the box? What does our society say is normal? Where do we get our messages about what is normal? What does media say is normal? What does education say is normal? Clarify that there is really no OBJECTIVE definition of "Normal", but we're focusing on what various influences tell us about what 'normal' means. What can we do to filter those ideas about what normal is and isn't?

☆ Use student's written reflections and ideas and work with the school's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) club to develop personal and school plans of action to deal with homophobia and transphobia in a future lesson.

STEPS OF OPPRESSION

PRIVILEGE ('ISMS)
or Oppression

- Racism
- Sexism
- Heterosexism
- Ableism
- Ageism
- Classism

P
O
W
E
R

DISCRIMINATION

Under discrimination - 6 areas covered by legislation

- Race
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Ability
- Age, and
- Class

However, can also include;

- Language,
- religion,
- politics,
- appearance,
- size etc

(Re)
A
C
T
I
O
N

PREJUDICE

B
E
L
I
E
V
I
N
G

STEREOTYPES

STEPS OF FREEDOM / EMPOWERMENT

ALLY / CHANGE AGENT

Join with others or
Add numbers =
Social Movements/
Systemic Change
The REVOLUTION!!

A C T I O N

AWARENESS

Active L
E A R N I N G

Un-learning discrimination

HONOURING DIVERSITY

B E L I E F

OPEN-MINDEDNESS/
UNDERSTANDING