

Having Conversations with Pride

10 Tips for LGBTQ+ Conversations

Before

1. Have everybody introduce themselves with their names and pronouns:

Take note of what people say, and respect and use the names and pronouns people use. If you make a mistake, apologize, correct yourself and continue the conversation.

2. Examine your preconceived notions about the LGBTQ+ community:

You may already have thoughts or ideas about the LGBTQ+ community based on your experiences - and that's okay! However, these conversations might not line up with the thoughts or ideas you already hold.

During

3. Acknowledge inequality and privilege:

LGBTQ+ individuals face unique hardships like unequal rights and discrimination. It is important to acknowledge the privilege that straight and non-transgender (cisgender) individuals have living in a culture where their identities are considered the norm.

4. Recognize a diversity of experiences and perspectives:

LGBTQ+, straight and cisgender individuals all have unique perspectives navigating the world with various identities that affect their experiences. It is important to honor and learn from these different perspectives.

5. Emphasize the common experiences between LGBTQ+, straight and cisgender individuals:

LGBTQ+ individuals are people with their own unique stories, and your conversation should respect this by talking about common experiences and beliefs. Ask respectful questions, be open-minded, and find connections with each other.

6. Center the voices of LGBTQ+ individuals if they are part of the conversation:

Don't speak over LGBTQ+ individuals or assume you know more about their experiences than they do. Instead, make space for LGBTQ+ individuals to add to the conversation.

7. It's okay to make mistakes, but be open to others' corrections:

There is no shame in making a mistake as long as you acknowledge it and apologize. If someone tells you that you made a mistake or said something inappropriate, accept their criticism, apologize, and use the interaction as an opportunity to learn.

After

8. Reflect on the conversation:

Ask yourself: what did you learn from this conversation? Do you feel that your thoughts or ideas about LGBTQ+ folks have been affected? What can you take away from this conversation to better the lives of yourself and others?

9. Don't automatically expect LGBTQ+ people to educate you:

Educating others on LGBTQ+ topics is real and stressful work that not all LGBTQ+ individuals want to do. Ask LGBTQ+ individuals if they would be willing to help you learn before asking them for help.

10. Use discretion:

After you leave a conversation, keep the specifics of what was discussed private, especially information about individuals. However, what you learn about yourself and about how to be a better ally can be shared and implemented into your daily life.

Terminology

LGBTQ+ - Acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning” with a plus sign to recognize all sexualities and gender identities used by members of the community.

Lesbian - A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women. Used by women and some non-binary people.

Gay - Someone who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same gender. Used by men, women, and non-binary people.

Bisexual - Someone emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity (sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual).

Transgender - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Questioning - Used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexuality or gender identity.

Queer - A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations within the LGBTQ+ community. Often used as an umbrella term to include many people of different identities and sexualities regardless of specifics. Previously has been used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.

Non-binary - Describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. They may identify as being both, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside the binary of man and woman.

Cisgender - Adjective for someone whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Genderqueer - Refers to individuals who blur preconceived boundaries of gender in relation to the gender binary; they can also reject commonly held ideas of static gender identities. Sometimes used as an umbrella term in much the same way that the term queer is used, but only refers to gender, and thus should only be used when self-identifying or quoting an individual who uses the term genderqueer for themselves.

Gender Nonconforming (GNC) - An umbrella term for those who do not follow gender stereotypes, or who expand ideas of gender express or gender identity.

Intersectionality - Coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, this term refers to the overlap of social categorizations or identities, such as race and ethnicity, sexuality, gender, disability, geography and class that exist in an individual or group of people that can contribute to discrimination or disadvantage.



Sourced from:
<https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>
<https://pflag.org/glossary/>



Common Missteps

Confusing gender and sexuality.

Gender and sexuality are two separate parts of one’s identity and not inherently linked. Gender is one’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither. Sexuality is a person’s attraction to and desire to have a relationship with another person/people, or lack thereof.

"Outing" anyone (telling others about someone’s LGBTQ+ identity without their permission) to people outside the conversation.

Some people may be ready to come out to you or a small group, but not to everyone in their life. Ask individuals about their comfort level of discussing their identity and what name and pronouns you should use for them outside of the conversation.

Comparing the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals with those of people of color or of immigrants, or with the Civil Rights Movement.

These comparisons distance these audiences and limit discussion of intersectionality; and it is not an effective way to help others understand LGBTQ+ issues.

Assuming that everyone is on the same page about language usage.

Language that may have been previously appropriate may no longer be, but some LGBTQ+ individuals might not be comfortable with reclaimed language. For example, saying “preferred name/pronouns” should actually be “name/pronouns.” Additionally, some people may not be comfortable with the reclaimed slur, “queer,” as an umbrella term for the LGBTQ+ community, even though others identify as queer.