GLSEN SAFE SPACE

A How-To Guide for Starting an Allies Program

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For the How-To Guide for Starting an Allies Program

Introduction

Welcome and Congratulations!

Welcome to the *Safe Space* program manual, and congratulations on taking a step towards celebrating diversity in your school! GLSEN has created this resource for students, student organizations commonly known as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), teachers, parents, administrators, and other members of the school community who are interested in making their schools safer by increasing awareness of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) issues and anti-LGBT bias.

The *Safe Space* program manual will take you step by step through the process of implementing a Safe Space program in your school by teaching you to train allies, providing strategies for support and intervention when anti-LGBT bias occurs, and providing materials and ideas for making your program highly visible. We hope that after reading this manual, you'll see that implementing a *Safe Space* program is something all schools can do.

The *Safe Space* manual is meant to be used as a self-contained guide for planning a *Safe Space* program and ally training in your school, but remember to take a look at other GLSEN resources for information that can help you in your planning. The Jump-Starts, a series of resources created for student organizers, may be especially useful, and are available online in the GSAs/Student Resources section of the GLSEN website (www.glsen.org). Other resources can be found on GLSEN's BookLink, a catalog of GLSEN-recommended books, films and other educational resources. BookLink can help you find novels and videos for young people, as well books about LGBT history and teaching guides. All of these resources can help promote tolerance by educating people about LGBT issues. You can access BookLink through a link at the bottom of the GLSEN homepage.

Thank you for your commitment to changing negative attitudes and fostering understanding in your educational community. We wish you the best in your work towards creating safer schools for all!

Section 1

Frequently Asked Questions

Before you get started, you might have some questions about *Safe Space* and how it works. This section aims to answer some of those questions, and might come in handy when it's time to let your school community know what *Safe Space* is all about.

What is a *Safe Space*?

According to GLSEN's 2005 National School Climate Survey, a majority of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students feel unsafe at school and are likely to skip class or even days of school out of fear for personal safety. The research also indicates that students who can identify a supportive faculty/staff member or student group are more likely to feel a sense of belonging at their school than those who cannot. For many students, the presence of allies to whom they can turn for support—or even the simple knowledge that allies exist—can be a big factor in developing a positive sense of self, building community, coping with bias, and working to improve school climate. *Safe Space* programs increase the visible presence of student and adult allies who can help to shape a school culture that is accepting of *all* people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or other differences. (The results of GLSEN's survey are summarized on page 4 of the *Safe Space* handouts packet.)

Why should someone take part in the *Safe Space* program?

All students deserve to learn in an environment that is supportive and friendly, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. As you learned above, anti-LGBT bias affects the school performance, school experience, and mental and emotional health of the students who experience it. Protection of actual or perceived LGBT students is the exception, not the rule, in most schools across the country. Often, change has to start with the grassroots effort of a group that is willing to start positive changes through support, education, and publicity.

Another reason to participate that is just as valid as the reality of bias and its effects is the fact that homophobia and transphobia hurt us all. They discourage diversity, encourage hurtful behaviors, and put limits on our relationships and roles in the school community. Being a part of the *Safe Space* program will give you an opportunity to learn about yourself and others, and will help you make your school a better place for everybody—regardless of an individual's identity. With all these great reasons for joining, who wouldn't want to be a part?

How does a *Safe Space* program work?

The main purpose of a *Safe Space* program is to visibly identify people and places that are "safe" for LGBT students. This is usually accomplished through a sticker with a pink triangle, rainbow flag, or other recognizable LGBT symbol on it. When students and staff put stickers on their lockers, backpacks, binders, or office doors, it stands out as an affirmation of LGBT people and lets others know that they are a safe person to approach for support and guidance. Often the idea behind *Safe Space* stickers travels by word of mouth and there is no organized program within the school. Ideally, however, each participating school should have a *Safe Space* team made up of students and staff that publicize the program, hand out materials, provide basic training to allies who wish to be involved, and educate the larger school community about the meaning of the stickers and importance of building safe spaces for LGBT and all students impacted by anti-LGBT bias.

Who should take part in the Safe Space program?

Anti-LGBT bias and prejudice affects all members of the school community and it is therefore everyone's collective responsibility to work against it. Therefore, all members of the school community—students and adults alike—are potential *Safe Space* participants. Different people might have different motivations for joining. Maybe they are LGBT, or have a close friend or family member who is. Maybe they are perceived to be LGBT and have endured bias on the basis of their appearance or interests. Or perhaps they are concerned about any type of bias or discrimination in the school community. Whatever their initial reasons for joining, we hope that they would leave a *Safe Space* training with the understanding that standing up for LGBT rights is not a "gay thing", but a human rights issue about which all people should be concerned. Remember to especially encourage the following people and groups to participate, as their involvement could help strengthen your program: students and adult advisors in GSAs and other diversity/multicultural clubs, guidance and health staff, school administrators, PTA leaders, coaches/athletic staff, classroom teachers, cafeteria staff, and security and transportation personnel.

What is an ally?

While there are many out and empowered LGBT students who are more than capable of standing up for their own rights, allies have a special role to play in the Safe Space programs.

An ally is a member, often of the majority or dominant group, who works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for the oppressed population. The work of allies has been a historically effective way of changing the thinking of the dominant culture. In your social studies class, you might have learned about the Freedom Riders, a group of students, ministers, and others who rode interstate buses in an effort to test the enforcement of desegregation laws. Many of the Freedom Riders were White allies who stood up for the civil rights of Black citizens. Their work brought media attention to racist practices and helped force bus companies to abide by the law.

In the LGBT community, an ally is any person who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBT people. It is important for allies who are straight to demonstrate that LGBT people are not alone as they work to improve school climate, and to take a stand in places where it might not be safe for LGBT people to be out or visible.

Why do I need training in order to be a *Safe Space* ally?

Maybe you feel you are pretty well versed in LGBT issues, and don't need to sit through a training to be able to support your classmates. Maybe you feel that being supportive is a matter of common sense and doesn't require any special know-how. But there are a few good reasons for everyone who wants to be a part of the *Safe Space* program to attend the standard training.

- *We all were taught* not *to know*. The society we live in allows LGBT people and issues to remain largely invisible. Even though you might have good intentions, you might not know how to best support your peers. How much you know about LGBT people and the issues that impact them directly affects your effectiveness as an ally.

- *We don't have an "automatic response."* Most of us know how to put the brakes on overtly racist and sexist behavior. There are some slurs that, in no uncertain terms,

are deemed unacceptable for use in school and everywhere else. But when people hear anti-LGBT slurs being used, they often have no idea how to respond, and it's no wonder! Most people haven't been taught how. Training will help you learn an "automatic response" to anti-LGBT bias.

- *Standing up for LGBT rights is risky business.* Unfortunately, anti-LGBT bias still sometimes leads to violence. Allies need to know how to stand up for LGBT rights while being conscious of their own safety and security.

Is this program only about LGBT students? What about other groups who experience bias?

Safe Space programs focus on LGBT students for protection because this issue remains largely invisible in the classroom and in the law. Homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism are socially acceptable in many schools. Even in classrooms where bigotry is not tolerated, LGBT issues are often considered taboo and not appropriate for discussion.

While there is a need for programs that specifically address anti-LGBT bias, it is also important to acknowledge the interconnectedness of all prejudices. The same conditions that allow homophobia and transphobia to develop most likely promote racism, classism, sexism, ableism, and other forms of prejudice. Any effort to reduce one type of bias will probably help reduce other kinds of bias, and will help individuals from a variety of backgrounds feel safer. In this way, a *Safe Space* program focused on LGBT students may serve as a springboard for work in other areas.

Just as all forms of oppression are related, so too are the many identities within each of us. None of us are just one thing—we all have sexual, gender, religious, ethnic, racial, class, and other identities that combine in complex ways. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are also Black and Latina/o, Jewish and Muslim, rich and poor, deaf and mentally retarded. When LGBT people are targeted for harassment, it is often about more than just sexual orientation or gender identity. A *Safe Space* program that protects LGBT people should therefore be designed to incorporate other "-isms," such as racism and sexism, through coalitions and partnerships with other groups both on- and off-campus.

What does the *Safe Space* symbol mean?

You might recognize some of the components of the *Safe Space* symbol, which is a combination of the LGBT Pride flag and the gay pink triangle and lesbian black triangle. Perhaps you've seen a rainbow flag flying at an LGBT event, and maybe you've seen black or pink triangle buttons on shirts. Understanding the history of these symbols might give you an idea of their importance, and an understanding of their enduring popularity among LGBT people and their allies.

The history of the pink triangle begins before WWII, during Adolph Hitler's rise to power. In 1935, he revised a German law prohibiting homosexual relations to include kissing, embracing, and gay fantasies in addition to sexual acts. Convicted offenders, of which there were an estimated 25,000 between 1937 and 1939, were sent to prison and then later to concentration camps. Their sentence was to be sterilized, which was most often accomplished by castration. In 1942, the punishment was extended to death.

Each prisoner in the concentration camps wore a colored inverted triangle to designate their reason for incarceration. The pink triangle was for homosexuals. Estimates of the gay men killed

during the Nazi regime range from 50,000 to twice that figure. When the war was finally over, countless gay men remained imprisoned in the camps, because the law regarding homosexuals remained in the books until its 1969 repeal in West Germany.

Like the pink triangle, the black triangle is also rooted in Nazi Germany. Although lesbians were not included in the laws prohibiting homosexuality, black triangles were used to designate prisoners with "anti-social" behavior. Since the Nazi ideal of womanhood focused on rearing children, domestic duties, and church, black triangle prisoners may have included lesbians, women who refused to bear children, and women with other "anti-social" traits.

In the 1970's, gay liberation groups resurrected the pink triangle as a symbol for the gay rights movement. Similarly, the black triangle was reclaimed by lesbians and feminists. Not only are the black and pink triangles easily recognizable, they draw attention to oppression and persecution—then and now. To many, the black and pink triangles represent pride, solidarity, and a promise to never allow another Holocaust to happen again.

The rainbow flag has a much happier history. It first appeared in 1978, when it was flown during the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade. Gilbert Baker, a San Francisco artist, designed the rainbow flag in response to a need for a symbol that could be used year after year. Baker borrowed symbolism from the civil rights and hippie movements, and created a flag that has gained worldwide recognition. The different colors of the flag symbolize different components of the community: red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sun, green for nature, blue for art, and purple for spirit. A black stripe added at the bottom symbolizes a hope for victory over AIDS.

We've combined both of these potent symbols – the triangle and the rainbow flag – for the *Safe Space* stickers and posters. The emblem reminds us of the joy of the diverse, accepting community we hope to build through programs like *Safe Space*, as well as the struggle against oppression we face as we try to make that vision a reality. In addition, not all members of the LGBT community identify the pink or black triangles as personal symbols, so combining them with the rainbow flag makes a symbol that is accessible.

Section 2

Getting Started

Now that you have an idea of what a *Safe Space* program is, how it works, and why it's so important, it's time to make a *Safe Space* program happen at your school! You might be a student, a teacher, a GSA or other student club leader, a counselor, a coach, or a family member— as long as you are a concerned member of the school community, you are in a position to make your school a safer place. The next few pages will guide you through the process of starting a Safe Space program, which is pretty easy, although it might seem intimidating at first. Basically, what you'll be doing is:

- Seeking administrative approval for the *Safe Space* program
- Publicizing the program
- Training members of the school community to become *Safe Space* allies
- Distributing stickers to make allies visible
- Following up on the training by working on school improvement, documenting ally experiences, and planning other trainings and events for allies to attend

A Word to Adult Members of the School Community…

Maybe you are a parent, teacher, administrator, counselor or other adult member of the school community who sees a need for a *Safe Space* program and ordered this packet. Give yourself a pat on the back! Every student body needs adults like you who help make school a safe and supportive place. Now, get ready to pass the *Safe Space* torch on to the students.

Is there a GSA or similar student club in your school? Do you know some student leaders who might be interested in making a *Safe Space* program happen? Are there diversity or multicultural clubs in operation that might want to get in on the planning? Reach out to the students, give them this packet, and watch them get to work.

The *Safe Space* program is most effective when led by students. This doesn't mean that adults shouldn't be involved; schools would be much friendlier places if every staff and faculty member was trained to deal with anti-LGBT bias, and every member of the school community should be invited to the *Safe Space* training. But, since this program directly impacts the students' quality of life, it's wisest to put the reins in their hands, since they are the ones most likely to influence their peers and the climate of the school at large.

Of course, many student-run clubs and programs need faculty sponsors or advisors, and with good reason. Students may seek your help while planning the training, want to run ideas by you, ask you to act as a liaison between them and other members of the school community, and generally keep you busy as a vital part of the *Safe Space* team—or they might be comfortable doing all the work themselves. Listen to your student organizers, support them, take a comfortable back seat… and watch them empower themselves, each other, and the entire school!

A Word to Students…

Congratulations! You are gearing up to make your school a safer, healthier, more supportive space for every student there. Maybe you are working within a group of seasoned student organizers, through a GSA or similar student club. Maybe you're school is new to dealing with LGBT issues, and you're a bit apprehensive about rocking the boat. Or maybe an adult member of the school community has asked you to look through this packet and make a program happen. Whatever the case, planning the implementation of a school-wide program might seem a little overwhelming.

How overwhelming (or not) it seems probably has a lot to do with your particular school.
Some schools are more supportive of student-led initiatives than others, and getting the help and backing you need from teachers, administrators, and other staff can be challenging—but it is doable, if you know your rights, know the rules, know you responsibilities, and know your faculty and administration.

Seeking Approval

Implementing a *Safe Space* program involves working with your school's administration. Every school and district is different, and the way you go about seeking administrative approval should reflect your school's rules and track record in dealing with LGBT issues. If your school has a Gay- Straight Alliance or similar club, it might be easiest to have the club sponsor the *Safe Space* program. If you are starting from scratch—or if your school club wisely wants to broaden its base of support—you might want to take a few minutes to brainstorm allies who could be involved and/or make more of an impact with the school community. In any case, following the guidelines listed below, which can be modified according to your circumstances, should help you get your *Safe Space* program off the ground.

1. *Ask and you shall receive.* If you have a hunch that your school administration would okay a *Safe Space* program (your school already has a GSA or similar club, or offers protections against anti-LGBT discrimination or harassment), don't be shy. Just ask! If your proposal gets turned down, go to step two.

2. *Get back-up.* If you think you might get the brush-off—which means you might hear things like "we don't have a bias problem at this school", or "there are no gay students here, so there's no reason to institute a program"—then you should handle things differently. Reach out to potential allies and build a coalition. Remember to think broadly. Your school community is made up of much more than students and teachers. Family members, administrators, athletic staff, counselors, librarians, school health staff, cafeteria workers, security staff, and recess personnel can and should be involved, as a safe school environment benefits them as well as the students. Write their names down—then get out there and talk to them! Make copies of the FAQ section (pages 3 to 6) of this manual to share with them. Then you can honestly tell your principal that plenty of school community members want to see a *Safe Space* program happen.

3. *Wow 'em with your presentation.* Go into your appointment prepared with statistics (you can find some in the Handout Packet on page 2), testimonials from students and staff, and the support of others behind you. You might want to conduct your own

Local School Climate Survey to collect data on your school's attitude toward LGBT students and issues—you can find the survey on GLSEN's website (www.glsen.org) in the Students/GSAs section. Use the tips in the box below for making your request for permission successful.

4. *Know Your Rights.* Getting permission to run a Safe Space program—or any sort of LGBT-friendly program, club, or event—can be a challenge in some schools. You might have some lingering concerns that make you a little nervous about seeking permission from your principal or other school administrator. Knowing your rights can help you approach your principal with confidence. But, knowing you rights requires research—protections, rights, and laws around student-run programs and displaying symbols (like the one on your Safe Space stickers) vary by state and district. Contact your local American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to find out what student rights look like in your area. In general, though, getting permission to start may be easier if your Safe Space program is organized by a GSA or similar club. Under the Equal Access Act, students are entitled to engage in the activities of an approved club, unless the activities are disruptive to the health, safety, or welfare of the community. The Constitutional right to freedom of expression can, in many cases, protect the right of students to display Safe Space stickers, but since local interpretations vary, it's best to get the scoop from your ACLU.

What can I say? Making an impact with your principal or administrator.

So you have your appointment with your school principal or other administrator lined up. Administrators are notoriously busy people—you'll only have a few minutes to get your point across and make a great impression. Here are some tips for using those few minutes wisely.

1. Be direct. Let them know exactly what you're there for. *"I'm here today to talk to you about implementing a Safe Space program in our school."*

2. Tell them what a *Safe Space* program will do. *"A Safe Space program will help make our school a safer and friendlier place for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression."*

3. Give a brief rundown of how the program operates. *"The Safe Space program will host an after-school training to teach interested members of the school community how to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students and intervene in anti-LGBT bias. After completing the training, they will officially become 'allies', and will receive stickers, which they can place on their backpacks or binders, or display in their offices. The stickers will make them visible to students who might be seeking support."*

4. Tell them why the program is necessary. *"We think there is a need for a Safe Space program here because…"* Break out your statistics or Climate Survey results. Use anecdotal evidence you've gathered. Or have personal stories from students available to share.

5. Put the focus on safety. All school administrators have a responsibility to make sure their schools are safe (physically and emotionally) for the students who attend them. *"As you can see from these statistics / incidents / stories, the climate in the school is having an effect on the comfort, safety, and sense of belonging of many of the students. A Safe Space program will make our school safer for everyone here."*

6. Let them know you have support. If you fear resistance, let them know you have a coalition. *"Ms. Brown has agreed to be our faculty sponsor, and several teachers and counselors, as well as some student clubs, have all expressed interest in participating in the training."*

Section 3

Planning a Training

Your First Meeting

Now that you've taken the steps to secure your school's permission, the fun begins. It's time to meet and plan the school wide implementation of your *Safe Space* program!

Try to find a space that's comfortable, and get your materials in order: some things you might need are pens and paper, chart paper and markers, and, of course, snacks to keep everyone's energy up.

You and your planning committee should set an agenda for this first meeting. Having some sort of structure is a key ingredient in making any project fly—it allows you to maximize the time you spend together, and keeps you focused as you try to reach your goals. That said, your agenda for this first meeting doesn't need to be long and complicated. It should allow the participants to get to know each other, and should help you guide the meeting so that everybody leaves it with a clear idea of what your group's vision is and what each person's role is in making it happen.

It's also important that your group take a few minutes during this initial meeting to come up with some Ground Rules. Ground Rules, Working Agreements, or Group Norms are standards of behavior that group participants expect from one another so that a productive and respectful environment exists. They set a clear and positive tone that allows group members to interact comfortably and safely. As you plan, you might consider some of these questions and use them to shape your Ground Rules.

- *Who's in charge?* Will one person lead your meetings and delegate tasks, or are you sharing leadership roles?
- *How much is expected of committee members?* How much time are you putting into planning? How much work can each member realistically commit to?
- *How do we agree to disagree?* Chances are, there will be some differences of opinion when it comes to how to plan or facilitate the training. Will you decide what to do by voting? By consensus?

We've also included some Working Agreements or suggested rules on page 1 of the Handout Packet, which you can use to shape your committee's rules, and can use at the training as well.

Before the training, consider how you'd like to keep tabs on how the Safe Space program is going. It's important to document the work that allies do, for their protection, and to show that Safe Space works. This means recording incidents of intervention of bias, as well as all of the great changes you make and positive feedback you get. How you'd like to do your documenting is up to you. You could use a report form (we've included a sample in the Handout Packet on page 16) and hand copies out to participants, letting them know, of course, who to give completed forms to. Or you could keep a notebook in a designated place—a counselor's office, for example—for allies to document their experiences in. If a GSA is sponsoring the event, the notebook or forms could be held by a GSA leader and made available during meetings. However you decide to do it, documenting is a must!

Let participants know how you plan to document Safe Space related stuff- whether it is an incident of bias that an ally responded to, or the changes you've made in the library. Emphasize

the importance of keeping track of your experiences. Allies who respond to bias need to record clear accounts of what happened so they cannot be accused or responding inappropriately. And positive changes need to be recorded to support the need for the program—and so you can look back and feel pleased with all the hard work that's changed the school climate! Make sure that materials for documentation are readily available to allies as the program gets off the ground.

Since planning a training is no small feat, we've included a sample outline, with plenty of resources and handouts. Use the parts you like—or use the whole thing. Also feel free to use the many resources available on the GLSEN website to help you with the process. Jump-Starts might prove useful-- especially numbers 1 and 4, which deal with organizing a GSA and planning a teacher training, respectively. Check them out in the "Students" section at www.glsen.org. You can modify the strategies outlined in the Jump-Starts to suit your needs as you plan your *Safe Space* training. Here are some other basics to keep in mind as you plan.

Tips for Planning

- *Consider your budget.* Snacks, copies, art supplies, chart paper, video rentals, extra stickers: they all cost money. Figure out how much you'll need. It probably won't be *too* much. Ask your school to give you access to some of the supplies, or to the copier. If your GSA is sponsoring the event, they should help with the costs. If you still come up short, consider what you might be able to do without, and think about ways to get your hands on the needed loot. Members of your coalition might be willing to make small donations, or your PTA might come to the rescue. Ask!

- *Consider your date.* Since you want to get many members of the school community involved, plan wisely. Make sure the day and time you pick doesn't conflict with a big faculty meeting or other large event.

- *Many voices and faces.* One person doesn't have to do it all. Divide the training into parts and delegate them to different people.

- *Put time on your side.* As you plan, consider the length of your training. Too short, and people don't leave with all the info they need. Too long, and people are looking at their watches and wriggling in their seats. Decide what works best for your participants. Make sure all the activities you plan fall into the allotted time.

- *Practice, practice, practice.* Meet at least once to review the training; you may also want to videotape the training for facilitators to review, so that they can improve their presentations for future trainings.

Tips for Facilitation

- *Paperwork!* Use handouts and other resources for participants to review during and after the training. If you are planning to use a bunch of handouts during the training, it might be smart to make up packets to hand out to everyone instead of spending too much time passing out numerous resources. Instead of using five minutes to get each piece of paper distributed, you can just say, "Please turn to page five."

- *Visuals!* Use flip charts, videos, overheads or other graphic representations. You may want to use a computer slideshow presentation with a projector, if you have

access to this equipment. If your presentation is eye-catching, people will tend to remember it.

- *Stickers!* Purchase stickers of different popular cartoon characters or animals, and give a sticker to each participant to wear during the training to help you divide into activity groups quickly and easily. You can just call out, "Frogs over here, and cats to the back of the room." Help participants mix and mingle by using different sticker combinations for different exercises. For example, frogs and mice can work together on one activity, frogs and dogs can collaborate on another.

- *Different people, different "places".* Remember that not everyone is in the "same place" when it comes to having knowledge about LGBT issues and how to deal with anti-LGBT bias. Most people attending will be there because they know they have lots to learn. Respect that, and keep in mind that there are no "dumb questions"—only openings for great dialogue. Also, stay away from judging those who didn't make it to the training. Maybe they're just not ready, maybe they feel shy, or maybe they had another commitment. Once they hear how wonderful and welcoming your first training was, they'll be begging you to host another one!

Section 4

Get the Word Out! Outreach and Publicity

Your training is coming together. Maybe some people at school have heard the news and are talking. It's time to turn the buzz into a roar with outreach and publicity!

Step One: List Potential Allies

Nothing is more important than the participants during your *Safe Space* training. The key to success is to let as many people as possible know about the training and how they can participate. As you start your outreach campaign, always remember your faculty, staff, and administrative allies. Their help is invaluable when you're trying to reach out to the school community.

Make a list of people or groups that you think might be supportive of the *Safe Space* program. Write down every person and group you can think of, and don't be afraid to be adventurous in your choices; you'll never know unless you ask if someone will want to participate. Try asking the following groups to participate:

- LGBT and ally groups
- Women and Feminist Groups
- Racial/Ethnic/Cultural Groups
- Religious Organizations
- Student Government and Leadership Groups
- Athletic and Recreational Groups
- Academic Groups and Clubs
- Faculty
- Staff (security, custodial, transportation, nurses, and cafeteria staff need to know how to respond to bias, too)
- Administration
- PTA

Step Two: Get in Touch

Okay, so we've basically told you to talk to anyone and everyone associated with the school. Big job, huh? It's not as hard as you think. Here are some ways to break it down:

1. *Make a list*. Write down any groups your planning committee members belong to. Members of your planning committee already have a relationship to those groups, and can ask in person for their participation. Then, make a list of the groups your organizers don't have personal connections with, and contact those groups to ask if one of you can visit their meeting and talk for a few minutes about the Safe Space program. Try to stay for the whole time, as groups will be more receptive if you show an interest in their activities—remember, it's all about building relationships.

2. *E-mail*. At schools where most students have accounts, write students and groups (and don't forget family members—this is a great way to reach them) a letter explaining what Safe Space is about, suggesting why they would want to participate, and specifying where and when the training will take place. Encourage them to write you to confirm their participation, and to forward their messages to friends, family members, and other

groups. Think of how many forwarded messages you get in your inbox—you don't want to miss this opportunity!

3. *Newspaper and public announcements*. Take advantage of your school media. Write an article about the Safe Space program—why you think it's necessary, what you plan to accomplish, and how others can get involved. Or ask for a spot during morning announcements to make a pitch. Remember to stress that everyone is welcome, not just students.

4. *Posters and flyers*. You'll certainly be able to pick up a few participants if you have some eye-catching flyers and posters. We've provided one, which you can hang in a high-traffic area with the training info posted right next to it. Then get your creative juices flowing and create some designs of your own. In addition to being effective general publicity, flyers and posters draw in people who may not be networked into groups. Again, be sure to include information about where and when the training will take place.

Don't Forget!

Remember to ask permission! Freshly posted posters might get taken down if they haven't been approved. Double-check the rules on mass e-mailings as well. You want the entire school community behind your effort—not ticked off because you didn't follow protocol.

Section 5

Safe Space Program Standard Training Outline

It's training time! Training allies is the heart of the *Safe Space* program. We hope this outline helps you, but we recognize that every school has different needs, and trainings will vary. You might want to make up a one-page survey for people who are interested in participating to fill out in order to get a better idea of what to include in the training. Some questions you might want to pose in the survey are:

- What is their level of knowledge about LGBT issues? Have they attended any LGBT-specific events or trainings? How well-read are they on LGBT issues?
- What specific skills or information do they want to get from the training?
- What are some specific problems that need to be addressed in your school?

The standard training outline we've provided makes for a three-hour training (we've included an estimate of how long each activity will take). You can either do the whole thing, downsize it by using your survey results to gauge which exercises are optional, or break the training down into two ninety-minute parts scheduled for different days. Also be sure to check out the GLSEN website (www.glsen.org) for more training resources.

Welcome! (5 minutes)

Purpose: To get participants seated, excited, and ready to work.

Start your training off with a little positive energy! Thank everybody for coming, and let them know you're glad they see the importance of creating a *Safe Space* program in your school. Give a brief overview of what the training will entail to get everyone pumped up. They'll love the handouts! The group exercises! The role-plays! The film clips! The student speakers!

Then take it down a notch. Remind everyone of the time constraints, and ask for their cooperation as you move from one activity to another. This is a good time to trot out the Working Agreement —we have some suggestions on page 1 of the Handout Packet—so that everyone's boundaries will be respected during the training. You might want to post the agreed-upon rules in a prominent place so everybody is reminded of them throughout the training. Also, be sure to go over your training agenda with the trainees, and post it somewhere visible. It is important for everyone to know what to expect.

An icebreaker activity will give participants an opportunity to loosen up and get to know one another. You'll find plenty of icebreaker ideas in the student resource section of the GLSEN website.

Why We're Here (20 minutes)

Purpose: To increase awareness of why a *Safe Space* program is needed at your school.

Start by sharing some statistics about LGBT youth. Distribute copies of "The Real Story: facts About LGBT Youth and Bias in Schools" from the Handout Packet (page 2), and give everybody a few minutes to read the list, or have it read aloud by volunteers. Ask for responses to the information. Are participants surprised by what they read?

Now get personal, and bring the focus to your particular school. You can use real-life stories to put a human face on the topic and connect with the audience. Before the training, gather a few personal stories. There might be students who want to share their experiences of anti-LGBT bias or isolation due to heterosexism. Perhaps there is a teacher who wouldn't mind recounting their experience as a witness to bias, or their struggle to make their curriculum more inclusive. Maybe a parent would like to share their concerns for the safety of their child. Whatever the case, choose stories that will convey the ideology behind the *Safe Space* program, and that do not make the tellers feel vulnerable or uncomfortable. Keep the stories brief (under five minutes each), and be explicit about the point of each story. Have the speakers practice with you before the day of the training.

If you are unable to get people to tell their stories, you might opt for written stories or a film clip about LGBT youth. Check out GLSEN's BookLink at www.glsen.org for excellent book and video resources.

How Anti-LGBT bias Hurts Us All (20 minutes)

Purpose: To explore the ways in which homophobia, and oppression of any kind, hurts us all.

Challenge the participants to identify ways in which Caucasian Americans as well as African Americans were hurt by the system of segregated schooling that once existed in America. Chart their responses. Make the analogy that heterosexual people are similarly hurt by the institutional heterosexism, transphobia, and homophobia that exist today.

Now divide the participants into six groups. Explain that each group will be reading a scenario and using it as a basis for exploring the ways in which homophobia hurts all people. Indicate that the scenarios are fictionalized composites of actual situations that real students and teachers have reported. Hand out "How Does Anti-LGBT bias Hurt Us All" (Handout Packet pages 3 and 4) and assign one to each group. Ask each group to come up with at least one way in which homophobia and/or transphobia was damaging to non-LGBT people in their scenario. Chart all responses and display them for the whole group to see. Ask each group to briefly share their list and the ideas that surfaced during their discussions. End the activity by distributing "How Anti-LGBT Hurts Us All" (Handout Packet page 5) and asking volunteers to stand and read the 12 points one at a time.

Anti-LGBT Bias in Our Lives (20 minutes)

Purpose: To have participants consider how homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism affect their lives.

Ask your participants to go far back in their memories and try to think of some of the earliest messages they got about LGBT people, whether positive, negative, or neutral. Ask them to spend a few minutes quietly jotting down their recollections.

Divide participants into small groups and ask them to share their recollections. Then have them discuss to what degree they think they have internalized the early messages they received about LGBT people. To what extent do they agree or disagree with these messages?

Bring everyone back together, and process the discussions briefly, asking them to share important responses. Help them identify some stereotypes about LGBT people that were formed from early experiences. Emphasize that participants shouldn't feel guilty about the misinformation they received and/or believed. Homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism are

woven deeply into the fabric of our society. Everyone suffers from these ills to some degree. Point out that as allies they will be asked to become aware of and unlearn the biases they were taught and have carried.

Distribute copies of the "Personal Assessment of Anti-LGBT Bias" (Handout Packet page 6) and ask them to read quietly and identify one area they need to work on. Break up into groups again and have the participants share the areas of work they've identified, and some specific actions they can take to change their perceptions or behaviors. Let participants know that as allies they can support each other as they grow and change.

What Makes an Ally? (15 minutes)

Purpose: To establish the qualities of an effective ally, and to set boundaries for ally work.

Define the term "ally" for your participants. An ally is a member, sometimes of the majority or dominant group, who works to end oppression by supporting or advocating for the oppressed population. Ask your participants to give some examples of allies, both historical and current. Chart their responses. Point out that allies have been involved in almost all movements for social change, and that straight allies can make a significant contribution to the LGBT rights movement.

Let the participants know you will be doing a large-group brainstorm. Write "An effective ally does…" on one piece of chart paper, and "An effective ally doesn't…" on another. Tell them they will be brainstorming a list of endings for each sentence. You can start the exercise off with an example like "An effective ally listens with an open mind". Post all the responses where everyone can see them, and ask the participants to consider them. Do any of the responses seem unrealistic? (For example, "An effective ally is available all the time.") Do any seem like they could foster an unbalanced relationship between straight allies and LGBT people? (For example, "An effective ally tells people what they need to do to solve their problems.")

Distribute copies of "An Effective Ally" (Handout packet page 7). Have volunteers read the points aloud. Remind the group of the special importance of the points on knowing when to get help from a counselor and knowing when to back off if anti-LGBT bias turns hostile. You might want to ask a school counselor to speak for a couple of minutes on what procedures exist in your school if somebody requires professional intervention.

Talking the Talk (25 minutes)

Purpose: To provide participants with a language for discussing LGBT issues; to clarify various terms and concepts regarding gender and sexuality.

Read the "Talking the Talk" glossary (Handout packet pages 10 and 11) in advance, making sure that you're familiar with all of the vocabulary. During the training, let the participants know that one of the ways to be an effective ally is to use LGBT language accurately and respectfully; unfortunately, few people have the know-how needed to appropriately use the terminology. Distribute the "Talking the Talk" terminology cards (Handout Packet pages 8 and 9), one to each participant. Some cards contain terms, some definitions. When all the cards have been handed out, ask the participants to move around the room and find their matches. When they are done, gather the group together and go over the terms one at a time. Some are straightforward and require little discussion. Others will need clarification or explanation. Be sure to help the participants understand the difference between sexual orientation, identity, and behavior, and the distinction between gender identity and sexual orientation. Point out the differences between homophobia and heterosexism, and answer the questions that often come up about transgender people. Emphasize the impact that language has on the way we see ourselves, and the

importance of describing people with accurate and respectful terminology. Point out that language is constantly changing, and that new terms are frequently introduced. Highlight the idea that many people reject labels altogether, and it's crucial to avoid assumptions and generalizations when it comes to the words we use to describe others.

Distribute copies of the "Talking the Talk" glossary for everyone to review after the training.

Taking A Stand (30 minutes)

Purpose: To arm participants with strategies for intervening in anti-LGBT bias.

Explain to the participants that one of the challenges of being an ally is responding to homophobic, transphobic, and heterosexist behavior. Allies can't sit back and be quiet, and might even be targeted for uncomfortable questions or opinions about their ally status.

Tell the group you'll be doing a role-play exercise to see how they react to such situations, and to come up with some good responses that can be shared. Divide the participants into five or six groups. Distribute chart paper and markers to each group.
Ask each group to brainstorm common homophobic, transphobic, or heterosexist scenarios that they might witness at school. Some examples you can share to get the ideas flowing:

- An ally is standing at their locker, and overhears two female students talking about "the big dyke" in their gym class, suggesting that this person should be given a separate changing room because no "normal" girl should have to change in the same room with this person.
- A student is being teased because of the clothes they choose to wear, and is told that they "must be a fag" because of them.

When your groups are finished brainstorming, take the pieces of chart paper and hang them up on a wall where they're visible. Then ask for volunteers to act out some of the situations, with an ally intervening in each one to challenge or try to stop the anti-LGBT behavior. Role-playing can be a little intimidating, so let volunteers pick their own scenarios, and don't push to make reluctant participants take the stage.

Ask for feedback from the participants. Were there any responses that really stood out for their effectiveness? Chart these responses.

Distribute copies of Handout pages 12 and 13, "Responding to Anti-LGBT Bias". Break up into the brainstorm groups, and have each group do a round-reading of the handout. Allow them to discuss their reactions. Have each group report back to all the participants about what strategies they liked, and what new ideas (if any) they came up with while discussing.

When Someone Comes Out to You (15 minutes)

Purpose: To teach participants strategies for being a supportive ally when someone comes out to them.

Let your participants know that one of the nicer challenges of being an ally is knowing how to respond properly when someone comes out to you. Share with them that coming out can be both liberating and risky. Maybe you would like to have a personal story lined up that deals with the pros and cons of coming out.

Hang two pieces of chart paper up, and label one "roses" and one "thorns". Ask the participants to identify some "roses" (good things) about coming out, and list their responses. Emphasize that many people who accept themselves as LGBT feel better about being honest with others, and that coming out often allows LGBT people to develop stronger relationships with their family, friends, and community members. Ask participants to imagine not being allowed to mention their partners' names in conversation, or having the people closest to them consistently address them by an inappropriate pronoun. Now ask them to imagine the relief they would feel at being able to speak freely to another about these things. Next, have the participants identify the "thorns" (risks and negative aspects) of coming out. Point out how damaging some of the reactions that people can have to an LGBT person's coming out can be. Finally, let them know that coming out is a process—most LGBT people come out over and over again throughout their lives, and coming out to just one person can be a journey as that person learns more about their friend.

Distribute "When Someone Comes Out to You" (Handout Packet page 14). Ask participants to discuss the points in small groups.

Improving School Climate (15 minutes)

Purpose: To generate ways in which allies can be proactive forces for school change.

Let participants know that being an effective straight ally means more than waiting for someone to confide in them. Effective allies also try to make change happen through their own initiative. Divide the participants into groups, distribute chart paper, let them know they will be asked to brainstorm ways they can make their school a safer place for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Point out that they should remember to consider their individual roles in the school community as they do this, and how this role can shape the ways in which they work for change. Ask them to chart their ideas. Then ask each group to report back to all the participants. Distribute copies of "Things You Can Do to Make Your School a 'Safe Space'" (Handout Packet page 15). Allow everybody a moment to read the list, and ask them to jot down some of the group-generated ideas that appealed to them. Emphasize that it's up to the allies to work together and with LGBT people to make change happen. Ask for volunteers to form into subgroups to work on specific issues; for example, get three volunteers to make a commitment to meet after the training to work on getting more LGBT-friendly resources into the library. Document all the subgroups and their members so you can follow up on their work later.

Keep the Fire Going (5 minutes)

Purpose: To point out ways to keep the Safe Space program alive and growing as the training comes to a close.

Let everyone know that you're getting close to the end of the training. It's time to talk about how to keep Safe Space alive and kicking after you leave the room. Ask the participants whether they'd be interested in attending another "mini-training" on a specific issue. Some topics for training you can suggest are transgender issues, celebrating LGBT History Month, intersections of oppression (how heterosexism and other "isms" are linked), or any other idea that you or the participants come up with. You will find GLSEN-recommended resources to help educate yourself and others about these issues and many others on GLSEN's BookLink website. You can navigate to BookLink from the GLSEN homepage. Take some time to browse it!

Other things you can do together besides training could have a lighter, more social feel, like viewing an LGBT-themed film and discussing it, or inviting a speaker. Keep the discussion

informal and list ideas. Ask for a hand count once you have a few ideas everybody likes, and find out which ranks #1. Your next event is ready for planning!

Safe Space Stickers (10 minutes)

Purpose: To increase the visibility of the Safe Space program, and to celebrate a successful training!

Tell the participants the good news—they've all completed the Safe Space program training! They will all now receive their Safe Space stickers and become visible allies of LGBT people in their school community!

Be aware of the rules pertaining to stickers in your school—and make sure participants are doubly aware. If you're not allowed to put them on lockers, remind everyone of this. You don't want a few misplaced stickers to make the whole program look bad. Ask participants to place their stickers somewhere visible—on a binder or backpack, or if allowed, on a locker or an office door.

Let everyone know that they should anticipate others asking them what the sticker represents. Since some participants might feel awkward wearing such a bright emblem without the vocabulary to explain it, we've given you a simple response to the "What's that sticker?" question, which you can copy onto chart paper for the participants to read:

"This sticker means that I'm an ally to all the LGBT people in our school community. It shows that I know that LGBT rights are a human rights issue, and not just a "gay thing", and that I'm here to offer support and advocacy. It shows that I'm committed to challenging homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism, both in myself and in the school at large."

You can hand the stickers out as you wish, either informally passed out or presented with a little ceremony. We've included a sample certificate in the Handout Packet (page 17), which you may want to copy and present to your new allies. In any case, thank everybody, individually if you can, for their commitment to making your school a safer, more supportive place. And don't forget to thank yourselves for your hard work!

Don't Forget!

If you run out of stickers, you can order more using a form from GLSEN's website. You can access the form by navigating from the GLSEN homepage—just look for the "Safe Space" link under the Resources heading.

GLSEN SAFE SPACE

Handouts and Resources for Ally Training

Working Agreements

- **Respect others.** You will hear ideas today that may be new or different for you, and the opinions voiced may run counter to your own. As you participate and interact, try to take in new information without judgment and keep an open mind. Make sure that your words and body language reflect a respectful attitude towards others. Learn by listening to others and be supportive of the "place" at which they currently are.

- **Speak from the "I."** Speak from your own personal experiences, and do not judge or moralize the thoughts or experiences of others. Use "I" statements such as "I feel…" or "In my experience…" Avoid "You should…" statements and generalizations and globalizations of any kind.

- **Be open to new ideas.** New ideas or techniques may be utilized or suggested today. Be open to considering new information and incorporating new ideas.

- **Ask questions.** Please feel free to ask any question that comes up without fear that it is to "silly" or "stupid." Make sure to phrase all questions in respectful and value-neutral ways.

- **Respect confidentiality.** Please make sure any personal information given in the room stays in the room. When sharing personal anecdotes, make sure to avoid using the real names of other people.

- **Respect commitments.** While you are encouraged to take care of your personal needs throughout the training, please honor your commitment to being here by observing time guidelines during breaks, turning off beepers and phones, and limiting unnecessary interruptions.

- **Respect time constraints.** While we encourage you to express your opinions or ask any pertinent questions, please respect the fact the training is run on a tight schedule, and we might have to redirect or stop a conversation in order to make sure everybody leaves fully trained to be an ally.

The Real Story: Facts About LGBT Youth and Bias in Schools

The statistics below are from the GLSEN 2005 National School Climate Survey*, which was taken by 1,732 between the ages of 13 and 20 from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Homophobic Remarks
75.4% of LGBT students reported hearing homophobic remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke," frequently or often.
89.2% reported hearing the expression "that's so gay," or "you're so gay," frequently or often.
18.6% reported hearing homophobic remarks from faculty or school staff at least some of the time.
83.5% reported that faculty or staff never intervened or intervened only some of the time when present when homophobic remarks were made.

Harassment and Assault
64.1% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed (name-calling, threats, etc.) because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
48.3% of LGBT students of color reported being verbally harassed because of both their sexual orientation and their race/ethnicity.
65.4% of LGBT students reported being sexually harassed (sexual comments, inappropriate touching, etc.)
74.2% of lesbian and bisexual young women reported being sexually harassed.
73.7% of transgender students reported being sexually harassed.
37.8% of LGBT students reported being physically harassed (shoved, pushed, etc.) because of their sexual orientation.
17.6% of LGBT students reported being physically assaulted (punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) because of their sexual orientation.
31.3% of LGBT students reported physical harassment based on their gender expression.
11.8% reported experiencing physical assault based on their gender expression.

Feeling Safe in School
74.2% of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation.
89.5% of transgender students reported feeling unsafe based on their gender expression.
28.9% of LGBT students had skipped a class at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe based on sexual orientation.
28.9% had missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe based on sexual orientation.

LGBT Resources and Supports in School
84.4% of students reported that there were no positive portrayals of LGBT people, history, or events in any of their classes.
39.7% of students reported that there were no teachers or school personnel who were supportive of LGBT students at their school.

** Information about methodology and demographics, as well as full results, are available online at www.glsen.org*

How Does Anti-LGBT Bias Hurt Us All?

For each scenario below, consider how homophobia and transphobia hurt not just lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, but all people. After reading each scenario, consider at least one way in which anti-LGBT bias hurts us all.

· **Scenario #1:** During his junior year of high school, Marcus became increasingly involved in the drama club and appeared in several school and community productions throughout the year. After seeing him on stage in his first leading role, Marcus' father proclaimed that when he was seventeen, he was out playing football and dating girls. In his senior year, Marcus' drama teacher encouraged him to apply to a local college reputed to have an excellent drama program, noting that Marcus had real talent and a bright future ahead of him. At the dinner table that night, Marcus' father made it clear that he would not contribute his "hard earned money" so that Marcus could "prance around on stage" for four years. Unless Marcus chose a more serious career path, his father indicated, he would be financially on his own after high school.

· **Scenario #2:** As the new semester began, Maria and her friends grew more excited about the upcoming senior prom and talked constantly about the boys they hoped would invite them. At lunch one day, Maria admitted she had a crush on Marc and fantasized about the two of them going to the prom together. "Are you crazy?," commented one of her friends, "He's never gonna ask you. You're too..." "Brainy," another girl chimed in. "It's all those classes you take--AP Chemistry and AP Calculus and all the others--it's like you want to be a man or something." "Yeah," agreed the first girl. "Marc even told me that he thinks you're a dyke." The next day Maria transferred out of advanced placement calculus, a class that she and Marc were in together. When Maria's advisor inquired about the switch, Maria explained that the higher level math was getting too confusing and thought she'd be more comfortable in a regular class.

· **Scenario #3:** Throughout high school, Hector was the victim of verbal and physical assault because of his choice to wear nail polish and make-up to school. It was common for teachers to look the other way as yells of "queer," "freak," and "faggot" were hurled at Hector throughout the school corridors. In the bathroom one day, a group of boys cornered Hector and pushed him to the ground. Alex, one of the boys, watched as his peers repeatedly kicked Hector and screamed obscenities at him. Noticing that Alex wasn't joining in, one of the boys moved over to make room and motioned for Alex to participate in the beating. When Alex hesitated, the boy commented, "What's the matter? You feel sorry for the faggot?" Alex reluctantly walked over and began kicking Hector.

· **Scenario #4:** Jill is a 16-year-old junior who plays the flute in her high school band. Though things with her boyfriend, Troy, had been great for the first few months, a growing conflict began to concern Jill. Troy accused her one night of caring more about her flute than she did about him, and exerted pressure on Jill to have sex. Jill assured Troy that she cared for him, but said she needed more time. Later that week, Jill's friend, Althea, confided that Troy told her boyfriend how "frigid" Jill was and that he wasn't

even sure if she liked boys. Althea advised Jill to do something before she lost Troy for good. That night Jill went to the drugstore and bought a pack of condoms.

· **Scenario #5:** Rob and Jose had been best friends as far back as either one could remember. Rob, an only child, had always considered Jose to be like a brother. Throughout middle school, however, things began to change. While Rob took an interest in team sports, Jose gravitated more toward the drama and dance clubs. Rob became increasingly uncomfortable with what he viewed as a growing flamboyance on Jose's part. In high school, some of the students began referring to Jose as "the Spanish flame" or the "gay blade." Rob felt embarrassed being seen with Jose, and awkward being alone with him--especially when Jose touched him or sat too close. The two boys socialized less and less, until their relationship dwindled to an occasional wave or nod in the school corridors.

· **Scenario #6:** Kim had always been somewhat of a loner. Shy and plain looking, Kim was often ignored by her classmates, and tended to retreat into the solitary world of books. As a teenager, Kim grew increasingly self-conscious about the way in which her peers viewed her. She was aware that other kids referred to her as a "dog" and a "lesbo." Kim even once overheard a boy say that all she needed was "a good man for just one night." Kim became more and more confused as to her own self-identity, and fantasized about a world in which she was popular and sure of herself. When one of the more popular boys in school asked Kim out, she readily agreed. Kim knew that it was probably a joke or bet of some kind, or a test to see if she really was a "lezzie." Despite this, Kim saw it as an opportunity to make a connection and fit in. Though they only went out a few times, Kim soon found herself pregnant. Because of strict religious beliefs, both families insisted that Kim have the baby.

How Anti-LGBT Bias Hurts Us All

At the same time the victims (or targets) of prejudice are oppressed, the perpetrators (or agents) and other members of the dominant group are hurt in some way as well. Although the effects of oppression differ for specific target and agent groups, in the end everyone loses.

1. Homophobia and transphobia lock all people into rigid gender roles that inhibit creativity and self-expression.

2. Homophobia and transphobia compromise the integrity of heterosexual people by pressuring them to treat others badly, actions that go against our basic humanity.

3. Homophobia and transphobia limit our ability to form close, intimate relationships with members of one's own sex.

4. Homophobia and transphobia generally limit communications with a significant portion of the population and, more specifically, limit family relationships.

5. Homophobia and transphobia prevent some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people from developing an honest self-identity, and add to the pressure to marry and/or have children, which places undue stress on them and their families.

6. Homophobia and transphobia can pressure young people of all sexual orientations and gender identities to become heterosexually active to prove that they are "normal." In this way, these phobias are a cause of premature sexual activity, which increases the chances of pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

7. Homophobia and transphobia result in the elimination of any discussion of the lives and sexuality of LGBT people in the curriculum, keeping important information from all students.

8. Homophobia and transphobia can be used to stigmatize, silence, and, on occasion, target people who are perceived or defined by others as LGBT, but who are, in actuality, heterosexual.

9. Homophobia and transphobia prevent heterosexuals from accepting the benefits and gifts offered by LGBT people to religion, to family life, indeed, to all parts of society: theoretical insights, social and spiritual visions, contributions in the arts and culture.

10. Homophobia and transphobia (along with racism, sexism, classism, etc.) inhibit a unified and effective governmental and societal response to AIDS.

11. Homophobia and transphobia take energy away from more positive activities.

12. Homophobia and transphobia inhibit appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. Therefore, we are all hurt when any one of us is disrespected.

Adapted from Warren J. Blumenfeld, ed. Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price

Personal Assessment of Anti-LGBT Bias

Anti-LGBT bias may be expressed by heterosexual people, or may be internalized and expressed by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people as well. There are many kinds of anti-LGBT bias that happen every day. We often overlook more subtle actions and exclusions because they may seem insignificant. They are not. Subtle bias is still bias.

1. Do you believe that LGBT people can influence others to become homosexual?

2. Do you think someone could influence you to change your sexual and affectional preference?

3. If you are a parent, how would you (or do you) feel about having an LGBT child?

4. How do you think you would feel if you discovered that one of your parents or parent figures, or a brother or sister, were LGBT?

5. Are there any jobs, positions, or professions that you think LGBT people should be barred from holding or entering? If yes, why?

6. Would you go to a physician whom you knew or believed to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender if that person were of a different gender from you?

7. If that person were of the same gender as you? If not, why?

8. If someone you care about were to say to you, "I think I'm gay," would you suggest that the person see a therapist? What if they said, “I think I’m trangender”?

9. Have you ever been to an LGBT social event, march, or worship service? If not, why?

10. Can you think of three positive aspects being LGBT?

11. Have you ever laughed at a "queer" joke?

12. Would you consider wearing a button that says, “How dare you presume I’m heterosexual?”

Written by A. Elfin Moses and Robert 0. Hawkins, Jr. Adapted by GLSEN.

An Effective Ally…

- ✓ Respects confidentiality.
- ✓ Allows individuals to lead the direction of the conversation, lets them make their own choices, and listens, listens, listens.
- ✓ Talks to LGBT family, friends, and coworkers.
- ✓ Avoids assumptions and stereotyping.
- ✓ Tries using gender-neutral terms when talking about significant others, spouses, and partners.
- ✓ Expects to make some mistakes, but doesn't use them as an excuse for not acting.
- ✓ Acknowledges how homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism have operated in their life.
- ✓ Educates oneself about issues facing LGBT people.
- ✓ Has a sense of humor.
- ✓ Knows when and how to refer somebody to outside help, and to get professional adult intervention when necessary.

An Effective Ally Doesn't…

- ✓ Have all the answers.
- ✓ Proceed with an interaction if boundaries or personal safety have been violated.

Talking the Talk -- terminology cards

Copy the cards below on to card stock to play "Terminology Match-Up." Distribute a card to each student and have them find their match. Use the definitions on pages 10 and 11 as you discuss these terms.

Biological Sex	Bisexual	Coming Out (of the Closet)
Gay	Gender Expression	Gender Identity
Gender Role	Heterosexism	Homophobia
Lesbian	Queer	Questioning
Sexual Identity	Sexual Orientation	Ally
Transgender	Transphobia	Transsexual

Our "packaging" determined by our chromosomes, hormones, and internal and external genitalia.	A term given to people who are attracted sexually and emotionally to some males and females.	To disclose one's identity as an LGBT person to others.
A term given to males who are attracted sexually and emotionally to some other males	The ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hair cut, etc.	Our innermost feeling of ourselves as "male," "female," or somewhere in-between.
Society's expectations about our behavior and appearance based on our sex (female or male).	A bias against homosexuality rooted in the belief that heterosexuality is superior or the norm.	A fear or hatred of homosexuality, especially in others, but also in oneself.
A term given to females who are attracted sexually and emotionally to some other females	Once a negative term to describe LGBT people, some have reclaimed this word and use it as a positive way to describe their "differentness."	People who are in the process of figuring out their sexual orientation or gender identity.
This is what we call ourselves in terms of our sexuality (gay, lesbian, straight, bi, etc.)	This is determined by the sex of the person one is attracted to and encompasses our sexual drives, desires and fantasies.	Anyone who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBT people.
A broad term for all people who do not match society's expectations regarding gender, including transsexuals and cross-dressers.	A fear or hatred of transgender people.	People whose sense of themselves as male or female is different from their birth biological sex. Sometimes they hormonally and/or surgically change their bodies to more fully match their gender identity.

Talking the Talk – terminology glossary

The following definitions will help you to understand and properly use some of the terms associated with sexual orientation and gender identity.

Biological Sex: This can be considered our "packaging" and is determined by our chromosomes (XX for females; XY for males); our hormones (estrogen/progesterone for females, testosterone for males); and our internal and external genitalia (vulva, clitoris, vagina for females, penis and testicles for males). About 1.7% of the population can be defined as **intersexual**—born with biological aspects of both sexes to varying degrees. So, in actuality, there are more than two sexes.

Gender Identity: Our innermost concept of self as "male" or "female"—what we perceive and call ourselves. Individuals are conscious of this between the ages of 18 months and 3 years. Most people develop a gender identity that matches their biological sex. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their biological sex. We sometimes call these people **transsexuals**, some of whom hormonally and/or surgically change their sex to more fully match their gender identity.

Gender Role: This is the set of roles and behaviors assigned to females and males by society. Our culture recognizes two basic gender roles: **masculine** (having the qualities attributed to males) and **feminine** (having the qualities attributed to females). People who step out of their socially assigned gender roles are sometimes referred to as **transgender**.

Genderqueer: A term used by people who identify their gender to be somewhere on the continuum in between or outside the binary gender system altogether. Genderqueer people may prefer a gender-neutral pronoun.

Transgender: Refers to those whose gender expression at least sometimes runs contrary to what others in the same culture would normally expect. Transgender is a broad term that includes transsexuals, cross-dressers, drag queens/kings, and people who do not identify as either of the two sexes as currently defined. When referring to transgender people, use the pronoun they have designated as appropriate, or the one that is consistent with their presentation of themselves. Though transgender has increasingly become an umbrella term referring to people who cross gender/sex barriers, many people find any umbrella term problematic because it reduces different identities into one oversimplified category.

Transsexuals are individuals who do not identify with their birth-assigned genders and sometimes alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally. The **Transition** (formerly called "sex change") is a complicated, multi-step process that may take years and may include, but is not limited to, **Sex Reassignment Surgery, also called Sex Realignment**.

Gender Expression: Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, and emphasizing, de-emphasizing, or changing their bodies' characteristics. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex. Gender expression is not necessarily an indication of sexual orientation.

Sexual Orientation: This is determined by our sexual and emotional attractions. Categories of sexual orientation include **homosexuals**—gay, lesbian—attracted to some members of the same sex; **bisexuals**, attracted to some members of more than one sex; and **heterosexuals**, attracted to

some members of another sex. Orientation is influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics and hormones, as well as unknown environmental factors. Though the origins of sexuality are not completely understood, it is generally believed to be established before the age of five.

Sexual Identity: This is how we perceive and what we call ourselves. Such labels include "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," "bi," "queer," "questioning," "heterosexual," "straight," and others. Sexual Identity evolves through a developmental process that varies depending on the individual. Our sexual behavior and how we define ourselves (identity) can be chosen. Debates regarding the nature of sexual identity – if it is a choice or solely biological – are still many.

Coming Out (of the closet): To be "in the closet" means to hide one's identity. Many LGBT people are "out" in some situations and "closeted" in others. To "come out" is to publicly declare one's identity, sometimes to one person in conversation, sometimes to a group or in a public setting. Coming Out is a life-long process—in each new situation a person must decide whether or not to come out. Coming out can be difficult for some because reactions vary from complete acceptance and support to disapproval, rejection and even violence.

Queer: Historically a negative term used against people perceived to be LGBT, "queer" has more recently been reclaimed by some people as a positive term describing all those who do not conform to rigid notions of gender and sexuality. Queer is often used in a political context and in academic settings to challenge traditional ideas about identity ("queer theory").

Questioning: Refers to people who are uncertain as to their sexual orientation or gender identity. They are often seeking information and support during this stage of their identity development.

Ally: Anyone who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBT people. Many allies identify as straight.

Homophobia: Refers to a fear or hatred of homosexuality, especially in others, but also in oneself (internalized homophobia).

Heterosexism: Bias against non-heterosexuals based on a belief in the superiority of heterosexuality. *Heterosexism* does not imply the same fear and hatred as *homophobia*. It can describe seemingly innocent statements, such as "She'd drive any man wild" based on the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm.

Transphobia: Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Some definitions adapted from: Warren J. Blumenfeld, co-author Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life and ed. Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price

Responding to Anti-LGBT Bias

Homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism manifest themselves in many different ways, from physical violence and verbal harassment to assumptions of heterosexuality and exclamations of "that's so gay!" Different situations call for different responses, but all situations call for a **calm**, **non-inflammatory response**. Bullying back is never a good idea. Your role as an ally is to diffuse situations of anti-LGBT bias, educate others about why it's harmful and unacceptable, and provide support to the person who has been targeted. Below are some ideas for dealing with anti-LGBT bias.

Name It, Claim It, and Stop It!

This technique is great in most situations where someone is being teased, name-called, or verbally bullied. It gives you an opportunity to spotlight the behavior, take a personal stand on it, and attempt to keep it from happening again.

Name it: When you witness bias, call the offending party on it by saying, "That term is not cool," or "Using words like that is hurtful and offensive."

Claim it: Make it *your* issue. Say, "People I care about are gay, and I don't like to hear those words."

Stop it: Make a request for the behavior to stop by saying, "Please don't use those words," or "Cut it out, please."

Get Help

In situations where talking to the bully hasn't stopped the harassment, or where you have a feeling the trouble will continue to escalate despite your intervention, get adult help immediately. Trust your instincts. **Being an ally does not mean you should compromise your safety at any time.**

Similarly, if you know repeated incidents of harassment are occurring despite intervention, report it to an adult member of the school community. Reporting harassment is not "tattling." It's taking a mature and proactive stance for the right of every student to feel safe.

Give Emotional First Aid

Don't get so caught up in addressing the bias that you forget the person who was being picked on. If you've diffused a situation, always be sure to ask the person if they're all right, if there's anything you can do to help, and if they'd like to talk further or take a short walk to cool off. Remind them that the behavior was not their fault by saying something like, "That person wasn't thinking at all. They obviously have a problem, and it's not you. You're all right just the way you are."

Easy Does It

Some situations call for a lighter hand. If nobody is being bullied or harassed, and the comments being made seem to be the result of ignorance and not a desire to hurt, try to keep these tips in mind:

Use humor. Some teasing is misguided, not vicious. Sometimes a little humor can help diffuse a situation that's becoming tense. For example, if someone says something like, "That shirt she's wearing is so gay," you might respond by saying, "I didn't realize shirts had sexual orientations." This gives you a chance to point out the senselessness of homophobic language while keeping the mood light.

Don't personalize. Homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism are the products of beliefs. So don't take it personally when someone makes a misguided conversational remark or asks a question that makes you want to bristle. Instead, take a step back, and remember that there is a belief behind that comment or question. It's up to you to challenge that belief— without losing your cool.

Ask. Many people use anti-LGBT slurs without giving thought to how hurtful they are. Sometimes a well-placed query can stop them in their tracks and make them consider the language they use. For example, you could ask, "What do you think a gay or lesbian person would think of that comment?" to open up a dialogue.

Remember Everyone's Rights

There is a difference between free speech that is the expression of a value or belief, and using words as weapons. Every student should be allowed to be who they are, and express opinions that speak to that end, so long as that speech is not depriving other students of their rights to obtain an equal education. So if a student respectfully states a belief ("I believe homosexuality is a sin"), you can certainly challenge that belief by opening up a debate, but you cannot tell them to stop it. Of course, beliefs can be used as fodder for harassment, (e.g., saying, "God hates you because you're queer.") in which case you *can* request that the behavior stop. It's sometimes a subtle distinction, but an important one, as we must guard everybody's First Amendment rights, whether or not we agree with how they use them.

When Someone Comes Out to You…

- **Be a role model of acceptance.** The LGBT person has likely spent some time thinking about whether or not to tell you, and is aware of the risks that come with telling.

- **Ask questions that demonstrate compassion.** Don't ask questions that would have been considered rude before the disclosure. The person has the same sensibilities as before. However, you might need to do some "catching up." Some good questions to ask are:

  How long have you known?
  Is there someone special?
  Has it been hard for you carrying this secret?
  Is there some way I can help?
  Have I ever offended you unknowingly?

- **Appreciate the person's courage and trust.** Thank them for sharing with you, and follow up later to see how they're doing.

- **Have a sense of humor.** While it's important to take the disclosure seriously, a little gentle humor might ease any tension the person is feeling.

- **Offer support.** Ask if you might be available as the person comes out to others.

- **Be prepared to give a referral**. If there are questions you can't answer, or if the person is feeling isolated, be prepared to refer them to a hotline, community center, GSA, or sympathetic counselor.

- **Listen, listen, listen.** Coming out is a long process, and chances are you'll be approached again to discuss this process and its challenges.

- **Assure confidentiality.** The person may not be ready to come out to others, or would like to do so in their own way.

Things You Can Do to Make Your School a "Safe Space"

1. **Do not assume heterosexuality.** Remind yourself—and others—that LGBT people are found on every staff, in every classroom, and on every team.

2. **Include the significance of LGBT people in lessons.** "Out" the figures you study whose sexual orientation and gender identity/expression is not discussed. Just as race, class, sex, and ability affect the way people shape our world, sexual orientation and gender identity/expression impact people's experiences deeply.

3. **Work with the librarian towards inclusive collections of literature.** The library is frequently the first place to which students turn for accurate information on sexuality and gender.

4. **Work with athletic staff/ athletes to reduce bias on the field.** Transphobia and homophobia are often at their worst in the locker room or in the gym.

5. **Work towards inclusive dances, proms, and social programming.** These activities often set the tone for the community. Make them memorable for everyone.

6. **Work with student or staff groups concerned with diversity and oppression.** The same conditions that allow homophobia and transphobia to develop most likely promote other forms of prejudice. Collaborate to unite against all oppression.

7. **Provide appropriate health education.** Sex education should address the needs of LGBT youth, and should affirm the fact that they go through many of the same changes, and face many of the same challenges during adolescence as their straight peers.

8. **Celebrate LGBT History Month.** Recognize the struggles, contributions, and victories of the LGBT community with special lesson plans, events, and displays.

9. **Join or start a GSA.** Creating a time and place to talk about LGBT issues recognizes their value and opens up dialogues which lead to healing.

10. **Create inclusive anti-discrimination policies.** LGBT members of the school community need to know that their schools value equality and that they are protected against discrimination. In addition, sexual orientation and gender identity/expression should be included in multicultural and diversity statements as a way to communicate equal treatment for all.

Check out "Institutionalized Heterosexism in Our Schools: A Guide to Understanding and Undoing It," a GLSEN resource that provides a lot of other great ways to work for change in your school community. Go to the Staff Development section in the Resource Center at www.glsen.org. Also see GLSEN's website for many other excellent resources on GLSEN's BookLink.

Safe Space Ally Report Form

Name _____ **Date** _____

Please describe the incident that took place in detail.

If it was an incident of bias, was an adult, school teacher, administrator or community member alerted?
Yes / No

If so, what action was taken by the adult?

Certificate of Achievement

For participation in the *Safe Space* Allies Training,
and in recognition of your commitment to undoing bias and making our school a safer place for everyone.

This award is presented to:

_____

by:

_____ _____

name and date *name and date*