

Teaching Notes for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Students: Perceived Social Support in the High School Environment
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Slide 1

This lecture would be appropriate for courses addressing adolescent development, adolescent health and mental health, discrimination and oppression, or school social work.

Slide 2

Review the slide to ensure students understand the stresses for LGBT youth in current society.

Discussion Question:

Ask students to list all the sources of support available to heterosexual adolescents. Which of these are not available to LGBT youth? Which are available on a limited or restricted basis?

Slides 3 and 4

Review the slide.

Slide 5

Review slide, ensuring that students understand the research question and design.

Slide 6

Students should understand the differences in the 4 types of support behaviors.

Group Activity:

Break students into 4 groups. Assign each group one of the types of support behaviors: emotional, appraisal, instrumental, informational. Ask each group to list all of the specific support behaviors within this type that could be of benefit specifically to LGBT adolescents (e.g. informational: a LGBT adult lends the adolescent a book about gay pride). Then ask the group to underline those things in the list that they feel are essential for positive development of LGBT adolescents.

Return to large group, report out, and discuss. Generate a master list of essential supports needed by LGBT youth.

Slide 7

Review the slide, expanding upon the thoughts and feelings reported by participants as they struggled with their sexual identity.

Discussion Question:

The participants describe a rather fluid sexual identity—not exclusively and permanently homosexual or heterosexual in their attraction to other people. A clinician hearing this interprets it as a participant’s ambivalence around his/her sexual identity and lack of full commitment to being LGBT. How do you respond?

Slide 8

Review the slide, ensuring students understand the stages of homosexual development presented.

Discussion Question:

The following are quotes from participants in this study. What stage of development do you think they represent?

“It was like we were both sort of in the process of...not knowing what was going on, but knowing that we were not straight.”

“The people who were out, I kind of envied them because I was thinking it would be so much easier if I was just out, but then hearing what the other people would say about them behind their back made me not want to come out.”

“Since I guess freshman year of high school, I didn’t feel like I fit in, exactly...I felt alienated most of the time.”

“I would say, probably most of them [my friends] I just told outright [that I was gay].”

Slide 9

Expand on the challenges and barriers to disclosure of LGBT identity for adolescents.

Discussion Question:

Two social workers are discussing the coming out process for LGBT adolescents and young adults. One says "Until a person is fully “out” they have not totally committed and become comfortable with their LGBY identity.” The other says “The decision to disclose LGBT identity is one that should be made slowly and with extreme caution. It can often make sense NOT to come out, ever.” *What do you think about these statements?*

Slides 10 and 11

Expand on the topic of disclosure; the process, barriers, and possible outcomes.

Discussion Question:

Ask students if they have examples from their practice or other life experience of a LGBT individual who disclosed and had a very positive experience. What made it positive? Ask for examples of a negative experience. What made it negative? If you were the social worker for the LGBT youth who had a negative disclosure experience, how might you intervene with him/her?

Slide 12

Ensure that students understand the limitations of the study and what that means for applicability of the information.

Slides 13-15

Review the recommendations.

Discussion Questions:

Ask students to generate additional ideas for creating LGBT affirming school environments.

What might some barriers be to implementing these recommendations for school settings? How might social workers address these barriers?.