



LBGTQ: The Ins and Outs of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.



What is LBGTQ?

Lesbian:

Lesbians are women who are attracted physically and emotionally to other females.

Bisexual:

Bisexuals are people who are attracted to members of both the same and opposite sex.

Gay:

Gays are men who are physically and emotionally attracted to other males. This term is sometimes used to refer to lesbians.

Transgender:

The word transgender is a broad term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term may include but is not limited to transsexuals, cross-dressers and other gender-variant people. Transgender people may identify as female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF). The word transsexual is an older term originating from the medical and psychological communities. While some transsexual people still prefer to use the term to describe

themselves, many transgender people prefer the term transgender to transsexual. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers. It is also important to note that the term transgender is constantly evolving and is as fluid as sexual and gender identities.

Queer:

The word queer is an umbrella term used to refer to the diverse identities of sexual orientation and gender.

The use of queer has become more common as a reclaiming of what was once (and still is used as) a negative name. For some, queer is used to highlight how identities are fluid and take multiple forms. Queer allies are people who identify as straight, who are supportive and accept queer people, and may even advocate for equality. We recognize that there are many diverse identities and not all people identify as LGBTQ but may use other language to describe their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Learning to Like Yourself:

Some people struggle to accept aspects of who they are that may or may not be related to gender and sexual identity. We all have doubts and insecurities. LGBTQ people sometimes struggle with self-acceptance and learning to love themselves for being LGBTQ. When we receive negative messages about what it means to be LGBTQ we sometimes feel silenced or feel negatively about ourselves. There are many reasons why some LGBTQ people feel ashamed of who they are, however, all of these reasons have more to do with other people's prejudice than our self-worth. We are all familiar with the homophobic jokes, the hurtful stereotypes, and the myths that circulate in society about LGBTQ people. Some people tend to hate or fear what they do not understand and are uncomfortable being around lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, or queer people.

Finding support groups, whether parents, family, friends, a teacher or other professional, can play an additional role in accepting and liking ourselves. Meeting other LGBTQ people and reading materials on sexuality can help young LGBTQ people feel better about themselves and enable them to understand their sexual and gender identities.

- In the St. John's area, the LGBTQ Youth Group meets once a month for social events.
- Camp Eclipse: Out In the Woods is a LGBTQ youth empowerment and advocacy camp that is held every summer.
- Visit www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com or www5.campeclipse.com for more details on the LGBTQ Youth Group and Camp Eclipse.

REMEMBER:

- It is OK to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer.
 - It takes time to know who you are.
 - You are not alone.
- There is a strong community out there ready to support you.
 - You are valued.
 - You deserve to be happy.

I Think I Might Be LBGTO...

Some LBGTO people say that from the time they were very young they “felt different.” Often, they say, it took a while to name their feelings – to begin to identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer. But when they started thinking in those words, it made sense – it fit with the feeling they had growing up.

For many other people, sexual orientation or gender identity remains undefined until they are teenagers or even adults.

Your feelings and your emotional and physical attractions will help tell you who you are. Human sexuality develops over time. Do not worry if you are not sure. In time, you will discover who you are, and you will learn to love yourself for just being you! Remember, you do not have to confine yourself through labels.

If you think you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer do not be afraid. Learn to explore your feelings and get to know who you are and embrace yourself for being who you are.
Accept and love yourself!

Is it Ok to Be LBGTO?

Yes, it is ok to be LBGTO! It is perfectly natural to acknowledge who you really are to yourself and others; it is part of the process of accepting yourself. You may encounter people who do not accept you for identifying as LBGTO, but do not let them discourage you from accepting yourself.
Remember that you are not alone.

Being LBGTO is as much a human variation as being left-handed; a person’s sexual orientation and gender identity are just another piece of who they are. There is nothing wrong with being LBGTO.

If I Do Not Fit a Stereotype, Am I Still LBGTO?

LBGTO people, like straight people, act all kinds of ways. Stereotypes arise out of ignorance and prejudice. Sometimes a stereotype about a group does not fit anyone in that group. Sometimes it fits a few people, sometimes more. However, a stereotype never fits everyone in any group.

Stereotypes will not define who you are, whether they fit you or not. You are a unique individual who will find your own way of being in this world. Keep in mind that there are infinite ways to express your LBGTO identity.

Remember: You do not need to prove anything to anybody. Just be yourself!

What About Sex?

There are many ways that LBGTO couples can pleasure one another. This can include kissing, hugging, stroking, stimulating the genitals using tongues, hands, fingers and sex toys, and intercourse.

Deciding whether or not to be sexual with someone is a big decision. You may feel scared at the thought of having sex with another person. That is normal, especially if it is your first time. However, it is still important to communicate with your partner about whether or not you feel ready to have sex as well as

what your needs and expectations are. Also, it is important to talk about STIs (sexually transmitted infections), whether you are at risk, and how to protect yourself.

What About HIV/AIDS and Other STIs?

All sexually active people need to be aware of HIV/AIDS as well as other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Being LBGTQ does not give you HIV. Certain behaviors can put you at risk for catching HIV and other STIs. HIV, genital warts, and genital herpes are incurable, but all STIs are preventable.

Here is how to reduce your risk of getting an STI:

- You and your partner should discuss your risk factors for HIV and other common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and decide which safer sex methods you should use.
- Avoid shooting up drugs and sharing needles. This is the riskiest behavior in terms of HIV and Hepatitis C transmission. If you do engage in drug use, be sure to use a clean needle every time. There are services available in the community where you can exchange used needles for clean ones.
- If you engage in anal, vaginal or oral sex, using a condom or dental dam every time will reduce the risks of transmitting STIs. You should always check the expiry date before using them. Store condoms and dental dams away from the heat. You should not store condoms in your wallet or pocket as heat and friction could damage them. Condoms and dental dams should only be used once, and then thrown into the garbage. Try to use condoms with a reservoir tip and be sure to squeeze the air from the tip as you put it on. Hold onto the condom as you remove your penis because sometimes, they slip off after sex.
- When using a dental dam, remember to never share it between partners, never flip it over and use the other side, and to use a new dental dam when switching from oral/anal to oral/vaginal.
- Choose sexual activities that do not involve intercourse: hugging, kissing, talking, massaging, or mutual masturbation (on unbroken skin).

Who Should I Tell?

As time goes by, more LBGTQ youth are learning to feel better about themselves, especially due to changes in society in terms of LBGTQ rights. As you start to acknowledge your deepest thoughts and feelings, you will learn what it means to be LBGTQ and you will even start to feel comfortable with your sexuality. This process is called coming out.

The first step to coming out is to tell yourself that you are, lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, or queer. Later, you may want to tell someone else who you trust, like a friend or an adult. You may want to meet other LBGTQ people for friendship or support.

Some LBGTQ people feel safe enough to come out to their families. You are the only one who can decide whether or not to tell your family. Lots of people, including parents, friends, employers, and others, understand and accept LBGTQ people. Coming out is a personal decision that you make when you feel safe and ready. Coming out is an ongoing process that happens throughout life, as we choose when and where to share our identities. There may be pressure to come out from others and yourself.

You may choose to come out to some people and not to others. Everyone's experience is unique. Hopefully you have supportive people around you. Support networks and groups as outlined here can help.

It is so important to be honest with yourself. Most people who have accepted their sexuality say they feel happier and more confident. You will get there too!

Organizations that may be helpful:

Planned Parenthood:

1-877-NO MYTHS

(1-877-666-9847)

In St. John's: (709) 579-1009

Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender at Memorial University of Newfoundland;
(LBGT-MUN) 737-7619 or 864-7619

Kids Help Phone (24 hours):

1-800-668-4668

Egale Canada (LGBT Human Rights Organization):

(647)404-7156

PFLAG Canada (A national organization that offers support to families of LGBTQ people):

National: 1-888-530-6777

In St. John's: (709) 722-5791

Email: stjohnsnl@pflagcanada.ca

Website: www.pflagcanada.ca

Related Organizations:

AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador

St. John's	709 579-8656
Toll-Free:	1-800-563-1575
Gander	1-888-271-2437
Corner Brook	1-800-563-1575



If you have further questions regarding sexual decision making or safer sex practices; or would like to see a health care provider regarding any sexual health matter, please contact us.

Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!

Location:

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

Hours:

Monday: 9am – 4:30pm
Tuesday: 9am – 4:30pm
Wednesday: 9am – 4:30pm
Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm
Friday: 9am – 4:30pm

Phone:

709-579-1009
Toll Free: 1-877-NO MYTHS
(1-877-666-9847)

Website:

www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com

Email:

pp.nlshc@gmail.com

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