

How Homophobia and Heterosexism Hurt LGBTQ People

For those not yet out:

- May feel the necessity to lie and pretend that you are something that you are not.
- Can only be affectionate with a loved one when you feel it is “safe”.
- Have to pretend the person that you’re with is not your lover.
- Have people try to “fix you up” with members of the opposite sex.
- Feel forced to adopt a gender presentation that you are not comfortable with.
- Unsolicited advice such as “you’ll never catch a man/woman if you act/dress like that.”
- Assumptions that you and everyone else are heterosexual.
- Being around people who are free to express their sexuality, while having to hide your own.
- Having a hard time finding/meeting other LGBTQ people.
- Thinking you are the only one.
- Thinking something is wrong with you.
- Feeling that you don’t fit in or belong.
- Not being able to get close to another person because of this “secret”.
- Feeling panic about being found out, and feeling like a coward or a dishonest person.

For those coming out, the possibility and fear of:

- Rejection from friends, family and/or co-workers.
- Rejection of your friends or your lovers.
- Rejection of other things that are important to you – your work, interests, etc.
- People refusing to accept your gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Having to deal with fear and anger toward you from others, including those who have been your best supporters on everything else.
- Losing your job, your living space or financial supports.
- Getting lower grades or poorer performance evaluations than you think you deserve and wondering if your LGBTQ identity is why.
- Subtle rejection or distance from people and having to wonder the cause.

For those who are already out:

- Dealing with heterosexism, transphobia and homophobia.
- Dealing with put-downs, slurs, jokes, and being talked about or stared at by others.
- Not getting jobs nor into groups and organizations.
- Being made into a special case – a “good” or “different” LGBTQ person.
- Any affection you show towards a same-sex person may be seen as a sexual “come on”.
- Encountering verbal or physical abuse/violence against you by total strangers just because of whom you are.
- Encountering emotional abuse in the form of graffiti, jokes and defaced posters.