

# Internalized Bias

## Bias

**Anti-Gay Bias:** Hatred, discrimination or aversion to Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual people, people perceived to be LGB, or those associated with person who are LGB. Often referred to as Homophobia. This could also be referred to as anti-lesbian bias or anti-bisexual bias.

**Anti-transgender Bias:** Hatred, discrimination or aversion to Transgender or Gender Variant people, people perceived to be as such, or those associated with persons who are transgender or gender variant. Often referred to as Transphobia.

**Heterosexism:** A dominant notion that everyone is heterosexual (or should be) and that heterosexuality is superior, better, and preferred. This ideological system denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community.<sup>i</sup>

**Internalized Bias:** “Internalized bias is when a person believes that the stereotypes and the misinformation that they hear are true about themselves. They [may] hold themselves back from living life to their full potential, or they act in ways that reinforce the stereotypes and are ultimately self-defeating”<sup>ii</sup>.

## Impact of Internalized Bias

- Less openness about LGBTQ identity
- Lower self-esteem
- Greater psychological distress (e.g. anxiety, shame, depression)
- Reduced social supports
- Possible higher risk for STI's, such as HIV
- Suicidal ideation and attempts
- Greater relationship problems
- Substance use and abuse
- Verbal and physical abuse by family, partners, and/or peer<sup>iiiivvvi</sup>

## How to Help

- Avoid Assumptions
- Use Gender Neutral and Inclusive Language
- Demonstrate Empathy and Patience
- Offer Appropriate Support and Resources
- Display LGBTQ Affirming Environmental Cues
- Conduct a Self-Awareness Check
- Strengthen LGBTQ Competency
- Employ an Affirming LGBTQ Approach
- Be Aware of Non-Verbal Communication
- Prepare vs. Repair
- Confront Implicit and Explicit Bias
- Watch out for words like: *phase, choice, lifestyle, & preference*
- Harvard Implicit Association Test  
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

## Affirming Statements

- Being LGBTQ is normal.
- Same-sex attraction is a part of healthy development.
- It is healthy to be transgender.
- LGBTQ people should be celebrated.
- Bisexual people know who they are.
- LGBTQ people are valuable.
- LGBTQ people are lovable.
- Coming out is courageous.
- LGBTQ people are moral.
- LGBTQ people are upright citizens.
- Being LGBTQ is a blessing.
- It is really brave to be an out LGBTQ person.
- LGBTQ people deserve equal rights.

## Contact Information

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<sup>i</sup> Herek, G. M. (1990). The context of anti-gay violence: Notes on cultural and psychological heterosexism. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 5*, 316-333.

<sup>ii</sup> Community Tool Box. 2015. Retrieved from <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents> retrieved on 4 Feb 2015.

<sup>iii</sup> Frost, D. M. and Meyer, I. H. 2009. "Internalized homophobia and relationship quality among lesbians, gay men and bisexuals." *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 56*(1), 97-109.

<sup>iv</sup> Herek, G. M., Cogan, J. C., Gillis, J. R., and Glunt, E. K. 1997. "Correlates of Internalized Homophobia in a Community Sample of Lesbians and Gay Men." *Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, 2*, 17-25.

<sup>v</sup> Igartua, K. J., Gill, K., and Montoro, R. 2003. "Internalized homophobia: A factor in depression, anxiety and suicide in gay and lesbian population." *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, Fall; 22*(2):15-30.

<sup>vi</sup> Weber-Gilmore, G., Rose, S. and Rubinstein, R. 2014. "The Impact of Internalized Homophobia on Outness for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Individuals." *The Professional Counselor: Research and Practice Digest, 1*(3), 163-175.