



Discussion Guide

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For Professionals Working with Teens

Sexetc.org

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Lesson for Gay, Straight, Bi: Do These Labels Still Apply?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to

- 1) Explain the definition of "sexual orientation"
- 2) Identify a situation in which the categories "gay," "straight" or "bi" do not easily apply
- 3) Explain their opinion about whether the labels "gay," "lesbian," "heterosexual" and "bisexual" still apply today

TIME NEEDED

50 minutes

MATERIALS

- Copies of "Gay, Straight, Bi: Do These Labels Still Apply?"
- "Sexual Orientation Scenarios" copied and cut—one per small group of three
- Copies of "Resources about Sexual Orientation"
- Chalkboard or flipchart paper
- Chalk or markers
- If using flipchart paper, then need masking tape

PREPARATION

Copy and cut scenarios

PROCEDURE

1. Review class ground rules, which may include respecting differences of opinion, one person speaking at a time, no judgments, right to pass, etc. Write the words "sexual orientation" on the board or flipchart paper. Share the following definition: "Sexual orientation" describes the gender or genders of the people to whom someone is attracted to romantically and sexually." [5 minutes]

2. Ask for volunteers to list the different sexual orientations, and write their responses on the board or flipchart paper. The list should include at least heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual.

(Facilitator's Note: Other orientations might be suggested, define them and add them to the list as well.)

Provide definitions for all three sexual orientations as follows:

Heterosexual: A person who is generally attracted to people of the other gender. A slang word for heterosexual is "straight."

Homosexual: Sometimes called "gay" or "lesbian," a person who is attracted to people of his or her own gender.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to another

person regardless of the other person's gender. Ask students if they have any questions about the definitions you have provided. [5 minutes]

3. Write the following question on the board or flipchart paper:

- Do these labels still apply?

Explain that some teens find that these labels don't apply to their experience or how they identify themselves while other teens find that the labels are still relevant. Ask teens to consider the question for themselves and put their thumbs up if they agree that the labels still apply and put their thumbs down if they believe they don't apply. After you have scanned for responses, reflect back to the class approximately how many in the group had their thumbs up versus thumbs down. [2 minutes]

4. Tell the group that you want to give them some real teen scenarios to consider and that they will play sexual orientation experts who will determine which label applies and why. Divide students into groups of three, and give each group a scenario. **(Facilitator's Note:** There are only five scenarios and probably more than 15 students in your group. Make sure that each scenario is given to two groups. If there is an odd number of groups, give the same scenario to three groups.) Give groups approximately five minutes to complete their task. [5 minutes]

5. Call time when five minutes have passed. Then ask for the groups with the same scenario to merge and discuss their decision-making. Have groups consider the following questions:

- Did both groups come to the same conclusion? If so, why? If not, why not?

Give these new groups an additional five minutes to discuss. [6 minutes]

6. Call time when five minutes have passed. Ask a volunteer from each group to read just his or her scenario aloud to the rest of the class. Then ask the whole group the following discussion questions:

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- How did it feel to label another person's sexual orientation?
- Was labelling their sexual orientation easy or difficult, and why?
- What will you take away from this activity? [10 minutes]

7. Distribute copies of the story "Gay, Straight, Bi: Do These Labels Still Apply?" Ask for two volunteers—one to read the "yes" response and one to read the "no" response. Ask the group the following questions:

- What did you think about the two perspectives in this story?
- Did the authors bring up anything new that your groups had not considered? If so, what was it? [5 minutes]

8. Next, direct students to look again at the original question:

- Do these labels apply?

Ask them to consider what their beliefs are now that they have considered a scenario and read the article. Ask students to again put their thumbs up if the labels still apply and put their thumbs down if they don't apply. Reflect back what you saw and any changes in percentages of students who felt one way or another compared to their opinions earlier in the class. [5 minutes]

9. Distribute copies of "Resources about Sexual Orientation" to each student. Explain that many teens have questions about sexual orientation, and there are many resources to find more information, ask questions and get support for people of all sexual orientations. Explain that parents and trusted adults can also be great sources of support. Ask if there are any additional questions and, if not, end the lesson. [7 minutes]

Do These Labels Still Apply?

Sexual Orientation Scenarios

1) I am a girl. I've been in love with a guy and dated guys before, but get turned on when I think about kissing a girl. What is my sexual orientation and why?

2) I am a guy and have a girlfriend. My girlfriend is really hot. We kiss and make out, and it feels great. Sometimes, when I look at porn online, I find myself getting aroused by the guys. I feel really guilty about that, since I love my girlfriend. But I can't help it. What is my sexual orientation and why?

3) I'm a girl, and I haven't had any boyfriends yet. My parents won't let me because they think I'm too young. I've had dreams about kissing and touching other girls, which are really confusing since I've only ever had crushes on guys. Is my mind trying to tell me something? What is my sexual orientation and why?

4) I'm a girl and had a serious-bad crush on this one guy who I thought was hot forever. I'm not sure he knew I was alive, until this party where I made out with another girl in front of him. That got his attention! Now people think I'm a lesbian, but I was just doing it so he'd notice me. What is my sexual orientation and why?

5) I'm a guy and think girls are hot. My best friend and I have known each other since we were kids. One time we jerked off in front of each other, but it was when we were like 12 at summer camp. Now I'm worried that because we did that, it means I'm gay. We can't be the only guys who have ever done that before, right? What is my sexual orientation and why?



Resources about Sexual Orientation

Sex, Etc. – www.sexetc.org

Sexetc.org is a Web site by teens, for teens, that features a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning topic area with stories, Frequently Asked Questions, Ask the Experts and a weekly live chat with experts.

Teenwire from Planned Parenthood Federation of America – www.teenwire.com

Teenwire.com features a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender topic area, which includes articles, Ask the Experts, quizzes, games and video.

Youth Resource – www.youthresource.com

Youthresource.com, a project of Advocates for Youth, is a Web site by and for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning young people.

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) – www.glsen.org

GLSEN's Web site features news, frequently asked questions as well as support and training for students who want to organize gay-straight alliances at their schools.

National Coalition for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth – www.outproud.org

The OutProud Web site includes coming-out stories, a directory of support groups for queer youth as well as *Oasis Magazine*—an online community by and for queer youth.

National Youth Advocacy Coalition – www.nyacyouth.org

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition's Web site has a "Youth Connections" page, which lists health centers, hotlines, local support groups and online resources for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people.

SexTalk from Planned Parenthood of Tompkins County – www.sextalk.org/queer/queer.html

SexTalk is a project of Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes in New York State. This Web site provides honest and frank sexuality information and includes questions and answers about your rights to healthcare, making an appointment to see a doctor, getting condoms and what to do if you're sexually assaulted.