

Activity: 7-8.12.1

Key Messages

- It may take time to work out sexual feelings and orientation and this is a normal part of puberty and growing up.
- It is very important that all young people feel supported, safe and secure at school, regardless of their sexual preference.
- Young people have an enormous role to play in supporting their peers and are important agents of change in combating homophobic bullying.

Activity Details

Victorian Curriculum

Health & PE Examine the benefits to individuals and communities of valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity VCHPEP132

Capabilities VICICCD016, VCCCTQ033

Time 30 minutes

Levels 7 & 8

Equipment • class set of *Take a walk in my shoes* handouts

Used with permission from Hillier, L et al 2010, *Writing themselves in 3: the third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people*, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Melbourne

Take a walk in my shoes

Purpose

To encourage empathy and understanding by exploring young people's experiences of diverse sexualities.

Teaching notes

This activity requires students to read real-life accounts of young people with diverse sexual preferences. These stories provide a personal insight into some of the challenges faced by young people who are discovering their sexuality.

Procedure

1. Provide each student with a copy of the handout *Take a walk in my shoes*.
2. Explain that the quotes are from real-life young people.
3. Choose a student (or have a volunteer) to read aloud each account, then discuss the questions below.

Discussion

Questions to consider include the following:

- How did each young person come to the realisation that they were same-sex attracted? Note any similar themes, as well as any differences.
- How are the experiences of same-sex attracted young people different to heterosexual young people?
- How are they the same or similar?
- Why don't heterosexual people have to 'come out'?
- How might someone support a same-sex attracted young person who has 'come out' to them?
- How might students, and the school generally, support students who are same-sex attracted, whether they are 'out' or not?

Take a walk in my shoes

Read and reflect on the personal stories of young people describing how they discovered their sexual orientation.

I think I had a dream about a friend of mine. Then I started thinking about it, and things started clicking into place. It sounds odd, but I was thinking about this obsession I had with Julia Roberts as a little girl. I loved all her movies and would watch them again. When I was first thinking of possibly being unstraight, that was one of the first things that came into my mind. It was like, 'huh, that's why'. (Jasmine, 16)

Although I first felt attracted to people of my own sex when going through puberty, I didn't accept these feelings until much later, at age 17 (9 months ago). Previously, I had thought that one day I would become straight, like my other four siblings and parents, who are all straight. I had been brought up to believe that sexuality is not an orientation but an action or behaviour. Having heard other people's stories about coming to terms with their sexuality, I now believe the opposite. I am very accepting of who I am. (David, 18)

I basically just got a crush on a girl in the year above me at school. Nothing ever happened, but I remember being really scared and feeling disgusted with myself. (Hannah, 18)

I just started noticing girls as much as boys. It didn't freak me out. I just accepted it. My mates made more of a fuss than I did. (Emma, 17)

I really can't remember. The process was gradual. I remember that I started to experience erections and couldn't figure out why. It was only after a long time that I began to associate that with people of the same gender. For a while, I thought it must be a phase and that I couldn't be really gay. And then, sometime, I just admitted it. I can't remember when or how; it was just a realisation that came over me. (Cooper, 21)

At the time, I was in a relationship with a person of the opposite sex and it just wasn't satisfying for me. I knew I was gay because I cared for my male friends more than I should. (Ryan, 17)

I'm not sure enough about myself to say that I'm bisexual, even though I am attracted to both females and males at the present. I could see these feelings changing in the future and I would prefer not to lock myself into anything while I'm not 100% sure. (Leah, 18)

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