



Activity: 9-10.1.3

Key Messages

- It is easy to make assumptions about people.
- Sexual identity includes a diverse range of attractions, behaviours and gender identification.

Activity Details

Victorian Curriculum

Health & PE Critique behaviours and contextual factors that influence the health and wellbeing of their communities VCHPEP151

Capabilities VCICCB018

Time 45 minutes

Levels 9 & 10

Equipment • a set of *Different stories* cards

Different stories

Purpose

To use real life stories to develop empathy and promote understanding of different types of relationships and gender identities.

Teaching notes

It would be useful to familiarise yourself with the glossary of terms relevant to sexual and gender diversity, please refer to the Safe Schools website for additional information (www.safeschoolshub.edu.au).

Procedure

1. Select a scenario and explain to students that these stories were written by real-life Australian young people.
2. Read out the scenario to the class and then use questions provided to promote discussion.
3. If time permits, select an additional scenario and repeat the above.
4. Alternatively, you could divide the class into small groups of 4-5 students and have them discuss the scenarios individually.

Please note: To maintain its authenticity, most grammatical errors within the young people's stories have been reproduced unedited.

Scenarios taken from Hillier, L. Jones, T. Monagle, M. Overton, N. Gahan, L. Blackman, J. Mitchell, A. 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, Latrobe University, Melbourne.





Josh's story, 15 years

I've found being gay hard but I'm happy with it, but if I had a choice it would be my last one. Sometimes I'm jealous of how straight people are so easily accepted in society, yet homosexuals can barely hold hands without people staring. Things like mardi gras make me feel good about myself and give me hope for the future. I have a gay uncle so I knew that coming out to my family would be pretty easy and they would be pretty understanding. And I was right, which really helped me grow as a person knowing I had my families support. People at school were generally supportive, but homosexuality is something everyone talks about, so when I came out to a few friends, it wasn't long before the whole school knew. The worst time in my life was when some kids at my school got my phone number and started leaving voice messages on my phone saying abusive things... I have also found that people talk, and kids from other schools know who I am, so sometimes at the local shopping centre kids from other schools give me threatening looks as I walk by. My good times have been with my boyfriends. My first kiss was my happiest moment. I felt like nothing could hurt me, and this made me sure of my sexuality. My hopes for the future are to become an actor/dancer and perform in Britain and America. I want to meet a man, get married and have children, by adoption and surrogacy.



Josh's story-Questions to consider:

1. Who and what has supported Josh to make him feel good about himself?
2. How could Josh deal with the abusive messages left on his phone?
3. How do you think 'straight people' (i.e. heterosexuals) are treated in society?
4. How do you think gay people are treated in society?
5. What could you do to make school a safer place for people like Josh?



Maddison's story, 17 years

I could not accept my sexuality at first, it took awhile. For most of high school I claimed myself to be bisexual and pretended to like guys and hook up with them. I'd always feel so terrible after it, and I was mystified, even though deep down I think I knew it was because I really was gay. Just recently, I've started accepting myself and my sexuality, although it's taken some time. Most people know now, although my family don't mention it, even if I say I'm going to see my girlfriend or the girl I'm dating. At first, this hurt me so much because when I broke up with my boyfriend, my mum questioned it and told me to sort it out because she thought he was a nice guy. I never told her then it was because I couldn't be with a guy and be happy 'cause they're not what I want. It hurt so much when I was having trouble with a girl, and she [mum] didn't say anything, just listened because I knew she didn't want to know. The friends I have been hanging out for the past few years are amazing, I have never met more accepting people ever who are crazy, funny and all have the same interests as me (music, games, etc.). One of the girls I'm most closest to is even gay. She actually came out the same time as me, as we both used to say we were bisexual, not les. I understand why people hide it, and I don't blame them. No-one wants to get hurt and rejected. Especially to others who have it harder than most because of religion, culture or family. In time, I know I'll be even more open than I am now, and I will 100% stop trying to be straight, or wishing it. I love the ladies, what else can I say?



Maddison's story—Questions to consider:

1. Why do you think Maddison chose to identify as bisexual and "pretended to like guys"?
2. How do you think having an unsupportive family would impact on Maddison's feelings about her sexuality?
3. How has having supportive friends impacted on Maddison's health and wellbeing?
4. How could you be supportive if a friend of yours 'came out', or told you, he/ she was gay, lesbian or bisexual?



Reagan's story, 17 years

People frequently yell at me as I walk down the street, most likely because I'm relatively effeminate, for a boy (It's kind of hard not to be when you're not technically male). I suffered a lot of transphobic abuse at my high school... A group of boys in my year used to regularly threaten me with physical violence ("If you're a boy, we can hit you") and sexual assault ("We should prove to you that you're a girl", often accompanied by being pushed into walls.) They would also often show me pornography in class, often of a lesbian or transsexual nature, by shoving phones and iPods into my face.



Reagan's story-Questions to consider:

1. a) What do you think Reagan means by not being "technically male"?
b) Is our gender only defined by our body?
2. How would being threatened with physical and sexual violence impact on Reagan's health and wellbeing?
3. What laws have been broken in this scenario?
4. Discuss all the things Reagan could do to access support.



Sally's story, 21 years

I followed a lot of gay people on YouTube who had gone through, or were going through the same thing as me, which helped define what being gay meant in my mind, erasing the stereotypes, and helped me relate in a way that let me admit to myself that I am the same as these people, and they're ok, so I must be okay too. I watched a lot of gay-themed feature films online, that I wouldn't have had access too otherwise, and wouldn't have been comfortable buying or renting anyway. These provided positive depictions of gay relationships to me, and helped me learn how gay relationships work, and differ from the norm. Relationships for same sex couples were never addressed throughout school, and I had no friends I could talk to about this. Online forums allowed me to interact with other gay males of a similar age for the first time, seek support, learn about what it meant to be gay, and once again provided an education in areas of social life, relationships, and sex-ed that simply weren't addressed while straight relationships and issues were being discussed in the classroom and the playground at school. Before I joined these forums, I had never had any interaction with openly gay people. It took away the bogey-monster stereotyped image I had in my mind, these were just teenagers like me, normal people. Most of all the internet taught me that I was not alone, and there were ways of finding people like me, even if I couldn't spot them, they were there.



Sally's story—Questions to consider:

1. How did social media help support Sally?
2. Why do you think "relationships for same sex couples were never addressed throughout school"?
3. What are some stereotypes about gay people?
4. How important is belonging to a community to you?



Becky's story, 20 years

I personally haven't been physically abused, however, one particular case of homophobic abuse has hit rather close to home and left me emotionally bruised. My brother was bashed up at a local club by two guys who assumed he was gay (He actually isn't, but that's beside the point) so the thought that my big brother could get so hurt for something he ISN'T really worried me as to what could happen to me for something I AM. I haven't gone out to a club or pub or anywhere where people are drinking since then because of that fear, and given that happened a couple years ago, I'm the one 20 year old I know that isn't going out to clubs, or has ever been out to a club for that matter.



Becky's story—Questions to consider:

1. How has the incident involving Becky's brother affected her?
2. How does homophobia affect us all?
3. Discuss all the things Becky could do to access support.