

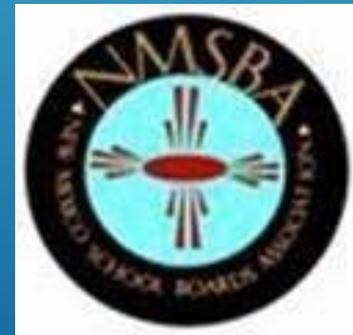
# UNDERSTANDING COMING OUT ISSUES FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

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Mora Board of Education

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"Advocacy and Equity in Education"



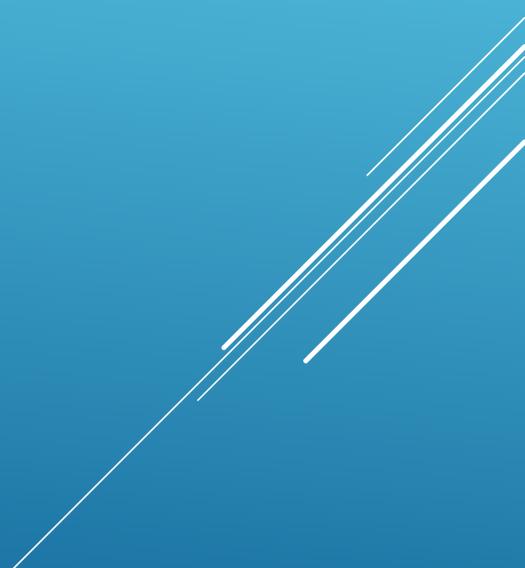
# OVERVIEW

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ Group Think
- ▶ Coming Out Stars
- ▶ Coming Out Strategies
- ▶ What Does This Mean?



Group Think

WHAT ARE SOME ISSUES THAT CAN  
AFFECT A STUDENT'S DECISION TO  
COME OUT?



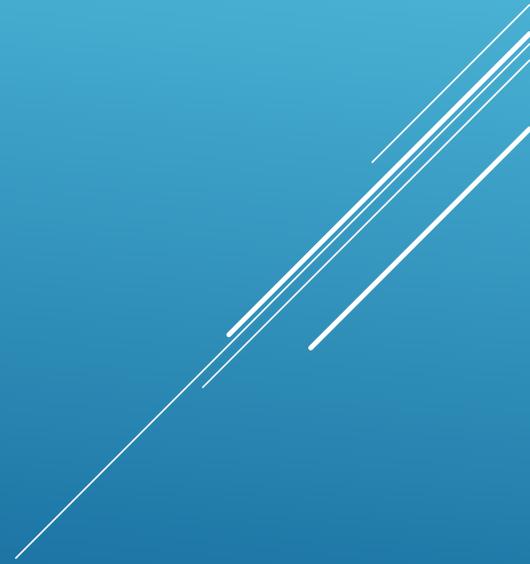
# DIFFICULTIES AT A GLANCE

- RELIGIOUS BELIEFS
  - FAMILY ACCEPTANCE
  - CULTURAL BACKGROUND
  - GENERATIONAL BELIEFS
  - FEELING UNSAFE OR BULLIED BY PEERS
  - FEELINGS OF ISOLATION
  - LACK OF SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES
  - LIVING A DOUBLE LIFE
  - FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES
- 

# ANTI LGBT BULLYING

- The National School Climate Survey, conducted in 2005, surveyed the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), concluded that three-quarters of the high school students surveyed heard derogatory and homophobic remarks “frequently” or “often” at school, and 90 percent heard the term “gay” used generally to imply someone is stupid or something is worthless.
- In a poll conducted in 2005 by Harris Interactive and GLSEN, 60 percent of students (aged 13-18) had been verbally or physically harassed or assaulted during the past school year because of real or “perceived race/ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, or religion” (p. 4). Over half of these incidences were thought to be based on sexual orientation alone.

# COMING OUT STARS



1.

Imagine that this star represents your world, with you in the center and those things or people most important to you at each point of the star.

So we'll begin by writing your name in the center of the star, making it your very own star! Then, pick a point on the star to begin with. Chose a friend who is very close to you. Someone you care about very much. A best friend or a close friend, it doesn't matter. Write their name on the point of the star.



Next, think of a community that you belong to. It could be a religious community, your neighborhood, a professional organization, or just a group of friends.

Moving clockwise, write the name of this community on the next point of the star.



Now, think of a specific family member. Someone that you have always turned to for advice or maybe who knows how to cheer you up when you're sad. A mother, father, aunt, or uncle ... any family member who has made a large impact in your life.

Please write their name on the next point of the star.



What job would you most like to have? It could be anything from president to dentist. Whatever your career aspiration is, write it on the next point.

Lastly, what are some of your hopes and dreams? Maybe you want to be a millionaire, maybe you want the perfect family. Think of a few of your hopes and dreams and write them on the last point of your star.



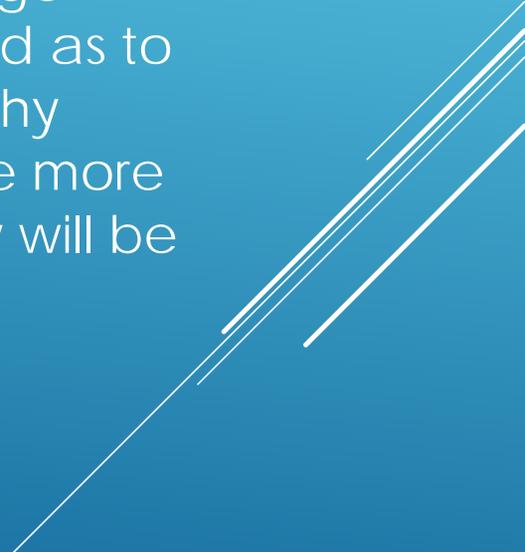
You decide that it will be easiest to tell your friend first, since he/she has always been there for you in the past, you feel they need to know.

- If you have a BLUE star, your friend has no problem with it. They have suspected it for some time now and thank you for being honest with them. Luckily, they act no different toward you and accept you for who you are.

- If you have a ORANGE or PURPLE star, your friend is kind of hesitant. He/she is irritated that you have waited so long to tell, but you are confident that soon it will be understood that being gay or lesbian is just a part of who you are ... you just need to give them some time. Please fold back this side of your star.
- If you have a RED star, you are met with anger and disgust. This friend who has been by your side in the past tells you that being gay or lesbian is wrong and they can't associate with anyone like that. If you have a red star, please tear off this side and drop it to the ground, this friend is no longer a part of your life.

After coming out to your friend, you decide that your family probably deserves to know. So, you turn to your closest family member first so that it will be a little easier

If you have a PURPLE star, the conversation does not go exactly how you planned. Several questions are asked as to how this could have happened, but after some lengthy discussion this person who is close to you seems a little more at ease with it. Fold this side of your star back, as they will be an ally, but only with time.

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If you have a BLUE star, you are embraced by this family member. They are proud that you have decided to come out and let you know that they will always be there to support you.

If you have a ORANGE or RED star, your family member rejects the thought of being related to a person who is gay or lesbian. Much like some of your friends, they are disgusted and some of you are thrown out of your house or even disowned. You are now part of the 42% homeless youth who identify as gay or lesbian. If you have a orange or red star, please tear off this side and drop it to the ground.

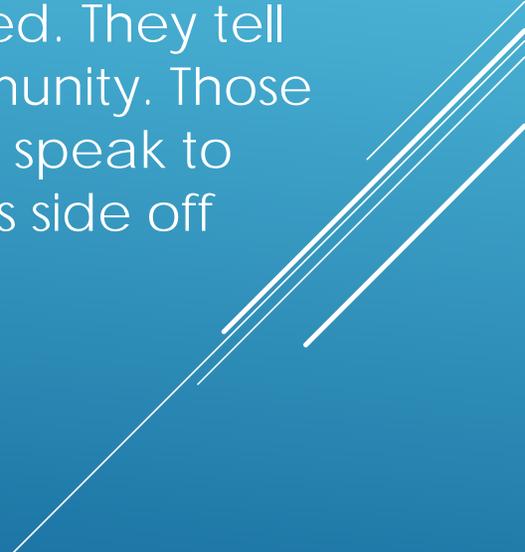
Having told your friends and family, the word begins to spread and soon members of your community begin to become aware of your sexual orientation.

If you have a PURPLE or BLUE star, your sexual orientation is accepted by your community. They continue to embrace you like anyone else and together you celebrate the growing diversity in your community.

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If you have a ORANGE star, you are met with a mixed response. Some accept you and some don't know what to think. You remain a part of the community, and with time, will fit in as you once did. If you have a orange star, please fold back this side.

If you have a RED star, your community reacts with hatred. They tell you that someone like you doesn't belong in their community. Those who had supported you in your times of need no longer speak to you or acknowledge you. If you have a red star, tear this side off and drop it to the ground.

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You have heard that rumors are being circulating at work regarding your sexual orientation. In the past, you have made it a point to confront these rumors as soon as they began, but now you're not sure if that will do more harm than good. But, unfortunately, you don't have the chance.

If you have a BLUE star, your coworkers begin to approach you and let you know that they have heard the rumors and that they don't care, they will support you. Your bosses react the same way letting you know that you do good work and that's all that matters.

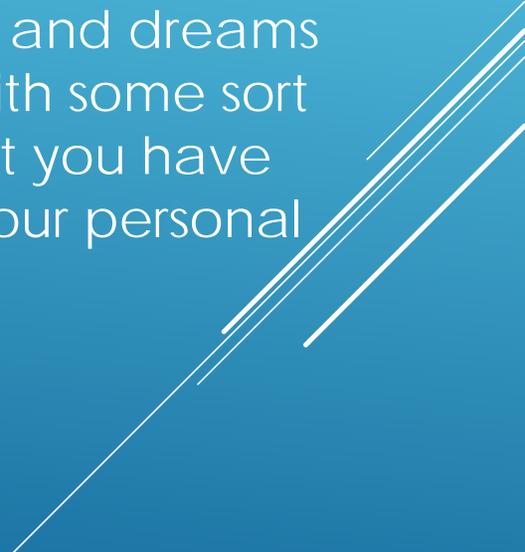
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If you have a PURPLE star, your workplace has become quite interesting. Everyone seems to think that you are gay or lesbian, even though you haven't mentioned it to anyone or confirmed any of the rumors. Some people speak to you less, but the environment has not seemed to change too drastically. If you have a purple star, please fold back this side.

If you have a RED or ORANGE star, you continue to work as though nothing is happening, ignoring the rumors that have spread throughout your workplace. One day, you come in to find that your office has been packed up. You are called into your boss' office and she explains that you are being fired. When you ask why, she tells you that lately your work has been less than satisfactory and that she had to make some cutbacks in your area. If you have a red or orange star, please tear off this side and drop it to the ground.

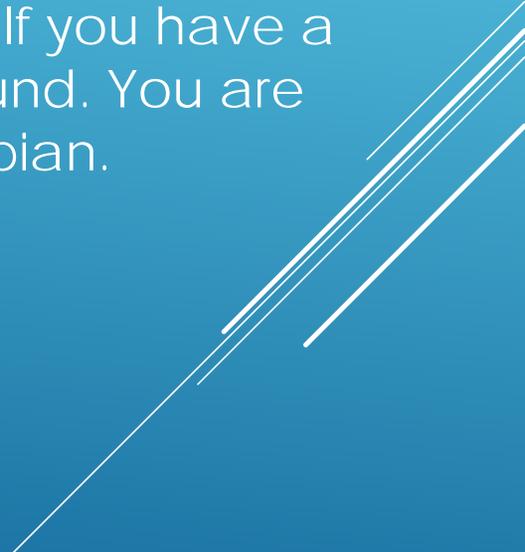
Now ... your future lies ahead of you as a gay man or lesbian. Your hopes and dreams, your wishes for the perfect life ... for some of you these are all that remain.

If you have a PURPLE, BLUE, or ORANGE star, these hopes and dreams are what keep you going. Most of you have been met with some sort of rejection since beginning your coming out process, but you have managed to continue to live a happy and healthy life. Your personal hopes and dreams become a reality.

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If you have a RED star, you fall into despair. You have been met with rejection after rejection and you find it impossible to accomplish your lifelong goals without the support and love of your friends and family. You become depressed and with nowhere else to turn, many of you begin to abuse drugs and alcohol.

Eventually, you feel that your life is no longer worth living. If you have a red star, please tear it up and drop the pieces to the ground. You are now part of the 40% of suicide victims who are gay or lesbian.

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# RED STAR STATISTICS

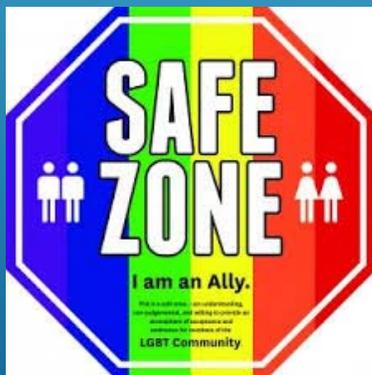
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers (Massachusetts 2006 Youth Risk Survey).
  - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth who come from a rejecting family are up to nine times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers (2007 San Francisco State University Chavez Center Institute).
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# WHAT DID THIS MEAN?

- Coming out experiences are unique
  - Cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, ethnicity, etc. may affect coming out
  - There is no correct or incorrect way, time, place, etc. to come out
  - Support networks can help
  - Intolerance and hatred are not going to disappear. It is our job to combat them.
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# HOW CAN I HELP?

- Become an Ally
- An Ally is a person who is a member of the dominant or majority group who works to end oppression in his or her private and professional life through support of, and as an advocate for the oppressed population.
- Through: — Awareness — Knowledge — Education — Skills — Action



# WHEN SOMEONE COMES OUT TO YOU

- Be patient
  - Commit yourself as an ally. Let them know you are supportive
  - Don't push or force someone to disclose anything to you
  - Keep their confidence and respect their privacy
  - Acknowledge the risk they took telling you
  - Thank them for trusting you
  - Say that it will not change how you feel for them
  - Don't over-react
  - Ask if there is anything you can do
- 