
Understanding our Gay Neighbours

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Rule #1

You will never understand what it is like to be Gay unless you are!

- We all bring our own unique stories, experiences, circumstance and histories to our understanding of this.
- This is okay as long as we recognize it.
- Humility is important
- Be self aware
- We must be open to new things

Rule #2

Our Gay and Lesbian Neighbours are DIVERSE and COMPLEX (Just like You!)

Think of the diversity in Christianity:

- Charismatic to Liturgical
- Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox
- Fundamental to Liberal

The LGBT community is just as diverse.

Think of all the ways you describe yourself... Gay individuals want to be recognized for more than just their orientation!

Rule #3

In gathering information we must be careful to evaluate the information we use to make judgements

- Commentators on all sides of an issues are guilty of intentionally or unintentionally misrepresenting data
- It's always best to read things on both sides
- Even respected publications can be guilty of this
- We are most vulnerable when we have placed high stakes on being right

Rule #4

The BEST way to understand our gay neighbours is to simply be open to being in ongoing friendships with them.

Rule #5

Categories and labels are harmful when they keep us from recognizing that there are gay and lesbian individuals among us.

There is NO "us and them" there is only "us together"

SEXUAL IDENTITY

- Sexual identity refers to private identity (to oneself) and public identity (to others).
- It is a way of communicating one's sexual preferences.
- Sexual identity is influenced by:
 - One's biological sex
 - Gender identity
 - Attractions
 - Intentions
 - Behaviours
 - Values
- Most gay identified youth have had their first sexual experience with a person of the opposite sex (Savin-Williams)
- Gay or bi Identified male Youth in BC are 4x more likely to get a girl pregnant than their hetero identified peers (BC AdHealth III)
- It is not uncommon for youth to change their public sexual identity several times (Diamond, 2003)
- Identity and Behavior can be divorced. (Down Low Culture, Feminist Action Groups)
- Youth can engage in homoerotic behavior for a variety of reasons. The majority of males who have same gender sexual contact as adolescents identify themselves as heterosexual (Savin-Williams)
- Language is complex - even the word "Gay" is not agreed upon as correct for usage, and different people mean different things when they say the word
- In general Gay or Lesbian is the best first choice, but if someone corrects you, defer to their preference

CAUSATION IS COMPLEX

- The Big Debate: Nature vs Nurture!
- The Real Answer: We don't know, but probably BOTH!
- Causation is not the same for everyone!
- Causation matters less then we pretend
- In the absence of definite answers humility is important

"The Use of Science in the Churches Moral Debate" by Mark Yarhouse and Stanton Jones
"The New Gay Teen" by Ritch Savin-Williams

All the following may or may not play a part in what causes same sex attraction and/or behaviors in a given person:

- Genes
- Interuterine Environment
- Personality
- Early Sexual Debut/Abuse
- Neuronal reinforcement and Pruning
- Choices
- Culture

REALITY CHECK

Our gay neighbours experience homophobia in schools, homes, churches and communities and it is NOT okay!