

studies as few as 6 and as many as 40 of these people are gay.

Even though you are not homophobic you might be heterosexist. **Do not panic. Be aware.** It is easy to make assumptions about orientation. Heterosexuality is the most common sexual orientation, just not a universal one. The key is not to assume that everyone around you is straight. Make a real effort, it will be appreciated.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Homophobia is like most forms of prejudice, based on false stereotypes and misinformation. Stereotypes spread by homophobia make it difficult to develop relationships with or, fact-based opinions and attitudes about gay people.

Luckily, like any kind of prejudice, education and real information that is widely shared can and is effective in fighting homophobia. Learn as much as you can. Ask questions of your family members or friends who are openly gay. Contact gay-lines, gay community agencies or search on the internet for gay positive sites. They can all help you understand more and better.

Discriminating against one group makes it easier to discriminate against another. Where does it stop? Canada has learned that discrimination against: women, non-english speaking minorities, the young, the old, and different races, religions or nationalities is wrong and socially irresponsible. And being gay is no different than any of these.

Eliminate one group and the whole is weakened.

By working against all forms of prejudice including homophobia a more just and free society is created. In a free and tolerant society everyone benefits.

The Avenue Community Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity

Saskatoon

Office: #201 - 320 21st Street West
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7M 4E6

Phone: 306.665.1224 (in Saskatoon)
306.665.1280 (Saskatoon Fax)
800.358.1833 (outside Saskatoon)

Website: www.avenuecommunitycentre.ca

Email: info@avenuecommunitycentre.ca

Prince Albert

Phone: 306.922.2228 (in Prince Albert)
Email: paccentre@sasktel.net

© The Avenue Community Centre 2009

Homophobia Affects Everyone!



HOMOPHOBIA, WHAT IS IT?

Homophobia is an irrational fear, and is directed towards gay men and lesbians and those who are perceived as being gay. Homophobia has also come to include a collection of beliefs that being gay is unnatural and abnormal and that this justifies discrimination and/or acts of hate and violence towards gay men, lesbians and those perceived to be gay.

Homophobia can be divided into four distinct forms.....

Personal or Internalized Homophobia this is a form of homophobia that is often found in gay people, bisexual people or people who are questioning their sexual orientation. It prevents the person experiencing it from fully developing their full potential and can lead to various forms of mental and physical illness, substance abuse and even suicide.

It is not uncommon for a person suffering from internalized homophobia to turn that feeling outward. They believe that by attacking gay men, lesbians or those perceived to be gay they can prove they are “not gay”.

Interpersonal Homophobia, is when a person acts on his/her homophobic beliefs with verbal and/or physical abuse, intimidation, or by discriminating against a gay person(s) or someone they believe to be gay.

Institutional Homophobia, is when groups, organizations, businesses and government agencies have active policies or laws that exclude or limit the rights or access of gay men and lesbians. Often these policies are unwritten and are based on the attitudes and actions towards gay people by senior staff and/or management.

Cultural Homophobia, is when social standards and customs that perpetuate or give preferred treatment to heterosexuals. An example is marriage. It also supports the belief that heterosexuals are morally superior to gay people.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT ME?

Homophobia has the following affects:

It prevents people from taking active part in the lives of their gay family members or friends.

It can make you change your behaviour so that you are not perceived as being gay by others.

It can isolate you from openly gay family members or friends so that you won't be labeled as being gay.

It prevents you from having full well rounded, and deep friendships with members of the same sex.

It assigns set roles for each gender, preventing you from exploring careers or

hobbies that interest you but are associated with the opposite sex.

It can make you feel like a coward when others say or do hateful things to or about gay people and you do nothing or say nothing out of fear.

It can make a gay person get married to someone of the opposite sex and have children in order to hide their orientation.

It can adversely affect your home life when a family member, who is gay or perceived to be gay, is physically attacked, emotionally abused or driven out of the home by another family member.

HETEROSEXISM or INVISIBLE HOMOPHOBIA.

Heterosexism, is the assumption that everyone you know or hang-out with is straight. It is very common and is more often than not completely unintentional. When you ask if a man has a girlfriend or wife; or when you ask a woman what her husband does for a living; you are making an assumption about their sexual orientation.

Believing that there is no one in your circle of family, friends, coworkers, or community who is gay is heterosexist. The average person has about 125 - 175 people in their lives with whom they interact with on a regular basis and another 75 - 100 more who they see irregularly. By most