

GLBTQ Oppression Exercise

Visualization:

Ask workshop participants to sit in a relaxed position and close their eyes or have an inward focus if they are not comfortable closing their eyes. Read the following and then debrief as a group.

Imagine it's early in the morning and the alarm goes off. You role over and give your partner a kiss and try to pretend to go back to sleep but she gets you out of bed and you both get ready for your day. As you walk out the door you notice that there is another egg that was thrown at your house during the night. You don't know if it was a random or purposeful. Either way you don't have time to clean it off now – it will have to wait till later.

You go to the gym, it's the only women's gym in Portland but you know you need to quit because the other day when you asked about partner benefits the woman at the front desk snorted with laughter. She said that it wouldn't be fair to the straight women and besides the lesbians would all lie and bring in people who weren't their partners.

Then you stop by your partner's office to bring her a surprise cup of coffee on the way to work and you notice that although she has a picture of your friends and your dog on her bulletin board she still does not have a picture of you. She does not want people to be put off by her having a same sex partner. You leave after whispering "I love you" so that no one else can hear.

When you are at work you hear the words "fag" and "gay" used by the young people at work. You always interrupt their behavior but you notice that not all other staff people do. A co-worker during lunch tells a homophobic joke and you get up to leave. Near the end of the work day you are hanging out with a bunch of female coworkers and everyone is talking about sex – you add to the conversation by bringing up an example of a boyfriend you had years ago instead of the multiple examples of ex girlfriends you could have brought up. Afterwards you feel ashamed and call yourself a chicken.

You take your dog to the park after work and one boy dog is humping another boy dog and the other dog owners make funny remarks about the dogs being gay. They quiet down when they realize you are there because they have seen you there with your partner before. Everyone looks away from you in awkward silence.

You and your partner are having dinner with your mom that night who is mostly supportive. When the subject of homophobia comes up she says "But you guys don't experience that do you? I mean here we are in the restaurant and you two are together and everything is ok."

After you are done reading ask participants to talk about the thoughts and feelings they had while listening to the story. Let them know the events in the story are all true and very common occurrences. Point out that all the examples were pretty "ordinary" and that GLBTQ oppression can be very overt, hostile and violent but this story focused on the ordinary, everyday more subtle forms of oppression.