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Supporting the LGBTQ+ Community - A Guide to Allyship

By: Tara Abdelnour on December 8, 2022



LGBTQ+ individuals continue, to this day, to experience prejudice, judgement, abuse and violence. Individuals who are Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer, may hide their sexuality from others in hopes that they will not be stigmatized or experience homophobia, transphobia or biphobia by others. As a result of many individuals continuing to experience negative attitudes and perceptions about members of the LGBTQ+ community, and act on their feelings to perpetuate violence and commit hate crimes, their actions are negatively impacting the lives and health of these sexual minorities.

Many LGBTQ individuals do not feel safe or comfortable in situations/environments because the dirty looks they receive from individuals who refuse to affirm and support the choices of those within this community. These individuals experience microaggressions on a daily basis, such as the use of heterosexist and transphobic terminology such as “That’s so gay” or referring to a transgender women with derogatory terms, the endorsement of

heteronormative culture and behaviors, such as parents instructing their son to act “more masculine”, etc. These individuals also experience larger-scale hatred such as being rejected by their loved ones, being subjected to abuse, having people invalidate that their love is not real simply because it is not a heterosexual relationship, etc.

It is important to note that these actions, whether or not they were intended as a joke, have a serious and detrimental impact on the lives of LGBTQ+ people. The more people experience microaggressions, the more likely they are to report symptoms of depression, psychological distress, and even physical health issues. The latter is because these individuals may not seek out healthcare needs, such as HIV testing, due to the fact that discrimination and homophobia fuel the HIV epidemic in gay and bisexual men. Our words are powerful. Our actions can be harmful.

There are multiple ways of how we can begin to make sure that these individuals feel more comfortable enough to hold their partners hand in public without being fearful of the repercussions, to ensure these transgender individuals no longer feel the need to hide their gender identity or suppress their gender expression merely to ensure their safety.

Firstly, it is critical to listen to the stories of individuals within the LGBTQ community in order to learn about the diverse and unique experiences of individuals within this community. Then is when we can begin to learn more about this community and become more familiar, for example, with the different types of sexual orientations, gender identities, etc. Learning can be done through Internet searches, following LGBTQ organizations on social media, signing up for newsletters, etc. Next, letting individuals who you know are part of this community, that you accept and support them is a step that will allow for that individual to finally feel that they are respected and loved for who they truly are. Letting a loved one, especially, know that you will be there for them in their process of self-discovery will surely make them feel less uncomfortable and intimidating. Lastly, to show that you are truly in support for LGBTQ people, become an ally. This means demonstrating through your actions and words that you are supportive of those who wish to defy society’s rigid notions about sexual orientation and gender identity and expressions. Attend protests against the discrimination of this community, and attend celebrations such as the yearly Pride festivals. Show the world that you are proudly an individual who is empowering individuals to be who they truly are and to love whoever they want.

To end, I would like to acknowledge that no matter the gender of the person you are sexually or emotionally attracted to, your feelings are valid and that love is real and beautiful. Being able to give your heart to someone and share the most intimate parts of yourself to another individual is what love is all about. Although it is easier said than done, do not let anyone tell you otherwise.

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