

Supporting LGBTQ2+ Students Facing Discrimination

Overall:

- **Acknowledge and validate their feelings**
 - They might feel scared, isolated, depressed, angry, overwhelmed...
- **Remind them that discrimination is unacceptable**
 - It is not about them as individuals, but about others and their views.
- **Encourage them to engage in activities (and spend time with people) that make them feel good about themselves**
 - Offer to help them come up with a list or encourage them to brainstorm one and write it down (on paper, on their devices...)
- **Offer to help them learn to assess unsafe situations**
 - See “Assessing the Situation”
- **Offer to help them learn to choose how to respond, and/or practice responding.**
 - See “Responding to Discrimination”
- **Advise your admin team of the discrimination.**
 - Do not use student name or identifying information without student permission.

Note: Please do not hesitate to reach out for support. Homophobia and transphobia are ongoing issues with complex roots. Who can you connect with for support?

Assessing the Situation: Safety First

Below is a list of questions that can help students learn to navigate uncomfortable or dangerous situations. You can offer to walk through this list together, or you might offer the list to them to contemplate on their own, or to complete with a friend or ally.

1. Is the person being ignorant or do they mean to cause harm?
2. Is the person aggressive with their words or body language? Are they threatening you? Using an aggressive tone? Moving closer to you?
3. Has the person harassed you before? If so, has there been an escalation in the harassment?
4. Are you alone, or do you have friends with you? Is there an adult nearby who could help?
5. Where are you? Can you get away? It's important to know where your exits are.
6. Trust your gut, and if you are concerned for your safety at all, try to remove yourself from the situation and/or find help.
7. Report the incident to a safe staff member at your school. If you are not comfortable sharing, consider reporting anonymously on the Surrey PSST website (psst-bc.ca), or to BC's ERASE website (erasereportit.gov.bc.ca).

Responding to Discrimination:

Below is a list of questions that can help students learn to respond to uncomfortable situations. You can offer to walk through this list together, or you might offer the list to them to contemplate on their own, or with a friend or ally.

Consider your safety and the potential effects of your response before responding whenever possible.

Options for responding:

1. **Turn the other cheek**, pretend you didn't hear/notice (frustrating, but safest).
2. **Use humour to deflect**, then exit the situation.
3. **Speak up**
 - a. Don't match insult for insult, it will likely escalate the situation.
 - b. See if the person will acknowledge their behaviour. Ask in a non-confrontational tone, "Why would you say something like that?" or "Are you aware that sounds homophobic/transphobic?"
 - c. State how their comments or actions make you feel, instead of saying something negative about the other person. For example, "There are a lot of misconceptions about queer people. We are all human beings, and it really hurts to hear things like that."
 - d. If a person becomes (or already is) aggressive, remove yourself from the situation as quickly and calmly as possible.
4. **Try to educate others** (most likely friends, family, acquaintances...)
 - a. Attempt to address the roots of homophobia/transphobia by asking something like, "What ideas do you have about LGBTQ2+ people that make you say that? Let's talk about them."

- b. Use your judgement, not everyone will be receptive, but you might make them think about their words and actions.
- c. Sometimes people are unaware of how their words or questions are harmful. Opening up the conversation like this can be effective.

5. Engage in community and/or activism

- a. Check in with safe school staff members and ask about LGBTQ2+ clubs, GSAs or other kinds of groups.
 - i. Look for Surrey School District rainbow stickers, or other Pride related signage that might indicate a staff member is an ally.
 - ii. If you're unsure of which staff are safe, ask your counsellor who the School SOGI Lead is, or speak directly to your vice-principal or principal.
 - iii. If there are no LGBTQ2+ groups at your school, ask a safe staff member for support in starting one, or look online for age-appropriate LGBTQ2+ groups that could offer community and/or opportunities for activism.