

# Supporting LGBT Students and Coworkers

## DEFINITIONS

**Sexual orientation:** describes the gender of the people you are attracted to. Ex: “My *sexual orientation* is heterosexual. I’m a man, and I’m attracted to women.” Below are some other words for sexual orientation:

**Lesbian:** a woman who is attracted to other women. Ex: “Ellen Degeneres is a *lesbian*. She is married to Portia.”

**Gay:** describes men who are attracted to other men. Ex: “Jason Collins is the first NBA player to come out as *gay*.”

**Bisexual:** describes to people who are attracted to both men and women. Ex: “Amber Heard is *bisexual*. She used to date a woman, but now she’s dating Johnny Depp.”

**Gender identity:** describes what your gender is. For some people the gender they are assigned when they were born may not be their true gender. Ex: “My *gender identity* is female. I am a woman.”

**Transgender:** describes people whose gender identity is different from the one they were assigned when they were born. Ex: “Laverne Cox is a *transgender* woman who also plays a *transgender* character on TV.”

**Questioning:** used to describe people who aren’t sure about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Ex: “I’m *questioning* my sexual orientation. I used to like only boys, but now I think I like girls too.”

## HOW TO RESPOND

**If someone comes out to you (tells you their sexual orientation or gender identity):**

**DO:**

- Listen
- Respect confidentiality and privacy
- Thank them
- Understand that it may have been hard for them to tell you
- Use the name and pronoun that they prefer

**DO NOT:**

- Ask them about sex
- Ask them about HIV or AIDS
- Use offensive words
- Confuse gender and sexual orientation
- Make assumptions
- Talk about political or religious differences
- Treat them differently

**If someone says “That’s so gay.”**

1. Redefine it: “Please don’t use that word to mean stupid.”
2. Make it personal: “That hurts me and people I care about.”

For more information:

The LGBT Liaison to the City of Somerville at 617-625-6600 x2400

[www.facebook.com/SomervilleLGBT](http://www.facebook.com/SomervilleLGBT)

