

Ten Things You Can Do to Support a Gay or Gender Questioning Person

1. Speak and act confidently when talking to or about lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or questioning people or their issues. Others will quickly formulate opinions and draw relevant conclusions based on how you address matters of sexuality and gender identity
2. Have lots of signposting displayed in your workplace, club, school, college or other setting so people can refer themselves to agencies local to them for support and advice including **EACH's national Freephone Actionline 0808 1000 143** and download a sheet of its **Safe Space Stickers** from our website
3. Agree a vocabulary of words to which everyone in your practice, team department, unit or educational institution is signed up. Well-intentioned attempts to “get down with the kids” using Facebook’s 56 terms describing gender, or employing colloquial sexuality adjectives which can cause offence, will serve only to confuse and potentially disenfranchise
4. Draw up a document of successful resilience and coping strategies learnt from your day-to-day experience. Integrate your learning within your practice
5. Drop in on your local LGBT+ Group and learn from everything you see and hear to better your understanding and improve your practice
6. Coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans or questioning takes courage. If you’re the confidante of this revelation smile reassuringly and thank the person for making you the individual they’ve told. Never, ever insinuate that you ‘already knew’ or ‘had guessed’ in efforts to comfort them.
7. If you are counselling someone assure yourself that any individual you’re supporting is safe at home and not liable to any homophobic, biphobic or transphobic threat, abuse or intimidation.
8. Know who are all your local wrap-around agencies and who is the person best placed within each to support a lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans person either ‘coming out’ or experiencing homophobic, biphobic or transphobic abuse
9. Bear in mind homophobia, biphobia or transphobia displayed by the person with whom you are working may actually be a fear of and an attempt to suppress recognition of their own sexuality or gender identity
10. Faith, religion or culture should never be used as a justification for homophobic or transphobic name-calling or bullying. The protected characteristics enshrined in UK law are not a pack of ‘Top Trumps’ playing cards with any one having higher status than the others

