



# Module 1



## Coming Out: From Discovery to Assertion

# Specific Objectives



- Identify the developmental stages that lead to integrating a homosexual or bisexual orientation (coming out)



- Recognize the main health issues encountered at each of these stages



- Identify personal and social factors that have an impact on the degree of difficulty with this integration process

- Welcome and support individuals in the process they are going through

# Coming Out: From Discovery to Assertion



- The 6 stages involved in coming out
- Difficulties encountered and health issues
- Differences based on sex, age, culture, etc.
- Non-heterosexist interventions





# The Six Stages Involved in Coming Out

# The Stages at a Glance



1. Questioning his/her sexual orientation
2. Recognizing the target of his/her attraction
3. Exploring the target of his/her attraction
4. Acknowledging his/her sexual orientation
5. Valuing his/her sexual orientation
6. Integrating his/her sexual orientation

# The Stages

## 1- Questioning his/her sexual orientation

Am I...?

I can't be. I don't want to be!

- Feels marginalized
- Labels others and him/herself
- Tests the attitudes of others
- Secretly seeks information



# The Stages

## 2- Recognizing the target of his/her attraction

I think it's possible that I'm...

- Conflict between the “me” I know as myself and the “me” others know
- Confronted with heterosexism and homophobia
- Considers the possibility of being gay, lesbian or bisexual



# The Stages

## 3- Exploring the target of his/her attraction

It's probably the case for me...

- Exploration of social and sexual situations
- Differentiates him/herself from the heterosexual majority
- Examines the possibility of telling others (who? when? how?)





# The Stages

## 4- Acknowledging his/her sexual orientation

I know that it's my case...

- Increased interest in exploring situations of a social and sexual nature
- Development of strategies for adjusting to dualism
- Adoption of an ideology of legitimacy



# The Stages

## 5- Valuing his/her sexual orientation

I am proud of being...

- No longer acts in complete secrecy
- Personal investment in gay and lesbian identity and pride
- “We and them” – close identification with gay and lesbian communities



# The Stages

## 6- Integrating his/her sexual orientation

I feel comfortable with myself.

I feel comfortable with others.

- Enhanced gay, lesbian or bisexual identity
- Greater ability to establish more genuine social relationships
- “My sexual orientation is just one aspect of my personality”



# Difficulties Experienced and Health Issues



- Isolation problems
- Difficulties with family relationships
- Homophobic abuse
  - Youth settings
  - Adult settings
- Problems related to career choice and the workplace
- Risks to sexual health (STBBIs, etc.)



# The Components of a Non-Heterosexist Approach



- Do not assume heterosexuality
- Demonstrate the value of all types of human relationships
- Sexual orientation does not determine the extent of a person's well-being
- Identify the real problem: its source is not necessarily related to the person's sexual orientation

# The Components of a Non-Heterosexist Approach



- Do not underestimate homophobia: recognize the impact of social stigmatization on the development and well-being of the individual, the couple, and the family
- One sexual experience does not determine a person's sexual orientation
- The person involved is the only one who can define his/her sexual orientation; our role is to help and support him/her
- Don't hesitate to request help if necessary

# Key Messages



- People come out at all ages
- It is not always experienced in a linear fashion and is never definitively completed
- The coming-out experience varies according to various factors: sex, age, culture, etc.
- To attain health and well-being, coming-out is an undeniably critical process

# Key Messages



- Intervene, taking into consideration the impacts of homophobia and heterosexism on physical and mental health
- Take into account the cumulative effect of the various minority statuses an individual may experience
- Social equality goes beyond tolerance