ALEX

What is homophobia?

KEY WORDS

rejection | hate | discrimination | homosexual

Homophobia is the rejection, discrimination or even hatred towards homosexual people (those who feel attracted to people of the same sex).

Homophobia takes many different forms, including negative attitudes and beliefs, rejection or prejudice against bisexual, lesbian and gay people. It is often based on **irrational fear and not understanding**. Some people's homophobia may come from conservative religious beliefs. People can have homophobic beliefs if they have been taught them by their fathers, mothers and other family members.
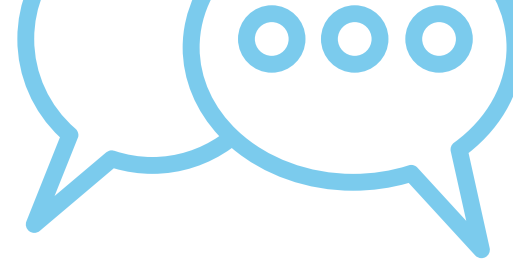
Homophobic people may use name-calling or foul language when talking about lesbian and gay people. In their most extreme forms, homophobia and biphobia (rejection, discrimination or hatred towards bisexuality) can cause people to harass, abuse and use violence against lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

What is internalised homophobia?

A specific type of homophobia is **internalised homophobia**, which is when a person is homophobic but also feels attracted to people of the same sex. Sometimes, people that are attracted to the same sex (and could be homosexual) have negative attitudes and beliefs toward those who are also attracted to people of the same sex, and instead of accepting their own desires, they turn those negative beliefs toward themselves. That may mean that they feel uncomfortable and disapprove of their own same-sex attraction, that they never accept their same-sex attraction, or that they never identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
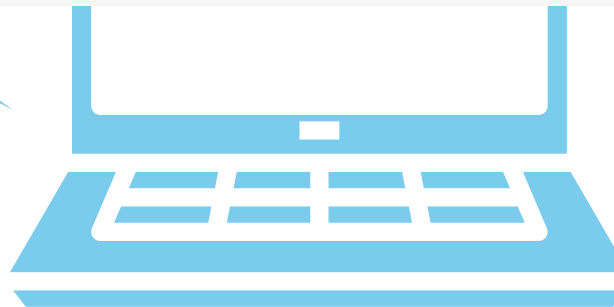
People who have internalised homophobia may feel the need to "prove" that they are heterosexual (or straight). They may also feel the need to behave in a way that is very stereotypical (cliché) of heterosexual men and women (such as adopting stereotypically extremely masculine behaviour), or even to bully and discriminate against people who are openly gay.

For a more understanding and inclusive society, we need to work towards eliminating the discriminatory attitudes, stereotypes, and harmful behaviours that homophobia brings. Fighting against homophobia means **promoting understanding, empathy, and a society that embraces differences and authenticity**, no matter your sexual orientation.

INCLUSION AND STAYING SAFE

ALEX