

Session 6A: Individual History

Learning Objectives:

- To gain greater understanding of how one has learned about sexual orientation and gender identity over his/hir/her lifetime.
- To see what understandings one has that are different and similar to the understandings of others.

Session Summary:

Participants will complete one personal timeline of their general understanding and remembrances of sexual orientation and transgender identity and another timeline about their own journey of sexual orientation/identity. Discussion will follow, and sharing is encouraged but optional.

Background:

This is a highly personal workshop. Encourage participants to share as much as they are comfortable and remind them that they have a choice as to how much they share. Timelines are one way of recording history. Timelines will be used here to represent their personal history.

Materials:

1. 2 sheets of paper (11 x 17 or larger) for each participant
2. Markers
3. Crayons

Preparation:

- Have markers and paper ready.

Workshop Plan

Opening Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

(You are invited to pick a reading and/or an opening hymn. Singing The Living Tradition is an excellent resource. Other options are a moment of silence, a prayer, or a brief check-in. You are encouraged to also begin with a chalice lighting. Please submit any readings and/or hymn choices that you have used successfully to the OBGLTC as feedback for possible inclusion in future editions of LWC.)

Activities:

Timeline (Part One) (40 minutes)

Tell participants that because the group has decided to gain greater knowledge about or for themselves of sexual orientation, they will begin by exploring their own history around sexual orientation and transgender issues.

Tell participants they are going to create 2 timelines. Distribute paper and markers/crayons.

The first timeline is about sexual orientation and transgender identity in general. Tell the group that they are going to create this timeline of their journey of learning about sexual orientation and transgender identity.

Ask participants to write at one end of the paper the year they were born and at the other end the year it is now. Ask participants to think about how they learned about homosexuality (specifically gay men), throughout their lives. Repeat for lesbians, bisexuality, heterosexuality, and transgender identity. Tell participants they will have half an hour to create a timeline that represents the significant things they learned about each of these identities. Tell participants they will be sharing these timelines with others and that honesty will help everyone here.

The timelines could include the first time they heard the words met a person with this identity, learned more about this identity, significant events that happened around them that shaped their thinking—anything that has contributed to their understanding. Suggest that participants might wish to choose a different color for each identity or a different color for the depiction depending on whether it was positive, negative, or neutral. Remind participants that if they remember something, it is probably significant. Also remind them they may not remember everything, which is to be expected, and if there is something they would prefer not to share, to not share it. Tell participants they may use little drawings, words, phrases and/or whatever else they want for their timeline. Ask for questions and allow participants to begin.

Conversation (20 minutes)

Ask participants to find a partner and to share their timelines with each other. They will have 15 minutes total within which each participant should be given 5 minutes to share her/hir/his own timeline and then the final five minutes should be a conversation about what they had in common, what was different, and what they learned. When the time is up, ask the pairs to report to the larger group what they learned that they shared with their partner, and discuss what was common in the entire group. Also, ask participants what was hard, what was easy about the exercise and what they learned.

Timeline (Part 2) (25 minutes)

Tell participants that on their second sheet of paper, they are to draw a timeline of their own experience of their sexual orientation and/or being transgender. Please let everyone know that if a person identifies as transgender they may choose their sexual orientation or being transgender (even though being transgender is not a sexual orientation) for this exercise.

Tell participants they will have 20 minutes to create their timeline and to remember as many things as they can. You might prompt them to think about crushes they had as children, their first love, realizing their sexual orientation/gender identity, reactions to this, etc. Tell participants that any sharing they do here will be optional and they may use their timeline accordingly.

Ask for questions and begin.

Discussion (20 minutes)

When the time is up, ask participants to join the larger group. Ask if there is anything anyone wants to share from this exercise. It could be one thing they learned or their entire timeline. You may have to regulate this based on the number of participants. Allow for 10 minutes of sharing and then ask participants to reflect on how their history and the history of others affects their views of sexual orientation and gender identity. What might they wish was different? And what might they do in the future with others?

Thank the participants for their trust and hard work and proceed to the closing.

Closing Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

(You are encouraged to find a suitable one. The difference between the Opening and Closing is that we suggest that one reading and/or one hymn is selected to be used as the closing for all sessions. The Opening may vary from session to session.)

Suggested Hymns

Suggested Readings

Add Your Suggestion

Ask participants to hold hands as they are willing, able, and comfortable.