

Session 7A: Affection/Sexuality

Learning Objectives:

- To explore the nature of attraction in two forms—affection and sexuality.
- To distinguish the difference between the two and to also think about their similarities.

Session Summary:

Through conversation, case studies, and creative situations, participants will explore the complexities of attraction and how orientation is a part of this. Participants will be asked to distinguish the difference between affection/love and sexuality and to look at how this manifests itself in their lives and the lives of those around them.

Background:

Often, when people talk about sexual orientation, in particular homosexuality and bisexuality, the conversation is only about sex and sexual acts. Attraction and orientation are far more complex and this session will open a conversation about this complexity.

Materials:

1. Case studies
2. Newsprint
3. Markers

Preparation:

- None

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:

Affection/Sexuality (35 minutes)

Ask participants to ponder the following questions:

1. How do you know when you have been or are attracted to someone?
2. What things make a person attractive to you?

Have participants break into pairs and answer these two questions. When five minutes is up, ask participants to come back as a large group.

Tell participants you will spend another 5 minutes creating a list of responses on newsprint. Let them know this is brainstorming and all responses are valued and will be recorded without judgment.

When the five minutes are up, ask participants to examine the list. What do they notice? After a few minutes, ask participants if there items on the list that pertain to just sexuality, to just affection, or to both?

Ask participants if it is important to distinguish a difference between sexuality and affection/love? Why or why not? Before they can answer, announce that the class will be divided into 2 groups arbitrarily. Tell participants to number off 1-2, 1-2. Tell the 1's they will have 15

minutes to make a case that the difference between sexuality and love is an important distinction. Tell the 2's that they will have an equal amount of time to make a case that the distinction is not important. Tell both groups they will present their cases to one another, each group having 2-3 minutes to support their answer to the question. Tell participants that even if they have a strong view on this, they should stick with the case they have been given. Allow for questions, and gather again in 15 minutes.

After each group has made their case, process the activity. What was it like to be forced to choose? Who represented a side that was not their own personal point of view? What did they learn about themselves in the process?

Ask participants to reflect on why this is an important question and allow for discussion.

Case Studies (45 minutes)

Prepare to spend 15 minutes on each case study. After reading the case study, ask participants to reflect with a partner on the following questions:

1. What would you say to this woman if she told you this story?
2. What does this story make you think about?
3. How typical do you believe this is for people?
4. Is the case study useful for you in any way?

Allow for five minutes of discussion with a partner and then continue the conversation in the large group.

Case Study #1

A woman in her 40's could never figure out her sexual orientation. There were times when she was attracted to men, but not completely; times when she was attracted to women, but not completely; times when she was attracted to both men and women.

A therapist asked her to look at whom she was attracted to in this way: Whom was she sexually attracted to? Whom was she emotionally attracted to? Whom was she intellectually attracted to?

A moment of insight occurred for my friend. She realized she was sexually attracted to men, emotionally attracted to women, and intellectually attracted to both women and men. This was a great source of comfort for her.

Case Study #2

A young six-year-old friend of yours sees two men who are partners hug in church. He is told they love each other and are partners. A month later he sees his father hug another man and asks his father if he is going to divorce his mother and move in with this man. The father gets flustered and gets angry with his son. Later he pulls you aside and tells you what has happened and asks what he should say now to his son.

How would you respond? What does a six year old need to know? What would you have liked to have known as a six year old? Would it be different if the child were ten?

Case Study #3

A young woman you know confides in you that her best friend has told her she loves her. Your friend says she is confused because she also loves this woman but not in a sexual way. She says she enjoys talking with her, camping with her, and even liked it when her friend fell asleep on her shoulder. She wonders if she might be bisexual or lesbian, but does not think so. She is not sure what to say to her best friend of 4 years, because her friend is a lesbian and is single. They have kissed on the cheek in the past and hugged. Your friend said she said nothing when her best friend told her this and admitted that she was not sure how to respond. So they said good-bye without resolving it.

What are some of the issues here? What advice would you give to her friend? Would this be different if it were two men? Would it be different if the women were older? Would the situation be different for you if both women were lesbian?

Project (30 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 4. Ask the participants to create a situation in which they will describe a scenario where two people are emotionally attracted to each other but not sexually, where two people are sexually attracted to each other but not emotionally, where one person is sexually and emotionally attracted to the other but the other is only emotionally attracted to the other, and where two people are emotionally and sexually attracted to each other. Give the group 15 minutes to prepare.

After 15 minutes, ask the groups to describe the situations they created. When the presentations are done, close with a discussion about how sexual orientation affects the way we are attracted to others, what sexual orientations the groups used for the individuals in the scenarios they created., and what the exercise made people think about.

Thank the participants for sharing and move 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.