

Kaleidoscope Manual
OVERHEADS REQUIRED FOR:

KALEIDOSCOPE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL STAFF

1. Australian Study of Health and Relationships
2. Suicide attempts
3. Vulnerable stages of suicide
- 4A. External pressures
- 4B. Internal pressures
5. Experiences of SSA young people
6. I dropped out of school
7. There was no-one
8. What schools can do to reduce homophobia
- 9A. Equal Opportunity Act – what is prohibited
- 9B. Staff to student harassment
10. Equal Opportunity and schools
11. Inaction and schools
12. Three important points for schools
- 13a-13d. Scenarios

The Australian Study of Health and Relationships, conducted in 2003, found that 12% of the population is same sex attracted.

This means that in a class of 25 students, it is likely that approximately 3 will be attracted to or have had sexual experiences with people who are the same gender as they are.

SAME SEX ATTRACTED
YOUTH SUICIDE ATTEMPTS.

- Gay male -----20.8%
Out of 100% of gay men
- Heterosexual male ----- 5.4%
Of all heterosexual men
- Bisexual/undecided male -----29.4%
Of all undecided males

- Lesbian female -----28%

Of 100% of lesbians

- Heterosexual female ----- 8.3%

Of all heterosexual females

- Bisexual/undecided female ---34.9%

Of all undecided females

Better To Be Dead Than Gay? Are gay youth more at risk of suicidal behaviour and if so what can we do? By Nicholas J and Howard J, 1999. A paper presented at Suicide Prevention Australia 6th National Conference, Sydney 2001.

overhead 3.

It is in the early stages of a young person's grappling with their sexuality that they are most at risk of suicide.

Young people are in a vulnerable state when:

- a) they are in a stage of confusion
- b) they are thinking that they are probably SSA
- c) deciding whether to tell anyone.

Better To Be Dead Than Gay? By Nicholas J and Howard J, 1999

LINK BETWEEN SEXUALITY AND SUICIDE

EXTERNAL PRESSURES

- Loss of family support
- Harassment
- Alienation
- Religion
- Homelessness
- Discrimination
- Substance abuse
- HIV risk

STEP Manual: An Educational Resource For Those Working With Indigenous, Refugee And Same Sex Attracted Young People. By the Victorian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Promotion Officers and Christine Farnam – STEP Project Co-ordinator. Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2001, page 137.

overhead 4B

LINK BETWEEN SEXUALITY AND SUICIDE

INTERNAL PRESSURES

- Hopelessness
- Ambivalence about sexual identity
- Self blame
- Internalised homophobia
- Grief

STEP Manual: An Educational Resource For Those Working With Indigenous, Refugee And Same Sex Attracted Young People. By the Victorian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Promotion Officers and Christine Farnam – STEP Project Co-ordinator. Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2001, page 137.

“...people kept coming up to me and making fun of me. They would call me horrible names and I would cry all the time. Letters were put in my locker saying things about AIDS and how my parents shouldn’t have had me and how I should just die. Kids would threaten me after school and follow me home yelling things at me. No-one should have to go through what I went through in school.”

“I dropped out of school after being at different schools. I am gay, and was made fun of so much that I got sick of being in school. I couldn’t stand worrying about what was going to happen to me each day, so I stopped going. I was beaten up all during my time in school, and the fights and threats started when I was pretty young. As I said, I did try different schools including a private one. The last one was pretty good, but by then I was so fed up that I had lost any interest in school.”

“There was no-one in my school for me to talk to about my issues. I felt completely alone and unsupported. I had nowhere to unload the burden I was feeling unless I ended it.”

What schools can do to reduce homophobia and increase safety.

- 1. Have resources and literature in the library. Inform students.**
- 2. Processes in place for dealing with homophobic bullying. Inform students. Respond to 'put downs' same as to racist or sexist slurs.**
- 3. Reduce isolation and negativity. Provide gay and lesbian role models.**
(See handouts for more)
 - **English and Literature: Oscar Wilde, Robert Dessaix, Kath Phillips, Virginia Wolf**
 - **Art and Music: Michelangelo, Jeffrey Smart, KD Lang, Cole Porter**
 - **Sport: Ian Roberts, Martina Navratilova, Greg Louganis, Renee Richards**
 - **Sciences: Evelyn Hooker, Kerry Phelps**
 - **Australian History and Politics: Senator Bob Brown, Susan Harben, Justice Michael Kirby**
 - **Religion: The Metropolitan Community Church, Reverend Dorothy McRae-McMahon.**
- 4. Support the rights and freedoms of SSA people. Encourage tolerance.**
- 5. Put posters up. Display a rainbow sticker to indicate you are supportive.**
- 6. Use gender neutral language like 'partner' instead of girl friend or boy friend. 'Do you think you might be SSA?' is less confronting than 'Are you SSA?'**
- 7. Become better informed.**
- 8. Ensure confidentiality.**
- 9. Reflect diversity on forms. Instead of father's and mother's name, write parents. Show awareness of children with gay or lesbian parents.**
- 10. Circulate these suggestions as widely as possible.**

Equal Opportunity Act

- The Act prohibits sexual harassment and discrimination on the basis of 17 attributes, two of which are sexual orientation and lawful sexual activity. These occur in 8 areas of public life including receipt of goods and services, employment and education.
- There are two kinds of discrimination as defined by the Equal Opportunity Act: direct and indirect.

Equal Opportunity Act

Sexual harassment includes discrimination/harassment
on the grounds of sexual orientation,
perceived or otherwise.

- Student to student harassment is unlawful
- Student to staff harassment is unlawful
- Staff to student harassment is unlawful
- Staff to staff harassment is unlawful

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND SCHOOLS

“Staff and students have a right to be treated fairly by staff and fellow students regardless of gender, sexual orientation and race.”

“Inaction may also amount to an implicit authorisation or encouragement of discrimination or sexual harassment. This means that a teacher or principal who ‘turns a blind eye’ to discrimination or sexual harassment by students may be liable on the basis of authorising or assisting discrimination.”

Three important points:

1. It is not being SSA that is the problem.
Homophobia and discrimination are.
2. Just like most schools don't put up with racist and sexist bullying, we must speak out against homophobic bullying.
3. Ask yourself: If I were in his or her shoes, what support would I need?

scenario 13A

Over the year a teacher develops a close working relationship with a withdrawn and isolated student. On one particular day, the girl arrives with badly slashed arms and is clearly more distressed than usual. She remains to speak with the teacher after class and after some time talks about her self-destructive thoughts regarding her confusion about her sexuality. The teacher suggests making an appointment with the SWC but the girl refuses, saying she'll only talk to that teacher.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

WHAT IS THE KEY ISSUE?

WHAT ARE THE TEACHER'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

HOW SHOULD THE TEACHER PROCEED?

Scenario 13B

An academically competent year 10 student 'comes out' to his friends and family. He has been the victim of gay bashing and taunting at school throughout his school life but when he 'comes out' and others at school hear about it, the bashings get worse.

He complains to the Student Welfare Coordinator who says that the Xmas holidays are coming up and suggests that things will settle down and be forgotten by next year. But after the break things are worse. Again he reports the bullying and how unsafe he feels. He says his marks are slipping and if things don't change he'll be forced to leave school.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

WHAT IS THE KEY ISSUE?

WHAT ARE THE TEACHER'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN NEXT?

Scenario 13C

A student lives with her lesbian parents. For the first few years no teacher knows that she has two mothers, a birth mother and a non- biological mother. But at a recent parent-teacher interview that is attended by her mothers, they ‘come out’ to the teacher. His response is that their sexuality is their own business. No further discussion about their sexuality ensues. But, back in class, the teacher is no longer warm to the girl.

There are subtle changes that disturb the student. She tells her parents who go to the school and confront him. He denies it all but nothing changes for the girl and she is scared of being in his class. She has been seeing a school psychologist for some time about an unrelated matter and has, in the past, confided in her that she has lesbian mothers.

On this occasion the girl and her parents see the psychologist and tell her that the teacher has changed and they think this is due to homophobia. The psychologist asks the student to describe what’s been happening. “He used to like me and say encouraging stuff and I always got good marks like As and Bs. But now he raises his eyebrows at me, he’s not interested in anything I’ve got to say and he never chooses me when my hand is up. Also, my marks are now Cs and Ds.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

WHAT ARE THE TEACHER’S RESPONSIBILITIES?

WHAT SHOULD THE PSYCHOLOGIST DO?

HOW DOES THE PSYCHOLOGIST PROCEED?

Possible Responses to Scenario, overhead 13A.

What are the issues?

- The girl's confusion about her sexuality
- Her self-harming behaviour
- Her insistence about speaking to only that teacher

What is the key issue?

- Suicide prevention – her safety

What are the teacher's responsibilities?

- Duty of Care which includes making the school environment safe, keeping the girl safe
- Confidentiality
- An Equal Opportunity environment

How should the teacher proceed?

- Arrange to speak to the girl that day
- During the meeting with the girl, allow her the time and safety to speak about herself
- Affirm sexuality that is other than heterosexual
- Encourage her to see the SWC or psychologist with you present. The girl's self harming is a concern regarding suicide and needs to be addressed urgently.
- Give her reading material
- Refer her to a SSA youth support group