

## **“LGBT/STRAIGHT” DIALOGUE “FISH BOWL” ACTIVITY**

*by Warren J. Blumenfeld*

### **SET-UP, DEFINITION**

A “Fish Bowl” activity is arranged in two concentric circles: one inner, the other outer.

A “fishbowl” is designed for members of the inner circle to speak and express their views while members of the outer circle listen to what is being said without responding or interrupting—as if viewing fish within an aquarium.

### **AGENDA**

- 1 Fish Bowl Activity: Lesbians, Gay Males, Bisexuals, Transgender People (LGBTs)
- 2 Everyone Process in Pairs
- 3 Fish Bowl Activity: Heterosexuals
- 4 Everyone Process in Pairs
- 5 Questions and Answers:
- 6 LGBTs Ask Questions of the Heterosexuals First, Then Heterosexuals Ask Questions of LGBTs.
- 7 Facilitated Open Discussion
- 8 Closure: Appreciations

### **GUIDELINES**

- 1 Anonymity (We can talk about what occurred after this workshop, but do not use participants’ names or other identifying characteristics.)
- 2 Respect for Ideas, No Attack or Blame
- 3 Speak from Your Own Experience, and Do Not Talk For Anyone Else
- 4 Take Care of Personal Needs
- 5 Share Air Time
- 6 Active Listening
- 7 Try On New Ideas

### **PURPOSE**

- 1 To develop a dialogue between and among people of all sexual and gender identities,
- 2 To discuss issues people of all sexual and gender identities have in common and issues that separate them,
- 3 To develop strategies to help people of all sexual and gender identities work more effectively together.

### **PROCEDURE**

- 1 Explain what a “Fish Bowl” Activity is,
- 2 Explain the Agenda,
- 3 Introduce the Guidelines,
- 4 Ask the LGBTs to come into the middle of the room (chairs or on the floor),
- 5 Ask the Heterosexuals to sit in a circle around the LGBTs,
- 6 Ask the LGBTs the following four questions:
  - A. What do you love about being a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?
  - B. What has been difficult for you growing up as a lesbian, gay male, bisexual, or

- transgendered person?
- C. What do you never want to see done to or hear said about LGBTs ever again? (These could include the stereotypes, the myths, the misinformation, the actions taken against them.)
- D. How can Heterosexuals and other LGBTs offer you support and be your allies?
- 7 Ask people in the middle circle (LGBTs) to find another person from within the circle and people in the outer circle (Heterosexuals) to find another person in the outer circle to form a pair in which they will talk together about anything that came up for them during the fish bowl (allow approximately 5–7 minutes),
- 8 Ask the Heterosexuals to come into the middle of the room (chairs or on the floor),
- 9 Ask the LGBTs to sit in a circle around the Heterosexuals,
- 10 Ask the Heterosexuals the following four questions:
- A. What do you love about being a Heterosexual?
- B. What has been difficult for you growing up as a Heterosexual?
- C. What do you never want to see done to or hear said about Heterosexuals ever again? (These could include the stereotypes, the myths, the misinformation, and actions taken against them.)
- D. How can LGBTs and other Heterosexuals offer you support and be your allies?
11. Ask people within the circle (Heterosexuals) to find another person from within the circle, and people in the outer circle (LGBTs) to find another person in the outer circle to form a pair in which they will talk together about anything that came up for them during the fish bowl (allow approximately 5–7 minutes),
- 12 Form one large circle,
- 13 Questions and Answers: Ask the LGBTs, “Are there any questions you would like to ask the Heterosexuals?”
- 14 Any of the Heterosexuals can answer the questions,
- 15 After the LGBTs have asked their questions, ask the Heterosexuals, “Are there any questions you would like to ask the LGBTs?”
- 16 Any of the LGBTs can answer the questions,
- 17 Facilitated Open Dialogue: Ask open-ended questions to facilitate a dialogue. Some possible questions could include:
- A. What did you learn during this activity?
- About yourself?
  - About others?
- B. What are some of the things you heard that LGBTs and Heterosexuals have in common?
- C. What are some of the things you heard that tend to separate LGBTs and Heterosexuals?
- D. What are some possible actions you may take to help people of all sexual and gender identities to work together more effectively?
- 18 End of Activity: Have participants give final appreciations of what they have gained from the dialogue.