



FAST FACTS



2+
People



45-60
Minutes



\$5 or less



High Risk
Level

A Different Life

Adapted from the UA New Start Summer Program

Purpose of Activity: This activity allows participants to go through a simulation that will help them understand some of the challenges LGBTQ individuals may face as their identity is revealed to others.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

By actively participating in this activity, participants will:

- Gain perspective on concerns some LGBTQ people face with regards to “coming out”
- Recognize that concerns around safety and acceptance for LGBTQ people are valid and unique
- Desire to be a strong ally/support for LGBTQ people

Materials Needed:

- Index Cards
- Pens
- Tissue
- A quiet, private room to facilitate in

Ground Rules:

- Be fully present and participate at your own comfort level – challenge by choice.
 - Follow up - What does it mean to be “fully present”?
 - Follow up - What does “challenge by choice” mean?
- Push yourself outside of your comfort zone – the most learning happens when we are a little bit uncomfortable.
- Listen respectfully, share air time, and encourage others to participate.
- It’s ok for us all to be at different places with the things we discuss today.
- Show respect for one another’s beliefs, values, and experiences.
- Respect and maintain privacy.

Disclaimer:

- This can be a very triggering activity, as it acknowledges the challenges many LGBTQ people face, including violence. Be sure to do this activity in a room where the door can be closed, as participants may get emotional, and you do not want someone overhearing your statements who is not participating in the program to be upset.
- It is important to note during discussion that not all LGBTQ people have this experience. Many are treated with love and respect by all the people in their lives. This activity is merely meant to provide a perspective about safety and acceptance that heterosexual and cisgender students don’t have to think about.

FAST FACTS



2+
People



45-60
Minutes



\$5 or less



High Risk
Level

- If someone DOES attend the program who is LGBTQ, be sure not to single them out for the “LGBTQ perspective,” stare at them to judge their reaction, or basically put them on the spot. They should be treated like every other student, and invite everyone to share/participate as much as she/he/ze is comfortable.

Facilitation Guide:

1. Facilitator reads the following script:

I am going to ask to you to put aside something that is very important to you. What I am asking you to put aside momentarily are your memories. I am asking you to suspend your reality and call upon the wonderful gift of imagination. Your imagination is the key instrument in this exercise of guided fantasy. We will be taking a chronological journey through your mind’s eye of what your life might have been if you were gay. You may experience a variety of feelings as you take this tour. Allow yourself to examine your feelings, but try to not let your feelings distract you from participating in this exercise. Please realize that my intent is not to manipulate your feelings or to change who you are. The goal is to help you to understand some of the feelings and experiences that someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual might feel. The experiences that I am about to take you through are not universal for lesbian, gay or bisexual people, but some of the themes presented are somewhat common.

On the six cards I have handed out to you, please write a name, word or phrase which fits the following five categories. Please use a separate card for each category.

1. A person from your childhood with whom you’ve shared secrets.
2. The names of your best friends in grade school.
3. A small valued material possession from your early teenage years.
4. Your favorite place.
5. A person who is very close to you.
6. A goal or dream.

As you undertake this imaginary journey, keep looking at the cards in your hand and consider the personal meaning of what you have written. Imagine how you would feel if any of all of these things were suddenly no longer there for you.

Let’s go back to your early childhood. Choose an age at which you have your earliest consistent memories. Perhaps you’ll be four, five, or six. You are sitting in front of the television set watching a show. One of the characters is Chris, a person of about your age who is the same gender as you. This character is your favorite and one of the main reasons why you watch this particular show. You feel drawn to Chris. You want to be Chris’s best friend. You turn to someone that you have always shared secrets with and you say “I love Chris.”



FAST FACTS



2+
People



45-60
Minutes



\$5 or less



High Risk
Level

That person makes a face at you and says. "That's disgusting! People shouldn't feel that way." You are confused and scared and ashamed.

Hold up the card with the name of the person with whom you shared secrets. You no longer feel that you can talk about your inner most feelings with this person. Tear the card in half.

(Pause a moment to allow people tear their cards in half).

You are now eleven years old and in grade school. Your teacher takes you and your classmates to the bathroom. As always, the teacher stays right outside the door and tells everyone to hurry up. You wonder why you and your classmates are always being rushed out of the bathroom. Of course, no one really has to go to the bathroom, so you and your friends get together and talk about the other people in your class. Someone starts talking about how cute another classmate of the opposite gender is. Everyone else agrees that this classmate is good looking and seems to be very interested in this classmate.

You, however, are not interested. You feel uncomfortable and out of place. Someone in the group laughs a little too loud and the teacher rushes in to see what's going on. The discussion ends and you head back to the classroom feeling alone and isolated. You know you are different from your friends and you feel like no one will understand. You don't understand your feelings, and you want to talk about them but you know you can't. Hold up the card with the names of your best friends, you no longer feel as close to them as you once did. Tear the card in half.

(Pause a moment to allow people tear their cards in half).

You're now fourteen. You've been looking forward to high school. You think things will be different, that you will make many new friends, and that you won't feel isolated anymore. You avoid looking too closely at the classmates to whom you feel attracted. You don't want them to call you the names you've been hearing for so long: fag, queer, dyke, lesbo. You don't want people to think you are gay. You've heard about how weird gay people are from your parents, friends, and religious leaders in the community. All the gay people you've ever seen were on television and were always caricatures, villains, or victims. You remember one movie in which a gang of criminals take over a subway car. One of the passengers is obviously gay and gets abused for it. Later in the movie, he gets killed and no one really seems to care. You don't know what you are, but you know you can't be gay. You tell yourself that it's just a phase and that you'll soon grow out of it.

One day, while in line for lunch, you forgot yourself and stare at someone whom you find very attractive. Someone sees you looking and calls you a "queer". It's starting over again; the names, the hatred, the feelings of worthlessness; later you go back to your locker and find that someone has broken into it and thrown ketchup all over your books. You find a



FAST FACTS



2+
People



45-60
Minutes



\$5 or less



High Risk
Level

note saying: "All gays should die". One of your most prized possessions you kept in your locker has been stolen. You feel like the whole world hates you and you wonder why this had to happen to you. You think things would maybe be better if you were just dead. You've been thinking of suicide a lot lately, but you're also very scared of doing it. Hold up the card with your prized possession on it - it is gone forever. Tear the card in half.

(Pause a moment to allow people tear their cards in half).

You're now eighteen and after years of hoping, praying, wishing and struggling, you've come to realize that you really are gay. It's not just a phase. It's not something that you chose. It's just who you are. You've just met someone named Terry, who is like you. This person is open and seems to be happy about being gay. You talk with Terry about your feelings and innermost desires. Finally, you've met someone who understands - someone who knows that you're not evil, sick or twisted.

You feel attracted to Terry and you want to get to know Terry better. There's a place you love to go to, so you suggest that you and Terry meet there later. You arrive early and wait with anticipation and excitement - this is your first real date. Terry arrives and you want to hug Terry. You start to, when you notice a look of panic on Terry's face. You realize that other people are around and they are looking at you and Terry suspiciously. You and Terry both feel very awkward and uncomfortable and you quickly decide to leave. Hold up the card with then name of your favorite place - you no longer feel comfortable there. Tear the card in half.

(Pause a moment to allow people tear their cards in half).

You are twenty-one years of age today. Someone who is very close to you decides to treat you to dinner in celebration of your birthday. Dinner was wonderful, the food was great, the atmosphere was comfortable, and you both did some reminiscing about the past. You both laughed a lot and you come to realize how important this person is to you, and you no longer want to keep part of your life a secret from him or her. You've decided that the first chance you get tonight, you are going to tell this person you are gay.

Soon the opportunity presents itself. You start out telling this person how important he or she is to you and that there is something you have wanted to tell them for a long time. Finally, you say it, "I'm gay." The person looks back at you for a second and says nothing. He or she finally says, "Well, that's okay, you're still my friend." But something seems different now. There's awkward silence and this person obviously feels uncomfortable. You try to break the tension with a joke, but it doesn't work. This persons is looking at you as if you were a total stranger and you feel like the bond has been broken. Hold up the card with the name of the person who is close you. Tear the card in half.

(Pause a moment to allow people tear their cards in half).

FAST FACTS



2+
People



45-60
Minutes



\$5 or less



High Risk
Level

You have graduated college and you are ready to enter the real world. You've just been hired for a job you are really excited about. You start immediately. You feel pretty good about yourself. You've made it through the tough times, yet you have a healthy outlook on who you are and what you can accomplish.

You are now proud of being gay. Your pride comes not solely by virtue of your sexuality, but also because you know you are a survivor in the wake of oppression and prejudice. You've been able to unlearn many of the lies and distortions about what it means to be gay. You think about your goals and your dreams and you feel like someday you will be able to achieve them. Later that evening, you meet some friends at your favorite club. You want to celebrate your good fortune. You all have a few drinks and a few laughs. You decide to leave a little earlier than everyone else, because you want to be ready for your new job tomorrow morning. You say goodbye to everyone and walk through the parking lot. Three men step out of a nearby car and approach you. They have baseball bats. One of them says, "Say goodbye queer," and swings his bat at your head. The others join in. Now hold up the card with your hopes and dreams. Tear the card in half.
(Pause a moment to allow people tear their cards in half).

2. Allow participants to reflect in silence for a few moments before moving into discussion questions.

Discussion Questions:

- *It is important to note during discussion that not all LGBTQ people have the experience described above. Many LGBTQ people are treated with love and respect by all the people in their lives. This activity is merely meant to provide a perspective about safety and acceptance that heterosexual and cisgender students don't have to think about.*
- How are you feeling right now?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Has this activity changed your perspective of others?
- What are some ways you can be a support for an LGBTQ person in your life?
- What are some of our campus resources available to support LGBTQ students?
 - LGBTQ Affairs
 - LGBTQ and Transgender Support Groups
 - SafeZone
 - Pride Alliance & SPRITE