

A Resource Guide to Coming Out

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http://www.hrc.org/documents/resourceguide_co.pdf

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT GLBT PEOPLE

It's important to remember that most of the negative stereotypes of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are based on erroneous or inadequate information. Here are some myths and facts to help you flesh out what's what:

It's a "choice." Sexual orientation and gender identity are not choices, any more than being left-handed or having brown eyes or being straight are choices. The choice is in deciding whether or not to live your life openly and honestly with yourself and others.

It's a "lifestyle." It's sometimes said that GLBT people live a gay "lifestyle." The problem with that word is that it can trivialize GLBT people and the struggles they face. Being GLBT is no more a lifestyle than being straight — it's a life, just like anyone else's.

Same-sex relationships don't last. Same-sex couples can, and do, form lasting, lifelong, committed relationships — just like any other couple. And just like any other couple, sometimes same-sex relationships end. The primary difference is

that same-sex couples have few opportunities to marry or enter into civil unions or domestic partnerships.

GLBT people can't have families. According to the 2000 Census, more than 1 million children — probably many more — are being raised by same-sex couples nationwide. The American Psychological Association and other major medical and scientific researchers have stated that children of gay and lesbian parents are as mentally healthy as children raised by straight parents.

GLBT people aren't happy. In 1994, the American Medical Association released a statement saying, "Most of the emotional disturbance experienced by gay men and lesbians around their sexual identity is not based on physiological causes but rather is due more to a sense of alienation in an unaccepting environment." What that means is that the discrimination and stress that GLBT people face is the root cause of a great deal of pain for many GLBT people. That pain can be alleviated by knowing that there is a vibrant, growing community of GLBT and straight-supportive Americans who know and care about GLBT people and the issues they face.

GLBT people can "change" or be "cured."

No scientifically valid evidence exists that shows that people can change their sexual orientation, although some people do repress

it. The most reputable medical and psychotherapeutic groups say you should not try to change your sexual orientation as the process can actually be damaging.