

## **What to do if you are the victim of homophobic bullying**

Homophobic bullying is defined as bullying behaviours that are motivated by prejudice against a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Anyone can be the victim of homophobic bullying, and it can happen anywhere, and at anytime.

If you are the victim of homophobic bullying:

- (1) **Tell someone you trust** – Talk to a trusted adult or friend who respects your confidentiality. This may be a teacher, parent, relative, youth worker, counselor, coach, faith leader or whomever you feel safest talking with. Remember, you don't have to suffer in silence. Keep telling until someone helps you.
- (2) **Know your rights** – Check out your school's bullying prevention policies or student code of conduct. Your school has a legal responsibility to protect you from bullying and abuse. You have the right to be respected and feel safe at your school and in your community, regardless of your sexual orientation or gender identity.
- (3) **Stay safe** – Don't fight back. Try to diffuse rather than escalate the situation by calling the bullies names. Is there a safe place nearby? Remember, bullies want attention and fighting back only gives them what they want. If you fight back, you may get hurt or make the situation worse. If you are a bystander, go for help and provide moral and emotional support to the person being bullied.
- (4) **Document everything** – Treat all bullying incidents seriously. Keep a record about the incident, including the date, witnesses, time, location, and what was said or done. If you are being bullied online, don't delete the message. You don't have to read it, but keep it. It's your evidence. The police or your school authorities can use this information to help protect you from further abuse.
- (5) **Remain calm** – It is common to feel angry, upset, scared, ashamed, embarrassed or hopeless when you've been the victim of homophobic bullying. You do not have to reveal your sexual orientation or gender identity to seek help. Unless you are at risk for self-harm, your teacher or school counselor does not have to tell your family or caregiver that you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, two-spirited, or queer (LGBTQ). You don't have to deal with bullying on your own. Caring and trusted adults are available to help and support you.
- (6) **Know the law** – Physical and sexual assault is a crime that should be reported to the police. Find out if your police service or RCMP detachment has a hate crime's unit or diversity officer. Describe in detail any hateful words expressed and what caused you to be afraid.
- (7) **Find support in your community** – You don't have to go through this experience alone! Check to see if there is a local LGBTQ\* youth group where you

can meet like-minded youth. Consider enrolling in a school that has a gay-straight student alliance or diversity club.

- (8) **Take a stand against homophobia and transphobia** – Speak out when it is safe to do so, and challenge homophobic language and bullying. Remember, you don't have to be LGBTQ to take a stand against homophobic bullying. There is strength in numbers.

Remember, being bullied is not your fault. Regardless of your sexual identity, you should be able to express and feel good about yourself without fear of violence or prejudice.

---

\* LGBTQ is an acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, two-spirited and queer identities.