



# Coming Out



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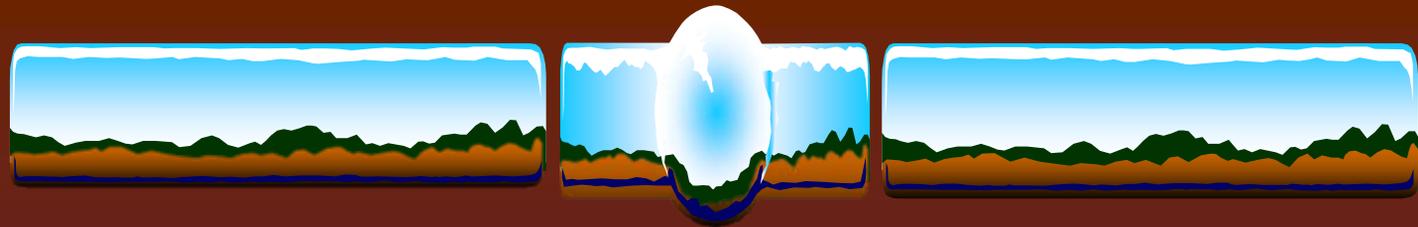
University of Hartford

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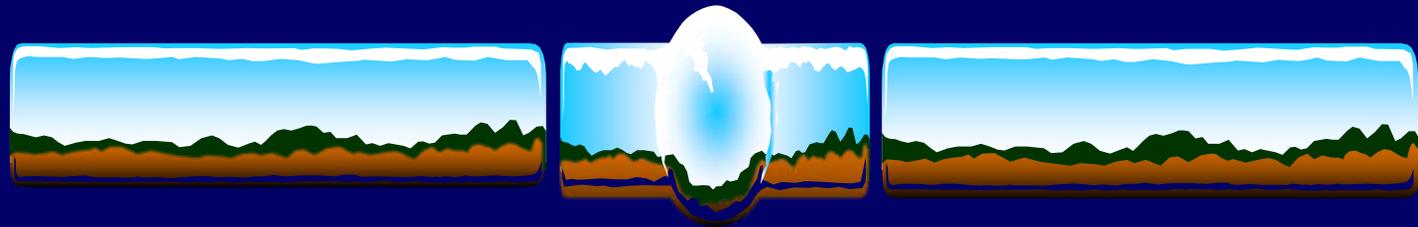
# Terms

- ✓ **Gay**
- ✓ **Lesbian**
- ✓ **Bisexual**
- ✓ **Pansexual**
- ✓ **Intersex**
- ✓ **Queer**
- ✓ **Questioning**
- ✓ **Transgender**
- ✓ **Allies**



## Coming Out

**The term "coming out" refers to the experiences of GLBPIQQTA as they work through and accept a stigmatized identity, transforming a negative self-identity into a positive one.**



## Stages of Coming Out (Cass, 1979)

**Stage I: Confusion** Occurs when a person begins to realize that he/she may relate to or identify as being gay or lesbian, a process of *personalizing the identity*.

**Stage II: Comparison**  
Occurs when a person *accepts the possibility the he/she might be gay or lesbian*.

**Stage III: Tolerance**  
Occurs when a person comes to *accept the probability that he/she is an LGBT person*.

**Stage IV: Acceptance**  
Occurs when a person *fully accepts rather than tolerates himself or herself as an LGBT person*

**Stage V: Pride**  
Occurs when the person *immerses himself or herself in the LGBT community and culture to live out identity totally*

**Stage VI : Synthesis**  
Occurs when the person *realizes that one's sexuality or gender identity is a part of who they are*.

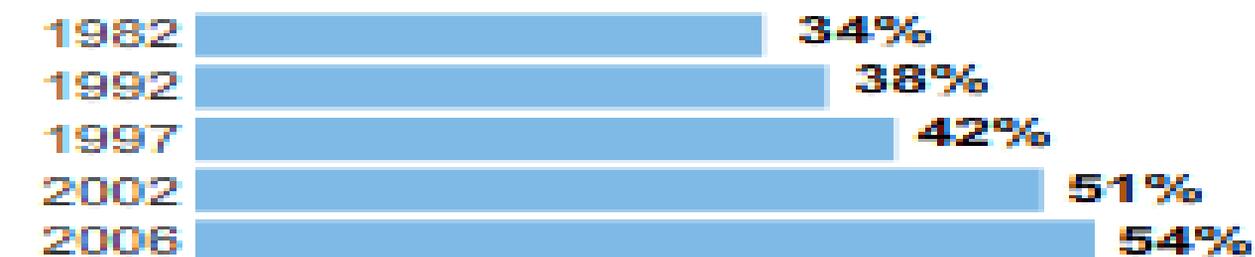


# Attitudes

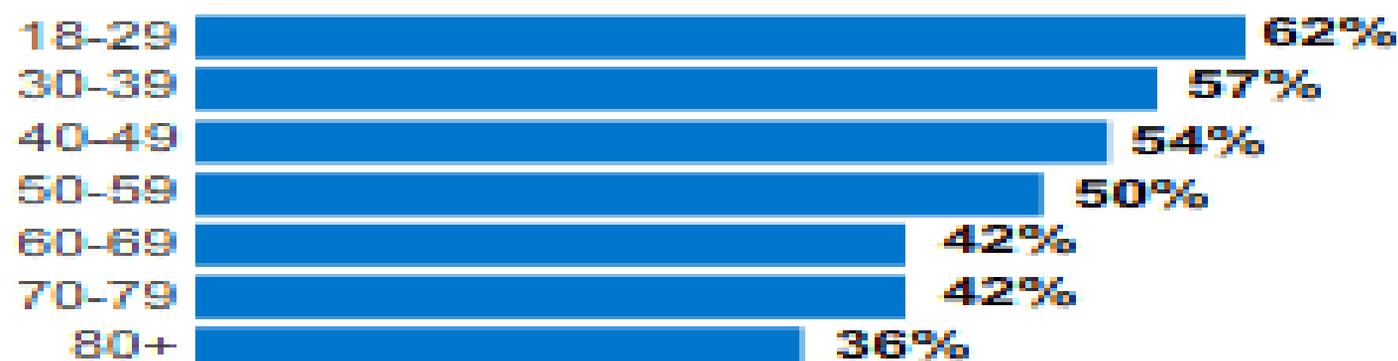
**Coming out requires the courage to honor your own experience of love and intimacy above anyone else's judgments about it. It can be very hard when you encounter others' negative attitudes. Seeking the help of a mental health professional can assist. While we can't change the world's prejudices, we can make sure we don't internalize counter-productive attitudes.**

# Percentage who consider homosexuality acceptable:

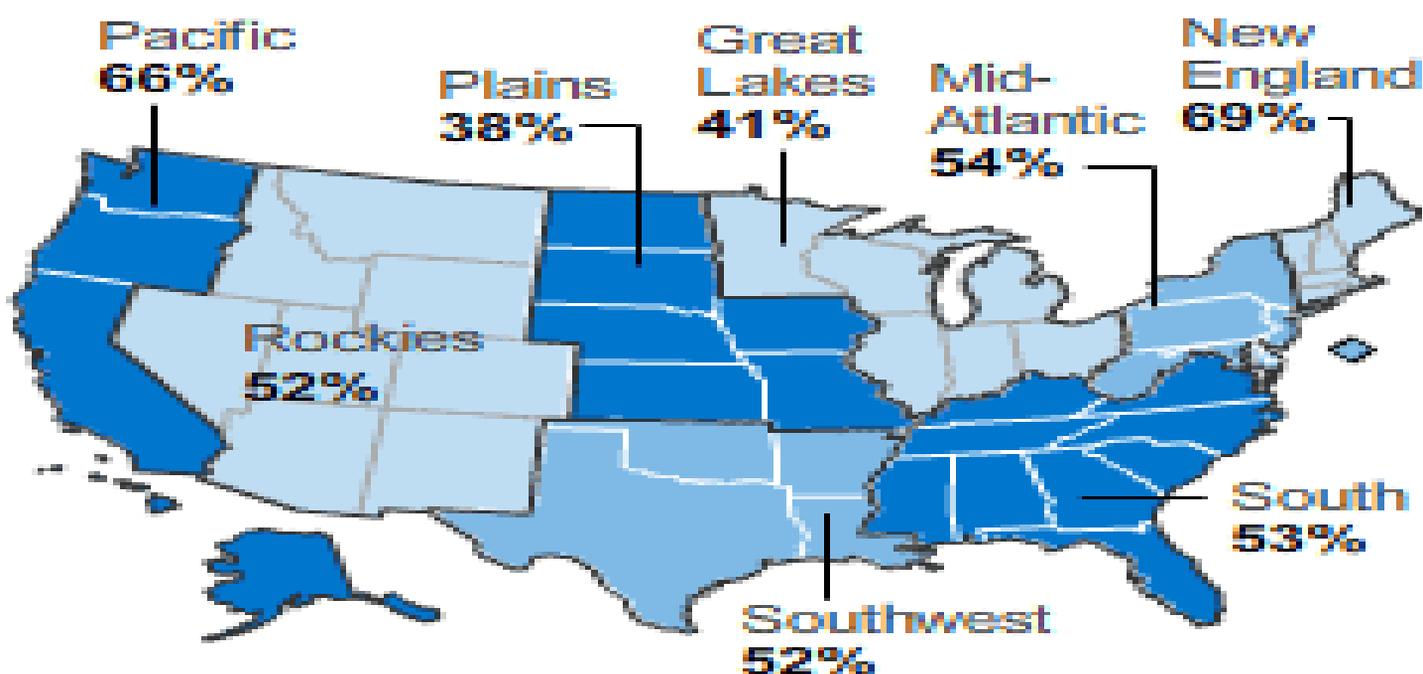
## ■ By year



## ■ By age group

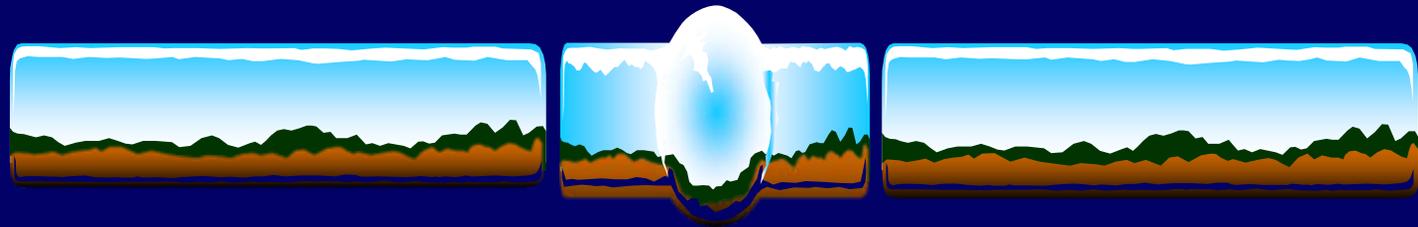


## ■ By region



Source: Gallup Polls. Margin of error  $\pm 2$  percentage points. Analysis by Evan Perikiss

By David Evans and Veronica Salazar, USA TODAY

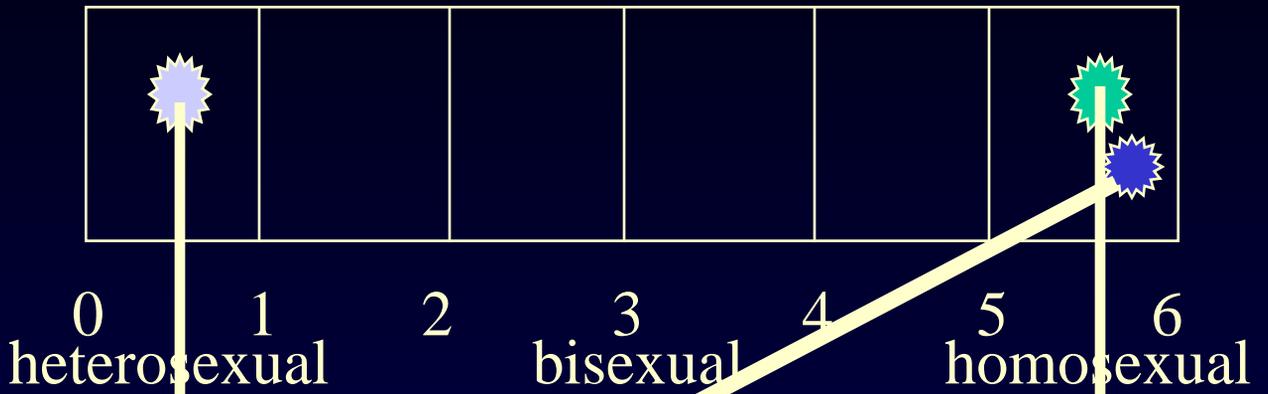


# Mean Age of Coming Out

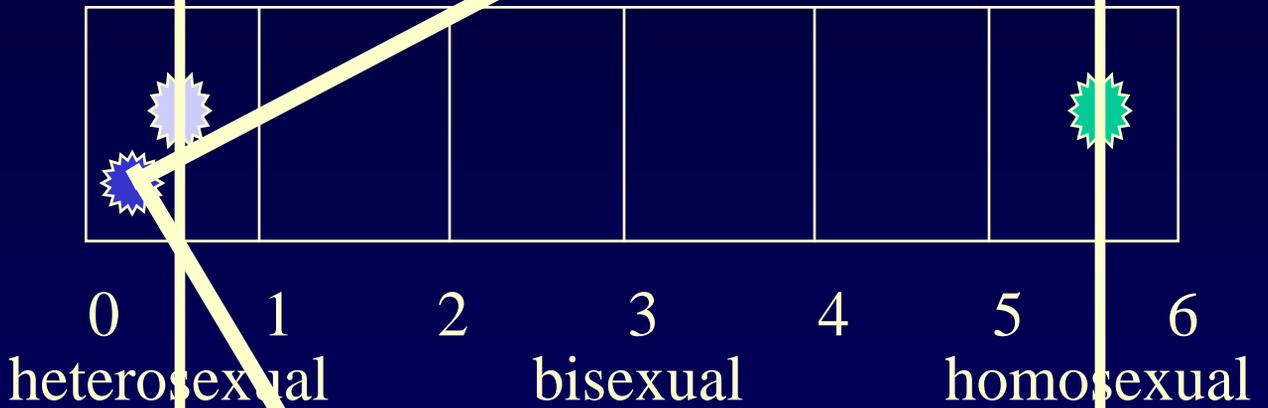
|      | Males | Females |
|------|-------|---------|
| 1971 | 19.3  | -----   |
| 1980 | 16.3  | -----   |
| 1982 | 15.0  | 20.0    |
| 1987 | 14.0  | -----   |
| 1993 | 13.1  | 15.2    |
| 2007 | ?     | ?       |



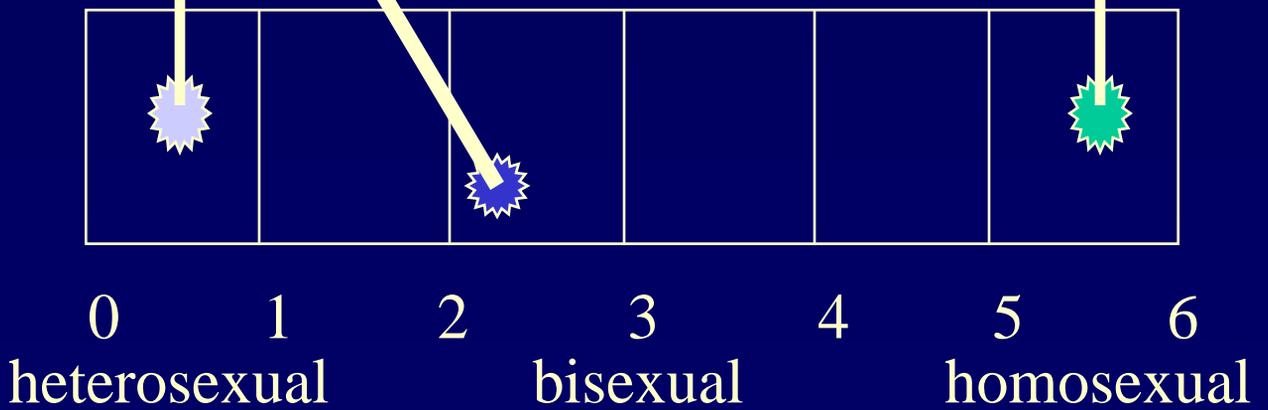
## Sexual Orientation

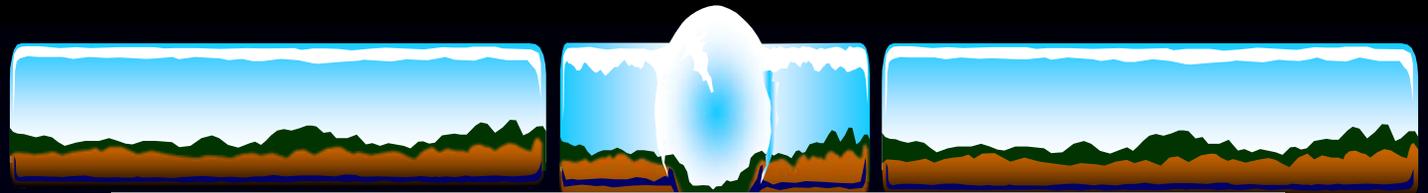


## Sexual Identity



## Sexual Behavior



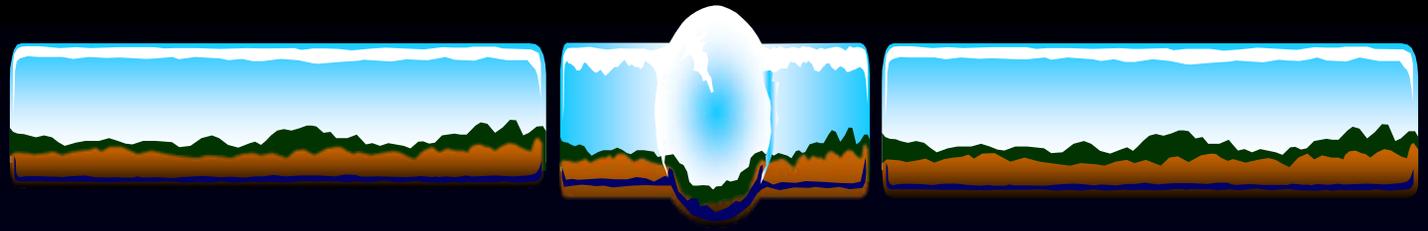
The top of the slide features three horizontal landscape panels. The left and right panels show a green hillside under a blue sky. The middle panel shows a white globe centered over a similar landscape.

## Research Tells Us

There are over 3 million GLB youth in the U.S., yet:

- ❖ 25% of gay and lesbian youth have serious substance abuse problems,<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ gay or lesbian youth account for 30% of youth suicides,<sup>3,7</sup>
- ❖ gay and lesbian youth are 2-4 times more likely to attempt suicide.<sup>3</sup>

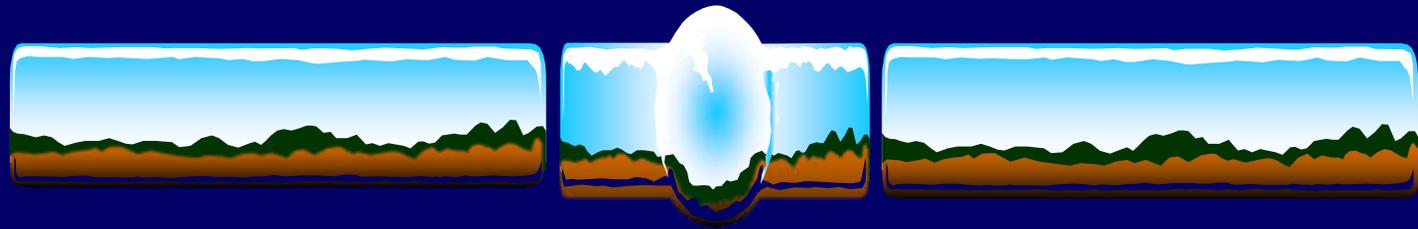




## Research Tells Us

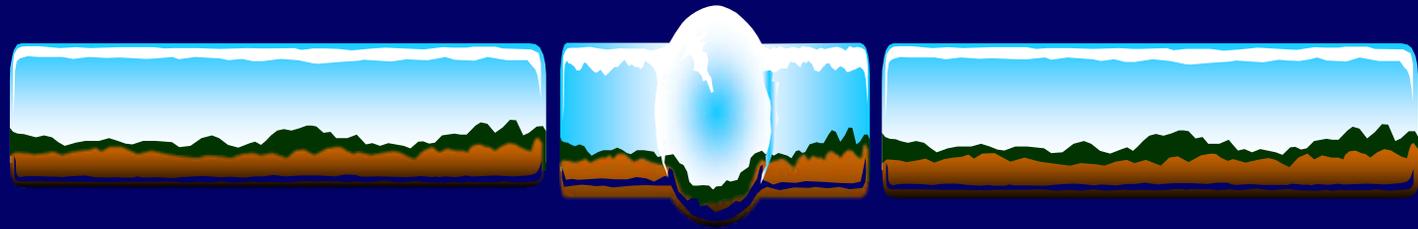
- ❖ up to 40% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth have run away from home at least once,<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ 20% of lesbians and 50% of gay males have been harassed, threatened, or physically assaulted in secondary schools,<sup>3,6</sup>
- ❖ GLB youth are 5 times more likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe.<sup>7</sup>





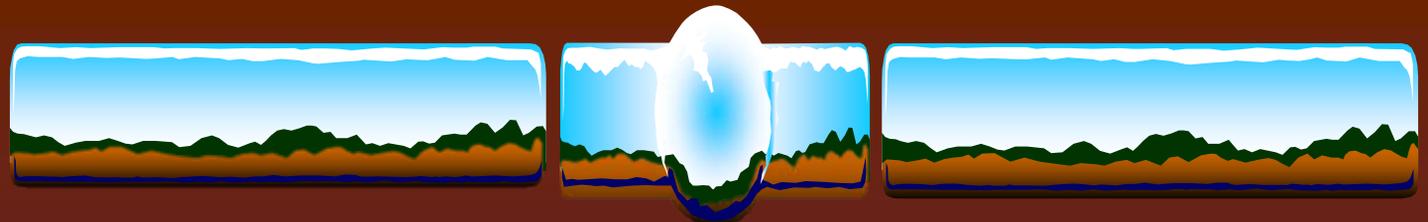
## *How to Come Out?*

- ❖ Think about what you want to say and choose the time and place carefully.
- ❖ Be aware of what the other person is going through. The best time for you may not be best for someone else.
- ❖ Be prepared for negative reaction initially. It took time for you, imp. So give others time too.
- ❖ Don't give up hope if you don't get the reaction you wanted.



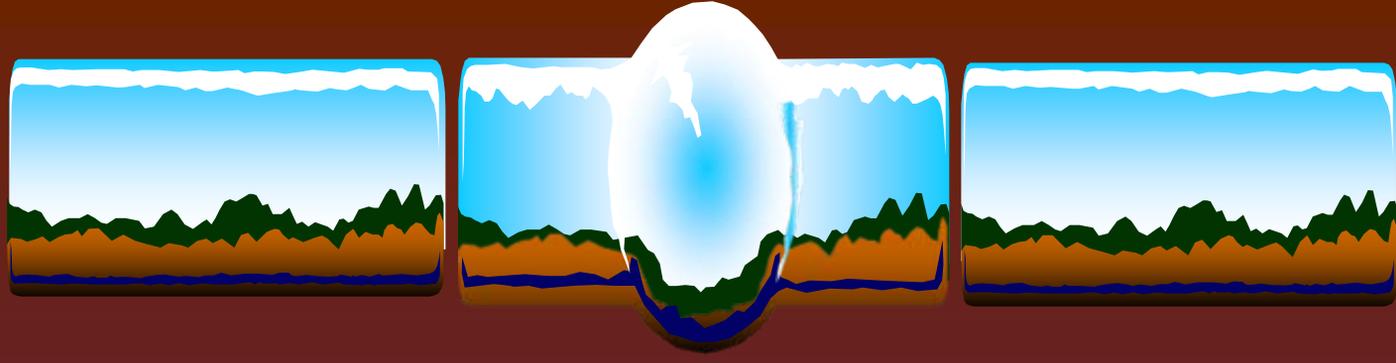
## *Responses to "Coming Out"*

- ❖ When someone comes out to you, take it as an indication that the person probably sees you as a person that can be trusted.
- ❖ Be ready to share your positive experiences with gay people; stay away from the "some of my best friends are" stance.

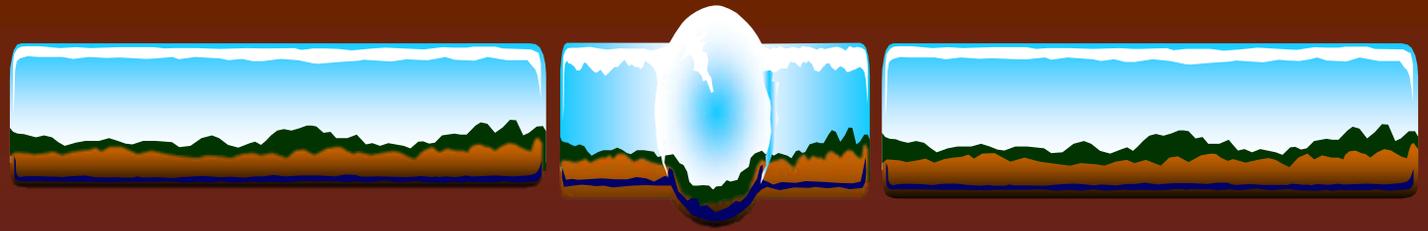
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# Coming Out Ourselves

- ❖ We are assumed to be heterosexual males or females by others.
- ❖ Part of our education encourages us to be “blank slates” as therapists.
- ❖ It may be helpful to others just coming out for us to also be out.
- ❖ People may be seeking therapy with openly GLBPIQQTA therapists.
- ❖ Don't have to be GLBPIQQTA to treat GLBPIQQTA people.



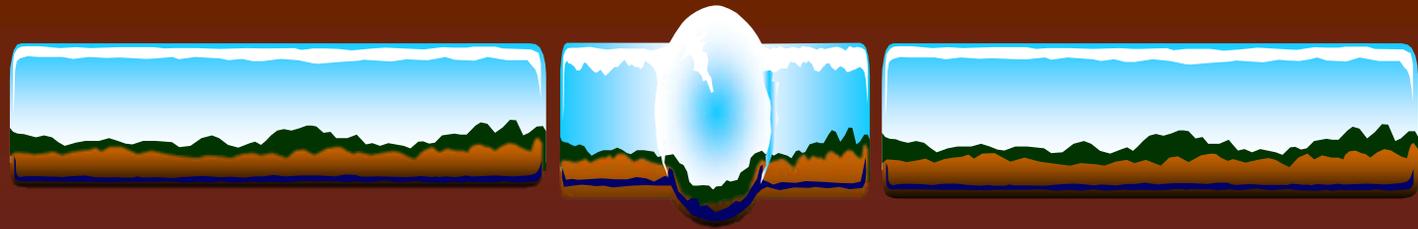
# Experiential Exercise

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# Coming Out as an Ally

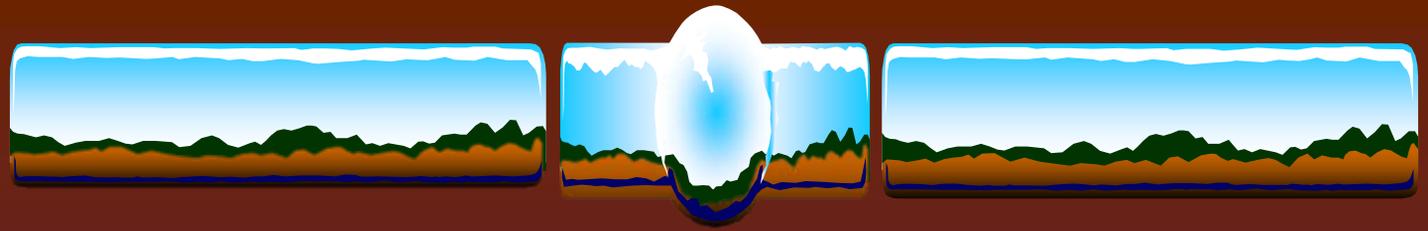
- ❖ Ally: someone who doesn't identify as, but supports the alphabet soup.
- ❖ Ally: a person who is a member of the dominant or majority group who works to end oppression in his or her private and professional life through support of, and as an advocate for, the oppressed population.

Washington & Evans, 1991



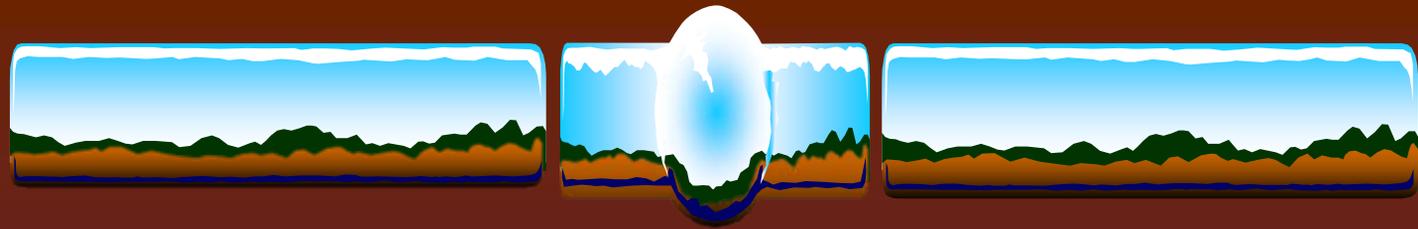
# What we can do as allies?

- ❖ Demonstrate support of diverse identities.
- ❖ Use inclusive language.
- ❖ Firmly object to homophobic speech and other actions.
- ❖ Avoid GLBPIQQTA jokes.
- ❖ Challenge stereotypes that belittle GLBPIQQTA people.
- ❖ Verbally express your support for GLBPIQQTA people.
- ❖ Learn about GLBPIQQTA issues.
- ❖ Familiarize yourself with resources for GLBPIQQTA people.
- ❖ Be willing to educate yourself.



# What else we can do as allies?

- ❖ Be aware of stereotypes you might have about **GLBPIQQTA** people and challenge those ideas.
- ❖ Expect to make some mistakes.
- ❖ Don't assume everyone is heterosexual - including a mom or dad.
- ❖ Don't assume that all men who have sex with men identify as gay or bisexual.
- ❖ Don't assume that all women who have sex with women identify as lesbian or bisexual.
- ❖ Don't be afraid to ask questions.



## Quotes

❖ “ People think they’ll lose everything if they come out. This did not happen to me at all. In fact, everything came back tenfold.”

- Melissa Etheridge

❖ “ To me, it was like being in a black-and-white movie that suddenly converted to color”

- Andrew Sullivan, writer

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## Another story . . .

- ❖ “ I pulled into a rest stop, parked my car, flashed my headlights, which was ‘THE SIGNAL’ and waited. Glancing in my rearview mirror, I saw a state trooper approaching. I desperately tried to convince the trooper of my innocence, showing him my former prosecutor’s badge. The trooper radioed his office and returned. “I never want to see you here again’ I survived for another day. In the way that teen-agers do, I came to the conclusion that my only options were suicide, for which I could never find the courage, or ‘CLOSETING” my sexuality”

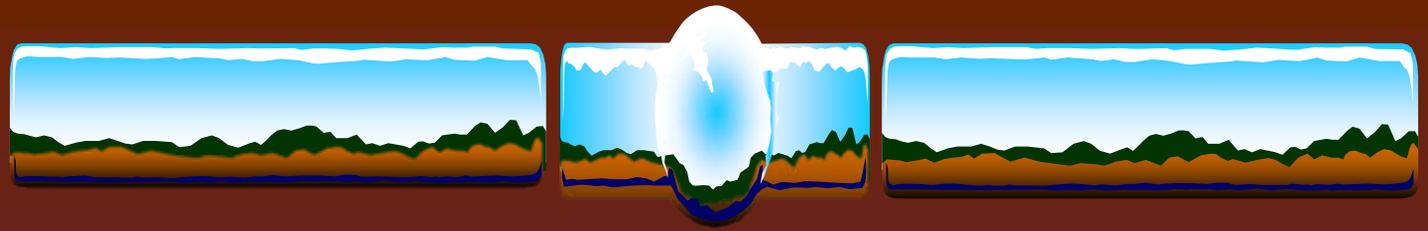
- James E. McGreevey, former Governor of New Jersey



## And a final quote . . .

- ❖ “When I was born, to have romantic feelings for another woman was known as ‘the love that dare not speak its name.’ Going to college in the 40’s, the sex books were under lock & key and I was too embarrassed to ask for them. I dated men, came home after each date and said ‘Goodnight’ at the door and breathed a sigh of relief. I lived for 44 years with the most loved and loving, giving, understanding and delightful partner imaginable. For all our time together, we were ‘in the closet.’ We had separate bedrooms to make it seem as though we were roommates. Finally, at 88 I can speak the unspoken.”

- Lorraine Barr, age 88



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