

## **Questions for Roommates**

### **In the residence halls**

Living in a residence hall environment, we interact daily with a wide variety of people. Statistics have shown that at least 10% of the general population consider themselves to be lesbian or gay, and many more consider themselves to be bisexual. It is very likely that you will meet individuals who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) during your time at NU. This page was developed to answer some of the questions you may have. Remember, you may ask these questions of your Residence Life staff as well.

### **Why do they flaunt their sexuality?**

"What people do in their own bedrooms is their own business, but I saw two guys walking across campus holding hands."

One of the worst forms of oppression for a human being is to be denied emotional expression. Curiously, it is called "expressing love" when heterosexuals hold hands, but "flaunting" when LGBT people express their love. How would heterosexuals react if they could not hold hands, kiss, dance together, go to romantic dinners, or be married? LGBT people who are open with their affections are not trying to shock others, but are just doing what is natural to them and others.

### **What should I do if a friend tells me that he or she is gay? What does that say about me?**

Most LGBT people who "come out" would like the same sincere acceptance and encouragement you might want when you tell a friend something special about yourself. Because of many people's "homophobic" attitude (fear and derision of same sex relationships), many LGBT people are afraid of rejection from their friends. You might first honestly ask yourself how you feel about this news and then discuss it as a caring friend.

Some people who find out a close friend is LGBT wonder "What does that mean about me?" This is a natural reaction. What it probably means is that your friend trusts you very much. However, liking someone gay does not make you gay any more than liking someone smart makes you smart.

### **If my roommate "comes out" to me, does that mean that he or she thinks that I'm gay too?**

There is a big difference between "coming out" and "coming on." As discussed above, most gay people who come out want to be accepted, not hassled. Sometimes a gay person might "come on" to you, tell you they are attracted to you, or want an intimate relationship with you. You can handle it in the same manner that you would handle a heterosexual approach. Gay love is as serious and legitimate as heterosexual love. Again, you should discuss it with your friend.

### **If I accept my LGBT roommate, will he or she bring in lots of LGBT friends and push me out?**

A formerly taboo subject will be out in the open. You may feel uncomfortable from a lack of experience dealing with gay people who are not "closeted." The LGBT friends should respect non-LGBT people just as LGBT people expect to be respected. Visits by LGBT folks are a good opportunity to learn about this large and diverse segment of the population. However, be cautious about presuming that all your roommate's friends are LGBT. His or her best friends may be straight.

**Won't my friends or parents think I'm gay if I have a gay roommate or friend or defend equal rights?**

Defending equal rights for gays is often a courageous stance to take. Some people may conclude that such a person has a vested interest to do so. It is up to you whether you feel that the people you are defending are worth the risk of occasional accusations or assumptions by others. Remember that a word from heterosexual friends and allies in defense or support of gay rights can go a long way to help change people's minds.

Now that I know my roommate is gay, I don't feel comfortable about nudity, dressing, showering, etc.

More than likely, you have been living together long enough to trust each other. There is no reason for the trust to diminish now. Your roommate has been gay or lesbian all along! Bear in mind that LGBT people are not always comfortable with non-LGBT people, either. Gay people, just like straight people, are attracted to certain types of folks. Most gays and lesbians are not sexually interested in heterosexuals, just as the reverse is true.

**Credits**

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