



**Activities**

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**NOTE:** Instructions to you are in regular font. A suggested script is in *italics*. Feel free to modify the script to your style and your students' needs.

**1. Explain the purpose of the lesson and introduce the *FLASH* unit.**

*Today we are beginning the **FLASH** unit, which stands for Family Life And Sexual Health. This unit will focus on sexual health, safety and well being. Over the next four weeks (this will vary depending on how you set up your unit), we will cover topics such as healthy relationships, abstinence, pregnancy, birth control ... and a whole lot more. I'm really excited about this unit. You'll get to learn more about your bodies and about sex and gender, and you'll get better at making decisions that keep you safe and healthy.*

*I want to tell you a story about a class a couple of years ago that was doing their sexual health unit. Unfortunately, it didn't go very well. Then I'd like for us to figure out how our class can learn from what happened to them and do things differently.*

**2. Set ground rules / classroom expectations for the *FLASH* unit.**

Read the following case study aloud:

**CASE STUDY**

*A couple of years ago there was a sexual health education class that really bombed. On the very first day, they were talking about flirting and "being hit on". A student who I'll call "Rob" announced that he already knew how to handle someone hitting on him.*

*He said, "Girls don't hit on guys unless they're sluts, so they deserve what they get. And if a guy ever tried anything, I'd punch him out. The idea of someone being gay makes me sick."*

*After class, two people came up to the teacher and asked to be excused for the rest of the unit. They each sat down in private and had long talks with the teacher.*

*It turned out that one student (I'll call her "Ming") had been raped by her ex-boyfriend. She felt as if Rob was blaming her ... saying that it was her own fault for being raped. Of course it's never somebody's fault for being raped, and it's easy to feel that way when it's you. Ming couldn't stand to be in class with Rob after his comment. Also, calling people names or putting people down, like Rob did, freaked her out.*

*Similarly, the second student (I'll call him "Juan") was furious at Rob's violent outburst at the idea of a man hitting another man. Juan's father is gay and he refused to be in a class where people were putting down and making threatening comments about gay people.*

Ask the class what could have been done differently in this case study. How would they respond to Rob if they were the teacher?

Give "Rob" the benefit of the doubt in order to invite those who have bullied to want to be more a part of the community you are creating:

*In fairness, you have to understand that Rob had no idea that Ming had recently been raped or that Juan's father was gay. It never occurred to him that anyone would be hurt or offended by his remarks. Rob needed a little education. He needed to learn that there are ways to express his opinion without demeaning other people. He also needed to realize that he never knows the life experiences of most of the people around him. Of course, Ming and Juan have every right to excuse themselves from the classroom if they need to, but the incident should never have happened in the first place.*

Own your responsibility for making the classroom safe:

*The teacher in that class felt awful for what happened and felt responsible for the crisis. I want to prevent anything like that from happening in our classroom. Instead, I would like for us to come up with some ground rules or classroom expectations together that will help everyone feel safe about asking questions and expressing opinions. I also know that some of you may feel comfortable with the topics we're going to cover in our **FLASH** unit. Other folks might feel anxious. I would like us to figure out some ground rules to help alleviate any anxiety, and so that you all know what to expect from me and from each other during this unit.*

Ask the students to come up with a list of classroom expectations that the entire class can agree to for the rest of the **FLASH** unit. Possibilities might include:

- No put-downs.
- It is OK to agree or disagree.
- Begin statements of opinion with, "I believe..."
- It's OK to keep your opinions and experiences private.
- Listen and be respectful of other people's opinions.
- Get the facts; any question is OK.
- Protect people's confidentiality. Don't share private information publicly, or, if you do, skip the names. You are entitled to protect your own privacy, too.
- Talk to the teacher in private, if you need to.

Write these ground rules up on chart paper or some other paper to keep displayed throughout the **FLASH** unit.

After the students come up with a list of ground rules, if there are any missing that you would like to add, ask the students' permission to add them to the list. In an effort to get students' buy-in for these group agreements, you can do one of two things.

- a) Ask the students to raise their hands if they agree. Make sure that all students raise their hands and agree to these ground rules. If there is not agreement, have a conversation regarding this.

## Activities

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**NOTE:** Instructions to you are in regular font. Suggested script of what to say is in italics. Feel free to modify the script to your style and your students' needs.

### 1. Explain the lesson's relevance and purpose and review the importance of ground rules.

*Today we'll be talking about sexual orientation and gender identity... about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual people and about transgender and people who are not transgendered. From now on, I'll use the acronym LGBT to stand for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender." We'll begin with understanding those words and a few other terms. Then we'll move on to hear from some LGBT youth. And we'll consider discrimination and what people can do to stand up against it.*

*Like the other issues we'll address in this unit, this one has personal meaning to many members of this class. In any class, there probably are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender students. There are also students who have close family members or friends who are LGB or T. And the chances are some people, both gay and straight, have been teased or hurt because someone thought they weren't masculine or feminine enough. I am going to remember that and work hard to protect people's feelings, and I would ask you to do the same.*

*There are also probably differences in values among us. Some people here may believe that homosexual behavior is wrong. Others may think it's no different from heterosexual behavior. Respecting one another's differing opinions will be important.*

### 2. Briefly define and distinguish among four key terms.

*First I want to get us all on the same page with definitions.*

Write these terms on the board as you explain them (see italicized text, below):

**GENDER**  
*gender identity*  
*gender expression*

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

*Everyone has a **gender** (made up of their gender identity and their gender expression) and everyone has a **sexual orientation**.*

*"Gender Identity" refers to how a person feels on the inside, the person's inner sense of being male, female, both or neither. This usually matches with their physical anatomy and the gender that the doctor guessed they were based on their biological sex at birth. When it does match their body, that's called 'cisgender.' Because the majority of people are cisgender, people may not even know there is a word to describe them. Sometimes, on the other hand, a person's body and their identity don't match. Their body may be male, but they feel like a girl or woman on the inside. Or vice versa. They may describe themselves as "transgender."*

**“Gender Expression”** refers to how a person walks, talks, dresses and acts. They may fit extreme stereotypes of what it means to be masculine or feminine or they may be anywhere in between the extremes. Or they may be both masculine and feminine, or neither. And it may change from day to day depending upon what they’re doing or how they’re feeling. Most people’s gender expression is roughly consistent with what their culture and generation expect of them. Once again, if they think about it at all, which people often don’t when they’re in the majority, they may call themselves **“cisgender.”** Not everybody is able to, or chooses to, conform to expectations of how a boy or a girl should look or act. If a person doesn’t act like society expects a boy or girl to act, they may consider themselves **“transgender.”**

**“Sexual Orientation”** refers to who a person **likes** ... the genders of the people they feel most sexually or romantically attracted to. The majority of people are primarily attracted to people of another gender. That’s called being **“heterosexual.”** That’s a guy who mostly gets crushes on girls or a girl who mostly would want to date boys. Some people are primarily attracted to people of their own gender; they’re **“gay”** or **“lesbian.”** They mostly get crushes on people or want to be in relationships with people of their own gender. Some people are attracted to people of more than one gender; they might call themselves **“bisexual.”**

First, I want you to hear directly from some LGBT youth.

### 3. Put a diverse human face on LGBT youth in one of two ways.

#### a. Host a 30-minute panel of LGBT youth and/or young adults

See page 2 of this lesson for advice about arranging for a panel.

A chance to meet and interact with openly LGBT peers or young adults is a way to put a human face on what may otherwise be an abstract concept of LGBT peers. A diverse panel (ethnically, religiously, and in terms of gender expression) is almost assured to debunk stereotypes. Panels are also a way to make real the issue of homophobia and the resultant isolation, fear, depression, and anger that its victims report. By hearing the voices and stories of real people, homophobia is moved from the intellectual to the personal domain, and it becomes increasingly difficult for compassionate human beings to ignore or discount the need for anti-homophobia action in their schools. It is also the most effective strategy to ensure that LGBT students feel welcome and understood in your classroom.

You may want to discuss possible questions with the students ahead of time.

We suggest you introduce a panel this way:

*Today’s guests are here to share their stories. They’ll talk a little bit about themselves and maybe their schools or their families or what they like to do. Then you’ll be welcome to ask questions. I’ve already explained our class’ ground rules to the panelists. Let me just ask you for your warmest and most respectful attention. I’d like to introduce, \_\_\_\_\_ (call them by name).*