

# How Homophobia Hurts Us All

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You do not have to be a LGBT person, or know someone who is, to be negatively affected by homophobia. Though homophobia actively oppresses LGBT people, it also hurts heterosexuals.

Homophobia:

1. Inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own sex, for fear of being perceived as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
2. Locks people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self expression.
3. Is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals, those perceived or labeled by others to be LGBT, children of LGBT parents, parents of LGBT children, and friends of LGBT people.
4. Compromises human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly, actions that are contrary to their basic humanity.
5. Combined with sex-phobia, results in the invisibility or erasure of LGBT lives and sexuality in school-based sex education discussions, keeping vital information from students. Such erasures can kill people in the age of AIDS.
6. Is one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chances of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Young people, of all sexual identities, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are "normal."
7. Prevents some LGBT people from developing an authentic self identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress and often times trauma on themselves as well as their heterosexual spouses, and their children.
8. Inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. We are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.

By challenging homophobia, people are not only fighting oppression for specific groups of people, but are striving for a society that accepts and celebrates the differences in all of us.

**\*For more about this topic, see Warren J. Blumenfeld, *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992)**