

## Allies Responding to Homophobia/Transphobia - B.A.R. – Breathe Acknowledge Respond

Adapted from Dr. Maura Cullen's [35 Dumb Things Well-intended People Say](#)

With these responses, we can plant seeds toward allyship.

**Example 1:** During Freshmen orientation you are walking to the next activity with a group of students. You and the whole group overhears one student say, “I hope I don’t end up with a gay roommate.”

- **Breathe. Acknowledge:** I understand that it can be really uncomfortable rooming with someone who is very different from you especially when it has to do with sexual orientation, *(when acknowledging another person, we are attempting to join the person and show an understanding of why they might think the way they do.)*
  - **Response:** but you will encounter a huge variety of different people and ideas on a daily basis here at UH. I encourage you to educate yourself on the issues or people with whom you are uncomfortable so you are better able to enjoy your college experience. We have a LGBTQ Resource Center on campus. You might want to check them out and see what they have to offer.
  - **Response:** but when you are in a group like this, I encourage you to speak from the perspective that there is probably someone here that belongs to any one of the various marginalized groups in our society.
  - **Response:** but you will find at UH that there is a big emphasis on respecting differences, so you might want to consider how the things you say affect those around you.

**Example 2:** During lunch with a few of your colleagues, someone says “Being gay is a sin and they are all going to hell.”

- **Breathe. Acknowledge:** I understand that many faiths send a strong message about the evils of LGBTQ people, and many people are concerned about “saving” LGBTQ people by “warning” them about this “sin”.
- **Response:** but that statement is very damaging to LGBTQ people, especially our youth. It separates them from the people and the faith community they love. LGBTQ people who experience the rejection and isolation caused from statements like this are more likely to attempt suicide, more likely to have high levels of depression, and more likely to use illegal drugs, compared to LGBTQ people who do not hear statements like that.

**Let’s Practice: Using the examples below, try to create your Acknowledge and Response.**

1. No homo or That’s so gay.
2. I don’t care what they do in their bedroom, just don’t flaunt it all over the place.
3. Marriage is meant to be between a man and a woman.
4. It’s unnatural. You’re either a man or women. That’s how God made us.
5. I don’t know what I would do if I found out my child was transgender.
6. Has s/he had “the surgery”?
7. There is no such thing as bisexual, it’s just an excuse until they can admit they are gay/lesbian.

8. I don't want any "man" using the restroom with my daughter or wife.

**If you need help, see these answers.**

1. I know "No homo" is often used in a joking manner and you most likely didn't mean it in an offensive way, but it can easily give LGBTQ members in our organization the impression that we are homophobic or unwelcoming, so I personally prefer you didn't use that language.
2. It can sometimes make people uncomfortable to see LGBTQ couples display public affection since it is not commonly portrayed in mass media like TV and magazines, but it is unlikely that we would expect a straight couple holding hands or sharing a kiss to "keep it in the bedroom" so we should extend that same consideration to LGBTQ people.
3. Some people interpret the bible to mean that marriage is only between a man and woman, but not all religions and people hold the same belief, and because of separation of church and state, we cannot deny millions of people rights based on a religious belief.
4. While we often only hear about people being born a male or female, over 1% of the population is born with hormones, chromosomes or genitalia that does not align with solely male or female. This population is categorized as intersex, which is natural because it happens to animals as well as humans. And "gender" which is how people experience themselves is known as being on a spectrum.
5. While it can be scary to think about our children being different than us or them experiencing discrimination and hatred for their identities, children with unsupportive family units will often face homelessness or suicide at higher rates than those in supportive environments, I would highly encourage you to seek our resources should you find yourself in that situation.
6. I know it is natural to be curious about the biological aspect of transgender people because society puts such a focus on sex. However, that is a very personal matter. Most people would find questions about genitals offensive. It is best to focus on a person's gender identity and treat them accordingly.
7. You know it is true that many gay and lesbian youth claim bisexuality first as a way to ease parents into the truth about their sexuality, however, that does not mean that no one is really bisexual. In fact, there are more bisexual people than gays and lesbians combine.
8. I understand that society send that message that transgender women are actually predatory men and that can make it seem like women and girls are at risk. But, the truth is all the research shows cities that have laws allowing transgender women to use the restroom that aligns with their identity have had zero incidents of sexual assault. Conversely, transgender women are assaulted in restrooms at an alarming rate.