

Action Tips for Allies of Non Monosexual / Bi / Pan / Fluid People

The following are several actions tips that can be used as you move toward becoming a better ally to Nonmonosexual/Bi people. Of course, this list is not exhaustive and cannot include all the “right” things to do or say—because often there is no single, easy, or “right” answer to every situation a person might encounter! Hopefully this list will provide you with food for thought and a starting place as you learn more about nonmonosexual and/or bisexual people/.

Monosexism: a belief that monosexuality (either exclusive heterosexuality and/or being lesbian or gay) is superior to a bisexual or pansexual orientation.

<<http://www.wikipedia.com>>

In this pamphlet the terms “bisexual” and “nonmonosexual” will be used interchangeably to describe individuals who identify with nonmonosexual orientations (attracted to more than one gender), encompassing pan-, omni-, ambi-, bi-, and nonmonosexual identities. Respect personal choices about self-identification and use specific terms on an individual basis.

Acknowledging that a person who is bisexual is always bisexual regardless of their current or past partner(s) or sexual experience(s).

Recognizing the way that specific relationships function is entirely independent of sexual orientation. Be positive about all relationships – monogamous, polyamorous, or anything else.

Believe someone when they come out as Bi/Pan/Non Monosexual.

Remembering that no one individual is more or less nonmonosexual; no one is “truly” or “untruly” nonmonosexual; someone is nonmonosexual if they say they are.

Be inclusive of Bi/Pan people of color

Don't assume that all bi people are white and acknowledge that racism exists within the bi community. BiPOC are often further erased by the assumption that they do not exist.

Don't stereotype non monosexual people.

Just because a person who is nonmonosexual can reinforce a stereotype does not mean the stereotype is true.

Respect that coming out as Bi/Pan/Non Monosexual can be different for lesbian/gay people

Because nonmonosexuality is erased and delegitimized, nonmonosexual people usually have to come out over and over. Often, after we come out, we also have to convince someone that we are nonmonosexual, and not “confused.”

Do not tolerate Biphobic remarks or humor in public spaces.

Consider strategies to best confront biphobia in your classroom, lab, office, living group, or organization. Seek out other allies who will support you in this effort.

Don't hypersexualize Non Monosexual people.

This reinforces societal assumptions about the nature of “good” or “appropriate” sexual practice or identity. Furthermore, asking questions about sexual activities contributes to a sense of invalidation

Over, please...

Recognize privilege is complicated.

Bisexuals don't have straight privilege because they are not straight. Some will never have a "heterosexual looking" relationship. However, many have "passing" privilege in different forms. This might be gender conforming privilege, which people of any sexuality can have. This might also mean being assumed to be straight when with a partner of a different gender. (Note: This often does not feel like privilege but rather an erasure of bi identity). Acknowledgement of one's own privilege (whichever forms it takes) is always important.

Don't accuse people of reinforcing the "gender binary".

Different people think differently about their identities. Many people identify as bisexual as an act of reclaiming the word from its negative contexts. Many describe being bisexual to mean "attraction regardless of gender", or "attraction to any gender". Identifying with the word bisexual can also serve to connect with history and literature.

Educate yourself through books, new articles, websites or other sources.

Learning more about bi, pan, and or non monosexual people helps break down stereotypes and further the LGBT movement as a whole.

Know your own limits as an ally.

Don't be afraid to admit you don't know everything! When speaking with a bi person who may have sought you out for support or guidance, be sure to point that person to appropriate resources when you've reached the limit of your knowledge or ability to handle the situation. It is better to admit you don't know something than to provide information that may be incorrect or hurtful.

The ideas in this handout were generated during a discussion at a UC Davis Bi Visibility Project group meeting and were compiled Winter quarter, 2009. Learn more at UC Riverside on the web site out.ucr.edu.

Terminology

Bisexual – A person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction to people of their own gender as well as other genders, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree.

Fluidity – May refer to either sexuality or gender, in which people's sexual attractions or sexual identities or gender identities or gender expressions may change over time (in daily life or over a life span).

Nonmonosexual – Attracted to more than one gender. May be used for individuals who identify as fluid, bisexual, pansexual, etc.

Pansexual – A person who has the potential to be attracted to all or many gender identities and expressions.