

October is LGBT History Month!

“The only abnormality is the incapacity to love.”

~Anaïs Nin

October is the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) History Month. LGBT History month is celebrated as an annual month-long observance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender history. Of special note, October 11th is National Coming Out Day, a day which promotes LGBT individuals in living truthfully and openly about their sexual orientation. The Human Rights Campaign’s Coming Out Project is an effort to support LGBT Americans and equality for all Americans. Moreover, straight allies are also encouraged to spread a message of equality to their friends and family. For more information about the project, see their website at: www.hrc.org. In keeping with this, I’ve dedicated this month’s article specifically to LGBT relationships. In addition, I’ve added a brief calendar of events for LGBT events in our area for this month. Enjoy!

LGBT Couples

While LGBT couples face many of the same relationship struggles as straight couples, there are some issues which are unique to same sex relationships. Depending on where they live, they may have more or less support from the community around them to be “out” as a couple. Certainly, the pressure of trying to hide your couplehood adds an exponential amount of stress to the relationship. Imagine being in a circumstance where you had to pretend—on a daily basis—that the person you’re in love with, plan to spend the rest of your life with, etc., is just your friend, or “roommate.” This is such a painful problem for many, many couples, especially those in small towns and communities; which typically have less LGBT resources available to them.

Another issue for some couples is a lack of family support. One partner may come from a family that supports them, while the other may come from a family that is against same sex relationships. Because of this, some same sex couples have one or both persons struggling with internalized homophobia, stemming from their family of origin. This deeply affects how they feel about themselves, both as a partner and as a sexual being.

Gender role conditioning, in our country, is also a major contributing factor to problems in same sex relationships. In Joe Kort’s (2012) “Gay Affirmative Therapy” he suggests, “Male couples are often disengaging having magnified issues around restricted emotional expression, achievement, competitiveness, and sexual expression. Female couples typically are too engaged and struggle with enmeshment, lacking differentiation, and lack of sexual expression.” For many, gender roles (i.e.- what it means to be male or female

in our society) were engrained in them throughout their childhood and young adulthood. Thus, in same sex relationships, the expectations of who does what may need to be more clearly communicated.

In addition to problems with gender roles, same sex couples also tend to have a greater degree of difficulty in their relationships when it comes to their ability to be affectionate in public; religious views; and whether or not to have children.

Sexual Dysfunction in Same Sex Relationships

Problems with sexual responding, (a.k.a. “sexual dysfunction”) are difficult for any couple to manage. After ruling out a medical reason for the issue, there are a host of other possible causes, unique to same sex couples. These include:

- Their feelings about what it means to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, etc.
- Beliefs they have about same sex relationships; which may differ from their partner’s beliefs.
- Their sexual history, including early sexual experiences, their first same sex experiences, coming out, and family responses to their sexual orientation.
- Cultural and religious beliefs about being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, etc.
- Internalized homophobia and/or self-hate, due to their sexual orientation.

Many same sex couples make the assumption that their partner will know how to please them sexually, because they have the same genitalia. This is rarely the case! Every person’s body is different, as are their sexual likes and dislikes. The expectation that the person will naturally *know* what to do sexually tends to decrease communication between partners in the bedroom. Over time, this can lead to increased sexual dissatisfaction, breeding resentment, if not addressed. Couples who are having these issues should seek out the support of an LGBT-friendly sex therapist, to help them navigate and resolve these concerns.

Self-help Resources

If you are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, or Questioning, there are plenty of self-help resources out there to help you navigate intimate relationships. Here are a few of my favorite:

- 101 Ways to Come Out of the Closet, by Denise Brienne
- Lesbian Couples: A Guide to Creating Healthy Relationships, by Clunis & Green
- Keeping Mr. Right: The Gay Man’s Guide to Lasting Relationships, by Kenneth George
- Transitions: A Guide to Transitioning for Transsexuals and Their Families, by Mara Drummond

****If you have a book or a resource that you found particularly useful for you, please contact me, and I will add it to the “Resource” section on my website.****

LGBT Local Events

Delaware may be “small,” but we have plenty going on around here for the LGBT community! Here are the highlights of some of the LGBT events happening this month in our area:

October 7- OUTFEST in Philadelphia from 12p-6p; Lots of activities for all ages...and SO much fun!

October 20- Delaware Pride Bowling starts at 7p at the Bowlerama in New Castle.

October 24- Delaware Pride General Community Meeting, 7p at the Brandywine Town Center.

October 28- Bingo-A-Go-Go, doors open at 6p at Elsmere Presbyterian Church, this month's theme:

“Spooktacular.”

Every Sunday- HAVEN, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender & allies group for students and faculty of the

University of Delaware, as well as for anyone else who wants to attend. Meetings are weekly at 6pm.

PFLAG of Wilmington & Northern Delaware- Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays meet the second

Thursday of every month at 7pm, see www.pflagwilmde.org.

For additional details about the aforementioned events, as well as future events in our area, visit:

www.delawarepride.org and click on “Calendar.”

For events in the Philadelphia area, visit www.phillygaycalendar.com and/or www.waygay.org

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