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## CONTACTS

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**Prideline BC** 1-800-566-1170  
(toll free through-out BC),  
or in Vancouver area: (604) 684-6869  
Information, referrals, support

**The Centre**  
1170 Bute Street, Vancouver, V6E 1Z6  
604-684-4901  
GAB LGBT youth groups  
gabyouth@igtbcentrevancouver.com  
www.igtbcentrevancouver.com

**Safe Spaces** (250) 374-7135  
Kamloops LGBT youth  
sspaces@mail.ocis.net

**Youth GLO** (250) 503-6654  
Vernon LGBT youth  
youthglo@hotmail.com

**YouthQuest!**  
1-866-NOT-ALONE (1-866-668-2566)  
Operates LGBT youth groups in many  
BC locations (see web site for locations)  
info@youthquest.bc.ca  
www.youthquest.bc.ca

**PFLAG** (604) 684-9872 Ext. 2060  
(Parents and Friends of Lesbians And Gays)

**Crisis Line**  
See Local number on the first page of your  
telephone directory White Pages under  
"Crisis Centre"

### LOCAL CONTACT

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# I THINK I MIGHT BE GAY OR LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL

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## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LESBIAN, GAY OR BISEXUAL?

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Lesbians are women who fall in love with and are sexually attracted to women more than they are to men. Being a lesbian does not mean that you cannot form close relationships with men. However, lesbians prefer women as partners and their sexual and romantic feelings for women are usually stronger and more important than their feelings or closeness for men.

Gay men fall in love with men and are sexually attracted to men more than they are to women. Many gay men can form deep friendships with women but prefer men as romantic partners and have a much stronger attraction to men in terms of sexual and romantic feelings.

Bisexual people are females or males who are attracted to and have intimate relationships with people of both genders, females and males.

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## WHO IS GAY, LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL?

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As gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, we are not alone. **Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people can be found in every part of society, every group, or job, in every country or culture.** This means that we include lesbian, gay, and bisexual teachers, doctors, lawyers, factory workers, police officers, politicians, ministers, movie stars, fathers, mothers, grandparents, nuns, truck drivers, loggers, models, and novelists, etc.

Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals can be Black, Asian, Hispanic, First Nation, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, etc. In any large group of people, there are probably several lesbians, gays and bisexuals. You may not know who they are unless they want you to know. Sometimes, people's perceptions about who is

gay, lesbian or bi are wrong, based on rumor, misinformation, or stereotypes.

We are a minority. Like many minorities, we often **FEEL** different from other people, because the majority does not understand us and treats us differently. **Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals are everywhere.**

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## HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM LESBIAN, GAY OR BISEXUAL?

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You may not know what to call your sexual feelings. You don't have to rush and decide how to label yourself right now. Sexual identities develop over time. Many adolescent boys and girls have intense sexual feelings at puberty (usually between 11 and 18 years of age) when their bodies begin to change and their hormones flow in new ways. Sometimes your sexual feelings may be so strong that they are not directed toward a particular person or situation, but seem to emerge without cause. Often, as you get older, you will figure out to whom you are really attracted.

You may feel that you are attracted to people of the same sex. You may find yourself falling in love with one of your classmates or developing a crush on an adult of the same sex.

Many adults may tell you that you're too young to call yourself gay, lesbian, or bi, or that you're going through a phase, or that you don't know what you're talking about. It is true that for some people, being attracted to someone of the same sex lasts only during adolescence. Some young people know for sure that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual, but others are not so certain. Sexual awareness develops over time, so don't worry if your preferences are not clear now. As you grow older your feelings will likely become more focused, and you will know if you're gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual.

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## AM I NORMAL?

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**Y**es, you are normal! It's perfectly natural for people to be attracted to members of their own sex. But it's not something that is always accepted in our society. Many people, therefore, suppress their real feelings because of the prejudice against gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals.

You have probably heard the words "sexual orientation" discussed. Sexual orientation refers to whether one is attracted to people of the same gender (homosexual) or the opposite (heterosexual) or both (bisexual). Most scientific experts agree that a person's sexual orientation is determined at a very young age, or maybe even at birth, and that we do not generally "choose" our sexual orientation.

We're sometimes told that it's sick, perverted, sinful, or abnormal to feel an intense love for someone of our own sex. These are homophobic reactions that express some people's fear or hatred of homosexuals. It's normal and healthy to be yourself, whether you're lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual. What's really important is that everyone likes and respects oneself and others, regardless of one's sexual orientation.

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## LEARNING TO LIKE MYSELF

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**I**t may not be easy to discover that you are gay. Some people make it very clear what they think of gays and lesbians by telling terrible jokes, promoting hurtful stereotypes, and spreading misinformation. Some people hate gays, lesbians, and bisexuals and many people are uncomfortable just being around them. It's no wonder that you might choose to hide your same-sex feelings from others. You might even be tempted to hide them from yourself. You may wonder if you are

normal. Perhaps, you worry about people finding out about you. Maybe, you avoid other kids who might be gay or lesbian because of what people will think. Working to conceal your identity is called "being in the closet". It is a painful and lonely place to be. It takes a lot of energy to deny your feelings and it can be costly. Some try using alcohol or other drugs to numb themselves against these thoughts. Some contemplate running away or even committing suicide. If you have considered suicide, please consult one of the resources at the end of this brochure to find an emergency number in order to talk to someone about your feelings rather than thinking about this drastic step.

All people have a right to feel good about themselves. We're all valuable human beings. Developing self-esteem is very important for all young people, including sexual minority youth. It helps to read books about bisexual, lesbian and gay lives, but the books you read should have accurate information. Many of us lead fulfilling lives and are proud of who we are. It also might help to meet other gays, lesbians, and bisexuals to find out how diverse we are.

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## WHOM SHOULD I TELL?

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**C**OMING OUT is a process of accepting yourself as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and deciding how open you want to be about your sexual orientation.

Unfortunately, not everyone you know will think that being a gay, or lesbian, or bisexual youth is the greatest thing you can be. It's hard to know who will be able to handle the information and give you support. Some may turn away from you or tell other people about you without your permission. Telling family can be very difficult. Some families are very supportive; however, some lesbian and gay youth have even been rejected from their homes and families when their parents found out. It's important to have someone you can trust, someone to talk to, because it's not healthy to have to keep secret about something so important. Fortunately, much of society is showing greater acceptance and support for sexual minorities.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Talk to your school counsellor or public health nurse

Contact the sources listed in this brochure. Check the phone book for a local youth hotline and ask for the support organizations in your area.

Look for gay/lesbian/bisexual newspapers in your area.

Check local bookstores, libraries and public health clinics in your area.

Seek out lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) youth groups at college and university campuses, high schools and community centres.

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## RESOURCES

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### Little Sister's Books

Large selection of books by mail  
1238 Davie Street  
Vancouver, BC  
V6E 1N4  
1-604-669-1753  
1-800-567-1662 (Phone Orders)  
Web: [www.littlesistersbookstore.com](http://www.littlesistersbookstore.com)

### GALE BC

See front of this brochure to get contact information. GALE BC has extensive lists of book & video resources, workshop presentations, and professional contacts.

### Gay Men & Women Who Enriched the World

Many short stories give little-known facts and insights about the lives of famous LGB people, past and present. By Thomas Cowan.  
ISBN 1-55583-391-8

### Two Teenagers in Twenty

Over 40 diverse lesbian and gay teens write about their feelings, experiences, coming out processes, and some words of advice. Edited by A. Heron ISBN 1-55583-282-2

### Is It a Choice? Answers to 300 of the Most Frequently Asked Questions about Gays and Lesbians

Many areas are explored, including mass media, religion, socialization, dating, sexuality, education and coming out. By E. Marcus  
ISBN 0-06-251623-X

### Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Youth, & Their Allies

A handbook for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth dealing with their most important issues. By E. Bass & K. Kaufman ISBN 0-06-095104-4

### Becoming Visible

A reader in gay and lesbian history for students. Covers over 2000 years of history and a diverse range of cultures. By K. Jennings  
ISBN 1-55583-254-7

### Not the Only One

21 stories capture many of the fears, joys, confusion and energy of youth coming face-to-face with lesbian and gay issues. Edited by T. Grima ISBN1-55583-275-X

### Am I Blue? Coming Out of the Silence

16 short stories address different issues for gay and lesbian youth: coming out, friends, hopes, relationships, parents and grandparents, even a "fairy godfather". Edited by M. Bauer.  
ISBN 0-06-440587-7

### Growing Up Gay/Growing Up Lesbian

Anthology of well-known writers telling their own stories of self-discovery, friendships, relationships, family, & facing the world. Edited by B. Singer. ISBN 1-56584-103-4

### In Other Words (video)

This National Film Board of Canada video made in 2001 in Toronto & Vancouver, explores homophobia's impact on many youth aged 14-22. They share their personal, family & social struggles and also their successes. (27 mins.)