



Afraid of what?



Discussion Guide

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Introduction

What are you afraid of? is an animated cartoon that brings together a collection of educational materials produced by the H Alliance (Aliança H), whose purpose is to promote critical discussion of cultural standards that subtly but frequently reinforce sexist and homophobic attitudes.

In the story, *What are you afraid of?*, our main character is Marcelo, a teenager that like any other teenager, has his own dreams, desires and plans for the future. His parents, his friend João and the community in which he lives also have their own expectations for him. However, Marcelo's desires don't correspond with the expectations of others. But what are Marcelo's desires?

This uncertainty creates fear... fear in Marcelo as much as fear in those around him. But fear of what? Fear of the unknown. In general, people have fear of what they do not know. By fearing the unknown, we often encourage prejudices that manifest themselves in various forms of discrimination. Homophobia is one of these forms.

The animated cartoon format and the absence of dialogue make the exhibition of the video possible in different cultural contexts, regardless of the audience's literacy level or language differences, or hearing disabilities. Furthermore, the cartoon's sensitive approach to the subject matter allows its usage in a variety of environments.

The video is particularly intended for teenagers, male or female, inviting them to reflect upon fears and prejudices related to homosexuality and to pursue a more civil, just and inclusive society. It is also aimed at teachers and health professionals in general that work with youth populations.

How did it come about? A coalition of NGOs including the Promundo Institute (Rio de Janeiro), the PAPAI Institute (Recife), ECOS (São Paulo) and Salud y Género (México) developed this program based upon workshops they conducted with young men (ages 15-24) in three cities in Brazil: São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro e Recife. Overall, the experience of these organizations with groups of adolescents has shown that homophobia is a difficult subject to address in these populations, since homophobic attitudes are commonly engendered in jokes and humor and is constantly manifested in symbolic (and sometimes actual) violence. Special attention to should be paid to adult professionals, since homophobia among adults is often expressed in quiet and subtle ways.

Notes about the video

Duration: 18 minutes

Number of participants: To stimulate discussion about the video, groups should range between 7 to 20 individuals. We suggest that audiences larger than 20 people be divided into smaller groups during the discussion. If you wish, you can bring the small groups back together after discussion for a wider debate.

Where? In schools, community centers, youth groups, parent-teacher conferences, class rooms, health care centers or any other place that offers an environment for open discussion about the subject of homophobia.

How to use the video

You can utilize the video in an array of ways, depending on your imagination and available resources. The animation captures the audience's attention, facilitates the introduction of the subject, examines the theme through aspects of daily life, motivates and stimulates discussion, and informs and entertains.

Considering that the video's principal objective is to sensitize (or provoke thought) and not simply to inform, additional steps can be taken to maximize the video's content and dynamics of group discussion. Make a note of the following suggestions:

Preparation

1. Prescreen the video to determine whether it is adequate for your situation and audience.
2. Make a note of the most important passages, and create a list of the central themes to discuss with the group.
3. Prepare yourself for the session: complement the information contained in the video by conducting additional research about the relevant subjects, and tailor the workshop activities for your particular audience.
4. Depending on the time available, prepare a short agenda for the discussion following the video, or begin a group project that could be continued in a following session.
5. Try to facilitate the participation of all individuals. A good strategy is to break off into pairs for a brief conversation before the group discussion.
6. Double-check that the necessary electronic equipment (television, video player, power plugs, etc.) is available and functioning well.

How to introduce the video in the workshop

1. To begin, only inform the group that they will be watching the "What are you afraid of?" video, lasting 18 minutes, which tells the story of a teenager named Marcelo.
2. Avoid imposing your personal views. Never express your own interpretations in the beginning. It is very important that each participant express her/his opinions without your influence.
3. After the first round of comments, you may explain the video's subject and objectives, and open up the group for a deeper discussion.

General tips for the discussion

1. Ask the group to identify the themes that were present in the video. Write them on the blackboard or on a sheet of paper.
2. If necessary, show the video a second time in order to better comprehend the story.
3. If you have limited time, or wish to have a deeper discussion of only a single theme, you can select specific scenes to watch.

The debate

Questions to stimulate debate

In order to encourage debate among the participants, it is always important to pose some initial questions to the group. Many questions will come up in the midst of discussion, as participants share their ideas and perspectives about the cartoon. However, it is suggested that the facilitator prepare a list of questions about particular points to highlight during the discussion. Please review the following collection of questions that may assist you in encouraging discussion. These questions are grouped by theme, which may be further explored according to your interest:

The character

- ✓ What was Marcelo like? What did he do? Do young people do similar things?
- ✓ What were the games that Marcelo used to play as a child? Are these games common among children?
- ✓ Did Marcelo study? What were his interests?
- ✓ What were Marcelo's dreams?
- ✓ Did Marcelo's life change in any particular moment? How?
- ✓ Do you know of a similar story?

Family

- ✓ What were the expectations of Marcelo's father for him? What do you think his father said to Marcelo's grandpa? What do you think about this? How does this affect the life of a person?
- ✓ What happens when a child doesn't meet their parents' expectations? How does the child feel? How do you feel when you don't meet your parents' expectations?
- ✓ What was it like for Marcelo to tell his parents that he liked other boys?
- ✓ What were his parents' reactions? Was there a difference between the mother and father? What do you think about this? How should the parents have reacted? How do you think this happens in real life?
- ✓ How do you think you would act if Marcelo was your brother? What if he was your child?
- ✓ What is the role of the family in this situation?

Dating/Sexuality

- ✓ Why did Marcelo go out with a girl? What do you think about this?
- ✓ Did Marcelo always feel attracted to boys? Why do you think he feels an attraction for persons of the same sex? (See Box 1 for this question)
- ✓ What happened the first time that Marcelo and his boyfriend had sex? Is it important that homosexuals use condoms? Why? Is this true for everybody? (See Box 2 for this question)

- ✓ What happened to the homosexual couple that kissed in the mall? What do you think about this? Do two people of the same sex have the right to kiss in public?

Friends

- ✓ How did Marcelo's best friend accept him? What do you think about this?
- ✓ How does a young person usually react after discovering a friend is gay? Is it common for heterosexual teenagers to have homosexual friends?
- ✓ What is it like for a heterosexual to be friends with a homosexual? Do they also suffer from prejudices? Is this common among young people?
- ✓ What do you think his friends' reactions were like? What was Marcelo's relationship with his friends like before he told them he was gay? What was it like afterwards?
- ✓ Is it common for friends to make jokes about each other? How did that make Marcelo feel? What is your reaction when you hear jokes about some of your own characteristics?
- ✓ Is there anything that bothers you about homosexuality? Why?
- ✓ What is the role of friendship in this situation? What type of support can one friend give to another?

Violence

- ✓ Is it common for homosexuals to suffer from violence? What kinds of violence?
- ✓ Are beatings common?
- ✓ Is making jokes a form of violence?
- ✓ What about insults?
- ✓ Is exclusion a form of violence?
- ✓ Is depriving someone of their rights a form of violence?
- ✓ How do you feel when you are denied from having something that you want?
- ✓ Have you ever witnessed an act of violence against homosexuals? What type of violence?
- ✓ In the scene where Marcelo is in the park, what do the eyes represent? Why does Marcelo worry about these eyes?

Social Movements

- ✓ Why don't many people say that they are homosexuals? Is it necessary? Why don't many people say that they are heterosexuals?
- ✓ In what places are homosexuals accepted? Where is it most common to see groups of homosexuals? Why?
- ✓ What does the Pride (or Diversity) Parade mean?
- ✓ What does the rainbow represent? Why is it a symbol for gays?
- ✓ Are there differences between a homosexual man and woman? Why? Does society tolerate one more than the other?
- ✓ What forms of support or measures are needed to reduce homophobia?

Conclusion

- ✓ What did you think about the end of the video?
- ✓ What does Marcelo expect when he offers his pen?
- ✓ Would it be different if Marcelo was rich? What if he was black? How would it be different? Why?
- ✓ What can each one of us do to help?

Box 1

Human sexuality is the result of a combination of genetic, cultural and social factors. Thus, no one can determine the single reason that causes one person to feel attraction towards someone of the same or opposite sex. Today we know that being a gay or lesbian isn't a decision an individual makes, because this implies choice. A homosexual doesn't choose to be homosexual, just as a heterosexual doesn't choose to be heterosexual or a bisexual to be bisexual. It is a spontaneous characteristic, which needs to be respected as much as all other individual attributes. The important thing is to respect the desires of each person and guarantee that their rights are defended and exercised. This is one of the central tenets of human rights: the right to the freedom of choice and respect for others. Celebrate diversity!

Box 2

We are all vulnerable to the AIDS virus. To avoid HIV infection, it is important that we all use condoms, regardless of our sex, sexual orientation, age or civil status. In the beginning of the epidemic, the first widely publicized cases were among homosexuals. However, infections among heterosexuals were soon observed. Thus, prevention campaigns expanded beyond populations considered "high-risk" groups (homosexuals, hemophiliacs, drug users and sex workers). Today, the idea that only these individuals can get infected is outdated. The HIV infection rate has increased among teenagers and females, including married women. It is important to be aware of these facts in order to avoid prejudices against various groups.

ACTIVITIES

Next, we present a collection of activities that can further stimulate discussion about the themes found in the video.

Activity 1

Hidden homophobia in daily life

This technique seeks to sensitize the participants to recognize different expressions of homophobia that manifest themselves in our everyday lives and that often go unnoticed.

Objective: To encourage a reflection about homosexuality and homophobia, seeking to influence the participants towards a greater tolerance of human sexual diversity.

Required materials: Paper flip-chart, markers and adhesive tape.

Recommended time: One hour.

Planning tips: This activity encourages a discussion about the themes that are ignored or considered taboo in a large part of the world, or provoke hate and intolerance. The facilitator that will be discussing these topics should first examine their own opinions and attitudes about sexual diversity and sexual orientation. When approaching the subject of homophobia and respect of differences through this manual, we often detect changes in our own underlying attitudes. Further, the facilitator should try to instill a sense of respect for people with all sexual orientations, but do this without lecturing the teenagers. The facilitator should listen to all comments – even homophobic ones. A participant's opinions should be encouraged and questioned, but never censured.

Box 1

Homophobia is present in different places and times in our life, and is one of the central aspects of machismo, used to encourage young men to be violent in order to avoid being labeled as gay. Even when physical violence doesn't occur, many individuals of homosexual or bisexual orientation are subjected to insults and ridicule.

Instructions

- 1- Explain to the group that the goal of this activity is to discuss and analyze homophobia. Ask the group to define homophobia.
- 2- Explain to the group that you will talk about examples of young men and women who represent diverse sexual orientations and behaviors.
- 3- Form a circle with all participants. Explain to the group that you will tell the beginning of a story, and that the participants will be able to invent the rest. Introduce the first story, asking each person to add more details to the narrative. You can stop the story at any time and ask: Is this a realistic tale? Why do you think the group made up the story like it did? (Due to the nature of the subject matter, it isn't usually recommended that the stories be dramatized, but in appropriate groups you could have the group create the story and then act it out. The ideal situation is to have each person contribute one detail to the original story.)
- 4- Discuss the following questions:

Questions for discussion

- ✓ Are these examples realistic? Can you imagine these happening in real life?
- ✓ What is the difference between a lesbian, a gay and a bisexual? And between a transsexual, a cross-dresser and a transgender person? (See glossary)
- ✓ Can a person can have sexual relations with someone of the same sex and still be considered heterosexual?
- ✓ Why is it difficult for many people to tolerate homosexuality or homosexual behavior?
- ✓ What type of violence against gays or lesbians have you already seen or heard of?
- ✓ What do you think about this type of violence?
- ✓ Have you ever been called gay by one of your peers for not doing something, like fighting? What do you think about this?

Story examples

One night, John was out with a group of friends, everyone from the same class at school. One of them, Roger, said: "Hey, let's beat up somegays. There's a bunch of cross-dressers over in the park. Let's go!" So then...

One night when he was camping on the beach with a group of friends, Luis slept in the same tent as his friend, William. They were having a few beers before going to the tent. Luke always considered himself heterosexual. He was fantasizing about having sex with his girlfriend and got an erection when he was in the tent. When William saw that Luke had an erection, he began to...

When he was 7 years old, Thomas had his first sexual experience with another boy. In his adolescence, he had sex with several girls and had a girlfriend for 5 years. At 21 years old, he fell in love with Joseph, his coworker. They moved in together. After ten years, they decided to tell their families. When they arrived at Tomas's house...

At 17 years old, Bob considered himself bisexual. He liked to have sex with both girls and boys. One night, his father saw him hugging another boy and when Fernando got home, his father...

Juana self-identified as a lesbian, and didn't hide it. She made it clear to her friends, both boys and girls, that she was a lesbian and often wore buttons and shirts celebrating gay rights. One time she was walking home at night, when a group of young men were waiting near her house. One of them said: "That's her. That's the lesbian". Then,...

Miguel has a friend named Sammy (a boy his age) that he is attracted to. Miguel was always single, never around girls. Although he had already had sex, he has never fallen in love. He doesn't know what this means...

Wrapping up

Some groups of young men deny the existence of homosexual behavior or of gay and bisexual individuals in their communities. Explain to the group that homosexual behavior has been recorded almost everywhere and that between 10 and 15 percent of adult and teenage men interviewed in various countries of Latin America have said that they have had sex at least once with another man – including those that identify themselves as heterosexuals.

You can also bring examples of organizations, social movements or legal mechanisms present in Latin America that address homophobia and that promote the tolerance of sexual diversity or the human rights of gay and bisexual individuals. You could consider inviting a member from one of these activist groups to make a presentation to the group, or suggest that the participants visit one of these organizations. You could also bring up a discussion of how homophobia is incorporated in the process of masculine socialization.

Activity 2

The “Celebrate Diversity” movement

The purpose of this exercise is to promote the values of diversity and of free expression of sexuality.

Objective: To create an environment for reflection about the need for people to live in harmony, without prejudice and with respect for diversity.

Recommended time: 2 hours.

Required materials: Paperboard or cardboard for signs, colored pens and pencils, scissors, glue and old magazines.

Planning tips: The facilitator can begin the discussion by explaining that in the same way that there are different ways of thinking, acting and viewing life, there are also different attitudes and behaviors related to sexual expression.

Instructions

1. Split the participants into small groups and tell them that each group will be an advertising agency competing for a big contract for a marketing campaign. Tell the participants that the organization that is promoting this campaign will vote on their proposals based on the signs designed by each “agency.”
2. Inform the participants that the theme of the campaign is “Celebrate Diversity” and that the goal is to promote the idea that if people respect one another, we will all have better lives. Tell them that they have 30 minutes to plan and design an advertisement with a slogan and illustration for this campaign. At the end, a representative from each group will present their proposal to the group.
3. After the presentations, inform each representative that the client thought that the original theme was too broad, and decided to retool the campaign. The groups will have only 15 more minutes to alter their advertisements to be more specific. They won’t be able to create a completely new ad, just to add a new phrase at the beginning or end of their original slogan. Tell them that the new campaign should address respect

for homosexuals and talk about the need to end prejudice against those who are of this sexual orientation.

4. After 15 minutes, the groups will present their modified advertisements.

Discussion questions

- ✓ What are some different sexual orientations?
- ✓ Are there certain prejudices or stereotypes related to people who aren't heterosexual? What are they? Why do they exist?
- ✓ The Brazilian singer Gilberto Gil proclaimed in a magazine interview that "no one has to like homosexuals, but they have to respect them." What do you think of this comment?

Wrapping up

- ✓ Mention that there is a tendency to believe that heterosexuality is the "normal" standard of sexuality. This "common sense" idea of normality should be explored so that homosexuality and bisexuality can be fully understood and respected;
- ✓ Examine the idea that heterosexual masculinity, by being the dominant form (defined by concepts such as virility, force, lack of sensitivity, etc.) overshadows other legitimate forms of masculinity;
- ✓ Show how the polarization between popular concepts of masculinity and femininity in our society limits and excludes other expressions of sexuality and sexual identity;
- ✓ Revisit the history of sexuality to show that over time, acceptance or intolerance of other sexual orientations is fluid.

Sexual Orientation

How can we define the sensation of being capable of romantic or sexual relations with someone? All over the world, the term sexual orientation is used to indicate if this relationship is with someone of the opposite sex (heterosexual), of the same sex (homosexual) or with persons of either sex (bisexual).

Luis Mott, teacher and founder of the Grupo Gay of Bahia (Brazil), asserts that in order for us to better understand sexuality, we should begin with the three fundamental facets of the Anthropology of Sexuality:

- 1) human sexuality is not instinctive, rather it is a cultural construction;
- 2) the sexual cultures of humans vary among populations and evolve over time within societies;
- 3) there is no such thing as a natural and universal sexual morality. Rather, human sexuality is amoral in the sense that each culture determines, for subjective and not always healthy reasons, which sexual behaviors are acceptable and which are not.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the main international scientific organizations have stopped classifying homosexuality as a disorder or disease, and rather as a sexual orientation as healthy as bisexuality or heterosexuality. There is no law in Brazil that prohibits romantic or sexual relations between persons of the same sex, and even some more progressive branches of churches of various denominations assert that homosexual behavior is not a sin. However, there is still no legislation that guarantees the same civil rights for homosexual couples that heterosexual couples enjoy, nor is there any federal law that bans expressions of homophobia.

On the other hand, one of the fundamental pillars of the Federal Constitution of Brazil is the confrontation of all forms of prejudice. Homophobia (aversion to homosexuality) is a clear expression of prejudice that exists not only on the street and public spaces in general, but also in the home.

Activity 3:

Diversity of Rights: Myself and Others

Objective: To encourage empathy with a diverse array of persons, and to discuss the origins of violence against those of different sexual orientations.

Required materials: Sheets of letter paper, markers and adhesive tape.

Recommended time: 90 minutes.

Planning tips: This activity generally makes teenagers laugh and have fun as they act out roles of persons with diverse sexual orientations and backgrounds. Try to keep this activity in a spirit of fun, without censoring the participants, while encouraging respect for differences.

Instructions

- 1- Before the activity begins, select some of the phrases below that you think are most appropriate for your group. Write these on pieces of paper, with enough phrases for each participant. If you wish, include other phrases or examples that aren't included here, or repeat a phrase if you think it is necessary.
- 2- Ask the participants to sit in a circle and close their eyes. Explain that you will give each person a sheet of paper with a word or phrase written on it. After getting the paper, each participant will read the phrase silently and think about what they would do in that situation.
- 3- Ask each person to tape their piece of paper to the front of their shirt.
- 4- Have everyone get up and walk slowly around the room with the paper on their chests, reading the phrases on the other participants and greeting each other, but without talking.
- 5- Next, ask all the participants to remain in a circle and look at one another. Explain that each person should be in character and make up a story related to the phrase that they received, telling about the character's situation. Give them all some time so they can think about this story.
- 6- Ask for a volunteer to begin. Each participant will, randomly or in sequence, speak about their story. In some cases, you may feel the need to exchange phrases among the participants.
- 7- Once everyone has told their stories, ask them to take their seats, but keeping the paper taped to their shirts.
- 8- Ask all the participants to remain in character, and ask each other about their lives, their problems and their situation at that given moment. You can use a "speech baton" in order to facilitate the conversation if necessary. You should allow for 20 to 30 minutes of discussion.
- 9- Next, discuss the following questions.

Questions for discussion

- ✓ Do you know another young person that has already gone through a similar situation to the one described on your paper?
- ✓ What was it like for you to play the part of this character? How did you feel?
- ✓ In many places, a teenager that is considered “different” or is from a minority group is subjected to discrimination and violence. For example, in Brazil and in the United States, there are groups of skinheads that violently attack gays and blacks. Where do you think this hate comes from?
- ✓ How does someone who is “different” from us handle violence?

Wrapping up

You can conclude this activity by asking the participants for other examples of different persons or minority groups that weren't included here. Sometimes, the participants identify examples of people labeled as different or minorities that we haven't thought of, leading us to more content material for future activities and workshops with young people.

I'm bisexual

I'm heterosexual

I had sexual relations with another man, but I'm not gay

I'm gay

My father is gay

My mother has a girlfriend

I've been married to a man for five years

My male friend is dating another boy

My brother is gay and he likes soccer

I have a friend that is a boy and is a ballerina

I have a friend that is a girl and drives a truck

I'm gay and have three children

My girlfriend cheated on me

I'm an executive

I have AIDS

My girlfriend hit me

I'm a dad and I take care of my children

GLOSSARY¹

Next, we present a brief definition of the concepts that we use throughout this manual. It is important to keep in mind that the terms below are complex concepts and these simple definitions don't always fully illustrate the multiplicity of ways that people construct their sexual identity. However, the following definitions are useful instructional tools.

Bisexuality: the romantic and/or sexual attraction to individuals of either sex.

Heterosexuality: the romantic and/or sexual attraction to individuals of the opposite sex.

Homosexuality: the romantic and/or sexual attraction to individuals of the same sex.

Bisexuals: people that have romantic or sexual relationships with people of both sexes.

Gays: men that have romantic or sexual relationships with other men.

Lesbians: women that have romantic or sexual relationships with other women.

Homosexuals: people that have romantic or sexual relationships with people of the same sex.

Cross-dressers: men or women that assume the social role of the opposite sex, often modifying their own body, without allowing their sexual identity to conflict with their biological sex. This is different from fetishized cross-dressing or from performance artists called drag queens.

Transsexuals: men or women whose biological sex doesn't correspond with the individual's self identity. This gender anxiety is so acute that it leads to some individuals (primary transsexuals) to seek surgical "sex-change" operations. Secondary transsexuals are those that while identifying with the opposite sex of their biological make-up, are content with their existing sexual genitalia.

Transgender: a term which includes transsexuals, cross-dressers, hermaphrodites and all other individuals whose gender identity is incongruent with their sex proclaimed at birth.

Homophobia: aversion, discrimination and violence against homosexuals.

(LGBT) Pride Parade: an affirmative demonstration of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals around the world, organized to combat the feelings of shame imposed from different groups (usually religious conservatives) that identify homosexual behavior as something dishonorable and unnatural. The origin of the LGBT Pride Parade harks back to the 1969 Stonewall Riots in the United States. These parades have emerged as celebrations of sexual diversity and commemoration of the struggle for LGBT rights worldwide. The symbol of a multi-colored rainbow represents diversity and is widely present in the LGBT Pride Parade. Since 2005, São Paulo has been the setting for the largest parades in the world in terms of number of participants.

¹ Promotion of civil and human rights for the GLBTTT population. Porto Alegre: Grupo Outra Visão, 2006.

Other videos



Once upon a boy

This video presents the story of a young man and the construction of his masculinity from childhood through adolescence. It focuses on different experiences that boys encounter as they become men in our society: machismo, domestic violence, homophobia, self-doubts about their sexuality, their first sexual experiences, pregnancy, STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) and fatherhood. This video is recommended for educators seeking new ways to work with groups of young men. It can be used in groups of teenage males in order to explore beliefs, opinions and attitudes related to themes of sexuality, reproductive health and masculinity, as well to reflect on what it means to be a man in modern society.

Duration: 23 minutes.



Onde upon a girl

Girls don't play soccer! They play dollhouse. Girls don't sit with their legs spread! They learn to work in the kitchen.

Can girls only be like this? This video tells the story of Maria, a girl like many others, who begins to question the expectations of what she should or shouldn't be like. From childhood memories to future dreams, the story reflects on how girls are raised and how this influences their desires, behaviors and attitudes. "She once was a different Maria" is an educational film that presents common experiences for young women and addresses subjects such as reproductive and sexual health, violence, pregnancy, motherhood and work. It can be used with teenage women or men, or with health and educational professionals seeking new ways to discuss the health and independence of young women.

Duration: 20 minutes.



H ALLIANCE



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