

# Tips to intervening on a homophobic, biphobic or transphobic attack

## For high levels of risk:

### Be aware of risk before you choose what you're going to do

- How will risk change if you choose to distract the people involved versus directly engaging?

### Let them know you're there

- Make eye contact with the person being harassed, ask if they're okay and if they need anything or talk to them about something irrelevant. This lets the harasser know that you're on the victim's side.
- If it's safe, get between the person being harassed and the harasser. If it's too dangerous to get involved, try to get closer to the victim so that they know you're a support.
- Is there a safer place you can move to?
- If you can, use your phone to video record what's going on in case the victim wants to file a report later.
- Check in with the victim afterwards about what they need.

## For less immediate threats:

- **Name hurtful jokes.** If someone makes a joke or a gender-binary statement (like "boys will be boys"), name that. You don't have to call the person homophobic, biphobic or transphobic, but you can explain why it is hurtful or leaves people out. Remember that you can be soft on the person but hard on the issue!
- **Practice and reflect.** Think about difficult situations ahead of time and brainstorm how you might feel safer. Will there be any backlash and if so, how will you deal with it? Are there ways you can gently tell people that their words are hurtful? Are there other allies around who might have your back? How can you take care of yourself afterwards?

- Challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia **even if you don't see someone being directly attacked**. If LGBTQ people are around they may hear it and appreciate your support.
- If you miss out on challenging someone, **consider coming back to it later**. Talk to them one-on-one if you feel safe enough.

### Here are some possible ways to intervene:

- Gently **tease** to make people less defensive. For example, if your friend texts, "I love gay men!" You can say "uhh, do you know all of them personally?" and then add some silly emojis.
- **Use "I" statements**. If your friend says, "Two lesbians together, that's hot!", you can say "When you talk about lesbians that way, *I feel* grossed out because lesbian sexuality has nothing to do with you." This lands softer than saying they're gross, because it challenges the behaviour rather than the person.
- **Relate to the experience but not the tactic**. For example, if a guy adds "no homo" to something he says, you could respond: "It sucks when people treat you like something you're not" (validate feelings), "but 'no homo' is not a cool thing to say, cuz there's nothing wrong with being gay" (challenge tactic).
- **Share a personal story**. Your friend is trying to argue that boys and girls are inherently opposite and different. She says, "Boys are just like that—they like sports and are aggressive and girls are the opposite." You know that the gender binary hurts us all, so you say: "My friend Tara is such a jock though. And you know Billy—he's straight and he loves hair and makeup."
- **Relate with your allyship journey**. You can say "I used to think that way too, but I learned..."
- **Share the impact of their remark**. "That's not cool to say, it hurts a lot of people."
- **Repeat the statement but don't use their language**. If someone says "Those gym shorts are so gay" you can say "Do you mean that you don't like those gym shorts?"