



# Space Matters: Creating a Safe & **Affirming** Space for LGBTQ+ Students

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## Disclaimers

Deaf = Deaf, DeafDisabled, DeafBlind, &  
Hard of Hearing (DDBDDHH)

LGBTQ+ / Queer= Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,  
Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual,  
Poly / Pansexual, and more!

A faint, light blue background graphic on the left side of the page. It depicts a hand with fingers spread, holding a globe. The globe has several curved lines representing latitude and longitude. The overall style is minimalist and modern.

Know the Issues.

Support.

Educate.

Advocate.

# **HOSTILE** SCHOOL CLIMATES NEGATIVELY AFFECT LGBT STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING

Experiencing higher levels of victimization and discrimination leads to **worse outcomes** for LGBT students:



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NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY AT [GLSEN.ORG/NSCC](https://www.glsen.org/nscc) **GLSEN**<sup>®</sup>



# Obstacles

- Depression
- Feeling of suicide
- Using drugs and alcohol
- Developing poor eating habits
- Losing self-esteem
- Self-blaming
- Feeling of confusion
- Losing focus
- Feelings of shame and embarrassment
- Feelings of isolation
- Giving up all social activities
- Needing constant validation and reassurance

# SCHOOLS ARE **UNSAFE** AND UNWELCOMING FOR THE MAJORITY OF LGBT STUDENTS.



Heard homophobic remarks frequently or often

65%

heard homophobic remarks like “fag” or “dyke” frequently or often



Missed at least one day of school

30%

missed at least one day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable



Verbally harassed at school in the past year

85%

were verbally harassed in the past year

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# Incident Reports & Disciplinary Actions

“Bethany was caught making out with a ~~female~~ student....”



Do not disclose your student's gender identity or sexual identity on any document, such as incident report, without their consent.

It's not your job to 'out' them.

*Nguon v. Wolf (2007)*



# Coming Out

- A normal tendency to want to share personal information with important others
- Takes a certain amount of courage and trust
- Enables youth to find the support they need\*



# A student discloses something to you...

- Provide positive listening support
- Affirm them
- Make appropriate referrals
- Enforce a safe space

Listening to your student's questioning their sexual/gender identity does not authorize you to disclose your experiences.



# What do we need to do?

- Recognize and acknowledge that is never about 'self' as we do not live their experience
- Constantly check our bias and assumptions regardless you are a member of LGBTQ+ communities or not.
- Recognize heterosexism, binarism and cissexism is violent and it does create physiological and psychological hardships.
- Quick to intervene in bias-related activities.



# What do we NOT need to do?

- Assume their pronoun/ gender identity / sexual identity
- Refuse to use their pronoun
- “Out” them
- Compare their story to others
- Assume people are gay or straight
- Let homoantagonism and transantagonism comments slide
- Ask personal physical questions

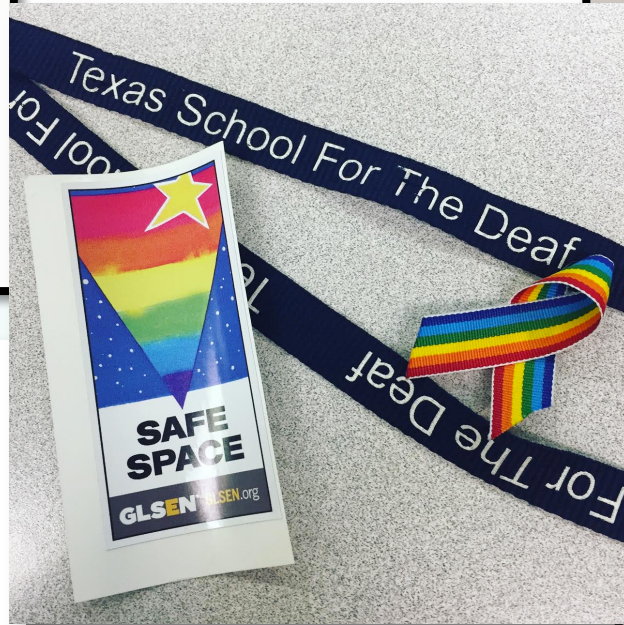
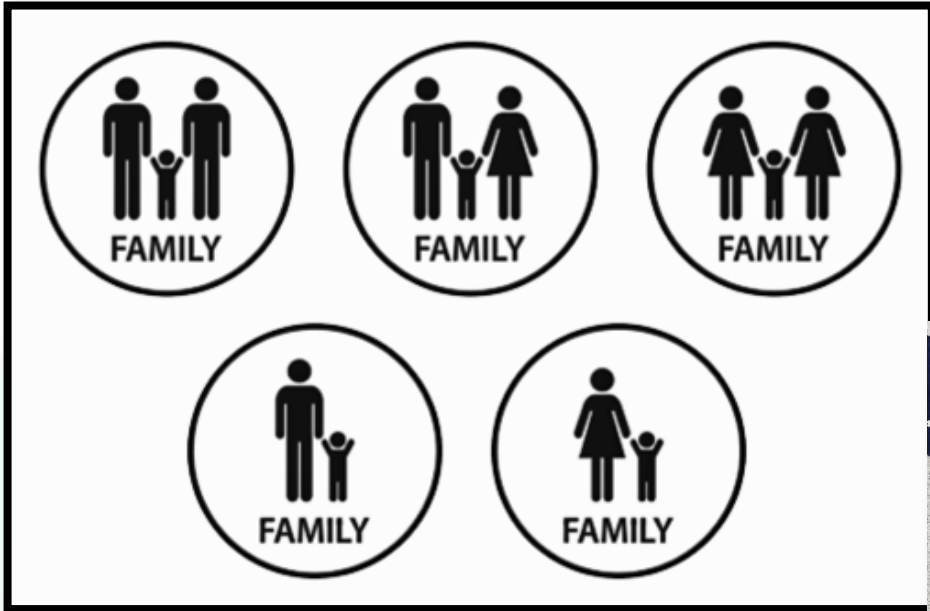




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Creating a safe place  
starts at having  
healthy conversations.

- “That’s so gay!”
  - “I know you didn’t mean it, but what you are saying is hurtful to some people.”
- “No homo.”
- “See that tomboy girl? I bet she is lesbian.”
- “You throw like a girl!”
- “When did you *choose* to be gay?”
- When someone misgender a trans youth/staff intentionally.

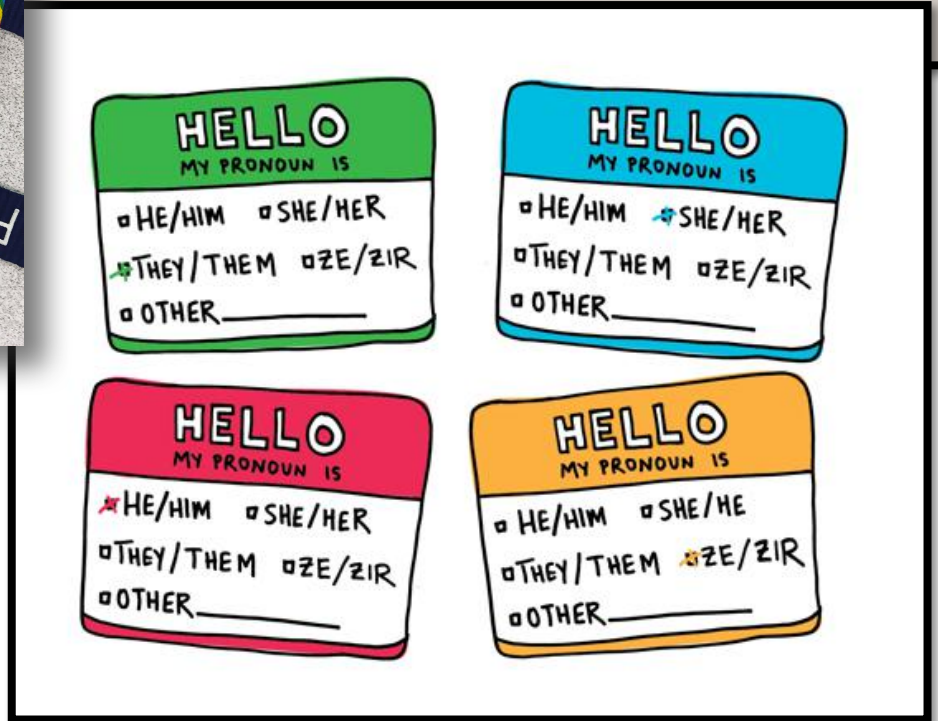


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# When greeting others, be mindful of language.

Consider

“Thanks, **friends**.  
Have a great  
night.”

“Good morning,  
**folks!**”

“Hi, **everyone!**”

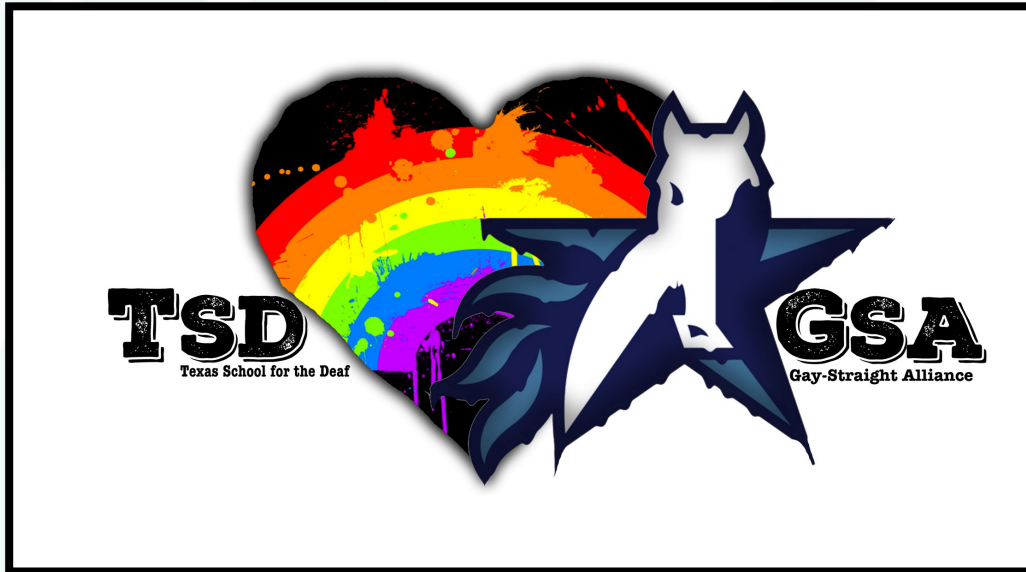
“And for **you?**”

“Can I get  
you **all**  
something?”

Why?

Shifting to gender-inclusive language respects and acknowledges the gender identities of all people and removes assumption.

# Host an Ally 101 workshop



Safe Space







**By displaying the stickers, I am making it clear that students can feel open to be themselves around me, and can seek support and advocacy from my position at school.**

*School psychologist, Idaho*

**After I posted the posters and stickers, my students started to ask me about it. It also made a statement to them that my classroom promotes respect.**

*Middle school teacher, California*

**It's a powerful visual for students who might feel left out to see that sticker on my door and think, OK, there is at least one person who will not judge or turn me away.**

*School Nurse, New York*



**Spot it.**



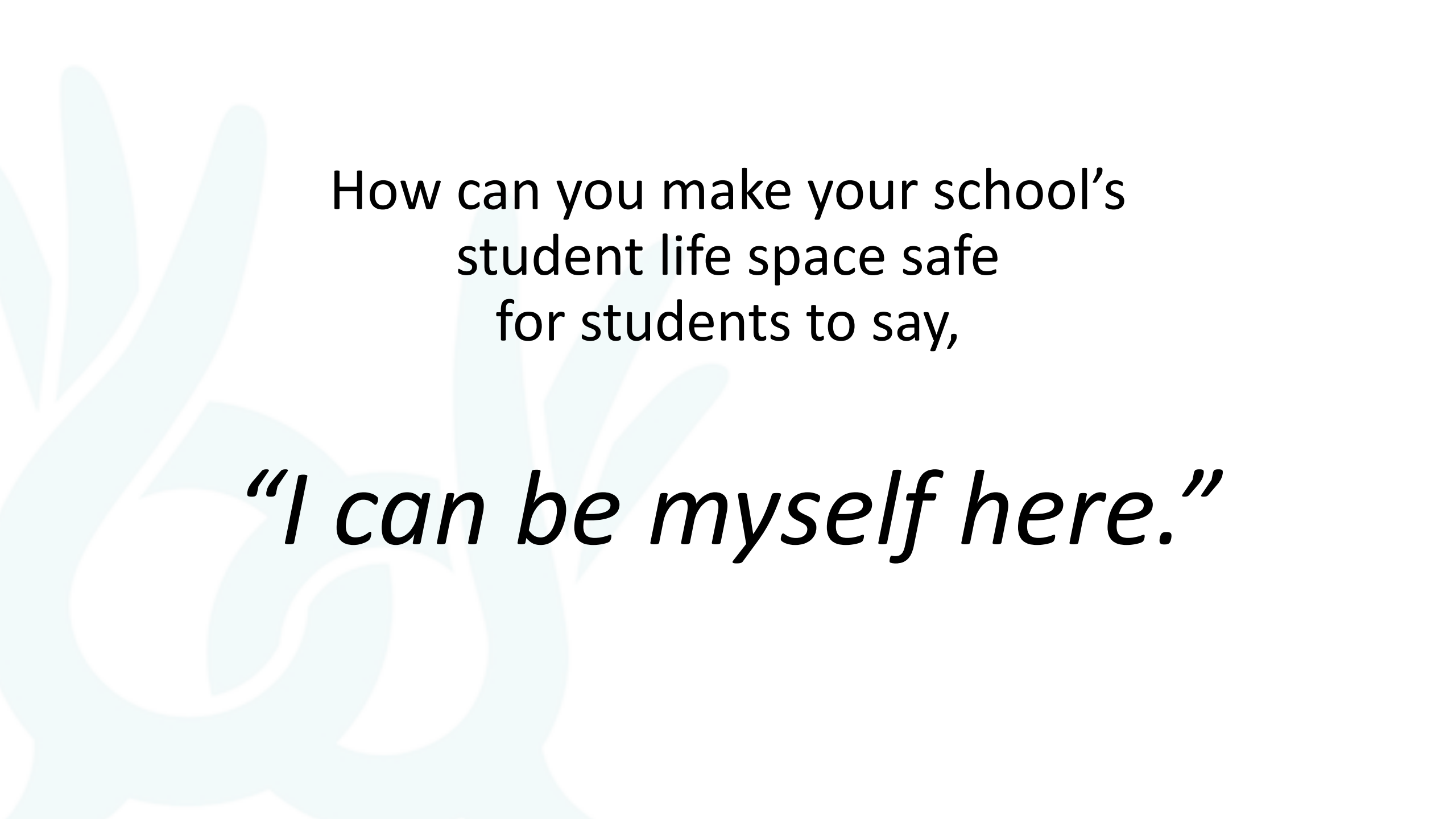
**Snap it.**



**Share it.**

**#SpotTheSticker**





How can you make your school's  
student life space safe  
for students to say,

*“I can be myself here.”*





Connect. Educate. Advocate.

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