

Resolving Conflicts

All our relationships at some point have conflicts and disagreements. It is normal. It is how we deal with these conflicts that can affect the health and strength of our relationships.

When disagreements come up, talk about them openly with your partner. You don't need to agree with your partner to accept and respect her point of view. Talking and listening with respect is a good place to start.

Some tips for dealing with conflicts...

- ▶ try to bring up things that bother you sooner than later – so that anger and resentments don't build. Deal with one issue at a time.
- ▶ be aware of your actions and body language. Behaviours such as threats, sarcasm, name calling, eye rolling, swearing and yelling can cause your partner to become defensive or to withdraw.
- ▶ while it is important to be clear about what you want and need, try to listen to what she is saying without getting defensive.
- ▶ be open to compromise. Make decisions together without pressuring each other.
- ▶ if either of you become too upset, take time-out for a specified time and agree to continue talking once you've calmed down.
- ▶ If you are getting no-where and can't resolve the conflict, get some outside help from a family member, friend, counsellor, workshop or book.

Resources

For information &/or support, contact the following resources:

The Centre (LGTB community centre)

Information, referrals & support

Daytime: 604 684-5307

Nightly: 604 684-6869 or BC Wide 1-800-566-1170

www.lgtbcentrevancouver.com

Safe Choices, BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs Vancouver, BC

Education re: abuse in same-gender relationships & healthy relationship workshops for lesbian & bisexual women.

604 633-2506

North West Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse, Seattle, WA

<http://www.nwnetwork.org>

Learning How to Communicate Effectively with Your Partner

(David Kelly Services)

www.fsatoronto.com/programs

Contains information adapted from the Lesbian Domestic Violence Project, Winnipeg, Manitoba

For additional copies contact:

BCASVACP 604 633-2506 or

The Centre 604 684-5307, or visit websites:

www.endingviolence.org,

www.lgtbcentrevancouver.org

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Healthy Relationships for Lesbians Information & Resources

Creating Strong & Safe LGBT Communities



BC Association of
Specialized Victim
Assistance &
Counselling Programs



THE CENTRE

A Community Centre Serving and
Supporting Lesbian, Gay,
Transgendered, Bisexual People
and their Allies

Women who identify as lesbian, bisexual, Two-Spirit, and/or queer, face unique challenges in creating and sustaining healthy, satisfying intimate relationships for many reasons:

- ▶ Stereotypes about women as gentle and caring can lead to conflict going underground in some lesbian relationships and make it difficult to talk about.
- ▶ Homophobia and heterosexism create stress for lesbian relationships. This can be especially true for partners who are not out or are out to different degrees.
- ▶ Lesbian couples often do not receive support from their families and society at large.
- ▶ Without many role models, some lesbian couples struggle to find relationship models that reflect their experiences and identities.
- ▶ Some women may enter their first lesbian relationship in isolation from a larger lesbian/queer community.
- ▶ Some women may enter lesbian relationships quickly and intensely without taking the time to get to know one another. This can happen for many reasons: pressure to be in a relationship and not alone; need to validate their lesbian identity; and having few road maps for dating.
- ▶ Women in cross-cultural/racial lesbian relationships may have to deal with racism, as well as different family and community expectations and traditions.

Despite these challenges, lesbians and bisexual women bring many strengths to their relationships. Some of these may include resilience, openness, a caring nature, playfulness and humour, sense of community, etc. Many lesbian couples also work to develop equal relationships where roles are more likely to be about who likes to do what, or who is good at certain things.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Lesbian relationships take many forms — monogamous, open relationships, dating, long-term, marriage, etc. — and they each have their good points as well as challenges.

No one said having a healthy relationship is easy work and it is sometimes hard to break old patterns. Here are some tips that may be useful:

Know yourself

Check in with yourself about your reasons for dating or being in a relationship. Are you reacting to being lonely or feeling judged for being single?

Make time to do those things that help you feel good about yourself. Being true to yourself and sharing who you are will have a positive effect on all your relationships.

Communicate clearly and responsibly

It's important for each partner in a relationship to take responsibility for her own feelings, and to communicate these to each other.

When talking with your partner, try to be clear and direct. Know what you want and need and ask for it. She cannot know what you need unless you tell her. You may also need to find other ways to meet your own needs.

Clarify expectations/ Negotiate solutions

Finding ways of dealing with conflicts and differences is not about one person doing all

of the changing. It is about negotiating, finding common ground and looking for ways to accommodate each other without giving up yourself.

Nurture all your relationships

Don't isolate yourself in your relationship. Stay connected with your friends and family. Spend time with other people in your life without your partner. In a healthy relationship, there should be enough trust that you don't feel threatened by each other's friendships.

Accept your partner for herself

Resist the urge to change your partner. Respect her for who she is and not who you want her to be.

This does not mean putting up with behaviours that are hurtful e.g. yelling at you, criticizing you, hitting.

Expect and give respect

A healthy relationship is one in which there is mutual respect. This means respecting your differences as well as your similarities. Even when you have conflicts, it is important to treat your partner and yourself with respect.

Respect cannot exist where one person controls, harms, intimidates or manipulates the other. If you cannot respect your partner or she cannot respect you, ask yourself if this is the right relationship for you.