

7 Don't assume your kids will grow up to be heterosexual, and don't assume your heterosexual friends will all remain that way. Try to make sure there are lesbians and gay men in your children's lives. Let the people you care about know that whomever they chose to love, you will celebrate with them.

8 Openly acknowledge the contributions of lesbians to the feminist movement and to local women's organizations. Make it clear that women's services are there to offer assistance to lesbians as well as heterosexual women. Make sure this is true in practice by including training about homophobia for staff members. If funding bodies balk, fight this discriminatory policy and make it known to your community that it exists - don't roll over and play dead.

9 Support us in our political struggles as we have supported you in yours. Write to the Justice Minister and demand

Human Rights Act and Charter protection for lesbians and gay men, and send copies to the leaders of the Opposition. Insist that we be given the same social and employment benefits as heterosexuals.

It has often been said about the women's movement that at its most basic, it is about choice, the right of women to choose who they wish to be. Ask yourself this: is there any choice more fundamental than the choice of who to love?

Based on an article by H. Fallding in the OptiMst.

Text: A. Molgat and D. Cameron

Translation: C. Vivier, S. Jacques

Layout: N. McKinney

**Lesbian Issues Committee,
National Action Committee on the
Status of Women
57 Mobile Drive, Toronto M4A 2P3**

1992

Distributed by:

Disponible en français

**DO
YOU
KNOW
A
LESBIAN?**

DO YOU KNOW A LESBIAN?

As women's organizations and other progressive groups endeavour to address the diversity of the Canadian community and seek to open themselves to a broad range of concerns, a frequently invisible minority speaks out. We are lesbians. We are in most of your organizations and many of your families. We are your daughters, your sisters, your friends and your mothers. You know us and love us, whether you realize it or not. We struggle alongside you, often on issues that touch your lives far more than they touch ours. As we have supported you, it is time for you to support us.

1 Use the word lesbian often. Use it in conversations with lesbians (it will make us feel less invisible), use it in front of other progressive people (it will teach them to use it), and use it in front of people who you imagine will drop dead when they hear it (it's time they got used to the idea).

2 Think about your own sexuality. Examine how you became heterosexual – because there is as much or as little "cause" for that as there is a "cause" for another woman being a lesbian. Much homophobia is rooted in people's discomfort with their own feelings for people of the same sex. Get past that and you'll be emotionally ready to be an ally.

3 Don't always claim heterosexual privilege by making it clear you are straight. Try casting doubt in people's minds about your own sexual orientation every once in a while. Make it clear that it would be no insult to mistake you for a lesbian. Refer to past relationships with women, if you've had any. Refer to lesbian friends (using their names only if they're comfortable with that). Talk about how any issue under discussion might affect lesbians. If all of this starts people asking you point blank if you are a lesbian, think of creative answers that teach people something.

4 Don't assume anyone is exclusively heterosexual. Use inclusive language if you are asking someone whether she has any new romantic interests. If she gets offended, help her to look at why she considers it an insult. If your friend is in fact a lesbian, your choice of words will be a sign to her that you are someone she can talk to.

5 Remember that we're as diverse as you are. We wear Levi's and we wear pearls. We come in every shape, size, dis/ability, race, colour and age. We are rich and we are poor. We speak every language.

6 Don't require that your lesbian and gay friends behave or look like heterosexuals in order to be accepted in your social circle or organization. Welcome the flaming queen or the butch lesbian. For some of us our appearance is a part of our culture and a strategy to affirm our right to be whomever we are.