

Myth/Fact Answer Sheet

1. False

Many people have sexual thoughts, fantasies or dreams about someone of the same sex at some point in their life. This does not mean that they are definitely gay. However, if most of a person's sexual thoughts are about same-sex partners, it may mean that he/she is gay or bisexual. A person does not discover sexual orientation overnight. It usually happens over a period of time. There are organizations that can give people support if they think that they might be gay. These groups can be found under "gay" in the phone book. (*RECAPP note: Educators can refer youth to the June 2000 edition of Topic in Brief.*)

2. True

Sex play between children and pre-teens of the same sex or other sex is a very common and normal part of healthy sexual development. Since childhood friends are often the same sex, this play is often with a same sex partner. This play has nothing to do with an individual's future sexual orientation.

3. False

We all know the stereotypes that gay men are "limp-wristed" and act feminine, and lesbians are large, have short hair and drive trucks. A few gay people fit the stereotype. Most do not. Though we usually do not know it, some of our neighbors, teachers, athletes, bankers and politicians are gay and lesbian. When we believe stereotypes, we don't see people as unique individuals but as members of a group which we don't understand or like.

4. True

Most experts believe that about 10 percent of the U.S. population is primarily gay or lesbian. Therefore, 10 percent of teens are gay or lesbian although many do not realize this until they are older.

5. True

The research of Alfred Kinsey revealed this fact. Such thoughts, fantasies or dreams can be extremely troubling for teen males if they fear them as a sign that they are gay. In fact, homosexual thoughts and fantasies are quite normal for straight men and straight women. However, if a boy or girl has mostly homosexual thoughts and fantasies and has a desire to act on the fantasies, then s/he is probably gay or lesbian.

6. False

Gay men and lesbians are people who are sexually attracted to people of the same sex. Bisexuals are attracted to people of both sexes. It is completely different when a person wishes s/he was the opposite sex. These people are called "transgender." For example, a male feels like he is truly a female trapped in a male body. Sometimes, transgenders undergo a long process of getting a sex change so that their bodies match their inner feelings.

7. False

Sexual abuse is damaging to both girls and boys. Male victims of sexual abuse often feel confused about their sexual orientation. Boys who are abused by older boys or men sometimes believe that something about them sexually attracted the abusers. They may feel intense fear of and/or confusion about their sexual orientation. Same-sex sexual abuse does not make someone gay.

8. False

In the U.S., HIV/AIDS spread first in the gay community. However, currently the rate of HIV infection is growing most rapidly among women, minorities and teenagers. Anyone who has unprotected intercourse or shares needles can be infected.

9. True

Although some believe that gay teachers, counselors and parents can influence children to be gay, it is not true that someone who is gay or lesbian can make someone else into a gay or lesbian. In fact, children of gay parents are not more likely to be gay or lesbian. A person's sexual orientation is set very early in life, possibly at birth.

10. False

Boys learn from the world around them that they are expected to want and like sex whenever it is offered. Having sex with an older girl or woman is seen as a sexual rite of passage. Boys who don't want or fear having sexual activity often worry that this means they are gay. Boys who are pressured or forced into having sex by older females, and experience it as abusive, may feel confused about their sexual orientation. Again, sexual abuse by a female or male does not make someone gay.

11. False

The vast majority of child molesters are heterosexual in their relationships with adults.

12. True

There is a myth that gay people have problems and are unhappy. It is true that many gay men and lesbians have to struggle to come to terms with their sexual orientation, and they experience discrimination in many ways. However, most grow up to lead fulfilling, healthy and happy lives.

13. True

Most urban areas have some form of support network for teens who are struggling with sexual orientation issues. Teens who want help can call a local lesbian and gay organization to see if there is a teen group in the area (usually listed under "gay" in the phone book).