

Feelings About Visibility

- To be safe we must come out (or must not come out); we must show (or hide) ourselves at all times.
- To come out is always dangerous.
- We do not exist; we are invisible; bisexuality is not real.

Feelings As Bisexual Women

- We are supporting the patriarchy.
 - We are deserting feminism.
 - We are "half dykes."
 - We are accepting "the sublimation of penetration."
- We are titlating to men, and must struggle to create a identity apart from that.

Feelings As Bisexual Men

- Both heterosexual and gay men are right to ridicule and discount us.
 - We have no place with heterosexual and gay men.
- We are responsible for the spread of AIDS.

Feelings About The Bisexual Community

- We lose our legitimacy and power by being bisexual.
 - Our diversity makes unity impossible.
 - We have no history or future as a people.
 - The work we do is trivial compared to other movements.
 - By being bisexual, we align/ally ourselves with a bunch of other things that may or may not describe who we are or what we believe in.
 - We're the "okay" kind of bisexuals and others are the "not okay" kind, or *vice versa*.
 - We will grow old without community.
- We are disappointed in our community, and the ways that bisexuals act like victims.

Feelings Among Lesbians, Gay Men, And Heterosexuals

- We are really heterosexual, or really lesbian/gay.
 - We just have not met the "right" woman or man.
 - We just want access to all the wonderful aspects of the lesbian and gay communities.
 - When "the shit hits the fan," we won't come through for lesbians and gay men.
 - If we "get a chance to get married," we will take it.
 - We cannot be married or monogamous and be bisexual.
 - We are hiding behind heterosexual privelege.
 - We are "on the fence," incapable of commitment.
 - We do not know who we are; we're just "in a phase."
 - We deserve to feel guilty about who we are within the lesbian, gay, and heterosexual communities.
 - If we leave a relationship, we are betrayers.
 - We choose relationships with men because we haven't "worked our shit out" with women, or *vice versa*.
 - We are not welcome in either the heterosexual or the gay/lesbian communities.
- We are third-class citizens (first heterosexuals, second gays and lesbians).

Feelings About Choices

- We are untrustworthy, unreliable, and fickle.
- We are copping out; we are wimps.
- It is dangerous to choose and safer or more comfortable to keep our options open.
- We are "schizophrenic," with very separate "sides" that are not united.
- We are always, in some way, being fake.

Feelings Of Defensiveness And Superiority

- We must defend ourselves and everything about us.
- Anything negative that is said to us is oppression or "biphobia."
- We must appear to "have it all" to be a good advertisement for bisexuality.
- We have the "best" or the "only real" sexual identity.
- Everyone is "really" bisexual, and that we are better than anyone who "hasn't admitted it yet."

Feelings Of Isolation And Homelessness

- We do not fit in anywhere.
- We are in a category of one, and no one can or will understand us.
- We are not connected to other human beings or other living things.
- We have no home and no community, and do not deserve one.
- If we feel at home somewhere, something is wrong, or it will be stolen or sabotaged at any second.
- We are strange, odd, wierd, and in our core different from other humans.
- We have to pretend to feel close.
- We scare everyone, everyone hates us, and we are dangerous to be close to.
- We have been betrayed by everyone.
- If someone loves us we will run away, and if we love someone they will run away.
- We need to create "comfortable" lives for ourselves, though many of our attempts, such as substance and sexual addictions, do not work.
- We despair about making our lives work in the face of the oppression, and have

difficulty building emotional support for ourselves (especially as men).

Feelings of Badness

- We, as individuals, are insignificant and at the fringe of society.
- We are alone and isolated, and deserve to be so.
- We will hurt or confuse young people by coming out to them.
- We have done something to be ashamed of.
- We are defective, anomalous; there is something wrong with us.
- We are going to be punished for our strengths and/or our weaknesses.
- Sex is bad, we are sex, and therefore we are bad.
- Because we "want it all," we are hedonistic, greedy, self-indulgent, and selfish.

Feelings About Sex And Gender

- We are never safe from sexual pursuit; we are always available.
- Our friendships are never safe from sex, and every relationship will/must eventually become sexual.
- Any interaction can possibly be sexualized.
- We are not fully male or female.
- Every choice we make is based on gender or based on politics.
- Every choice of a person is only a choice of gender.
- We are who we sleep with.
- We are hypersexual, "on the prowl" at all times.
- We must defend, as part of our identity, our sexual addictions and hangups.
- Having sex is the answer to our loneliness.

Ways To Eliminate Internalized Oppression

- Honestly recognize which of the feelings on this long list are going on inside us. Acknowledging the reality of our struggle is the first step.
- Find or create safe places to talk honestly about our feelings and heal the pain, such as support groups or friends. Build relationships with lesbians, gay men, and heterosexual friends and activists and help them learn about our issues. Each ally we develop can remind us that our internalized oppression is not true and will make our liberation movement more effective.
- Lead in bisexual or lesbian/gay liberation work. It requires us to step out of our internalized oppression and model self respect. Ending our oppression will end our internalized oppression.
- Make life decisions that reflect and act on what is really true. For example, if you feel as if every relationship is eventually about sex, choose a friend to get close to without ever becoming sexual.

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Bisexual Internalized Oppression

This is a start at creating a list of the specifics of internalized bisexual oppression, based on brainstorming at the "Eliminating Internalized Bisexual Oppression" workshop I led at the National Bisexual Conference in San Francisco, California, USA, in June 1990.

Internalized Oppression is the set of feelings and misinformation that individuals carry about themselves and other members of their own group. It is the turning inward of, and adopting as true, the misinformation that is directed toward oppressed people by the external oppression, and it is any way in which we treat other members of our group as if these things were true of them.

No item on this list applies to all bisexuals. Use it to figure out what pieces of internalized bisexual oppression *you* carry, so that you can begin to eliminate it (see back panel).

It may be difficult to read this pamphlet, because it is painful to look at the ways we have come to accept our oppression inside our own minds. As you read, you may want to remind yourself of the following:

- Our internalized oppression has nothing to do with who we really are as human beings.
- Recognizing our internalized oppression is the first step toward eliminating it.



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