

## Identity Star Activity

This activity, often referred to as the Identity Star, can be tailored to [your school] students.

**Audience:** This activity is intended for mature high school or university students and can be adapted to language level. With significant adaptation of the scenarios, it could be used for less mature audience members, too.

**Goal:** Build empathy for and awareness of LGBT community members.

**Prep:** Cut stars out of colored paper, with the following distribution: 1 white star, 3 orange stars, 4 yellow stars, and 4 green stars (per 12 students). Participants are each given a star with one of the following words printed on each of the five points of the star.

Housing  
Class

Family  
Friends

[Insert a place that is a popular area in or near school, such as downtown, mall, park, etc.]

### Verbal instructions to participants:

Imagine that this star represents your world. Please write your name in the center of the star.

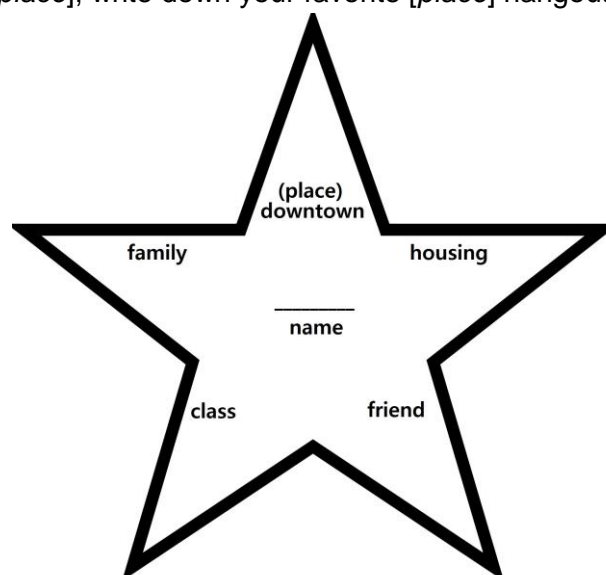
On the point labeled 'friends' write the name of one very close friend, someone you care about more than anyone else, whom you have known for a long time and confide in.

On the point labeled family, write the name of one family member to whom you can always go to for advice and help, whom you can count on and talk to anything you struggle with.

On the point labeled housing, write down your home address or the dorm where you live. Write down a few positive adjectives to describe this place, such as safety, comfort, home.

On the point labeled class, write down your favorite class subject - a class where you have friends, admire the professor, and are interested in the class material.

On the point labeled [place], write down your favorite [place] hangout in your free time.



## Identity Star Activity

Now, imagine that every one of you is now ‘**coming out**’ as **gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender**. If you already identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, instead please imagine coming out as another different lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identity.

Imagine that you decide that it will be easiest to come out to your friend first, since they have always supported you in the past and you feel they need to know about your identity.

- If you have a **YELLOW** star, your friend has no problem with it, they’ve suspected it for a while and thank you for being honest with them. Luckily, they act no different toward you and accept you for who you are.
- If you have an **ORANGE** or **GREEN** star, your friend is kind of hesitant. They are irritated that you waited so long to tell them but you’re confident that with time, they will begin to understand that being LGBTQ identified is just part of who you are. Fold back this point of your star.
- If you have a **WHITE** star, you are met with anger and disgust. This friend who has been by your side in the past, tells you that being LGBTQ identified is wrong and that they can’t associate with anyone like that. Tear off this point on your star, this friend is no longer a part of your life.

You now decide that your family should know so you turn to your closest family member.

- If you have a **GREEN** star, the conversation does not go exactly how you planned. Several questions are asked as to how this could have happened, but after a lengthy discussion, this person who is close to you seems more at ease. Fold back this point on your star--with time, this person will be an ally.
- If you have a **YELLOW** star, you are embraced by this family member. They’re proud of you for coming out and let you know that you have their support.
- If you have a **WHITE** or **ORANGE** star, your family member rejects the thought of being related to an LGBTQ identified person. They are disgusted and some of you are thrown out of the house and even disowned. Your parents have also told you that they will no longer support your education, please rip off this point on your star.

Having told your friends and family, you decide to be open with individuals who you live with and some of your neighbors.

- If you have a **GREEN** star, your identity is accepted by your community and you are embraced warmly by your neighbors.
- If you have an **ORANGE** or **YELLOW** star. You are met with a mixed response. Some people outwardly accept you but others don’t know what to think. Some people make comments about how uncomfortable they would feel if you brought a significant other home with you. Fold back this point on your star, it may take some time before your neighbors and/or roommates act towards you in the same way as before.
- If you have a **WHITE** star, your community reacts with hatred. They tell you that you don’t belong, threaten you, and even deface your property by writing mean words on your door. Rip off this point of your star--you do not feel safe in your living environment and your landlord is unresponsive. Eventually you have to move because you fear for your own safety.

Next, rumors have started circulating through your classes. Typically, you would confront them head on, but this time, you’re not sure if doing so would cause more harm than good.

## Identity Star Activity

- If you have a **YELLOW** star, your classmates approach you and let you know that they've heard the rumors and they really don't care, they will support you even if the rumors are true.
- If you have a **GREEN** star, your environment has become a little interesting. No one has approached you about the rumors but people have started acting differently around you. Some people speak to you less often and even though you haven't confirmed or denied the rumors, you notice a shift in people's behavior toward you. Fold this point back, it may take a little time before you feel fully comfortable in this environment again.
- If you have a **WHITE** or an **ORANGE** star, you continue to work as though nothing has changed but feel a lot of hostility coming from your classmates and coworkers. Connections have been ruptured and your ability to succeed has been undermined because people have started to ignore your work or look at it differently. Rip off this point on your star.

After all of these experiences, you go out with your date on Friday night to relax and have fun. You're walking to *[insert place]* after enjoying a snack...

- If you have a **GREEN** star, you have a fun night and feel more at ease with the world around you. You come to realize that no matter what, this is your life and even though you've probably experienced some sort of rejection because of your identity, there's still a long road ahead and you feel prepared to face the struggles that you're sure to encounter.
- If you have a **YELLOW**, or **ORANGE** star, you and your date are followed while being called anti-gay slurs and even being spat on by a few intoxicated individuals leaving one of the bars. This makes you feel immediately unsafe and you find that your interest in being out and about on State street after a certain hour doesn't feel safe. Fold this point back.
- If you have a **WHITE** star, you and your significant other are followed, verbally harassed, and physically attacked by some individuals who have just come out of a bar. This experience is more than you can handle--you begin looking back on the rejection you've experienced since first coming out to your friend and feel seriously depressed. Eventually, you feel that your life really isn't even worth living. If you have a **WHITE** star, tear it up now. You've become part of the 40% of LGBT identified people who attempt suicide. If you or anyone you know is ever in this vulnerably situation, please help them reach out to *[insert local resource, ex. DDingDong LGBTQ Youth Crisis Support Center]*.

As this activity hopefully helped you understand, LGBT students receive varied responses to coming out and being out. Some people are fortunate enough to find supportive community, but others are not so lucky. All of your stars have been folded or ripped in some way and this holds true for the entire LGBT community. None of our "stars" are perfectly intact. We all face different forms of discrimination and isolation due to our identity because of society.

Our work as members of society is so important for this very reason. There are places that serve as resource for all students, including allies who sometimes face hatred for supporting LGBT equality. There are resources for family members of LGBT people, too.

What LGBT friends, family members and classmates need is your support. In many ways...