

Based on the best practice principles, this activity will help teachers to set up the learning environment with their class so that it is a safe space for people to explore their values and knowledge to increase their skills in a respectful, inclusive practice with older LGBT+ people. This in turn will give tools for managing challenging behaviour and supporting LGBT+ learners in the class.

When teaching gender and sexual diversity, always establish an explicit learning agreement for the participants to provide a safe and supportive learning environment where participants behave inclusively and respectfully. At the start of class, remind the class who will be developing skills in working with LGBT+ and older adults, that the class will be made up of people with diverse identities some of which will include LGBT+ identities. Be explicit that the classroom will contain people with differing experiences and of different sexual and gender identities who may or may not be "out" to the class. Explain that a group contract about expectations of behaviour and attitudes can make the classroom a safer space for people to share their stories and their life experiences. You can use humour as well in this context, it doesn't have to be a very heavy subject and playfulness is important.

Activity 1: Setting up a group learning agreement– the way to work as a group

- 1 It is important to do this activity on the very first day, otherwise there are already a lot of implicit agreements between each other. By starting with this at the very first day, the group obtains ownership on its own safety and security in the classroom. The group should make their own suggestions and explore this together.
- 2 The teacher can start with open questions to the classroom. How do we solve problems in this class room? How do we listen to each other and respond to each other? Can we explain it in more detail? How are we going to do that? Some examples:
 - a. Speak in a respectful manner and do not make assumptions about a person's gender or sexuality
 - b. We assume that everyone wishes to learn best practices in this area.
 - c. We all will have heard discriminatory ideas growing up and may have internalised some of these values. We agree to being gently challenged on these so that we can learn and change ideas that could lead to discriminatory behaviour.
 - d. The classroom is a safe space in which participants can explore ideas, respectfully and with the intention of inclusivity
- 3 The teacher is the facilitator and an equal among equals. The teacher has to guide the process but facilitate participation by including themselves as also learning. Invite everyone to participate with an expectation that everyone has something important to contribute. Write the points on a flip chart. It is the learning agreement between the students and the teacher. The teacher can use themselves as a model to invite respectful challenge in the classroom by acknowledging that they themselves might say something that is hurtful to someone, without knowing it. Invite the class to let the teacher know so that they can amend their behaviour and learn from what the person explains . "It may be only by having these things pointed out that we realise that our behaviour was discriminatory. This is how we can change and become more sensitive". The teacher will also need to stress though, that everyone needs to be respected and that the learning journey cannot be supported at the expense of making LGBT+ people in the class, who may have not come out, feel unsupported or uncomfortable.
- 4 At the end of the week the teacher can go back to the list and remind students of the agreement. Ask the class whether they feel the learning agreement was adhered to and whether anything needs to be clarified or added.

Activity 2: The human knot, team building

The human knot is a game that has long been used as a team building exercise and a fun way of breaking the ice with new groups of people. It takes around 15-20 minutes. The group will circle up and join hands together to form a human knot out of arms. The goal of the game is to untangle yourselves without letting go of the hands you are holding. After untangling you will be standing once again in a regular circle.

- 1 Ask the students to stand close to each other in the centre of the classroom.
- 2 Ask the students to bring their hands to the centre and grab two hands from the centre, without knowing who it is. So now you are holding two hands, one in each.

- 3 In the beginning, the knot will be tight and thick with many crossed arms. The group might want to take a step backwards, if possible. This way they have a better perspective of the Human Knot.
- 4 While playing, students should always try to be respectful of the boundaries of others. If they find themselves in an uncomfortable position with another player, they might ask if other players can help you out by untangling a different part of the knot.
- 5 Students can climb and duck, but they can't break the circle.
- 6 If it doesn't work, try it again.
- 7 After the exercise, ask the students the meaning of the exercise. What have they learned from this?