



# Minority Fellowship Program

The National Board for Certified Counselors

## Innovations in Counseling: Working with Minority Populations- Part 3 Counseling Same-Sex Couples

### Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session with David Ford

#### Question from Rosemary Thompson

Can you explain the new term I have encountered from a client who says they are pansexual?

#### Answer from Presenter

Pansexual means being attracted to any gender and not ascribing to a gender of your own. For persons who are pansexual, they view sex and gender as irrelevant.

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#### Question from Teodora Tecu

Is this trend found also in Europe? [Increasing of gay couples and families]

#### Answer from Presenter

The answer to this question would have to be aggregated by country. I would say that many European nations are more liberal with regard to same-sex couples.

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#### Question from Teodora Tecu

Can you please explain once more what does the prep for infectious diseases mean?

#### Answer from Presenter

PrEP is Pre-exposure Prophylaxis. It is a medical regimen taken by the person who does not have HIV in the relationship and is quite effective in reducing the likelihood of passing HIV onto that person. The person who does have HIV, however, has to be undetectable. Undetectable means that the viral load (number of copies of the virus in 1 mL of blood) is minimal.

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#### Question from Tracy Smith

Is it biased to talk about infectious diseases with same-sex couples, as all couples heterosexual otherwise have the same concerns?

#### Answer from Presenter

In my practice, I let the members of the couple bring it up. Once it is brought into the room, I include some psychoeducation regarding infectious diseases.

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**Question from Nicole Ford**

Have you counseled a same sex couple who is impacted by domestic violence?

**Answer from Presenter**

I have not, but in the even that I do encounter interpersonal violence in a relationship, I will first ensure the safety of the survivor and have a session with that person first. I would not blame them and validate their feelings, giving them the space to talk about it and set goals for our time together. We would explore options for the relationship and what those options mean.

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**Question from Amanda O'Bryan**

Could you discuss couples with a transgender individual? How that can have an impact on relationships. What should be discussed?

**Answer from Presenter**

Having a partner who is transgender can be tricky. The impact depends on when the person who is transgender is male-to-female or female-to-male and to what gender that individual is attracted. I wouldn't really do all the talking. I would listen to all parties involved and let them talk, being the arbitrator or mediator during the session. I would resort to my basic counseling skills of reflecting, paraphrasing, and summarizing, making sure to use the proper gender-specific pronouns. I would help them to talk out how being involved with someone who is transgender can and does impact their relationship.

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**Question from Sharnetta Baker**

Thank you for this information. In your opinion, would it be unethical for a counselor to deny a same sex couples services, due to the counselor's own personal beliefs?

**Answer from Presenter**

Well, according the *ACA Code of Ethics*, refusing them services because of our own beliefs is unethical. Our beliefs should not get in the way of forging a relationship with our clients. That is different if we believe that we are unprepared. In that case, I would refer, but make sure I get some professional development in that area, or seek consultation while I am working with them.

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**Question from Ida Duplechin**

Is there a consortium of attorneys who deal with family law issues re same-sex couples?

**Answer from Presenter**

That, I'm not sure about, but I suggest having resources for your clients that have the contact information for lawyers that are affirming to same-sex couples.

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**Question from Teodora Tecu**

I'm a school counsellor and a teacher and I would like to know how we can educate a class of students to accept their transgender colleague.

**Answer from Presenter**

For starters, I suggest you getting permission from your administration regarding resources for transgender students. If you wanted to use readings, please make sure that the school powers-that-be have approved them. I would also be an advocate for the transgender student and assist them with regard to bullying, discrimination, and helping them to navigate their identity-forming process.

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**Question from Vande Wilson**

How do we deal with situations in which there may be role confusion within a same sex relationship?

**Answer from Presenter**

Communication is important in these situations. I would let the members of the couple talk about their perceived role and how those roles have become confused, and how we can get back to the original roles. I would let them be concrete in designating what those roles are and the characteristics of those roles. I also suggest writing them down to give them life. Allow them to make changes and let them know that they can change, but that doesn't have to ruin the relationship.

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**Question from Melanie Richburg**

Do you have any personal experience in addressing disclosure concerns with a client who has not disclosed his/her HIV status?

**Answer from Presenter**

I have and the best thing to do is to validate that person's fears about disclosure and help them develop the consequences for nondisclosure. Also, I would role play various situations regarding disclosing the status. I would tread lightly with this, but I would also mention the legal, moral, and ethical implications of nondisclosure.

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**Question from JD Jackson**

What would you suggest when one partner is pressuring the other partner to be more visible and vocal about being gay however, he's only came out 5 years ago with his family who was unaccepting?

**Answer from Presenter**

I believe in communication in a relationship letting the two of them talk out the situation, with you being the mediator. You would have to set some ground rules with regard to no name-calling, being authentic with emotions, using "I" statements, and letting the other person know how they are being affected. I would also let



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them switch places and role play. I would also like to know about the other's coming out process, especially regarding family involvement. I would like to know the root of the pressure, also.

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### **Question from Kesi Shaw**

Are you familiar with LGBT-Affirmative Psychotherapy Online Certification Program Presented by AAMFT-CA if so, what are your thoughts?

### **Answer from Presenter**

I am not too familiar with this curriculum, but I believe it to be a good way to get professional development to become better equipped in working with members of LGBTQIA community. I am not sure if they will give CEUs for your licensure board or for NBCC, but it is for pre-licensed and licensed individuals in California.

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### **Question from Mo Chen**

What techniques do you use when helping improve the communication between the couple?

### **Answer from Presenter**

I use open communication, being concrete with emotions, role playing scenarios, letting each person role play each other, and setting boundaries for the sessions, letting them know throughout the process that honesty is the only way to have effective communication in the relationship. I also like to be the omniscient observer in that I will not intervene while they are talking.

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