

Our Mission:

The **Bisexual Resource Center** envisions a world where love is celebrated, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression.

Because bisexuals today are still misunderstood, marginalized and discriminated against, the **BRC** is committed to providing support to the bisexual community and raising public awareness about bisexuality and bisexual people.

What do we mean by “bisexual”?

The **BRC** uses bisexual (or BI for bi-inclusive) as an umbrella term for people who recognize and honor their potential for sexual and emotional attraction to more than one gender (pansexual, fluid, omnisexual, queer, and all other free-identifiers).

We celebrate and affirm the diversity of identity and expression regardless of labels.

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IT'S NOT A PHASE,
IT'S MY LIFE.

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The Bisexual Resource Center is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) educational organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**How to be
an Ally to a
Bisexual
Person**

By Ellyn Ruthstrom
BRC President

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Bisexual Resource Center



I was walking down the street in Jamaica Plain a few days ago when two people with clipboards approached me and asked, "Do you have time for gay rights?" I cheerfully replied that I always had time for gay rights and stopped to listen to their pitch. The young man took the lead and giggled a little, looking at the woman with him. He seemed new to the task. He began, "The Human Rights Campaign is a gay and lesbian organization..."

I stopped him there, "I thought it was a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender organization." He was a little startled but tried to recover, "Oh, yes, it is but it's just so long to say..." "That's too bad," I said, "because I'm bisexual and HRC's record on inclusiveness is really poor. Sorry, I can't support you today."

Sadly, there are still many national LGBT organizations that give short shrift to bisexual and trans visibility within their outreach and policy development. Bi activists constantly try to claim our space within the greater LGBT community, often feeling our work gets erased like a sand castle below the high water mark.

I've drawn up a **few tips** that can certainly be taken into account by organizations, but my main focus was on the individual level. Straight allies can benefit from these recommendations, but I know that a lot of them developed for me more from my experiences with gays and lesbians over the years.



1) Believe that I exist. Despite ongoing scientific research that seems so determined to disprove the existence of bisexuality, plus the general lack of interest by the greater gay and lesbian community to acknowledge us, we really do exist.

2) When I tell you I'm bisexual, please **don't try to talk me into redefining my identity** into something more comfortable for you. Please don't tell me that if I haven't been sexual with more than one sex in the last three, five, or ten years that I am no longer bisexual.

3) Celebrate bisexual culture along with me. We have a vibrant and rich cultural history within the bi community. Not only do we have fabulous examples of cultural communities that accepted and practiced bisexual living/loving—Bloomsbury Group, Greenwich Village, Harlem Renaissance—but from Sappho to Walt Whitman to Virginia Woolf to James Baldwin to June Jordan, we have many daring voices that have expressed love beyond the monosexual confines.

4) Please **don't try to convince me that people who lived bisexual lives in the past would have been gay** if they had lived today. You don't know that, I don't know that, and your insistence that it is true says that you believe that people were bisexual only out of necessity, not by desire. I believe there have always been bisexual people just as you may believe there have always been gay and lesbian people.

5) Validate my frustration with the gay and lesbian community when they ignore or exclude bisexuals. Please don't try and defend an action such as a keynote speaker who is addressing a LGBT audience but consistently says "gay and lesbian" when referring to all of us. It bothers me, so even if you don't think it's that important yourself, please don't try and talk me out of my feelings.

6) Ask me, if appropriate, about my other-sex relationships and my same-sex relationships. Bisexuals live our lives in multiple ways. Some of us are monogamous and we would like to discuss that relationship openly with the people in our lives, no matter whom it is with. Some of us have more than one relationship going on and we'd like to be able to share that with others without feeling judgment.

7) If there is some sort of bisexual scandal in the news, **don't use it as an opportunity to make derisive remarks about bisexuals generally.** As we know, all communities have examples of "bad behavior," and painting everyone with the same brush doesn't create much understanding between us.

8) When I'm not around, or any other bisexual, **speak up when bisexual people are being defamed or excluded.** It's great when we can witness your support, but I'd love to know you are helping us even when we are not looking. You'll be the best ally possible!