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How Do We Talk About It?

Combatting Anti-2SLGBTQI Hate

A Guide For Having Difficult Conversations



Contents

1. Introduction
2. Tips For Having Difficult Conversations
3. 2SLGBTQI Issues Commonly Impacted By Misinformation
4. Additional Resources

Introduction

We all want to feel safe to be who we are.

In Canada, one of our core shared values is that everyone – no matter what part of the country they live in – should feel safe to be their authentic self at home, at school, and in their community.

But for 2SLGBTQI communities, our rights, freedoms, and safety are under attack. There has been an exponential rise in anti-2SLGBTQI, hate-fuelled movements across the country. We see it in the anti-trans policies and policy proposals emerging provincially and federally, and in the rising rates of hate crimes, hate speech, and coordinated anti-trans protests.

This rise in anti-2SLGBTQI and specifically anti-trans hate is directly linked to the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.

Coordinated anti-2SLGBTQI movements are relying on the general public's lack of familiarity with trans and gender diverse people to disseminate harmful disinformation and malinformation.

Misinformation

False or inaccurate information. The individual sharing the misinformation believes it to be true.



Malinformation

Information that stems from truth, but is taken out of context or exaggerated in order to mislead or manipulate.



Disinformation

Deliberately false information, often used for manipulation.



An [October 2023 poll](#) found that just one-third (33%) of Canadians know someone personally who is trans, and only 6% say they have a close relationship with at least one trans person.¹ This is why the coordinated anti-trans groups have been so successful at spreading disinformation about trans and gender diverse communities.

This resource is designed to empower you with the knowledge you need to have the difficult conversations needed to tackle anti-2SLGBTQI hate, and help familiarize members of your community with the issues facing trans and gender diverse people across Canada.

¹ Anderson, B., & Kohut, A. (2023).

Canadians are divided on school pronoun mandates. spark*insights.
<https://sparkadvocacy.ca/insights/2023/10/canadians-are-divided-on-school-pronoun-mandates>

Tips for Having Difficult Conversations with Folks Who May Not Be Familiar with 2SLGBTQI Issues:



1. Begin by tapping into shared values in order to build an emotional connection.

Try something like, “We agree that all kids deserve to be who they are and feel safe and respected at school.”



Find out what they already believe about the issue and ask follow up questions.

Try something like, “Where did you learn about this from? What have you heard those who are impacted say about this issue?”

This can help people question the source of their information.



2. Ask questions and listen without judgement.

3. Share personal stories.

While facts and data are important, connecting the numbers to real-life personal stories is what changes hearts and minds.

Try sharing a story as an example of how the harmful belief has a real impact in people’s lives.



4. Avoid sounding like you're being critical of parents in general, when talking about issues that impact children and young people.

Through their [research on effective messaging](#), UK-based organization [Equally Ours](#) found that, "When a message related to a hypothetical unsupportive parent, and even if that message was not actively assigning blame or motivation, many in our focus groups were quick to take this personally, as an attack on all parents."

Stories about the importance of supportive parents were found to be most effective, but when there is a need to talk about the potential of unsupportive parents, be clear that you're not drawing conclusions about most or all parents.



This can help people be more aware of manipulation techniques.

Are there sources cited? Does this stance go against expert consensus? Are they oversimplifying a complex issue? The Government of Canada has [resources for how to spot disinformation available here.](#)

5. Ask questions to highlight common red flags that point to disinformation.



6. Remember to stay calm and avoid getting confrontational.

Once people become defensive, it's harder for them to listen and be open to learning new perspectives.

7. Describe what we're working towards, not what we're fighting against.

This relates back to shared values.

Our opponents make frequent outlandish claims about our communities and their own actions. It can be tempting to engage in rebuttal...But this simply has us repeating their words and unwittingly lending credibility to them. As much as we wish otherwise, negating a claim actually brings it top of mind. People latch onto the most tangible element of a sentence – usually the noun. In contrast, words like “don’t” and “not” are intangible. In fact, decades of research demonstrate that attempts to refute false information can actually strengthen people’s belief in the claims.²

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8. Remember that words are only part of the conversation.

The angrier a person gets, the less they hear your words – and the more they react to your nonverbal communication. **Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice.** Keeping your tone and body language neutral will go a long way. This can also include allowing personal space to decrease a person’s anxiety and can help you prevent acting-out behaviour. If possible, stand 1.5 to three feet away from the other person.

² Shenker-Osorio, A. (2017). Messaging This Moment: A Handbook for Progressive Communicators. Center for Community Change. <https://communitychange.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/C3-Messaging-This-Moment-Handbook.pdf>



9. Be aware that while sharing facts and data can be persuasive, for certain people it can be divisive.

The fact that there is consensus among doctors and scientists on a topic can be persuasive for some people. ³However, if someone is already deeply entrenched in a particular conspiracy theory, they may believe they've already effectively done their own research, and try to cite the one outlier doctor or "expert" on the issue.

Try discussing what that person might be gaining from publicly sharing their outlier opinion – are they benefiting financially? Tread lightly here, if the person has a distrust of the medical community, it may be best to focus on shared values and personal stories.

Groups that have been spreading disinformation and conspiracy theories have been using the tactic of creating distrust in science and doctors. For example, when talking about Alberta's anti-trans policies, the Premier has frequently claimed that there is division in the medical community ([this has been proven to be untrue](#)). We also saw this tactic used a great deal during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to discredit doctors and increase vaccine hesitancy.

While it may seem counterintuitive to let moments of silence occur, sometimes it's the best choice. It can give a person a chance to reflect on what's happening, and how they need to proceed.



10. Allow silence

In certain circumstances, silence can be a powerful communication tool. Silence also allows time for decision. When a person is upset, they may not be able to think clearly. Give them a few moments to think through what you've said.

³ Polarizing topics and productive conversations. ScienceUpFirst. <https://www.scienceupfirst.com/project/our-tips-for-conversations-on-polarizing-topics/>

11. Keep in mind that it's incredibly difficult and highly unlikely that you will fully change someone's mind with one conversation.

Bringing people together to a place of understanding about issues that they have little or no knowledge of, is a process. It can be tempting to cut someone out if they hold views that are harmful, but we know that social isolation pushes people further away towards conspiracy theories and radicalization.

”

12. Be patient, but remember to take care of yourself and step away if you need to!

“





2SLGBTQI Issues Commonly Impacted By Misinformation



There are many 2SLGBTQI issues that are specifically being targeted by the hate-fuelled spread of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.

So that you can be fully equipped with the knowledge you need to respond, we have included information and links below for some of the most common issues you may encounter.

Gender-Affirming Care & Transition



Gender-affirming care is an essential form of care that involves a range of services, including mental health care, medical care, and social services. In general, transition refers to the variety of changes a person may pursue in order to express their gender.

Despite what we know from decades of research about gender-affirming

health care being necessary and safe, there is a great deal of misinformation being spread about it. This is in part due to some of our political leaders introducing [discriminatory policies](#) to restrict gender-affirming care.

To learn more, visit [Egale Explains: Transition.](#)

Trans & Gender Diverse People In Sport



Sport is a lifeline for so many people, and everyone deserves access to the numerous physical and social benefits that sports offer. But for trans and gender diverse people, especially trans women, they are being discriminated against and excluded from athletics and sports due to [some politicians](#) trying to cause division and fear.

The world's leading experts in sports medicine and human rights in sports agree that no one should be prevented from competing in a sporting competition simply because they are trans or intersex.

To learn more, visit [Egale Explains: Trans Women in Sport.](#)

Gender Identity & Pronouns

She/Her/
Hers/They/Them/
Theirs/He/Him/His/Xe/
Xem/Xirs/Ey/
Em/Eirs/Ze/Hir/H
irs

Gender identity is a person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is not necessarily visible to others and it may or may not align with what society expects based on assigned sex. Changing their name or pronouns is one way a person may choose to express their gender when they are perceived by other people.

Learning to ask for and use someone's pronouns is a small step in treating 2SLGBTQI people with decency and respect. But with the rise of [so-called "school pronoun policies,"](#) this has been taken away from some young people who are being forced to choose between being outed to their families and being misgendered at school.

To learn more, visit
[Egale Explains: Gender Identity.](#)

2SLGBTQI Inclusion In Schools



From the lack of 2SLGBTQI inclusive curriculum, to harmful "school pronoun policies," to the absence of gender neutral washrooms, the remaining work to be done to improve 2SLGBTQI inclusion in schools is being hindered by misinformation.

All young people deserve to grow up feeling safe and respected at school, including 2SLGBTQI students. However, Egale Canada's national report, [Still in Every Class in Every School,](#) shows that 2SLGBTQI students continue to face homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia at school.

From the lack of 2SLGBTQI inclusive curriculum, to harmful "school

To learn more, visit
[Egale Explains: 2SLGBTQI Inclusion in Schools.](#)

Drag Artists & Drag Storytime



A powerful form of art and self expression, drag has existed throughout history in various cultures. In recent years, drag performers putting on family-friendly shows have been increasingly targeted by hateful protests and in some instances, with the baseless accusation that they are “grooming” children for sexual abuse.

In one recent [legal case](#) that Egale intervened in, the court found the use of the “groomer” slur against drag performers to be rhetoric based on hurtful and hateful myths and stereotypes.

To learn more, visit
[Egale Explains: The Importance of Drag.](#)

2SLGBTQI Representation



2SLGBTQI people – particularly those who are Two Spirit, trans, and/or nonbinary – are regularly excluded from mainstream media and culture. This lack of representation of role models from 2SLGBTQI communities can lead to harmful outcomes including causing 2SLGBTQI youth to feel alone and isolated, and allowing hateful disinformation campaigns to thrive.

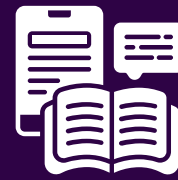
When 2SLGBTQI people are represented in media and campaigns, it often leads to [vile attacks](#) fuelled by misinformation.

To learn more, visit
[Egale Explains: 2SLGBTQI Representation.](#)

Additional Resources

Studies show that one of the best ways to combat hate is through education.

This list of resources will help empower you with the knowledge you need to have the difficult conversations needed to combat anti-2SLGBTQI hate.



Inclusive Narratives:

A Messaging Guide for 2SLGBTQI Advocacy. This guide was created to provide the tools needed by advocates and organizations to develop effective messaging to combat the ongoing rise in anti-2SLGBTQI hate.

Egale Explains:

Our [Egale Explains](#) series of resources are designed to provide you with the facts, data, and information to respond to common misconceptions, current events, and issues impacting 2SLGBTQI communities.

Have a topic suggestion? Contact us at communications@egale.ca



This resource is part of Egale Canada's **Rainbow Action Hub**. Use the Rainbow Action Hub to find more resources and tools to combat the rise of anti-2SLGBTQI hate.

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