

Mattering and Marginality

This exercise allows participants to examine the concept of mattering and marginality. Explain the definitions of each concept for purposes of this activity:

Mattering – state in which a person is important, appreciated, and valued.

Marginality – state in which a person feels ignored, shunned, separated, or on the “fringe”.

This concept is important when working with LGBTQ individuals because there are so many instances in which they feel marginalized by others and by society. WOU and Safe Zone Allies should work to consciously and unconsciously help LGBTQ people feel like they matter.

Ask participants to take the Mattering & Marginality sheet and answer the questions provided as honestly as possible. They will not be required to share their answers with anyone, but people may share if they feel willing to do so. Once everyone has completed the questionnaire, ask participants to comment on each of the questions if they feel comfortable doing so. Discuss the information at the bottom of the Mattering & Marginality sheet titled “Continuum of Community.” Explain that these characteristics are vital as a Safe Zone Ally on campus. Each person has a choice of how to make others feel – like they matter or like they are marginal. The essence of Safe Zone Ally training is shifting from the marginal to the mattering (whether conscious or not).

Facilitation Questions:

- How might an LGBTQ person feel marginalized on campus? How might they feel like they matter?
- Why is it important to have allies that help LGBTQ people feel like they matter?
- What can you do as an individual to make people feel like they matter? What will you commit to?
- We want a campus that is accepting of diversity. How do we accomplish an accepting campus culture and still value the individual members of the LGBTQ community?

Facilitator Observations:

- Each person has the choice to help others feel like they matter or feel like they are marginalized. The experience of LGBTQ people in society is often one of oppression and denigration in subtle and sometimes overt ways; for example, heterosexism is a rampant form of marginalization. We as allies have a responsibility to acknowledge these systems of oppression, to challenge them, and to show support for LGBTQ people.
- Remember that the LGBTQ community is extremely diverse, cutting through boundaries of race, religion, nationality, gender, socioeconomic status, ability level, and so on. This means that much like everyone else, each LGBTQ person will have a unique experience. Respecting individual experiences and identities is a crucial aspect to being an ally.

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Please think about and list...

- 1.) Someone to whom you matter:
- 2.) An environment in which you matter:
- 3.) A person to whom you are marginal:
- 4.) An environment in which you are marginal:

How do you feel in situations in which you matter? How do you feel in situations in which you are marginal?

How do you know if you matter or if you are marginalized?

What differences do you notice in yourself (comfort level, attitude, behaviors, etc) when you are in a situation where you matter vs. as situation where you feel marginalized?

Continuum of Community

Marginality

Silence

Ignorance

Fear

Separateness

Shunning/Avoidance

Mattering

Identification

Attention

Importance

Dependence

Appreciation

Pride