

# Riddle Homophobia Scale

In a clinical sense, homophobia is defined as an intense, irrational fear of same-gender relationships that becomes overwhelming to the person. In common usage, homophobia is the fear of intimate relationships with people of the same gender. Listed below are four negative and four positive "levels of attitude" toward lesbians and gay men. The scale was developed by Dr. Dorothy Riddle, a psychologist from Tucson, Arizona.

## **HOMOPHOBIC LEVELS OF ATTITUDE**

1. **REPULSION:** Same-gender sexuality is seen as a 'crime against nature.' Lesbians and gay men are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc. Anything is justified to change them: imprisonment, hospitalization, aversion therapy, electroshock, etc.
2. **PITY:** Heterosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is seen as preferable. Any possibility of "becoming straight" should be reinforced, and those who seem to be "born that way" should be pitied.
3. **TOLERANCE:** Same-gender sexuality is considered just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people "grow out of." Thus, lesbians and gay men are less mature than heterosexuals and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with a child. Lesbians and gay men should not be given positions of authority because they are still working through their adolescent behavior.
4. **ACCEPTANCE:** Still implies that there is something to accept. It is characterized by such statements as "You're not a lesbian to me, you're a person!", "What you do in bed is your own business," or "That's fine with me as long as you don't flaunt it!"

## **POSITIVE LEVELS OF ATTITUDE**

1. **SUPPORT:** The basic civil liberties position. People at this level may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware that homophobia is wrong and work to safeguard the rights of lesbians and gay men.
2. **ADMIRATION:** Acknowledge that being lesbian and gay in our society takes strength. People at this level are willing to truly examine their homophobic attitudes, values, and behaviors.
3. **APPRECIATION:** Value the diversity of individuals and see lesbians and gay men as a valid part of that diversity. People at this level are willing to combat homophobia in themselves and others.
4. **NURTURANCE:** Assume that lesbians and gay men are indispensable in our society. People at this level view lesbians and gay men with genuine affection and delight and are willing to be allies and advocates.