

My friend Is Struggling With Homosexuality: How Do I Relate?

For the most part, relating to a friend with homosexual problems is the same as relating to any friend! But there *are* some special ways a person from a non-gay background can minister to a close friend who struggles with homosexuality or lesbianism. Through correspondence, counseling, and experience, we've noted that there are some differences in our responses depending on whether the friend is of the same or the opposite gender. Here are some things to be aware of in four specific situations:

If you are the . . .

Female friend of a Guy Struggling with Homosexuality:

Special Opportunities

You can be someone he can share with openly. Many former homosexuals say their first attempt at sharing about their struggles happened with female friends.

You can offer affirmation and encouragement.

You can pray for your friend and be a godly influence in his life, sharing Christ and presenting the hope of change.

You can direct him to ministries or counselors skilled in helping people come out of homosexuality.

Special Cautions

Be careful of falling in love with your friend and "waiting" for God to change him. Many ex-gays do marry, but most have left their sin and received much of their healing *before* they become involved with the woman they marry.

Try not to "mother" your friend and take care of him out of pity. You might be cushioning him from the effects of his sin.

Try to maintain other healthy, committed friendships with other Christians, both men and women. You need the balance in perspective!

Female friend of a Woman Struggling with lesbianism:

Special Opportunities

You can be a channel of God's healing to your friend through your love and acceptance.

You can provide an example of what a godly, non-sexual friendship is like.

You can help your friend break old patterns by not giving in to manipulation (self-pity, subtle emotional demands, etc.); remaining constant and faithful; and holding her accountable for her end of the relationship, developing mutuality rather than dependency.

Special Cautions

Don't assume you won't be tempted sexually or emotionally even if you've never had homosexual temptations before. This is especially true if you are emotionally needy or have a "need to be needed."

Watch out for jealousy and possessiveness. Maintain other close friendships, too.

Realize you are one of *many* people God wants to use in your friend's life to minister to her. Don't play God!

If you are the . . .

Male Friend of a Guy Struggling with Homosexuality:

Special Opportunities

You can help build confidence in your friend's life through your acceptance of him as another man.

You can help dispel his homosexual identity by being honest about your own life, sharing your weaknesses and fears as well as your strengths. This helps him overcome the thinking, "I'm like this because I'm gay."

You can offer to be prayer partners, providing mutual support and encouragement in times of stress and temptation.

You can be challenged to examine your own commitment to Christ in the area of your sexuality. If you've surrendered this area to Christ and are living in freedom from sexual sin, you'll be able to minister to your friend.

Special Cautions

Try not to focus on your friend's homosexual problems. The root problems behind homosexuality (envy, loneliness, fears of 'not being masculine') are things you may have struggled with. Build on the similarities in your lives, not the differences.

Don't allow your friend to become too dependent on you or put you on a pedestal. This might be evident through excessive emotional or time demands, continual praise of you while putting himself down. If this happens, confront him gently.

Don't put off confronting your friend for fear of "blowing him away." We all need tough love at times. Your friend can take it.

Don't pressure your friend to date girls or brag about your heterosexual interests. If your attitudes toward the opposite sex are healthy and appreciative, that will speak for itself.

Male Friend of a Woman Struggling with Lesbianism:

Special Opportunities

You can bring healing to your friend's life by being a friend and brother to her, relating to her as a woman as well as a person.

You can help each other grow by having fun together, encouraging each other in your faith in Christ.

You can help her overcome fears and wrong images of men by respecting her and allowing her to get to know you without putting romantic or sexual expectations on the friendship.

Special Cautions

Don't be afraid to share your weaknesses and struggles with her. Avoid presenting a "macho" attitude.

Don't allow yourself to be dominated or controlled by the friendship. Express yourself!

Though she may have many of the same interests and ideas you do, avoid treating her totally as a "buddy." Remind her from time to time that you are aware of her female gender. Express appreciation of her in gentle, non-pressure ways.

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