

# BEYOND THE BLAME GAME

## The Intersection of Religion, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity at Work

The Forum on Workplace Inclusion  
March 10-12, 2020



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### Tanenbaum’s work:



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## PFLAG National's work:



- Founded in 1973
- More than 400 chapters across the United States; headquarters is in Washington, D.C.
- Primary Voices: Families and LGBTQs
- **Mission: Support, education, advocacy**



- Launched in 2007 as a project of PFLAG National
- Primary Voices: Straight/cis (nonfamily) allies and LGBTQs
- Large focus on workplace educational programs
- **Mission: Invite, educate, and engage new allies**



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## Session Objectives:

1. **DEFINE** and contextualize the many ways that religious and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities intersect at work.
2. **DISCUSS** the common stereotypes and pitfalls that companies and employees must overcome in addressing religious and LGBTQ inclusion at work.
3. **IDENTIFY** concrete next steps that you can use to have more productive and inclusive conversations about the intersection of religious and LGBTQ identities at work and apply the skills to real-world scenarios.



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### A few notes about content:

- 1. **We are not attorneys.** While we'll talk about some legal issues, this is not the focus of the session. (Looking for legal content or assistance? Talk to us for recommendations.)
- 2. **We're not debating religion.** This isn't going to be about who is best/worst for people who are LGBTQ or the merits of any particular faith tradition. (Need help with faith resources? Talk to us later.)
- 3. **This is complicated.** There's no simple detangler for inclusion, but we're going to share the best things we know – and hope you'll do the same.

**Terminology:**  
**LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQ+**  
This terminology is used in different ways depending on how research was defined. We want to be inclusive, so please use the language that is respectful for you.



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### Workshop ground rules:



- 1. Listen when others speak.
- 2. Participate fully.
- 3. Keep an open mind (i.e., assume you can learn from everyone).
- 4. Listen/participate from your interests.
- 5. Step up, step back. Share the time we have.
- 6. Be kind.
- 7. Have fun!



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Before we go any further, a few words...\*

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual

GENDER IDENTITY:

- Gender identity
- Transgender
- Gender expression

THE Q AND MORE:

- Queer
- Questioning
- SOGI



WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT TERMS?

Respect is often felt when we are addressed using the words/terms that feel most inclusive to us. Getting language right is one of the most accessible – and effective – ally signals.

(Also, language is always evolving, so stay alert!)

\*This isn't a full list! Is there a word you'd like to understand better? Ask me!



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**DEFINE** common experiences, assumptions, and stereotypes related to religion and LGBTQ identities at work



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### Religion vs. LGBTQ: The conflicts we see

- **Vast majorities** of LGBT Americans describe the Muslim religion, the Mormon Church, the Catholic Church, and evangelical churches as **unfriendly toward people who are LGBT**.
- **23%** of American workers in highly diverse environments report witnessing or experiencing **conflict between religious coworkers and LGBT coworkers**.

#### What does it look like right now?

- Controversial RFRA in states
- Federal support for religiously based LGBT service-refusals
- Establishment of the Natural Law Commission
- Church reaffirmed bans on marriage equality
- Adoption and foster care restrictions
- Withdrawal of bullying/harassment protections for K-12 students

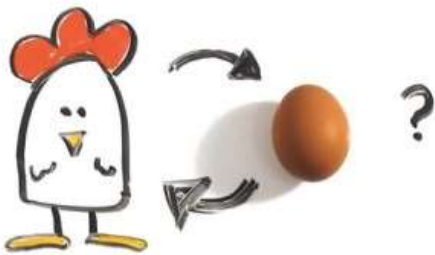


1. 2013, Pew, A Survey of LGBT Americans  
2. 2016, PPRI, "Exodus: Why Americans are Leaving Religion—and Why They're Unlikely to Come Back"  
3. 2014, PPRI, LGBT Report, "A Shifting Landscape"  
4. 2013, Tanenbaum, Survey of American Workers and Religion



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### Religion vs. LGBTQ: How has it shown up in D&I work?



DID ONE COME FIRST?  
OR IS THIS AN EVOLUTION OF EXISTING ISSUES?

#### Tanenbaum:

- More presentations in August 2019 than in all of the Augusts of the last seven years
- Increased number of questions about addressing religious diversity in the workplace, coming from both religious and secular D&I professionals.

#### PFLAG National:

- Demand for educational around navigating conflicts has significantly increased, resulting in some of the highest demand for work we've seen (more than 100 educational sessions in 2019 alone).
- The degree of conflict appears to be getting higher, and perspectives in faith conversations often reflect talking points of right-leaning organizations



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# Question:

## Has this issue showed up for you in the workplace?

- I’ve had direct conflict specifically and explicitly because of someone’s religious beliefs and/or their SOGI.
- I suspect religious beliefs/SOGI were the underlying source of conflict, but it wasn’t actually said.
- Programs offered by ERG(s) at my organization have been protested/complained about under the banner of religious beliefs and/or SOGI.
- I feel like I can’t talk about LGBTQ rights and/or religion and news stories in the office because I worry about the negative backlash from people around me.



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# Views from the congregants are changing:

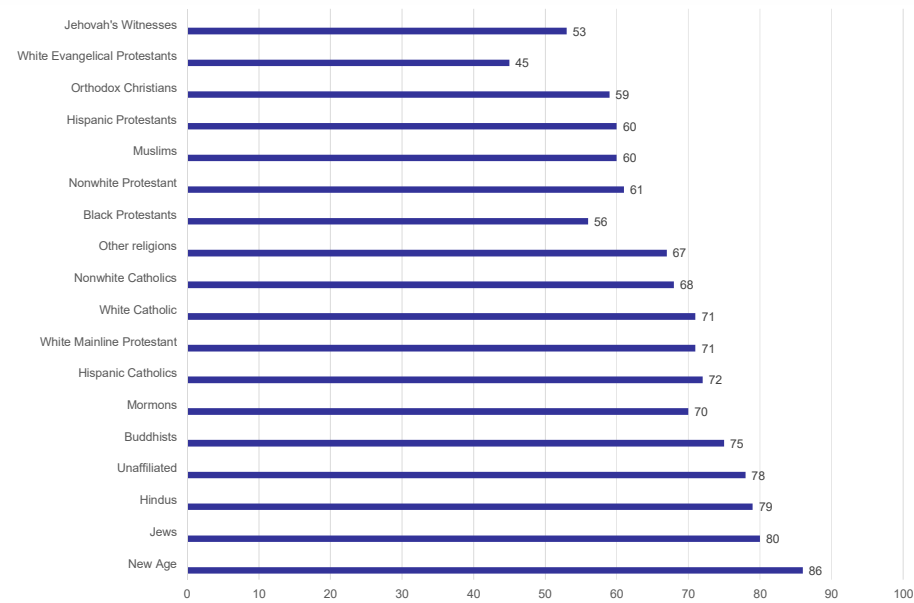
Views About Homosexuality by Religious Group  
% of adults who say homosexuality...

Religious tradition	Should be accepted	Should be discouraged	Neither/both equally	Don't know	Sample Size
Buddhist	88%	10%	1%	1%	264
Catholic	70%	23%	4%	4%	7,202
Evangelical Protestant	36%	55%	5%	4%	8,593
Hindu	71%	22%	5%	2%	199
Historically Black Protestant	51%	40%	6%	4%	1,916
Jehovah's Witness	16%	76%	4%	4%	245
Jewish	81%	16%	2%	1%	847
Mainline Protestant	66%	26%	5%	3%	6,083
Mormon	36%	57%	4%	3%	664
Muslim	45%	47%	5%	3%	237
Orthodox Christian	62%	31%	4%	4%	186
Unaffiliated (religious "nones")	83%	12%	3%	3%	7,556



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Faith-based support for nondiscrimination laws is growing:



Solid majorities of all major religious groups in the U.S. support laws protecting LGBT people from discrimination in housing, public accommodations, and the workplace.  
*(PRRI, 2019)*

Religious allies are becoming more visible:

Examples of inclusive leadership are emerging in nearly every faith community:

- Some of the strongest voices for equality have come from faith leaders. Many are becoming increasingly engaged in pro-equality efforts, crossing areas of faith, race, and LGBTQ+ issues.
- Organizations are providing leadership and giving space to marginalized voices. Change is often happening, but it remains centered in the grassroots.



NEWS FROM AFFIRMATION  
**Won't Be Erased – We Affirm Our Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Siblings**  
October 25, 2018



1. PRRI, Wedding Cakes, Same-Sex Marriage, and the Future of LGBT Rights in America (2018)  
2. PRRI, Emerging Consensus on LGBT Issues: Findings from the 2017 American Values Atlas (2018)  
3. PRRI, A Shifting Landscape: A Decade of Change in American Attitudes about Same-Sex Marriage and LGBT Issues" (2014)

Rev. Dr. William Barber, Fr. James Martin, SJ, John Pavlovitz, Rev. Jay Bakker, Rev. Dr. Jacqueline J. Lewis





And a little reminder...



LGBTQ+ people are often religiously-identified, too.

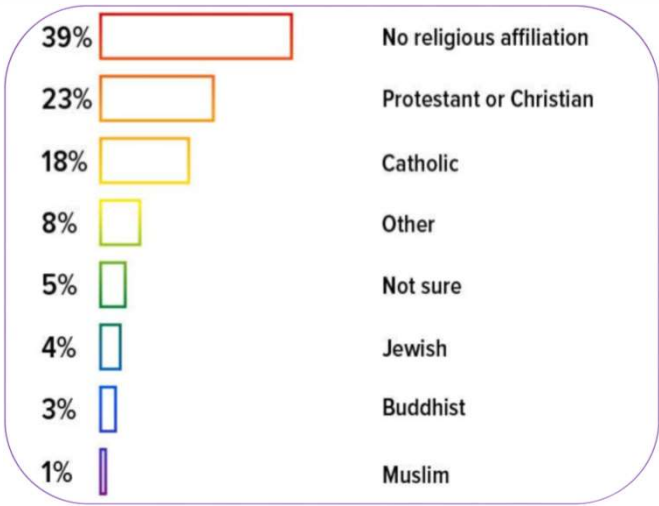
- 77% of LGB adults in America say that they believe in God (compared to 89% to straight adults).
- Only 59% of LGB respondents identify as a Christian or another non-Christian faith, compared to 78% for heterosexuals.

Who is getting unintentionally excluded from these conversations and their sense of being welcomed?



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Looking at the breakdown...



Source:  
Buzzfeed (May-June 2018)



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But what makes headlines?



Dan Cathy, CEO

Americans’ opinions on marriage equality are “inviting God’s judgment on our nation.”

OR



Bill Marriott, Executive Chairman and Chairman of the Board

“This church helped me raise a family and has brought great joy and happiness to my life...**We have to take care of our people, regardless of their sexual orientation or anything else.** We are an American Church. We have all the American values: the values of hard work, the values of integrity, the values of fairness and respect.”



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Be part of the shift that is starting to happen:



Which conversation do you want to be in?



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We need to hear from you:



Have you observed/experienced any of these positive changes when in interactions between people of faith and LGBTQ/allies at work?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I’m not sure.



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**Discuss** the common stereotypes and pitfalls that organizations and employees must overcome in addressing religious and LGBTQ inclusion at work.



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## Beyond the blame game: What's really going on here?

- An employee refuses to sign a D&I statement which requires him to “value” all of his colleagues. He agrees to behave respectfully toward colleagues, but cannot agree to literally “value” all of his colleagues – he believes it goes too far.
- A Muslim employee is ostracized by team members after she declines to attend an event hosted by the LGBTQ ERG. They assumed she declined because she does not support her LGBTQ colleagues.
- An employee hasn't signed a birthday card for her transgender co-worker. The employee's manager approaches her about it and says that it looks like the employee hasn't had a chance to sign the card.



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## Questions:

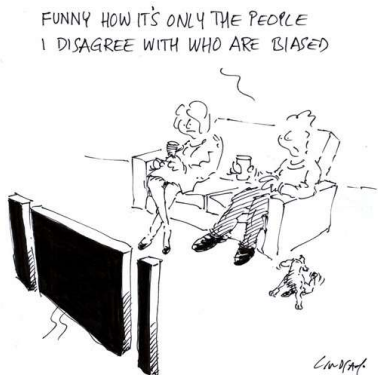
- In your experience, what are some of the immediate assumptions you find people who are LGBTQs/allies making when they interact with coworkers who have identified themselves as religious/people of faith?
- What do you think are some of the assumptions that coworkers who are religious/people of faith make about LGBTQs/allies?



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Remember the role you play in these interactions...

IT'S UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TIME!



- Seriously, ask yourself:
- Where did you initially get your ideas about religion and about LGBTQ+ people from?
  - Have those ideas changed over time? Why?
  - Do you ever think about where other people got their ideas from?
  - Do you believe that other people's ideas/beliefs may change?
  - **How are my ideas around others' beliefs shaping my approach to them?**



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**Identify** concrete next steps that participants can use to have more productive and inclusive conversations about the intersection of religious and LGBTQ+ identities at work.



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Move conversations to a respectful space

BELIEF

BEHAVIOR

Case in point:

- 70% of people who identify as Mormon support inclusive LGBTQ nondiscrimination legislation, but only 36% think being gay should be accepted.
- Belief and behavior are not the same thing.

How can you use this?



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Recognize the difference and work from there

BELIEFS

- ✓ Personal and off-limits in the workplace
- ✓ Often drive behaviors, but not in every case
- ✓ All people have them
- ✓ Can change

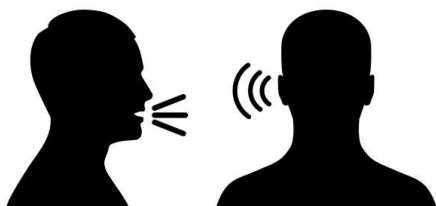
BEHAVIORS

- ✓ At work, the area of fair game
- ✓ Expectations are shaped by organizational mission/norms
- ✓ All people have them
- ✓ Can change



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## Tanenbaum’s Competencies for Respectful Communication



Build your skills to focus on behavior and avoid conversation stoppers:

- 1. Avoid “Spokesperson Syndrome” – use “I”
- 2. Platinum Rule: Treat others how *they* would like to be treated.  
This means asking what respect looks like.
- 3. Be curious and ask respectfully. (Sometime may I ask you about...?)
- 4. Identify and debunk stereotypes.
- 5. Acknowledge and apologize for mistakes made.



THIS HAPPENED. >



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## Seek out experienced voices to help with your dialogue



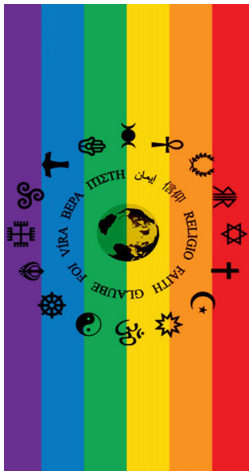
This is about the journey, not a quick fix:

- **Connect with organizations** providing guidance and thought leadership on this issue.
- **Pay attention to changemakers.** Who in these communities is shifting the dialogue?  
What can you learn from them?
- **Know the right resources** so you can make effective referrals (we can’t all be experts!)



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### Just a few LGBTQ+ Inclusive Religious Resources



- Affirmation LGBTQ Mormons, Families & Friends
- Call to Action (Catholic)
- Eshel (Orthodox Jewish)
- Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association (Hindu)
- Gay Buddhist Fellowship
- LGBTQ Humanist Council
- Muslims for Progressive Values
- Many Voices (Black church movement)



Wire Report. Watermark. California bill to prevent LGBT discrimination at religious schools. <http://www.watermarkonline.com/2016/08/01/california-bill-to-prevent-lgbt-discrimination-at-religious-schools/> August 1, 2016.



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### Recognize that change is already happening

**70%** The percentage of Americans who interact with people of different faiths in the workplace. This is more exposure to religious diversity than in school, friend/family groups, etc.

**Organizations with faith-based ERGs & initiatives include:**

- Accenture
- Target
- AllianceBernstein
- Salesforce
- GSK



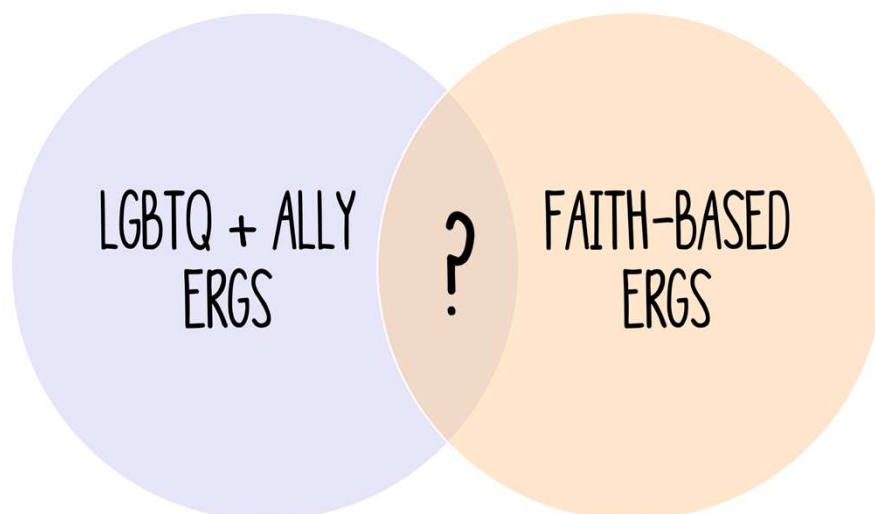
PRRI "Americans Deeply Divided by Party on Ideals of Religious and Ethnic Pluralism." February 21, 2019. <https://www.prri.org/press-release/americans-deeply-divided-by-party-on-ideals-of-religious-and-ethnic-pluralism/>



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## LGBTQ + faith-based ERG joint programming



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## Where can the conversation start?

**Controversy is hard. Common ground and shared concern isn't.**

- Food/toiletry drives
- Educational programs (e.g., suicide/mental health awareness)
- Volunteer days (e.g., working at local public school to do cleanup, food pantry)
- Events with multiple ERGs (e.g., LGBTQ, Interfaith, Latinx)
- Disaster relief fundraising (e.g., South Carolina, Puerto Rico, etc.)
- Shared D&I forums (e.g., featuring multiple focus areas)
- Showing up (e.g., just committing to being visible at key events to understand more)



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## Partnerships with faith-based ERGs: Inclusive practices

1. **SCHEDULING:** Check interfaith calendars before scheduling events
  - ADL Calendar of Observances
  - Harvard Divinity School Multi-faith Calendar
2. **EATING:** If there will be food, ask all attendees about any food restrictions, e.g., kosher, halal, vegetarian, vegan, allergies, etc.
3. **COMMUNICATING:** Practice respectful communication with all; genuine, respectful curiosity can go a long way
4. **RESOURCES:** consider the business benefits to sharing knowledge-informed decisions, increased sales, respected employees, satisfied customers



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## Lead with knowledge and understanding

**This is about the journey, not a quick fix:**

- **Connect with organizations** providing guidance and thought leadership on this issue.
- **Know the right resources** so you can make effective referrals (we can't all be experts!)
- **Pay attention to changemakers.** Who in these communities is shifting the dialogue? What can you learn from them?
- **End the either/or.** People who have both identities (LGBTQ and people of faith) must be engaged, but space often needs to be created for them.
- **Recognize that often, progress will depend on you.** How will *you* change this conversation?



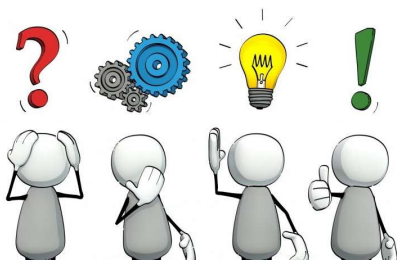
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**Apply these skills** to real-world scenarios to determine how you could approach conflict (and opportunity)!



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## Here's what we're looking for...



### Consider the scenario that's being presented:

- What are the concepts/ideas that you need to be mindful of as you take control of **your own biases/lenses**?
- What **respectful communications skills** might apply here? In other words, what does the conversation sound like?
- Are there any **resources or materials** that you might be able to leverage to help with this situation?



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## Scenario One

**Your company has just announced it will be adding a Christian  
ERG in 2020 to the network group roster:**

- One member of the Pride group pointed out that the Chairman is a conservative Christian and this is his attempt to force his beliefs on people.
- Another member mentions harm done by people of faith to LGBTQs and says that this will be another way for the Pride group to be marginalized.
- Similar comments seem to be spreading on internal social media, and now many people are suggesting that the Pride group is being intolerant of religious beliefs.
- You've also noticed a tension among Pride members over this, with some being unusually quiet.

**You are the current chair of the Pride group  
and feel like you need to address the situation.**

- Who do you start speaking with?
- What do you need to know to be effective?
- What assumptions may need to be addressed?
- How might you move the conversation to a better place?



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## Scenario Two

Jane is another manager at your organization. You're both on the same level, so you've become work friends, often supporting each other's projects. You also occasionally socialize with her outside of work. Your backgrounds are different, but she's always been friendly.

During lunch today, she tells you about a situation that happened that morning. One of her employees has requested two additional days off that are related to her Wiccan beliefs.

"I don't even know what she's talking about with that lesbian witch religion," Jane commented. "I've been very accepting of her, but this just feels like too much to ask of me."

- **How could you respond to Jane's comment?**
- **What issues do you think are at play here?**



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## Scenario Four

**Blaine:**

- Manager at your organization. He identifies as an out gay man.
- Has not had issues with his identity except for one of his direct reports, Sam.
- Sam sometimes uses terms Blaine finds offensive (e.g., “lifestyle”) even though Blaine has discussed it with him in the past.

**Sam:**

- Identifies as Jewish, attends synagogue and keeps kosher.
- Has been with the organization for 15 years.
- Requested off on the High Holy Days (two days for Rosh Hashanah and one for Yom Kippur, plus leaving early the day before).

**The scenario:**

- The day before Yom Kippur is a huge board meeting and Sam’s work is at the center of what will be presented.
- Blaine declines Sam’s request and notes that Yom Kippur is on one day and he can attend services then. He doesn’t need to leave early the day before.
- Sam is angry that his request has been denied and immediately comments that the reason he is being forced to work is because Blaine is opposed to his religion.

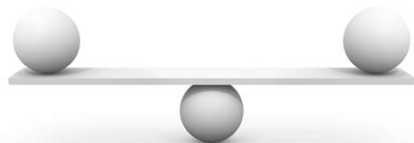
**You are the supervisor for this group. The situation has been brought to you. What do you do?**



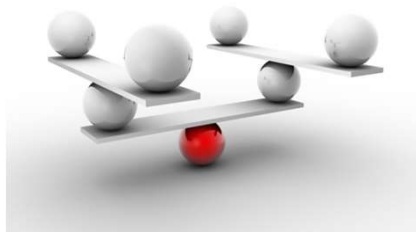
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## Remember: This is complicated...and essential

WHAT MANY  
PEOPLE ASSUME  
THIS ISSUE  
LOOKS LIKE:



WHAT THE  
ISSUE  
ACTUALLY  
LOOKS LIKE:



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Questions? Comments?



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