

Greater Boston PFLAG supports anyone who wants to create a more just and affirming world for the LGBTQIA+ people they love, and we invite you to join us in the work to realize this vision. We will not be silent and let misinformation and hatred make inroads into communities - we will advocate and teach others how to do the same. Capacity building is how we stay strong - working together and making local impacts that ripple out into the world.

Disarming disinformation is an action we call on all allies to do. In personal conversations, at local events or committee meetings, in letters to the editor -- we must be vigilant about not just refuting disinformation but disarming it by replacing it with affirming, true facts about our LGBTQ+ loved ones.

### **Be Sure Your Information is From Credible Primary Sources**

- Primary sources are well-known experts in their field
- Primary sources publish research that is current, meets the standards for validity and reliability, and is peer-reviewed
- Primary sources publish in areas common to their field: scientists publish their research in scientific journals, on science-based websites, or even an educational video. They do not publish exclusively on social media, nor do they claim that ‘only certain platforms will allow me to tell you this’
- Primary sources back their claims up with reliable evidence and will explain their methods and conclusions
- Primary sources are referenced by other experts, meaning the same information can be found in multiple credible places. Anyone claiming “I’m the only one brave enough to tell you this” or something similar is not a credible source

### **Evaluate the Information Itself**

- Does it sound credible?
- Is there an undefined group that the author says is behind suppressing the information (i.e., “they don’t want you to know this”)?
- Is it adequately explained?
- Can you find other citations for this same information?

## Know the Difference Between Fact, Opinion, and Propaganda

Fact	Opinion	Propaganda
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective</li> <li>Known to be true</li> <li>Can be proven</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subjective</li> <li>A person's or group's thoughts on a matter</li> <li>Cannot be proven or disproven</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subjective</li> <li>Information that is spread by and for a particular group, belief, or cause</li> </ul>
<p>Example: This author has written 3 books about nutrition.</p>	<p>Example: This author's books are full of nonsense.</p>	<p>Example: The soy industry paid the author to make false claims about the benefits of soy.</p>

Propaganda has a motive behind it. In the example above, the writer is trying to cast doubt on both the author's work and the soy industry by stating that the soy industry paid for the author to present data favorable to them.

There's a difference between misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation is shared when someone has the facts wrong or is incorrect. Disinformation is **false information spread deliberately** in order to mislead others. Disinformation is frequently a tool used in propaganda campaigns.

## Disinformation Hurts!

Youth are frequently forced to hear and read public debates based on disinformation about LGBTQ+ people – from whether they're real to whether they should have access to affirming healthcare to whether we can talk or read about them in schools. A 2022 poll showed that 85% of trans and nonbinary youth said this continuous exposure to anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric negatively impacted their mental health. The poll also shows that 45% of trans youth experienced cyberbullying, and nearly 1 in 3 reported not feeling safe to go to the doctor or hospital when they were sick or injured.

(The Trevor Project/Morning Consult poll, Nov. 2022)

**Keep Your Words Simple & Factual**

If you hear...	It probably means...	Try saying this, because...
<p>“Kids shouldn’t be allowed to get gender-affirming care! They’re too young to cut off their body parts.”</p>	<p>This person doesn’t understand that gender-affirming care for minors is primarily social support, such as using correct pronouns and choosing clothing to reflect their identity.</p>	<p>“I’m happy to tell you that children don’t get gender-affirming surgery. I’m glad that you support it now that you know it’s about affirming the child in non-permanent ways, such as haircuts and clothing.”</p> <p>This negates the disinformation that gender affirming care for kids means surgery.</p>
<p>“A lot of people who get gender affirming surgery end up regretting it. I’ve seen interviews where they say they wish they’d never been allowed to permanently alter their bodies.”</p>	<p>This person believes the disinformation being spread that a significant number of people regret getting gender affirming surgery, or knows it is untrue but is spreading it anyway.</p>	<p>“The rate of regret after gender-affirming surgery has been studied and <u>was reported at less than 1%</u> – compared with up to 30% of knee replacement patients who say they regretted getting that surgery. Besides, if that many people regretted getting gender affirming care, the media would be able to find more than the same one or two people they always interview for these stories! Those people don’t exist.”</p> <p>Bringing hard data into the conversation strengthens your point.</p>



**Keep Your Words Simple & Factual**

If you hear...	It probably means...	Try saying this, because...
<p>“Elementary school children don’t need to know what gay is! They’re too young!”</p>	<p>This person is reducing LGBTQ+ to being only about sex. They’re dehumanizing the people who have these identities. They’re likely buying into the myths that sexual orientation is discovered at or after puberty and that there’s one magic age at which it’s OK to mention that gay people exist.</p>	<p>“It sounds like you think they’d be talking about sex, but being gay is about who you love. Some elementary students already know that they’re gay, and some have gay parents! Of course it’s appropriate to know of their existence.”</p> <p>This defuses a few of the false premises this person’s argument is built on, such as that talking about LGBTQ+ issues means talking about sex and that kids are too young to understand the concept, both for themselves and among the adults they know.</p>
<p>“I don’t want my kids reading any books about LGBTQ+ people and then getting confused or thinking they’re transgender.”</p>	<p>This person has bought into the fear-mongering that reading about different identities will cause kids to adopt those identities.</p>	<p>“Reading about transgender people won’t make a cisgender kid trans; just like reading about cisgender people won’t make a transgender kid cis. We are who we are.”</p> <p>This is a plainly-stated, simple truth to counteract the fear-mongering.</p>

