Barriers to Interpersonal Communication

Heterosexism

● What is Heterosexist Language?
  ○ Heterosexist language refers to the language used to assign lesser value to individuals who identify as gay or lesbian, or to view them first and foremost as their sexuality instead of as a person.
    ■ For example, “She’s a lesbian teacher.” instead of “She’s a teacher.”
    ■ Also, “He’s my gay roommate.” instead of “He’s my roommate.”

● Why should I avoid Heterosexist Language?
  ○ The presumption of heterosexuality denies individuals who are gay or lesbian their true identity and personal experiences.
  ○ Viewing an individual through their sexuality hinders being able to communicate with them as a whole person and reinforces the idea of heterosexuality as “default” and homosexuality as “deviant.”

● How do I correct Heterosexist Language?
  ○ Avoid any offensive non-verbal mannerisms that parody stereotypes when talking about gays and lesbians.
  ○ Avoid “complimenting” gays and lesbians by saying they “don’t look it.”
  ○ Avoid the assumption that every gay man or lesbian knows what every other gay man or lesbian is thinking.
  ○ Avoid overattribution - the tendency to attribute just about everything a person does says, and believes to being gay or lesbian.