

HOLIDAY CONVERSATION STARTERS

The — SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT ACTION —

you can take towards achieving marriage equality is to start a conversation about why marriage matters with the people you see everyday—and especially over the holiday season.

Just because you're "out" as a gay person or a straight ally, *don't assume that people in your life know how you feel about marriage for gay and lesbian couples.*

Undecided voters consistently tell researchers, "The gay people I know haven't said that marriage matters to them—so why should it matter to me?"

Despite all the media attention, it's an issue many people haven't had a chance to discuss. You can open that door.

Remember, you don't need to be an expert. And you don't need to change anyone's mind. *Your job is to invite someone on a conversational journey. You're their guide.* You don't need to reach the destination right away—just start down the path together.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS ON HOW TO START A CONVERSATION THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

- The holidays for me are all about family and being together. I was talking to my gay/lesbian _____ (friend, colleague, etc.) and I realized that it is about the same things for them. Which got me thinking about marriage for gay and lesbian couples—and I realized that I think that all loving, committed couples should be able to get married.
 - *How do you feel about marriage for gay and lesbian couples?*
 - *Do you know any gay or lesbian couples? Do you know if they want to get married?*
 - *What are your concerns with it?*
 - *Do you think they want to get married for similar reasons? Why exclude them from it?*
- As a lesbian/gay person, the holidays for me are all about being around the people I love. An important part of being able to be with who you love and protect your family is being able to get married. I don't know if we've ever talked about it before, but being able to get legally married is really important to me.
 - *How do you feel about marriage for gay and lesbian couples?*
 - *What are your concerns with it?*
 - *Do you think we want to get married for similar reasons? Why exclude us from it?*

However your conversation goes, thank the person for taking the time to talk with you about this issue. Remind them how important it is to you. And know that you have gotten us one step closer to moving enough hearts and minds to defeat this amendment!

THANK YOU!



WHY MARRIAGE?



As more Americans consider what it means to allow same-sex couples to join in civil marriage, you may have questions about what it means and how it works. We hope that you'll spend some time here getting the facts and listening to the voices of real couples from all backgrounds talking about why marriage matters to them.

WHY DOES MARRIAGE MATTER TO GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES?

Marriage matters to gay people in similar ways that it matters to everyone. Gay and lesbian couples want to get married to make a lifetime commitment to the person they love and to protect their families.

MARRIAGE STRENGTHENS FAMILIES. IT GIVES COUPLES THE TOOLS AND THE SECURITY TO BUILD A LIFE TOGETHER AND TO PROTECT THEIR FAMILIES.

- Couples get married because they want to be there for each other in sickness and in health, when times are good and when things get tough. State and federal marriage laws provide a safety net of legal and economic protections for married couples and their children — including the ability to visit your spouse in the hospital and to transfer property, which can mean being able to remain in the family home when your spouse has passed away.
- There have been attempts to create marriage-like relationship systems, but they don't provide the same security and protections. In many states, same-sex couples that have domestic partnerships have been barred from a dying partner's bedside, and denied the ability to say goodbye to the person they love. That just doesn't happen when you're married.

Information from www.whymarriagematters.org, a project of [Freedom to Marry](http://www.freedomtomarry.org) (www.freedomtomarry.org)

MARRIAGE SAYS "WE ARE FAMILY" IN A WAY THAT NO OTHER WORD DOES.

- Marriage is one of the few times where people make a public promise of love and responsibility for each other and ask our friends and family to hold us accountable.
- Gay and lesbian couples may seem different from straight couples, but we share similar values — like the importance of family and helping out our neighbors; worries — like making ends meet or the possibility of losing a job; and hopes and dreams — like finding that special someone to grow old with, and standing in front of friends and family to make a lifetime commitment.

ALLOWING COMMITTED GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES TO GET MARRIED DOES NOT CHANGE THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE.

- All couples who marry in the United States must get a license for a civil marriage, usually at a courthouse or city hall. These civil marriages would also be available to same-sex couples.
- Civil marriage for gay couples does not affect religious marriages, religious institutions or clergy in any way. No religion would be forced to marry same-sex couples, or recognize same-sex marriages within the context of their religious beliefs.
- What defines a marriage is love and commitment, and the ability to protect your family.

JUST THE FACTS



WHY DO GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES WANT TO GET MARRIED?

For similar reasons as anyone who wants to marry. To stand in front of friends and family to make a lifetime commitment to the person they love. To share the joys and the sorrows that life brings. To be a family, and to be able to protect that family.

DOES THIS CHANGE THE DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE?

No. Allowing same-sex couples to marry does not change the meaning of marriage. It simply allows same-sex couples to marry the person they love, to establish and protect a family and to make a lifetime commitment in the same way that other couples are able to.

HOW WOULD GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES MARRY?

All couples who marry get a civil marriage through a license, usually obtained at a courthouse or City Hall. States could make civil marriage available to same-sex couples. Some couples also choose to marry in a religious setting. This would not change.

DOES CIVIL MARRIAGE FOR GAY COUPLES AFFECT CHURCHES OR OTHER RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS?

No. It does not affect religious marriages, religious institutions or clergy in any way. No religion would be forced to marry same-sex couples, or recognize same-sex marriage within the context of their religious beliefs.

AREN'T THERE OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO MARRIAGE FOR GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES?

There have been attempts to create marriage-like relationships, but they don't work. For example, Domestic Partnership and Civil Union laws still don't qualify a spouse or children for health care coverage that employers only extend through marriage. If a loved one is sick and needs to take time off from work, same-sex couples are not eligible for family leave.

Information from www.whymarriagematters.org, a project of Freedom to Marry (www.freedomtomarry.org).



HOLIDAY CONVERSATIONS

Thank you for doing the critical work of talking to the people you know about why marriage matters to all loving, committed couples. The holiday season is the perfect time to start a conversation. You can use this worksheet to set goals and track how your conversations go. It is important for us to learn about what works well for you - and any concerns people have with marriage for gay and lesbian couples. We look forward to hearing how it goes!

SUPPORTER Someone who supports marriage for gay and lesbian couples and will vote NO on the amendment

UNDECIDED Someone who is undecided or conflicted on this issue

OPPOSED Someone who opposes marriage for gay and lesbian couples and will vote FOR the amendment

NAME	CONTACT INFO	DATE YOU	DATE YOU HAD	THEY ARE	NOTES
		PLAN TO HAVE CONVERSATION	CONVERSATION		
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