

Sue and Kim want to talk with somebody about their decision to get pregnant. Both are in their early thirties and they've been together for five years and civilly partnered for two.

Think about:

- What is your formulation/understanding of the key issues for Sue and Kim?
- What assumptions might you have about Sue and Kim's relationship on the basis of this information?
- How would you proceed?

If you are unfamiliar with LG culture or issues around lesbian/gay women parenting, some useful preparation would include reading Stonewall's 'Pregnant pause: a guide for lesbians on how to get pregnant' (www.stonewall.org.uk) or other similar information, reading some copies of a lesbian/gay women's magazine such as *Diva* in the UK, and talking with colleagues who have expertise.

In initial sessions it would be worth talking with Sue and Kim about your qualifications and expertise, and to offer to refer on if they do want specialist expertise that you don't have, or to work with an LG professional (if you are not one).

Key issues (on which Sue and Kim may or may not already have made decisions) might include consideration of which person will become pregnant and what that will be like for both of them, including legal protections for the 'non-biological' mother who will automatically be recognised as a parent given the civil partnership. Other issues may include how the process will work, whether they want a known or unknown donor (if known what the relationship with them will be), and potentially questions around schooling and childrearing and managing changes in their relationship over time. Familiarity with the relevant literature may be helpful in alleviating any concerns.

Pierre (39) approaches you for therapy having found your name on a list of gay-friendly therapists. Your first impression is of an extrovert, charming, and articulate black man. He spends some time telling you the engaging story of his life, from his childhood in New Orleans, through many travels, to his current work in the music industry in London. However, when you ask him, for the second time, what brings him to see you, he physically

slumps, explaining that he is really struggling with alcohol addiction. He has been attending a group programme to work on this but feels like that just isn't helping.

Think about:

- What is your formulation/understanding of the key issues for Pierre?
- What assumptions might you have about Pierre, particularly his sexuality, on the basis of this information?
- How would you proceed?

When you explore in more detail Pierre's experience of the group you find that he feels alienated as the only gay man, and the only black man, present. He said that one time he was speaking about a couple of the guys he is fuckbuddies with and somebody commented that it was confusing to keep up with so many names. The leader of the group also mentioned, that same session, that alcohol and sex addiction often go together, and Pierre felt that this point had been aimed at him: that his sexuality was seen as part of the problem. Another time, relating a racist incident, a white person in the group had expressed the view that they could all understand because of being victimised as alcoholics. He felt silenced and angered by this. The religious context that the group takes place in also feels uncomfortable to Pierre as he was rejected by a Christian community he belonged to as an adolescent when he mentioned attractions to other boys.

Exploring Pierre's relationship to alcohol further, you find that abstinence is difficult because so much of his social life on the gay scene takes place in pubs and clubs. Most of his friends drink a lot and see that as a natural part of having a good time. Pierre says that his gay identity is vital to him: something that he has fought hard to claim, even sometimes to the extent of being rejected by family and friends in the black community. Now it feels like he is being forced to prioritise being "an addict" over being gay. He says it all reminds him of a time, several years ago, when he realised that a man had picked him up just because he was a "hot black guy". He'd thought he had found a safe place (the gay community then, and the alcohol support group now) but found that he was still being treated like an object.

Over the course of your sessions Pierre decides to leave the group and you help him to find a specifically LGB alcohol support group where there are more shared experiences. You explore together Pierre's experiences of betrayal and being unable to find a safe place, as well as a loss around some of the experiences and spaces he feels he has to move away from in order to not be tempted to drink.