FAITH FORWARD

FAITH-BASED APPROACHES TO LGBTQ YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

Rev. Marian Edmonds-Allen

Forward

This is a pre-publication version of a portion of the forthcoming e-book:
Faith Forward, Faith-based Approaches to Preventing and Addressing LGBTQ Youth Suicide and Homelessness, a ministry of Parity.

Parity works to help religious, spiritual and faith communities and organizations to affirm LGBTQ people, and for LGBTQ organizations to affirm faith, religion and spirituality. parity.nyc

About the author:
Rev. Marian Edmonds-Allen is the executive director of Parity. She is a Petra Fellow, recognized nationally for her work with LGBTQ youth in preventing and addressing suicide and homelessness. She served as National Program Director for the Family Acceptance Project, executive director of OUTreach Resource Centers and the Utah Pride Center and in many pastoral ministry, chaplaincy and church planting roles. Rev. Edmonds-Allen attended Western Theological Seminary and is a graduate of Eden Theological Seminary, and is currently in the doctoral program at Eden Theological Seminary.

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THE NEED

Faith And LGBTQ Youth: From Risk Factor To Protective Factor

Throughout history, human beings have found ways to reach beyond themselves through spiritual expression. There is a longing within people to connect with the Divine, what some call the "God-shaped hole."

This longing often results in a person being part of a faith tradition or religion, perhaps as an active member of a church, synagogue, faith or religious community. Or for others, their spirituality is expressed in other ways, by connection with nature, yoga or meditation. Like expressions of personality, expressions of spirituality are varied.

Lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer and questioning people (LGBTQ) are often assumed to not be religious or have a spiritual practice, and in fact, are too often told that because they are LGBTQ faith isn't an option for them. Some LGBTQ people are excluded from religious rites and services, and in some instances, told outright that "God hates you." Despite pressures, many LGBTQ people continue to have faith and spiritual practices, to attend religious services, even pursue callings to ministry and missionary work. For these LGBTQ people, faith is important to them, yet that very faith can contribute to feelings of distress, even thoughts of suicide.

Religious expression has been shown to have many health benefits, even to the point of helping to prevent suicide, yet those protective benefits of faith don't always extend to LGBTQ people.

For LGBTQ youth who are either drawn to attend religious services and to be part of a faith community, or for those youth who are part of a family that is religious, the religious environment can help to affirm and protect them, or it can cause distress and negative health outcomes, even increased suicidality.

Clergy, faith leaders and members can play a unique and vital role in helping the LGBTQ youth in their churches and faith communities to not only survive but thrive. The religious and community authority of faith leaders is one of the most important determinants of acceptance of LGBTQ people in homes, families, schools and communities and is the key to LGBTQ youth suicide prevention within a faith community or church.

Sobering data:

- Every 15 minutes someone in the U.S. takes his or her own life. And for every one suicide, there are 25 attempts.

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24. (1)

- LGB youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times the rate of heterosexual youth. (2)

Faith can help
Religion has been shown to be a protective factor:

"Religious affiliation does not necessarily protect against suicidal ideation, but does protect against suicide attempts...and possibly protects against suicide." (3)

But not always
Suicidal lesbian, gay and bisexual people who seek help from religious based counselors or providers are more likely to attempt suicide.

> *"Compared with individuals who did not seek help at all, those who sought help from a religious or spiritual advisor were more likely later to attempt suicide." (4)*

Studies also show that very religious LGBT people are at a greater risk for suicide, and in fact attempt suicide more often than peers over their lifespan.

> *"Religion-based services for mental health and suicide prevention may not benefit gay/lesbian, bisexual, or questioning individuals. Religion-based service providers should actively assure their services are open and supportive of gay/lesbian, bisexual, or questioning individuals." (5)*

With those facts in mind, how can clergy, faith leaders, members of churches and religious organizations help to prevent LGBTQ youth suicide in their congregations and communities?

This guide has strategies that can help, with quick tips that are linked to in-depth information and background materials:

1.CDC, NCIPC. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2010) {2013 Aug. 1}. Available from:www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars.

2. CDC. (2016). Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

3. Religion and Suicide Risk: A Systematic Review.
Lawrence RE, Oquendo MA, Stanley B. , 2016
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13811118.2015.1004494

4. The Role of Help–Seeking in Preventing Suicide Attempts among Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals>
Ilan H. Meyer PhD Merilee Teylan MPH Sharon Schwartz PhD, 14 May 2014   https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12104

5. Association of Religiosity With Sexual Minority Suicide Ideation and Attempt.
Megan C. Lytle, PhD, John R. Blosnich, PhD, MPH, 18 March 2018 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.01.019

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FAITH–BASED APPROACHES SUICIDE PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND POSTVENTION

Twelve General Tips For Churches, Faith Communities And Faith-based Organizations

Twelve General Tips For Churches, Faith Communities And Faith-based Organizations

1. **Recognize risk factors and warning signs and know what to do.**
   National and state organizations have special training for clergy and will have options that meet your needs, whether a multi-day, in depth program or a quick training in how to watch for signs and refer.

2. **Get training for your staff and some key lay volunteers.**
   Bring your youth pastors with you, other clergy and staff, and don't forget the church secretary! Your staff sees important things every day, and training for them could help to save lives in your congregation.

3. **Consider having a care team to assist with pastoral care.**
   There are many models for adding care teams to your parish, such as Stephen Ministers. A single pastor or even multiple pastors are most often not able to keep close watch on all of their flock for signs of suicidality or other needs. Lay people can be trained to provide support to existing pastoral care, and perhaps even take on additional tasks such as driving or organizing help for members in need.

4. **Develop a referral list.**
   When you have a congregant, youth or family in need, you will want to have therapists and counselors that you feel great about recommending. Check these professionals out yourself - your reputation is on the line. Find out about local mental health centers and what they offer, learn about local organizations and what they do so that you can recommend support groups and classes.

5. **Network with other faith based organizations and churches to do suicide prevention activities and with local mental health organizations.**
   You will help secular organizations learn to recommend you and your congregation as a safe place for their clients, and you and your congregation will learn and grow from these associations. Your entire community will benefit.

6. **Have an event, host a support group, have a speaker series to highlight mental health, grief and loss and resilience.**
   Your church will become a magnet for community members for learning, and your own members will benefit as well as make new connections.

7. **Be ready to talk about your denomination or faith's beliefs about death and suicide.**
   Think through your own beliefs and how you might talk with someone who has had a death or is thinking about death. Talking about death is a comfort for many people - we all know that we will die one day, and if the pastor can't talk with them about that, who can? Bring comfort and care, have resources ready for those you think will benefit from supportive groups or a professional therapist.

8. **Prepare for funerals and calling hours and for a time when suicide may happen within your congregation or community.**
   What Scripture would provide comfort, what would your approach be to a homily, to liturgy and prayers, music, family participation?

9. **Prepare for helping a family experiencing loss.**
   Called postvention, knowing how to talk with a family, what resources to share and helps to suggest is vital. Be ready, be a resource for your clergy colleagues.

10. **Check your culture.**
    Religiosity can be a protective factor: but for those who feel unacceptable, for whatever reason, their faith can be a source of pain and increasing isolation from family and community.

11. **Be aware of what is happening in your community.**
    If there is a death - whether death by suicide or other death - be ready with a general idea of your message. High profile deaths often cause distress, but your words and your choice to hold a support group or special workshop can be helpful.

12. **Have a plan and know what do in a crisis - and make sure your staff and key volunteers know what to do, too.**
    Post and share emergency numbers. Every minute can be important in saving a life.

IN-DEPTH RESOURCES

1. Recognize risk factors and warning signs and know what to do.
See Chapter 7.

1b. and 2. National and state organizations have special training for clergy and Get training for your staff and some key lay volunteers:
Contact your local health department or search for your local NAMI or AFSP chapter and ask about local training opportunities. You can attend one, or even host a training at your church / faith community.

Online options:

Suicide prevention, intervention and response video series for clergy, pastors, ministers, rabbis and other faith community leaders.

This series of five videos for clergy discusses: warning signs and risk factors; how to tell if a person is considering suicide; responding to a suicidal person; responding to family members after a suicide; and designing a service for a person who has died by suicide.

QPR for Clergy
The QPR Institute worked with noted spiritual leaders to build a training program designed to meet the specific needs of those working in communities of faith and those planning a career as a faith leader.

The Role of Faith Community Leaders in Preventing Suicide
A web-based resource from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center describing roles for faith communities in reducing risk of suicide among community members.

The Role of Faith Communities in Suicide Prevention webinar offers practical information about suicide prevention for Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith leaders, and highlights the many ways

congregations foster mental health--through "communities of connection," narratives of hope, worship and educational resources, and advocacy in the wider community.

3. Consider having a care team to assist with pastoral care.
There are many models for adding care teams to your parish, such as Stephen Ministers. "A one-to-one lay caring ministry that takes place in congregations, equipping and empowering lay caregivers—called Stephen Ministers—to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting, including those dealing with depression and thoughts of suicide and grief."

Guidelines **for Starting a Mental Health Ministry in your Congregation**

Mental Health Ministry: A Toolkit for Faith Communities from Pathways to Promise.

4. Develop a referral list and know when to refer.
Contact your local NASW chapter, counselor's association or health department. Ask professional colleagues, find out what each therapist specializes in, and be very sure that the professional you recommend is someone you trust.

Making Referrals: Developing and Maintaining a List of Referral Resources
This video by the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness offers suggestions for researching, developing and maintaining a file of appropriate resources for referring your congregants who need to be evaluated or treated by a mental health professional.

Making Referrals: Clergy - When to Refer a Congregant to a Mental Health Professional
This video by the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness offers guidelines for deciding if one of your congregants needs to be referred to a mental health professional for help with a mental health issue.

5. Network with other faith based organizations and churches to do suicide prevention activities and with local mental health organizations.
Many communities have an interfaith council or roundtable or clergy group. See if others are interested in doing faith based prevention work. Contact your local health department and mental health organizations to see if there are any faith based groups - if not, consider starting one.

6. Have an event, host a support group, have a speaker series to highlight mental health, grief and loss and resilience.
You may have the resources to conduct a group or event yourself, or ask local clergy or professional colleagues for recommendations and your local health department, AFSP, NAMI and other mental health and suicide prevention organizations.

Starting a Spiritual Support Group in Your Faith Community
This video outlines some reasons for starting a spiritual support group in your faith community and offers some guidelines for starting a group.

Resources for Community Conversations about Mental Health
Community Conversations About Mental Health provides information on holding a community dialogue that builds awareness and support around mental health issues.

7. **Be ready to talk about your denomination or faith's beliefs about death and suicide.**
Many faiths have resources available - ask your national, regional or local representatives, or if nothing exists yet, you could spearhead the effort to create much needed materials.

8. **Prepare for funerals, calling hours and memorial services.**
After a Suicide: Recommendations for Religious Services and Other Public Memorial Observances
A guide from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center for faith community leaders and other community leaders that provides background information, suggests ways to care for and support survivors, and offers recommendations for planning a memorial observance.

Designing a Service for a Person Who Has Died by Suicide
This video offers some ideas for designing a funeral or memorial service for someone who has died by suicide. It also includes a list of do's and don'ts for reducing the chance of suicide contagion.

9. **Prepare for helping a family experiencing loss.**
Responding to Family Members After a Suicide Video
This video from the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness discusses the grief experience of family members of a person who has died by suicide and offers some do's and don'ts for reaching out to them. Also, appropriate language to use when discussing suicides.

10. **Check your culture.**

Strategies:
Be aware of messages from the pulpit - do sermons stress forgiveness and hope? Or is condemnation a usual topic? Be aware of who might be impacted by not only the overall message of the sermon or homily, but also watch for words that may cause pain: "broken families" "lives destroyed" - choose words carefully.

Be aware of the words and messages in prayers and liturgy, even hymns.

Check your education program, your youth group and other groups. Does your education program stress acceptance and community for all people? Does it stress hope, care and belonging? Is bullying tolerated? Are cliques present? Do children from non-rational families feel as valued? What about differences in class, race, gender?

Checklist for Faith Communities: Becoming a Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged

(WISE) Congregation for Mental Health
Developed jointly by the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness and the UCC Mental Health Network. This checklist is designed to be a mirror showing you where your congregation is today and a window to see where you might go in the future.

11. Be aware of special holidays and the pain that can accompany them.
Have a "Blue Christmas" event, or special grief groups for people whose parent(s) or family members have died, think about people who are alone on any holiday and provide opportunities for community support.

Holiday Coping Brochure

Tips For Managing The Holiday Blues **from NAMI**

Coping with grief and loss during the holidays **from Harvard Medical School**

12. Be aware of what is happening in your community.
Knowing what is in the news, happening at local schools and in your area can help you help your congregation. Look for resources specific to an event, and if you need to publicly address a death learn about safe messaging:

The Framework for Successful Messaging is a research-based resource that outlines four critical issues to consider when messaging to the public about suicide.

13. Have a plan and know what do in a crisis - and make sure your staff and key volunteers know what to do, too. Post and share emergency numbers.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices
for professionals. 1-800-273-8255

#BeThe1To

If you think someone might be considering suicide, be the one to help them by taking these 5 steps:

ASK. KEEP THEM SAFE. BE THERE. HELP THEM CONNECT. FOLLOW UP.

Find out why this can save a life at
www.BeThe1To.com

If you're struggling, call the Lifeline at
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Recommended additional resources:

AFSP: [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

NAMI: [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

[Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention ([Action Alliance](#)**)**

Caring Clergy Project: [Resources on Mental Illness for Faith Community Leaders](#)

United Church of Christ [Mental Health Network](#)

[Pathways to Promise](#)

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LGBTQ YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION TIPS FOR TRADITIONAL FAITHS

13 Tips For LGBTQ Youth Suicide Prevention In A Traditional Faith Context

In-depth information for each tip in the following section

1. Know the risk factors, danger signs and what to do.

2. Teach others the risk factors, danger signs and what to do, or provide training for key people in your faith community. The more people who are watching carefully and who know what to do, the better.

3. Support the youth's family and friends so that they can provide the affirming close community that the LGBTQ youth needs. A very helpful resource is the Family Acceptance Project's booklets, videos and publications.

4. Connect the LGBTQ youth and family with community and supports. Each faith, denomination or religious group has an affirming organization with people who can help. Community groups such as PFLAG and other organizations are an important source of education and support.

5. When counseling or in conversation with the LGBTQ youth and their family, focus on affirming the person, not on sexual orientation or gender identity. Sexual orientation and gender identity is only one part of a person. If the youth wants to discuss their sexual orientation or gender identity, be sure you know what you are talking about (learn more here) or be prepared to do a lot of reflective listening and then refer.

6. Refer the youth and their family to additional counseling resources (make VERY sure the counselor is both faith and LGBT affirming).

7. Create and post or share a list of LGBTQ affirming counselors and groups.

8. Post and share emergency numbers and "what to do" crisis information.

9. Give the LGBTQ youth a volunteer position that fits their interests, skill and capacity. Set them up for success to feel valued and valuable.

10. Learn the basics (or more!) about LGBTQ people, arrange for in person or online training for leaders in your faith community.

11. Assign one or more members / congregants to be a friend to the LGBTQ youth and to their family - but be very sure this person is affirming and supportive, and provide for training if need be. The goal is having more people interested in and caring about the LGBTQ youth and being supportive to the youth's family.

12. Find ways to be publicly supportive of the LGBTQ community that fit within your community and religious context.   Invite an LGBTQ professional or LGBTQ clergy person to visit and talk about what it is like to be an LGBTQ person of faith.

Bonus: Make an LGBTQ friend.

IN-DEPTH RESOURCES

1. Know the risk factors, danger signs and what to do.
See Chapter 7.

2. Teach others or provide teachers for key people in your faith community.
Contact your local health department or search for your local NAMI or AFSP chapter and ask about local training opportunities. You can attend one, or even host a training at your church or faith community.

> **Suicide prevention, intervention and response video series for clergy, pastors, ministers, rabbis and other faith community leaders**
> This series of five videos for clergy discusses: warning signs and risk factors; how to tell if a person is considering suicide; responding to a suicidal person; responding to family members after a suicide; and designing a service for a person who has died by suicide.

> **QPR for Clergy**
> The QPR Institute worked with noted spiritual leaders to build a training program designed to meet the specific needs of those working in communities of faith and those planning a career as a faith leader.

3. and 4. Support the youth's family and friends so that they can provide the affirming, close community that LGBTQ youth need.
A very helpful resource is the Family Acceptance Project's booklets, videos and publications. PFLAG is a national organization with local chapters, and is an important source of support and education.

> **A note on family supports:** too often, it is assumed that parents and families won't love and support their LGBTQ children. That is sometimes true, and with disastrous results. You can help the parents and family to be a loving, affirming presence and in so doing, will help the LGBTQ youth to not only survive, but also thrive. The Family Acceptance Project® is a research, intervention, education and policy initiative that works to prevent health and mental health risks for lesbian, gay, bisexual and

transgender children and youth, including suicide, homelessness and HIV – in the context of their families, cultures and faith communities.

Each faith, denomination and religious group has an affirming organization with people who can help. The Institute for Welcoming Resources has a list of helpful information and links to additional resources on LGBT communities, support, and spirituality. See Chapter 5, section 2 for complete lists of national and international LGBTQ affirming faith organizations. If you don't see a group for your faith, inquire with your regional or national representative.

5. When counseling, focus on affirming the LGBTQ youth and their family, not solely on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Just like you, an LGBTQ person is multifaceted, with hopes and dreams and often, deep faith that sustains and engages them. It is vitally important for you to learn some basics about LGBTQ people so that you feel comfortable and better able to help. Available in Chapter 6 is a complete training for you to learn from, or you can contact your local LGBTQ organization or university and ask for LGBTQ diversity training or Safe Zone training.

6. and 7. Refer the youth and their family to additional counseling resources and create and post or share a list of LGBTQ affirming counselors and groups.

Make VERY sure the counselor is both faith and LGBTQ affirming. Some questions to ask a prospective counselor or therapist:

- Ask them if they have seen LGBTQ clients.

- Ask them if they are up to date on the latest scholarly work in their field on LGBTQ issues and what training they have received.

- Ask them if they are comfortable talking about LGBTQ issues and if their personal or religious feelings might get in the way.

- Ask them if they are affirming of faith and spirituality.

    A note on counseling with LGBTQ people:

    Before beginning any counseling with an LGBTQ person, a therapist or counselor has the responsibility of making sure he or she is well versed on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity and has the skills necessary to create a positive and nonjudgmental environment. If a therapist or counselor believes the being gender exceptional, transgender or a sexual minority is wrong, sinful, immoral, or a mental illness, he or she should NOT work with LGBTQ clients. Refer this client to someone who is able to provide the necessary components of a therapeutic relationship.

American Psychological Association:

[Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People](#)

[Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients](#)

8. Post and share emergency numbers and "what to do" crisis information.
[See Chapter 7.](#)

9. and 10. Give the LGBTQ youth a volunteer position that fits their interests, skill and capacity, and give them more friends.
Set them up for success to feel valued and valuable and assign one or more members / congregants to be a friend - but be very sure this person is affirming and supportive. The goal is having more people interested in and caring about this youth, providing them with a growing, supportive community

As we say when we are working to build up a faith community, it's most effective to give every person "a friend and a job." Make sure this is true for the LGBTQ people in your community. Too many times LGBTQ youth are told indirectly or even directly that they don't belong and cannot participate with their peers in service projects and other youth activities.

What does that message send to the LGBTQ youth, and to the other youth who are watching? LGBTQ youth and adults have tremendous gifts to share with your faith community and with other members. From religious education to running a food pantry to checking in on housebound elders, make sure these valuable LGBTQ members are a valuable (and valued) part of the community.

11. Find ways to be publicly supportive of the LGBTQ community that fit within your context.
Provide space for LGBTQ groups, be a part of a food drive for homeless LGBTQ youth, attend LGBTQ events as a representative of your faith. You don't need to change your faith's position on sexual orientation or gender identity, but you CAN affirm these human beings.

Not sure what to do? Pick up the phone (or better yet) drop by and ask how you can help your local LGBTQ youth or adult serving organization. Your church or faith community could be the one to start a parents group (faith-based, even). The sky is the limit for what you can do, and remember that even the smallest signs of support and affirmation for the LGBTQ community communicates volumes. Share the love.

12. After you learn the basics (or more!) about LGBTQ people, arrange for in person or online training for leaders in your faith community.

Perhaps you could be the facilitator, or even the trainer. See Chapter 6 for a full training plus many resources for learning.

13. Invite an LGBTQ professional or LGBTQ clergy person to visit and talk about what it is like to be an LGBTQ person of faith.

Don't know one? Look online for LGBTQ professional groups, ask your colleagues or local LGBTQ serving organizations, read through the Welcoming Resources Listings and be in touch with connections listed there.

Bonus: Make an LGBTQ friend. Become comfortable with someone who may be different (or maybe not be all that different) from yourself!

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FOR LGBTQ AFFIRMING FAITH TRADITIONS

12 Tips To Help Prevent LGBTQ Youth Suicide

In-depth information in the following section

1. Recognize risk factors and warning signs and know what to do.
   See Chapter 7.

2. Teach others in your church / faith community or arrange for them to learn.

3. Create a ministry for your congregation and broader community that helps to prevent LGBTQ suicide.

4. Have LGBTQ people lead worship, services, events, teach.

5. When counseling LGBTQ people, also refer them to faith and LGBTQ affirming therapists and counselors.

6. Create a supportive group for LGBTQ members and seekers.

7. Do LGBTQ activities and ministry in your community.

8. Start a LGBTQ affirming drop in space for youth at your church or in a local park or library.

9. Coordinate with your local college / university diversity or LGBT center

10. Examine your written and spoken liturgy, prayers, sermons, educational programs, etc for inclusive language, and examine your building as an inclusive space.

11. Be a resource for organizations and groups in your area to talk about LGBTQ issues, provide diversity training, whatever is most needed in your community.

IN-DEPTH RESOURCES

1. Recognize risk factors and warning signs and know what to do.
See Chapter 7.

2. Teach others in your church / faith community or arrange for them to learn.
Contact your local health department or search for your local NAMI or AFSP chapter and ask about local training opportunities. You can attend one, or even host a training at your church or faith community.

> **Suicide prevention, intervention and response video series for clergy, pastors, ministers, rabbis and other faith community leaders**
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> **QPR for Clergy**
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3. Create a ministry for your congregation and broader community that helps to prevent LGBTQ youth suicide.
Creating an opportunity members of your faith community or local area to come together with a common goal of LGBTQ youth suicide prevention is a gift to everyone involved. They will have learning, networking and service opportunities, and will help to knit together a stronger fabric of support for the entire community. Work with your local health department and mental health organizations, invite other congregations to take part.

4. Have LGBTQ people lead worship, services, events, teach - role models are VERY helpful for providing hope and ideas for the future.
Our work with youth has shown over and over that LGBTQ youth want and dream of their own family, faith, connections to community - let them see people who are living that dream. In addition to that critical reason for involving LGBTQ people in leadership roles, you will find that LGBTQ people have deep and unique religious, faith and spiritual insights that your entire congregation will benefit from.

5. When counseling LGBTQ people, also refer them to faith and LGBTQ affirming therapists and counselors.
Don't know any? Ask around and find someone, or help someone get educated so that they can be a place to refer people to. Make VERY sure the counselor is both faith and LGBTQ affirming. Some questions to ask a prospective counselor or therapist:

- Ask them if they have seen LGBTQ clients.

- Ask them if they are up to date on the latest scholarly work in their field on LGBTQ issues and what training they have received.

- Ask them if they are comfortable talking about LGBTQ issues and if their personal or religious feelings might get in the way.

- Ask them if they are affirming of faith and spirituality.

6. **Create a supportive group for LGBTQ members and seekers.**
This could be your usual youth group, if you have one - it doesn't need to be something new, but it is important to communicate widely that this group is welcoming of LGBTQ youth and allies. Include "allies" - not every youth is ready to come out as LGBTQ, and some may be in discernment about their sexual orientation and gender identity. What a gift to them and your community to have a supportive faith-based space for LGBTQ and allied youth!

7. **Do LGBTQ activities and ministry in your community.**
Hold a Pride event, help sponsor LGBTQ serving organizations, your local GSA or PFLAG. Offer them space and volunteers. See what is happening and get involved. Ask what needs to happen in your community - how might you help? And then involve other congregations and faith organizations. The large gulf between faith and LGBTQ adds to the risk for youth - you can change that!

6. **Start a LGBTQ affirming drop in space for youth at your church or in a local park or library.**
This could be your current youth group, or you could start something brand new. It could be a one time per month movie night or Drag Race watching party, it could be games and a cookout in a local park. You could share hosting with other congregations. We have helped dozens of faith organizations start these types of groups and ministries. Watch for *Faith-based Approaches for Addressing and Preventing LGBTQ Youth Homelessness* or email info@parity.nyc for more information, ideas and samples.

7. **Coordinate with your local college / university diversity or LGBT center.**
Publicizing what is happening at your local affirming college or university serves two purposes: youth see that they can have a future that includes higher education, and have a reason to go to a campus (studies show that stepping onto a campus increases the likelihood a youth will attend college). You also are communicating to your local college or university that you welcome LGBTQ people - that is a gift for everyone!

8. **Examine your written and spoken liturgy, prayers, sermons, educational programs, etc for inclusive language.**
For example, say parents instead of "mom and dad" and children instead of "boys and girls." Make your classes, worship, events truly welcoming by always being aware of representing LGBT people and by using language that is affirming. Make accessible restrooms available for people of all gender identities.

9. **Be a resource for organizations and groups in your area to talk about LGBTQ issues, provide diversity training, whatever is most needed in your community.**
Bonus: involve your LGBTQ youth in these trainings! Who better to talk about issues relating to youth

than the youth themselves? Create your own trainings or repurpose one of ours, use Safe Zone - details are in Chapter 6.

10. Hold a special worship or faith event during important LGBTQ observances
Important observances such as the Transgender Day of Remembrance, LGBTQ History Month, Pride Month or World AIDS Day. Invite other congregations and work with your local LGBTQ serving organizations, health departments, to create a spacial community event. Hold an AIDS walk, invite special speakers - see who in your faith community has ideas, or invite your youth group to lead an event or activity.

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LGBTQ SUICIDE RESOURCES & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Emergency numbers:

The LGBT National Hotline's LGBT National Youth Talkline:
800-246-7743, online one-to-one chat at www.LGBThotline.org/chat

The Trans Lifeline: 877-565-8860

The Trevor Project: 866-488-7386

Recommended resources:

From the Suicide Prevention Resource Center Best Practices Registry, some resources we especially recommend for LGBTQ youth prevention:

Supportive Families, Healthy Children: Helping Families with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) Children
Family Acceptance Project, San Francisco State University

Trevor Lifeguard Workshop, The Trevor Project

Saving Our Lives: Transgender Suicide Myths, Reality and Help,
Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Suicide Prevention among LGBT Youth: A Workshop for Professionals Who Serve Youth
Suicide Prevention Resource Center

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) has a weekly newsletter and a wealth of information, webinars, workshops and more. Definitely worth checking out: http://www.sprc.org

In particular, though dated (2008) the SPRC document Suicide Risk and Prevention for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth is worth reading: http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/SPRC_LGBT_Youth.pdf

American Association of Suicidology
Guidelines for School Based Suicide Prevention Programs

Talking About Suicide & LGBT Populations
This guide, co-authored by GLSEN, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, GLAAD, the Johnson Family Foundation, the Movement Advancement Project and The Trevor Project, provides ways to talk about suicide more safely, while advancing vital public discussions about preventing suicide, helping increase acceptance of LGBT people, and supporting their well-being.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: LGBT Initiative

This initiative works on suicide prevention among the LGBT population in a number of ways, including producing a conference, funding research grants, working to improve how the media covers anti-gay bullying, helping its chapter volunteers bring understanding of suicide into their local LGBT communities, and creating LGBT mental health educational resources and training tools.

[Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention](#)

The Centers of Disease Control has an interesting publication, [The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What it Means for Schools](#)

[National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#)

An important excerpt from that plan, by LGBTQ youth suicide expert, Ann Haas, beginning page 121:

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations

Studies over the last four decades suggest that LGBT individuals may have an elevated risk for suicide ideation and attempts. Attention to this disparity has been limited, in part because neither the U.S. death certificate nor the NVDRS identify decedents' sexual orientation or gender identity. Thus, it is not known whether LGBT people die by suicide at higher rates than comparable heterosexual people.

Across many different countries, a strong and consistent relationship between sexual orientation and nonfatal suicidal behavior has been observed. A meta-analysis of 25 international population-based studies found the lifetime prevalence of suicide attempts in gay and bisexual male adolescents and adults was four times that of comparable heterosexual males. Lifetime suicide attempt rates among lesbian and bisexual females were almost twice those of heterosexual females.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) adolescents and adults were also found to be almost twice as likely as heterosexuals to report a suicide attempt in the past year. A later meta-analysis of adolescent studies concluded that LGB youth were three times more likely to report a lifetime suicide attempt than heterosexual youth, and four times as likely to make a medically serious attempt. Across studies, 12 to 19 percent of LGB adults report making a suicide attempt, compared with less than 5 percent of all U.S. adults; and at least 30 percent of LGB adolescents report attempts, compared with 8 to 10 percent of all adolescents. To date, population-based studies have not identified transgender participants, but numerous nonrandom surveys show high rates of suicidal behavior in that population, with 41 percent of adult respondents to the 2009 National Transgender Discrimination Survey reporting lifetime suicide attempts.

Most studies have found suicide attempt rates to be higher in gay/bisexual males than in lesbian/bisexual women, which is the opposite of the gender pattern found in the general population. As in the overall population, there is some evidence that the frequency of suicide attempts may decrease as LGB adolescents move into adulthood, although patterns of suicide attempts across the lifespan of sexual minority people have not been conclusively studied. Within LGB samples, especially high suicide attempt rates have been reported among African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian American subgroups.

Suicidal behaviors in LGBT populations appear to be related to "minority stress," which stems from the cultural and social prejudice attached to minority sexual orientation and gender identity. This stress includes individual experiences of prejudice or discrimination, such as family rejection, harassment, bullying, violence, and victimization. Increasingly recognized as an aspect of minority stress is "institutional discrimination" resulting from laws and public policies that create inequities or omit LGBT people from benefits and protections afforded others.

Individual and institutional discrimination have been found to be associated with social isolation, low self-esteem, negative sexual/gender identity, and depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders. These negative outcomes, rather than minority sexual orientation or gender identity per se, appear to be the key risk factors for LGBT suicidal ideation and behavior. An additional risk factor is contagion resulting from media coverage of LGBT suicide deaths that presents suicidal behavior as a normal, rational response to anti-LGBT bullying or other experiences of discrimination. Further research is needed to explore the pathways to suicidal behaviors for transgender individuals, including the impact of prejudice and discrimination.

Factors that foster and promote resilience in LGBT people include family acceptance, connection to caring others and a sense of safety, positive sexual/gender identity, and the availability of quality, culturally appropriate mental health treatment.

Strategies for preventing suicidal behaviors in LGBT populations include:

Reducing sexual orientation and gender-related prejudice and associated stressors;

Improving identification of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other mental disorders; Increasing availability and access to LGBT-affirming treatments and mental health services; Reducing bullying and other forms of victimization that contribute to vulnerability within families, schools, and workplaces;

Enhancing factors that promote resilience, including family acceptance and school safety; Changing discriminatory laws and public policies;

Reducing suicide contagion.

Collaboration between suicide prevention and LGBT organizations is needed to ensure the development of culturally appropriate suicide prevention programs, services, and materials, and to facilitate access to care for at-risk individuals. A promising example is the development of guidelines for media in talking about suicide in LGBT populations created by a coalition of AFSP and several national LGBT organizations.

Another critical need is closing knowledge gaps through additional research and improved surveillance. Efforts are underway to expand the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity measures in federal health and mental health surveys, and to develop and test procedures for postmortem identification of LGBT people in NVDRS.

ADDITIONAL LGBTQ RESOURCES

American Medical Association
LGBT Health Resources Page

American Psychological Association
Resources for Promoting Resiliency for Gender Diverse and Sexual Minority
Students in Schools

American Psychological Association
Respect Course: Preventing health risks and promoting healthy outcomes among LGBTQ students

Centers for Disease Control
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health

Family Acceptance Project
Materials for families of LGBTQ youth
National Best Practice for suicide prevention among LGBTQ youth

Fenway Institute
National LGBT Health Education Center website

Gender Spectrum
Resources for Social Service Providers, Child Welfare, and Juvenile Justice

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Saving Our Lives: Transgender Suicide Myths, Reality, and Help

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
LGBT Training Curricula for Behavioral Health and Primary Care Practitioners

AFFIRMING FAITH ORGANIZATIONS

From the Institute of Welcoming Resources:
Christian/Denominationally-Based LGBTQ Affirming Organizations

Affirming Baptists (Baptists in the United Kingdom)
Supporting lesbians and gay men and those with concerns about their sexuality within the church.
Affirm United (United Church of Canada)
Working through education and social integration for the welcoming of diverse peoples, especially the inclusion of LGBT persons in the life and work of the United Church of Canada.
Affirmation (Mormon)
Serving the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Latter Day Saints and their supportive family and friends through social and educational activities.
Affirmation
United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns
AXIOS
Eastern and Orthodox Gay and Lesbian Christians
The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists
Members of AWAB are churches, organizations, and individuals who are willing to go on record as welcoming and affirming all persons without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity, and who have joined together to advocate for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons within Baptist communities of faith.
Bay Area Coalition of Welcoming Congregations
A project of The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry, whose goal is to create a strong network of religious leaders, religious congregations/communities, and individuals of faith in the nine-county Bay Area, who are highly motivated to act as agents of positive social change.
Beyond Ex-Gay
An on-line community for those who have survived ex-gay experiences
Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests
To provide support for Mennonite and Church of the Brethren lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual people, their friends and families; foster dialogue between gay and non-gay people in churches; and provide accurate information about human sexuality from various theological, sociological, psychological, and biblical perspectives.
Call to Action
Catholics working together for justice and equality.
Catholics for Marriage Equality

We are Catholics promoting the freedom for all loving couples to be included in civil marriage.

Christian Lesbians

Offers information and resources for women presently struggling to reconcile their faith and sexuality.

Christian United Church

An Inclusive, Connectional Denomination - We are an inclusive denomination that teaches the concept of the equality before God of all people. We are a whosoever (John 3:16) church whose doors are open to all people regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation.

CLOUT (Christian Lesbians Out)

To celebrate the miracle of being Christian, lesbian, and OUT simultaneously, in ways that aim to be anti-racist, anti-classist, and milagro-bound.

The Community of Welcoming Congregations

An Oregon and SW Washington interfaith ministry and advocacy organization working toward full inclusion and equality for transgender, lesbian, bisexual, gay and questioning persons.

Crossvine Ministry

Crossvine Ministry is an LGBT-affirming organization and strongly supports marriage equality. We are available to officiate legally-binding same-sex weddings in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama.

DignityUSA (Roman Catholic)

DignityUSA works for respect and justice for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy and support.

Emergence International

A world-wide community of Christian Scientists, their families and friends, that provides spiritual and educational support for LGBT people, as they deal with homophobia and heterosexism.

Equally Blessed

Fired by a vision of a church that transcends cultural prejudices, the Equally Blessed coalition seeks to educate and inspire Catholics to take action on behalf of LGBT people, their families and friends.

Evangelicals Concerned

The national network of gay and lesbian evangelical Christians and friends.

Evangelicals for Marriage Equality

As Evangelicals for Marriage Equality, we believe you can be a devout, Bible-believing evangelical and support the right of same-sex couples to be recognized by the government as married. Our commitment to following Christ leads us to speak out for equal treatment under the law for others—whether or not they share our religious convictions.

Extravagance United Church of Christ - An Online Faith Community and Ministry

Extravagance UCC is a geographically dispersed, online faith community, that welcomes persons of all faith traditions or none, ages, races, nationalities, sexual orientations, gender identities & expressions, family configurations, economic abilities, and mental and physical capacities. Digital natives, immigrants, ex-pats and refugees are welcome.

Extrodinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM)

Committed to the full participation of persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life and ministry of the Lutheran church.

Fortunate Families

Catholic families with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender daughters and sons.

[Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (Quaker)](#)

A North American Quaker faith community that affirms that of God in all people.

[Gay and Lesbian Acceptance (GALA) (Community of Christ)](#)

GALA envisions communities which witness that persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities have sacred worth; and are fully included, celebrated, and affirmed with their chosen faith traditions.

[Gay Christian Europe](#)

We support gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender Christians all over Europe in a safe and caring environment. Our aim is to support each person in their own personal journey, whatever their denomination and whether they feel called to celibacy or believe that God blesses same sex relationships, and to welcome those who are drawn to Christianity. We also aim to connect LGBT Christians in all European countries with groups, welcoming congregations and resources local to them, as well to build both an online and in person community.

[Gay Christian Network](#)

The Gay Christian Network is a nonprofit ministry serving Christians who happen to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, and those who care about them.

[GayChurch.org](#)

Dedicated to ministering to the LGBT Christian community and their friends. Includes boards, a directory of welcoming congregations, articles, art gallery, calendar of events, and a web magazine. Features are in both English and Spanish.

[Goodsoil](#)

A collaboration of organizations working for the full inclusion of LGBT people and their families in the full ministerial and sacramental life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

[Integrity USA (The Episcopalian Church)](#)

An organization of LGBT Episcopalians and our straight friends, serving as the leading grassroots voice for the full inclusion of LGBT persons in the Episcopal Church and our equal access to its rites.

[Lesbian and Gay Christians](#)

A UK-based international charity praying for an inclusive church.

[Lutherans Freed in Christ](#)

A safe and secure online forum for all LGBT Lutherans, including those from the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, who for personal reasons cannot or choose not to be out. At this forum all LGBT Lutherans will find support and have the space to minister to and interact with one another.

[More Light Presbyterians (Presbyterian Church USA)](#)

Following the risen Christ, and seeking to make the Church a true community of hospitality, the mission of More Light Presbyterians is to work for the full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of faith in the life, ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

[National Catholic Church of America](#)

An apostolic, inclusive Catholic body, celebrating the diversity of God's people.

[Nazarene Ally (Church of the Nazarene)](#)

To make the Church of the Nazarene a safe place for its LGBT members by removing homophobia in all areas of the Church and by creating a positive and constructive dialogue between members about sexual orientation and Christianity.

Network on Religion and Justice for Asian American and Pacific Islander Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people (NRJ-API-LGBT)

The Network on Religion and Justice for Asian American and Pacific Islander Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people (NRJ-API-LGBT) is a coalition of organizations and individuals affirming the dignity and spiritual wholeness of API LGBT people of faith.

New Ways Ministry

A gay-positive ministry of advocacy and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Catholics, and reconciliation within the larger Christian and civil communities.

Open and Affirming Ministries (The Christian Church - Disciples of Christ)

The Gay, Lesbian, and Affirming Disciples Alliance is an organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and affirming members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We are a prophetic voice calling for the full inclusion of LGBT persons in the Church.

Open and Affirming (ONA) Program (United Church of Christ)

ONA is the designation for congregations, campus ministries, and other bodies in the United Church of Christ which make public statements of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Operation: Rebirth

The first web site dedicated to ending the religious and spiritual abuse against black gays and lesbians inflicted by Black churches.

Other Sheep: Multicultural Ministries with Sexual Minorities

The only worldwide ecumenical Christian organization dedicated to empowering sexual minorities throughout the world with the Good News of God's unconditional love for all.

Parity

Parity is a faith-based LGBTQ-focused organization that creates open and nurturing spaces – physically and spiritually to:

    1.Support emerging LGBTQ pastors as they live into their callings.
    2.Empower LGBTQ and allied young people to integrate their spiritual, gender and sexual identities.

Rainbow Baptists

A website providing support, information and advocacy for LGBT and queer identified Baptists, their families and friends.

ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)

A Christian Ministry affirming God's love for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities since 1974.

Reconciling Ministries Network (United Methodist Church)

A national grassroots organization that exists to enable full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life of the United Methodist Church, both in policy and practice.

Reconciling Pentecostals International

A network of Pentecostal ministers, churches and ministries which seeks to by means of the full gospel of Jesus Christ to reconcile all repentant people to God without regard to race, gender, political persuasion, economic or educational status, sexual orientation, nationality, religious affiliation, or any other thing that divides.

Reformed Catholic Church

The Reformed Catholic Church is an emerging Christian denomination that is welcoming, open, affirming and progressive. The Reformed Catholic Church reaches out and invites all people, most especially those who have been disenfranchised or made to feel unwelcome or an invisible member at other churches, to the table of our Lord. The Reformed Catholic Church is committed to living a life of authentic Gospel in our communities across the United States and Internationally.

Room For All

Supporting, educating and advocating for the full inclusion of LGBT persons in the Reformed Church in America.

Sanctuary

A Christian worship and fellowship group of gay and lesbian Moravians.

Seventh-Day Adventist Kinship International

A support organization devoted to the spiritual, emotional, social and physical well-being of current and former Seventh-Day Adventists who are LGBT.

Soulforce

Freedom for LGBT people from religious & political oppression through the practice of relentless nonviolent resistance.

That All Might Freely Serve

Working for ordination of qualified lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender candidates in the Presbyterian Church (USA) as Elders, Deacons, and Ministers

TruthSetsFree.net

An inclusive, ecumenical Christian outreach to LGBTQ Christians, friends, and family. Includes a bible study, The Bible, Christianity, & Homosexuality by Justin R. Cannon.

Unitarian Universalist Association office of LGBTQ Ministries

Unitarian Universalism is a welcoming and inclusive denomination for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people and families and dedicates national staff to the work of becoming ever more welcoming and inclusive. This office runs a Welcoming Congregation Program and provides print and online resources, training, and other support.

United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns

The Coalition provides support and sanctuary to all of our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender sisters and brothers, their families and friends; advocates for their full inclusion in church and society; and brings Christ's affirming message of love and justice for all people.

United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church

A gathering across racial and ethnic lines for the purpose of engaging the subject of heterosexism and homophobia in Christianity and the United Methodist Church.

Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

The world's first and only predominantly LGBT denomination.

Voices for an Open Spirit

A network of people who want to give voice to a progressive spirit in the Church of the Brethren, who want to encourage dialogue, and who believe there is a place for everyone at God's table.

Welcoming Community Network

Welcoming Community Network (WCN) is an international grassroots organization that exists to enable full participation of persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life and ministry of Community of Christ both in policy and practice.

Yes! Coalition

A diverse group who work together to say "Yes!" to celebrating our faiths, and "Yes!" to affirm our sexuality and gender expression.

Multi-Faith LGBT Organizations

Al-Fatiha Foundation

Dedicated to Muslims who are LGBT, intersex, questioning, those exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity, and their allies, families and friends. Al-Fatiha promotes the progressive Islamic notions of peace, equality and justice.

Be' chol Lashon, In every Tongue: Advocating for the Growth and Diversity of the Jewish People

Council on American-Islamic Relations

CAIR's mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

Gay Buddhist Fellowship

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the Gay men's community. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

Gay/Lesbian Baha'i Story Project

To tell, listen to, and reflect upon stories of Gay/Lesbian Baha'is and their supportive friends/family.

Global Faith and Justice Project

Rooted in faith and justice, this global project amplifies faith voices that protect human dignity and achieve equality for LGBT people and their families.

Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation

The Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) is the first and only institute of its kind in the Jewish world. It is unique in its place at the juncture of academia and professional training at the Jewish Reform Movement's seminary.

Inter-Denominational Conference of Liberation Congregations & Ministries

A multi-faith, ecumenical fellowship of pastors, clergy, ministers, ministry leaders and congregations that have an interest in advancing the Good News of God's Radical Inclusivity.

Interfaith Working Group

Religious diversity and social issues.

Interweave Continental: Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns

Interweave Continental is a membership organization actively working toward ending oppression based on sexual orientation and gender identity, recognizing that we will not be free until all oppression is a thing of the past. We are a Unitarian Universalist organization and UU principles guide our work.

Islamic Society of North America

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) has served the Muslims of this continent for well over forty years. During this period ISNA has provided many invaluable services to the Muslim community of North

America.

Jeff Herman Virtual Resource Center

The largest online gathering of articles, texts, and websites on Judaism and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender topics in the world. From the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College.

Jewish Mosaic

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Jews and allies are our relatives, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. LGBT and allied Jews span the denominational and political spectrums. The Jewish communal world is full of LGBT and allied educators, cantors, rabbis, social workers, activists, and synagogue members. All too often LGBT Jews "assimilate" and hide their identities in order to participate in the Jewish world or "separate" and distance themselves from Jewish life, representing a collective loss in terms of the strength and vibrancy of the community.

Jewish Transitions: Celebrating the Sacred in Every Gender

An organization focusing on transgender jewish resources.

JQ International: A Space for GLBT Jews

JQ International is a Gay, Lesbian, Bi and Transgender (GLBT) Jewish movement founded to serve as an infrastructure and community building space for GLBT Jews. It provides an opportunity to connect with others and build programs and services that foster a healthy fusion of GLBT and Jewish Identity.

Keshet

Keshet's mission is to ensure that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Jews are fully included in all parts of the Jewish community. Nationally, Keshet offers support, training, and resources to create a Jewish community that welcomes and affirms LGBT Jews.

Muslims for Progressive Values

MPV endorses the human rights, civil rights and civil liberties of LGBT individuals.

Muslim Public Affairs Council

The Muslim Public Affairs Council is a public service agency working for the civil rights of American Muslims, for the integration of Islam into American pluralism, and for a positive, constructive relationship between American Muslims and their representatives.

The National Union of Jewish LGBTQ Students

NUJLS, the Nehirim Student Program, is the National Union of Jewish Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, & Queer Students. NUJLS was founded in 1997 by a small but dedicated group of thirty students. We are Jewish students and young adults of diverse sexual and gender identities who empower our communities and ourselves through education, support, and outreach.

Nehirim: LGBT Jewish Culture and Spirituality

Nehirim ("Lights") builds community for LGBT?Jews, partners, and allies. Our retreats and other programs celebrate LGBT culture and spirituality, and empower LGBT?Jews to become active voices in their home communities. Through this work, we welcome LGBT Jews into the Jewish community, and in turn, build a more vibrant, diverse, and inclusive Jewish community by incorporating the gifts of LGBT people.

Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns

Unitarian Universalist Association

Outspirit

A multifaith voice of compassion, inclusion and empowerment for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

[The Rainbow Center Jewish and Gay](#)

The Rainbow Center was founded by members of the Atlanta Jewish Community. It is currently managed through Jewish Family & Career Services (JF&CS) and sponsored by Congregation Bet Haverim (CBH), a synagogue founded to serve the needs of Jewish gay men and lesbians.

[RitualWell](#)

LGBTQI life passage rituals

[Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentary on the Hebrew Bible](#)

Welcome to Torah Queeries, offering creative and incisive "queer" takes on the weekly Torah portion or Jewish holiday since spring 2006. Read this week's essay, browse the archives, or check back each week for a new essay, brought to you by some of the Jewish world's most dynamic scholars, rabbis, activists and lay leaders.

[Transgender Friendly Religious Alliance](#)

Network for transgender friendly religious, spiritual workers of all faith.

[Transgender Religion Global Network](#)

To build a bridge between religious transgender people and the different religions all over the world.

[World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews](#)

The World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Jews: Keshet Ga'avah consists of around 50 member organizations in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Mexico, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The World Congress holds conferences and workshops representing the interests of lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender Jews around the world. The focus of these sessions varies from regional, national, continental, to global.

6

LGBTQ TRAININGS

In this chapter:

LGBTQ Cultural Competency 101
by Rachel Peterson, MS
May 2018

Language, LGBTQ 101

Why is language so important?

Using respectful language that is not hetero-normative or cis-normative is one of the fastest, easiest ways to help an LGBTQ person feel welcome, safe, and supported. Language that is not respectful of individuals or identities, even when unintended, is harmful to LGBTQ individuals and the community. For an LGBTQ person, having the ability to select their own labels and pronouns is not only advantageous, but critical to their well-being. This section also addresses critical preliminary questions around identity and choice.

Alphabet Soup

What does LGBTQ stand for? This is an inclusive way to refer to an entire community, encompassing a diverse group of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and beyond. For many, the word queer is inclusive of any other identities that might be missed by the L, G, B, and T labels (more on the word queer below). Some prefer to add the + symbol after (LGBTQ+), in an effort to be more inclusive. Sometimes other letters follow LGBTQ, including but not limited to A (asexual), I (intersex), 2S (two spirit), or an extra Q for questioning. You'll read more about these terms soon. For most purposes, the acronym LGBTQ is considered to be inclusive of everyone in the queer community.

> Wait…did you say "queer?" I thought we weren't supposed to say that.

The word "queer" has a complex history. With a literal meaning of "unusual, strange, or odd," people used queer as a pejorative towards members of the LGBTQ community in the late 19th century. It was specifically used for men who acted effeminate. However, starting in the 1980s, members of the LGBTQ community began reclaiming the word. Today, the word queer no longer has a hateful connotation. For that, you can thank the LGBTQ community.

> Queer is a powerful word, and is important for several reasons:

It is inclusive. The word queer is meant to encompass and recognize all genders and orientations, which is critical as the LGBTQ community grows to embrace members of the community who feel excluded by the L, G, B, and T labels. Because there are so many ways to identify, it can be impractical to add letters to the acronym to represent all genders and orientations (even something as long as LGBTQQIAAP2S doesn't cover it all).

It is the least "label-y" label. Queer may be a comfortable identity for someone who might not feel as if they fit neatly into a category or label, or for someone who simply chooses not to label themselves other than as a member of the queer community. Queer is also a necessary word for those who are questioning their gender or orientation. A person may know they belong to the LGBTQ community, but not fully understand their gender or orientation. When we use the word queer, we include questioning persons as part of our community, as welcome and validated as members who feel comfortable with a specific label.

Reclaiming language is empowering. When the LGBTQ community started using this word as our own, it becomes a word in which we can take pride. Reclaiming a word says, "You can't use that against us, that's ours."

It helps to break down the idea of binaries, which don't actually exist. The false idea that these binaries exist perpetuates biphobia, transphobia, and queerphobia. The term queer can be a powerful tool in combatting these assumptions and phobias.

With all of this said, it is important to acknowledge and honor that the word queer is still very hurtful for some members of the LGBTQ community. Yet, with continued reclamation and usage of this word, it becomes less wounding and more empowering. Excluding this word would be disempowering to many LGBTQ people, particularly youth.

One final note – the use of the word queer is for those who understand its meaning, history, and proper use. When used properly and respectfully, the word queer has the power to unite the LGBTQ community. Even within the community, hostility and misconceptions exist between subgroups and individuals. The word queer helps us to remember that we are all part of the larger LGBTQ community, and that we should celebrate our differences. The word queer unites us.

Let's Talk Lingo

Considering the meaning of the word queer brings up another point – that language is always evolving. Especially the language used to empower or disempower marginalized groups. As an ally, it is important to keep yourself educated as much as you can. That said, if you are doing your best, most members of the LGBTQ community will acknowledge and respect your attempts at using language that is respectful, empowering, and affirming for LGBTQ people.

Because a glossary of basic terminology follows, this section will not provide definitions for all LGBTQ-relevant terms. There is also more information on using language mindfully as an ally in [Part 3] of this chapter. For now, a few quick highlights should be useful.

What is sexual orientation? What is gender identity? How about gender expression? Because each of these concepts is complex and sometimes (although not always) overlapping, it can be tricky to think about how they are similar and different. The Gender Unicorn is a tool (from the amazing Trans Student Educational Resources) that can help us to understand these concepts.

The first thing to note about the unicorn is that for each aspect represented, there is not a double headed arrow, for example with "male" at one end and "female" at the other. These concepts are not binary. Someone may simultaneously feel feminine and masculine, or they may identify as neither of these genders, or as another gender. Another important note - all components of the self represented by The Gender Unicorn are separate. For example, gender identity and gender expression might not "match" within an individual. There are many reasons for this, but one big reason is basic safety – a trans person may identify as one gender, but express/present as what we would traditionally see as another gender. For some, the reason is simply that it's not always safe for trans people to present. We'll talk more about the safety of trans people in Part 2.

Each of the components and identities represented in The Gender Unicorn co-exist within one individual. Each of us possess our own unique constellation of these aspects of gender and attraction. For many, some of these aspects of the self are fluid, meaning within an individual, attraction, gender identity, or gender expression may change across time. As you can see, identities and components of self relating to gender and orientation/attraction are complex. Understanding each person as an individual, rather than reducing them to any one label (even their chosen label) is of crucial importance. Let's take a moment to break down each of the five components of the Unicorn.

Gender Identity refers to the extent to which someone identifies as male, female, both, neither, or another gender. This is represented by the thought bubble above the unicorn, indicating that this is the way the unicorn perceives themselves, how they experience and think about their gender. For more on gender identity, see Section 3.

Gender Expression refers to the information we communicate to the outside world about our gender. We might be comfortable presenting in a way that is traditionally considered feminine, in a way that is traditionally considered masculine, in a way that is androgynous (expressing both feminine and masculine traits), or in a way that is fluid and constantly shifting. Gender expression encompasses the ways we dress, the ways in which we wear our hair, our mannerisms, and beyond. For more on gender expression, see Section 6.

Sex Assigned at Birth is just what it sounds like – whether, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" balloons and cards welcomed the arrival of the baby. This pink vs. blue dichotomy is one of the false binaries mentioned above. Please note that there is a third dot under "Sex Assigned at Birth" on the Gender Unicorn. There are many babies born into the world who have a less common combination of hormones, chromosomes, and anatomy that are used to assign sex at birth. Numerous conditions and syndromes can lead to a baby being born intersex. For more information on intersex, see Section 2.

Sexual Attraction refers to the aspect of human attraction that is sexual in nature. You may have heard attraction referred to as Sexual Orientation. This is also an accepted term, but it is important to note that attraction as a whole encompasses much more than sex. Attraction is about the ways in which we connect with other human beings – sexually, but also mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and romantically.

Romantic /Emotional Attraction refers to the emotional response that most people feel that results in a desire for a romantic relationship with another person. Though many people have similar patterns in their sexual and romantic attraction, others do not. For example, a person who is asexual does not experience sexual attraction, but may still experience romantic attraction. Aromantic is a label that connotes a lack of the experience of romantic attraction (an aromantic person may or may not experience sexual attraction).

When a person's sex assigned at birth doesn't "match" their gender identity, this person is part of the trans community. Trans, meaning across (in this case, across genders), is an umbrella term encompassing many diverse gender identities. Cisgender is a word to indicate that someone is not trans – a cisgender person's sex assigned at birth "matches" their gender identity. We'll talk more about the experiences of trans people below, and you can read more on what it means to be trans in Section 3, and learn why pronouns are so important, particularly in the trans community in Section 4.

It's important to keep in mind that these words can be used in more than one way, as both personal labels and as terms referring to a group or community. It is critical that we empower both marginalized groups and individuals to choose their own labels, then use these labels appropriately. For a more detailed glossary of LGBTQ terms, see Section 1.

Intersectionality and Multiple Marginalization

Humans are complex. As you saw with the Gender Unicorn, an infinite number of constellations of aspects of gender and attraction can exist within just one person. But it is important to understand that gender identity and attraction are only two pieces of an individual's identity, which also includes identities related to race and ethnicity, religion, national origin, ability, social class, and other components of identity. These identities all interact with each other in complex ways, resulting in a person's overall identity.

Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity
Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007

Jones, R.J. & McEwen, M.K. (2000). A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. Journal of College Student Development, 41(4), 405-414.

Abes, E.S., Jones, S.R., & McEwen, M.K. (2007). Reconceptualizing the model of multiple dimensions of identity: The role of meaning-making capacity in the construct of multiple identities. Journal of College Student Development, 48(1).

This model portrays the complexity of our interacting and shifting identities as human beings. Our core contains aspects of ourselves that both are affected by and affect our identities and social contexts. We'll talk more in the following sections about how a person's risk for negative outcomes can be compounded when they belong to more than one marginalized group, which increases their experiences of discrimination and harassment.

Is being LGBTQ a choice?

According to the American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Medical Association, and American Academy of Pediatrics, sexual orientation and gender identity are not choices. It is dangerous to think of sexual orientation and gender identity as choices, because this implies that they can be changed. Conversion therapy (or reparative therapy), therapy with the intention to change sexual orientation and gender identity, is not ethical. In fact, subjecting someone to conversion therapy dramatically increases their likelihood of attempting suicide. For more information, read the Ending Conversion Therapy report from SAMHSA (hyperlink).

Is being LGBTQ a mental illness?

Is being LGBTQ a mental health issue? Being LGBTQ is not a mental health issue or diagnosis. Being LGBTQ is not included in the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual – the diagnostic tool of the American Psychological Association. However, gender dysphoria, or the distress many trans people experience at the incongruence between their identity and body, is in the DSM. Being trans is not a mental health issue, but the resulting distress can be a psychological diagnosis. For more information on gender dysphoria, see [Gender Dysphoria DSM 5] (hyperlink). Though being LGBTQ is not a mental health issue, members of the LGBTQ community experience higher rates of mental illness because of the minority stress they experience including micro-aggressions, discrimination, and harassment. More on this in the next section.

Understanding the Experiences of LGBTQ People

What is privilege?

A basic understanding of privilege is prerequisite to understanding the experiences of LGBTQ people and members of other marginalized groups. Privilege can be defined as invisible, unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group. There are many types of privilege, including privilege related to race (white privilege), class (middle-upper class privilege), gender (male privilege), gender identity (cisgender privilege), orientation (heterosexual privilege), religion (Christian privilege), ability, and housing status. The pioneering work on privilege is Peggy McIntosh's work on White Privilege (hyperlink to White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack). According to McIntosh, "Whiteness protected me from many kinds of hostility, distress, and violence from which I was being subtly trained to [impose], in turn, on people of color."

Although it may come from a place of genuine acceptance, the "We treat everyone the same" approach can lead to a denial of differences and a failure to acknowledge the context of an LGBTQ person's life. It is the equivalent of the "color blind" approach to racism. Because privilege shapes our interactions, causing very different experiences for some people than others, we shouldn't say that "I don't see you as any different from anyone else," or "I don't see color." This approach communicates that "you are no different from anyone else" and invalidates the lived experience of a person with a marginalized status.

If you can say "yes" to most of the following, you likely have heterosexual privilege.

• I can be pretty sure that my roommates, classmates, and coworkers will be comfortable with my orientation.

• When I make a reference to my orientation (such as talking about my relationships), I will not be accused of pushing my sexual orientation onto others.

• I can go home from most meetings, classes, and conversations without feeling excluded, fearful, attacked, isolated, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, stereotyped, or feared because of my orientation.

• People don't ask why I chose my orientation/attraction.

• No one will ever question whether or not it is appropriate for me to have children or get married because of my sexual orientation.

• I can easily find a religious community (if I choose) that will not exclude me for my orientation/attraction.

• I can walk in public with my significant other and not have people double-take or stare.

• I do not have to fear that if my family finds out about my sexual orientation there will be economic, emotional, physical, or psychological consequences.

If you can say "yes" to most of the following, you likely have cisgender privilege.

• I can use public restrooms without fear of verbal abuse, harassment, physical intimidation, or assault.

• Strangers don't assume they can ask what my genitals look like or how I have sex.

• I have the ability to walk through the world and generally blend in, not being constantly stared at, whispered about, or laughed at because of my gender expression.

• Hollywood depicts people of my gender, and does not consistently make my identity the punchline of a joke.

• I do not have to remind friends and family repeatedly which gender pronouns to use when referring to me.

• I am able to purchase clothes that match my gender identity without being refused service, mocked, or questioned about my genitals.

• I can assume that people I encounter will understand my identity and not think that I'm confused, misled, or worse when I reveal my identity to them.

• No stranger checking my identification or drivers license will ever insult or glare at me because my name and/or sex does not match the sex they believed me to be based on my gender expression.

A few questions for you to consider when thinking about your own privilege:

• What identities do you think of most? Least?

• How often do you think about your privilege?

• Why is it important to be aware of privilege in our own identities/experiences? Why don't we attend to these on a regular basis?

• What insight can this give us in connecting with and helping others?

Mcintosh, Peggy. (2008). "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." Women: Images and Realities : A Multicultural Anthology. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies 388-92.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, non-verbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, (whether intentional or unintentional) which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. In other words, microaggressions are subtle discrimination. Here are a few examples of microaggressions experienced frequently by members of the LGBTQ community:

- Giggles in a theater during a same-sex love scene in a movie

- Getting stared at for holding your partner's hand in public

- Being told you don't "act gay" or "look trans" as if it's an accomplishment

- Seeing all advertisements depict straight couples as the only option

- "You're only bisexual/lesbian because you haven't met the right man yet."

- "Oh, you're gay? Do you know my friend John? He's gay too!"

- "Why aren't you married yet? Where is your boyfriend?"

- "How do you know you're queer if you've never had sex with a man/woman?"

- "That's cool with me as long as I can watch."

- "Why is a pretty girl like you a lesbian?"

-    "If you weren't gay, I would totally hook up with you."

-    "SHE"

Can you think of other examples of common microaggressions?
The Advocate, retrieved from http://www.advocate.com/commentary/2016/2/10/24-microaggressions-endured-lgbt-folks

Coming Out: Letting In!

Coming out is the process of recognizing, accepting, and sharing one's orientation and/or gender identity with others. Because coming out is a lifelong process, it might make more sense to think about it as letting in. Because we live in a culture that is heteronormative (assuming that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to being homosexual or bisexual) and cisnormative (assuming that everyone is cisgender, and that being cisgender is superior to being trans), members of the LGBTQ community must continuously assess with whom to disclose their identity or orientation, including in interactions with family, extended family, co-workers, classmates, social groups, and numerous other people with whom they become acquainted.

Coming out is beneficial, allowing an LGBTQ person to live authentically. As humans, we have needs to be understood and accepted for who we are. Coming out allows a person to have their honest emotions validated by people they care about. This plays a crucial role in healthy relationships, both romantic and otherwise. While coming out is empowering and beneficial, coming out can also be terrifying because the person letting someone in never knows how the other person will respond. Sometimes an LGBTQ person thinks a friend or family member is safe to come out to, and that person ends up reacting in a hurtful, damaging way. Letting someone in can make an LGBTQ person feel very vulnerable.

According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control:

"Homophobia, stigma, and discrimination have negative effects on the health of [gay men], lesbians, and other sexual minorities."

"Keeping one's sexual orientation hidden from others…and fear of having one's sexual orientation disclosed…can add to the stress of being [LGB]. In general, research has shown that [LGB people] who disclose their sexual orientation to others have better health outcomes than [LGB people] who do not. However disclosure in some settings and to individuals who react negatively can add to the stress they experience, and can lead to more stress, poorer mental health, and discrimination."

The Experiences of Trans People

Trans people experience elevated rates of homicide, physical and sexual assault, domestic violence, police violence, unemployment, homelessness, and suicide. For trans women of color, every one of these rates is even higher. According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, over 40% of trans people have

attempted suicide, compared to 1.6% of the general population. For more data on the trans community, see the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, the Executive Summary and Why Trans People Need More Visibility Fact Sheet (hyperlink).

Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011.

Creating Allies and Safe Spaces

How can I be an ally when someone comes out to me (lets me in)?

When someone comes out to you, they are putting a great deal of trust in you. The way you respond and handle this information can have a profound impact on the person disclosing their LGBTQ status. Here are some points to keep in mind when someone comes out:

-   They just need you to listen

-   Show you are interested and that you care

-   Match the person's words (pronouns, labels)

-   Mirror the person's emotions (they could be excited, devastated, or anything in between)

-   Keep in mind that sexual experience is not the same as sexual orientation. A romantic or sexual experience with a member of the same sex does not necessarily mean that person identifies as gay.

-   Most importantly – Keep information disclosed confidential!

Speaking of confidentiality - What does it mean to "out" someone?

To out an LGBTQ person is to reveal their orientation or gender identity without their consent, whether intentionally or unintentionally. When people are outed, it is most commonly not out of ill will from the person who outed them, but from a lack of understanding of its impact. It is crucial to let LGBTQ people choose when and to whom to disclose their LGBTQ status. There can be tremendous negative consequences to being outed, including loss of family and friends, loss of home, loss of job (financial repercussions), and lack of basic safety. When you out someone, you risk subjecting them to all of these experiences. If you feel like an LGBTQ youth would benefit from coming out to someone, such as a parent or counselor, talk to them about it. Ask them whether they are ready to tell their parents, and let them know that you will be there to support them if they would like you there.

Becoming an Ally

An ally is a person of any sexual orientation or gender identity who supports and honors sexual diversity, who works toward combating homophobia and transphobia, and is willing to explore and understand these forms of bias within themselves.

Notice that part of this definition is recognizing and addressing biases within ourselves, which all of us, even members of the LGBTQ community, have.

Here are some simple ways to be an ally:

- Do not make assumptions about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity (just listen!)

- Remember that LGBTQ people are a diverse group, and one person should never be asked to represent or speak for their entire group

- Stand up! Express support for LGBTQ people and confront derogatory statements, even when you don't think there is an LGBTQ person around (see Stopping Harrassment below)

- Language is of key importance. Mirror people's language and allow them to choose their own pronouns and labels (see Gender Pronouns section by Sable) (hyperlink). Below is more information on using language to act as an ally.

Gender Neutral Language

Being misgendered (referred to by the wrong pronouns) is a microaggression, and when this happens to a person consistently, can be a great stressor. Gender neutral language is a powerful tool to implement, allowing us to avoid misgendering people and to ask questions in ways that make LGBTQ people feel safe. Here are the most common linguistic tools we have to respectfully address members of the LGBTQ community:

Using the pronouns "they, them, their" as singular (referring to only one person) is a gender neutral way to refer to an individual when you may not know which pronouns they prefer. Additionally, these are the chosen pronouns of some individuals whose gender is not captured in the male/female binary. The American Dialectic Society named the singular "they" 2015 word of the year See article here.

Asking someone "What are your pronouns?" or "What gender pronouns do you prefer?" when you are unsure how to refer to them conveys your desire to respect their identity. Please note that these questions are very different than asking someone, "Are you a man or a woman?" or any variation of this question.

Where relevant, when talking about a person's significant other, asking them about their partner, or asking "Are you seeing someone?" rather than questions like, "Do you have a husband?" leaves the door

open for a lesbian, gay, or bisexual person to talk safely about their relationship, regardless of who they are in a relationship with or married to.

What Not To Say

There are several terms that can be problematic at least, and harmful at worst that we should avoid using. These include:

- Homosexual: Has been used as derogatory ("homo"); emphasizes sexual behavior over other aspects of love, commitment and relationships; feels clinical and diagnostic

- Lifestyle: Suggests that all people of one orientation or identity have a given way of living, or are represented by the most visible or fringe sector of that group; a person's lifestyle expressed in their actions, choices, interest and opinions, varies greatly among people of a given orientation or identity

- Same Sex Attraction: Often prefaced with "struggling with," this is a generally offensive phrase implying that it is changeable

- Sexual Preference: A quality that one looks for in a sexual partner, or preferred sexual activities; sexual orientation as a whole, such as being LGB, is not a sexual preference

- Outdated and offensive terms that should never be used to refer to the trans community or a trans individual include: transgendered, transsexual, transvestite, hermaphrodite, tranny

Keep in mind that this list is not comprehensive and will constantly evolve, and remember to mirror people's language, allow people to choose their own pronouns and labels.

Stopping Harassment

If you are working in a professional or human services setting, it is important to make clear to all from the beginning that homophobia/transphobia and derogatory remarks will not be tolerated. There are other settings where it may be hard to establish clear expectations or influence the behavior of others, but you can stop harassment in any setting, no matter your role. This is a clear, powerful way to be an ally to members of the LGBTQ community. With practice, this can feel fluid and natural. Here are the basic steps to stopping harassment:

- Interrupt the situation (say "stop")
- Identity the harassment (let the person know what they did)
- Broaden the response when possible by speaking for the organization or setting,
      "That is not tolerated here"
- Ask for change in future behavior
- Check in with the target of harassment privately

SAMSA (2012). A Provider's Introduction to Substance Abuse Treatment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals.

A Final Note on being an Ally

Don't be afraid to say, "I don't understand, but I want to be respectful of you." Being a good ally does not mean that you never get confused or make mistakes. It means that you are doing everything in your power to learn and act in a respectful way, always, even when you don't understand.

Thank you for completing this training!

If you have questions, comments, would like a webinar of this presentation or want more information, please email marian@parity.nyc

LGBTQ TERMS

Terms are always changing in the LGBTQ+ community. If you are speaking with someone, try to match the words they choose and do not try to guess how they identify.

Cisgender/cis: term for someone who exclusively identifies as their sex assigned at birth. The term cisgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life.

Transgender/Trans: encompassing term of many gender identities of those who do not identify or exclusively identify with their sex assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. Also see: The Gender Unicorn.

Queer: A term for people of marginalized gender identities and sexual orientations who are not cisgender and/or heterosexual. This term has a complicated history as a reclaimed slur.

Basic Terminology:

Cis(gender): Adjective that means "identifies as their sex assigned at birth" derived from the Latin word meaning "on the same side." A cisgender/cis person is not transgender. "Cisgender" does not indicate biology, gender expression, or sexuality/sexual orientation. In discussions regarding trans issues, one would differentiate between women who are trans and women who aren't by saying trans women and cis women. Cis is not a "fake" word and is not a slur. Note that cisgender does not have an "ed" at the end.

Gender Expression/Presentation: The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. (typically referred to as masculine or feminine). Many transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth. Someone with a gender nonconforming gender expression may or may not be transgender.

Gender Identity: One's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or other gender(s). Everyone has a gender identity, including you. For transgender people, their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity are not necessarily the same.

Sex Assigned At Birth: The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex

assigned at birth often based on physical anatomy at birth and/or karyotyping.

Sexual Orientation: A person's physical, romantic, emotional, aesthetic, and/or other form of attraction to others. In Western cultures, gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Trans people can be straight, bisexual, lesbian, gay, asexual, pansexual, queer, etc. just like anyone else. For example, a trans woman who is exclusively attracted to other women would often identify as lesbian.

Transgender/Trans: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. Note that transgender does not have an "ed" at the end.

Transition: A person's process of developing and assuming a gender expression to match their gender identity. Transition can include: coming out to one's family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) some form of surgery. It's best not to assume how one transitions as it is different for everyone.

Transsexual: A deprecated term that is often considered pejorative similar to transgender in that it indicates a difference between one's gender identity and sex assigned at birth. Transsexual often – though not always – implicates hormonal/surgical transition from one binary gender (male or female) to the other. Unlike transgender/trans, transsexual is not an umbrella term, as many transgender people do not identify as transsexual. When speaking/writing about trans people, please avoid the word transsexual unless asked to use it by a transsexual person.

More Terminology:

Agender: An umbrella term encompassing many different genders of people who commonly do not have a gender and/or have a gender that they describe as neutral. Many agender people are trans. As a new and quickly-evolving term, it is best you ask how someone defines agender for themselves.

AFAB and AMAB: Acronyms meaning "assigned female/male at birth" (also designated female/male at birth or female/male assigned at birth). No one, whether cis or trans, gets to choose what sex they're assigned at birth. This term is preferred to "biological male/female", "male/female bodied", "natal male/female", and "born male/female", which are defamatory and inaccurate.

Ally: Someone who advocates and supports a community other than their own. Allies are not part of the communities they help. A person should not self-identify as an ally but show that they are one through action.

Aromantic: The lack of romantic attraction, and one identifying with this orientation. This may be used as an umbrella term for other emotional attractions such as demiromantic.

Asexual: The lack of a sexual attraction, and one identifying with this orientation. This may be used as an umbrella term for other emotional attractions such as demisexual.

Bigender: Refers to those who identify as two genders. Can also identify as multigender (identifying as two or more genders). Do not confuse this term with Two-Spirit, which is specifically associated with Native American and First Nations cultures.

Binary: Used as an adjective to describe the genders female/male or woman/man. Since the binary genders are the only ones recognized by general society as being legitimate, they enjoy an (unfairly) privileged status.

Bisexuality: An umbrella term for people who experience sexual and/or emotional attraction to more than one gender (pansexual, fluid, omnisexual, queer, etc).

Boi: A term used within the queer communities of color to refer to sexual orientation, gender, and/or aesthetic among people assigned female at birth. Boi often designates queer women who present with masculinity (although, this depends on location and usage). This term originated in women of color communities.

Bottom Surgery: Genital surgeries such as vaginoplasty, phalloplasty, or metoidioplasty.

Butch: An identity or presentation that leans towards masculinity. Butch can be an adjective (she's a butch woman), a verb (he went home to "butch up"), or a noun (they identify as a butch). Although commonly associated with masculine queer/lesbian women, it's used by many to describe a distinct gender identity and/or expression, and does not necessarily imply that one also identifies as a woman or not.

Cross-dressing (also crossdressing): The act of dressing and presenting as a different gender. One who considers this an integral part of their identity may identify as a cross-dresser. "Transvestite" is often considered a pejorative term with the same meaning. Drag performers are cross-dressing performers who take on stylized, exaggerated gender presentations (although not all drag performers identify as cross-dressers). Cross-dressing and drag are forms of gender expression and are not necessarily tied to erotic activity, nor are they indicative of one's sexual orientation or gender identity. Do NOT use these terms to describe someone who has transitioned or intends to do so in the future.

Cissexism: Systemic prejudice in the favor of cisgender people.

Cissimilation: The expectation for and act of trans people, especially trans women, assimilating to cisgender (and often heteronormative) standards of appearance and performance.

Drag: Exaggerated, theatrical, and/or performative gender presentation. Although most commonly used to

refer to cross-dressing performers (drag queens and drag kings), anyone of any gender can do any form of drag. Doing drag does not necessarily have anything to do with one's sex assigned at birth, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Dyadic: Not Intersex.

Equality: A state in which everyone is equal. This ignores difference in identity/community and history. Read why we changed our name from "equality" to "educational."

Equity/Liberation/Justice: A state in which all marginalized communities are free. This differs greatly from equality. Read TSER director's Eli Erlick's article on why equality hurts the transgender movement

Femme: An identity or presentation that leans towards femininity. Femme can be an adjective (he's a femme boy), a verb (she feels better when she "femmes up"), or a noun (they're a femme). Although commonly associated with feminine lesbian/queer women, it's used by many to describe a distinct gender identity and/or expression, and does not necessarily imply that one also identifies as a woman or not.

Gender Affirming Surgery; Genital Reassignment/Reconstruction Surgery; Vaginoplasty; Phalloplasty; Metoidioplasty: Refers to surgical alteration, and is only one part of some trans people's transition (see "Transition" above). Only the minority of transgender people choose to and can afford to have genital surgery. The following terms are inaccurate, offensive, or outdated: sex change operation, gender reassignment/realignment surgery (gender is not changed due to surgery), gender confirmation/confirming surgery (genitalia do not confirm gender), and sex reassignment/realignment surgery (as it insinuates a single surgery is required to transition along with sex being an ambiguous term).

The Gender Binary: A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two, opposite categories, termed "male and female", in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. This system is oppressive to anyone who defies their sex assigned at birth, but particularly those who are gender-variant or do not fit neatly into one of the two standard categories.

Gender Dysphoria: Anxiety and/or discomfort regarding one's sex assigned at birth.

Gender Fluid: A changing or "fluid" gender identity.

Gender Identity Disorder / GID: A controversial DSM-III and DSM-IV diagnosis given to transgender and other gender-nonconforming people. Because it labels people as "disordered," Gender Identity Disorder is often considered offensive. The diagnosis is frequently given to children who don't conform to expected gender norms in terms of dress, play or behavior. Such children are often subjected to intense psychotherapy, behavior modification and/or institutionalization. This term was replaced by the term "gender dysphoria" in the DSM-5.

Genderqueer: An identity commonly used by people who do not identify or express their gender within the

gender binary. Those who identify as genderqueer may identify as neither male nor female, may see themselves as outside of or in between the binary gender boxes, or may simply feel restricted by gender labels. Many genderqueer people are cisgender and identify with it as an aesthetic. Not everyone who identifies as genderqueer identifies as trans or nonbinary.

Heteronormative / Heteronormativity: These terms refer to the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm, which plays out in interpersonal interactions and society and furthers the marginalization of queer people.

Intersex: Describing a person with a less common combination of hormones, chromosomes, and anatomy that are used to assign sex at birth. There are many examples such as Klinefelter Syndrome, Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, and Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia. Parents and medical professionals usually coercively assign intersex infants a sex and have, in the past, been medically permitted to perform surgical operations to conform the infant's genitalia to that assignment. This practice has become increasingly controversial as intersex adults speak out against the practice. The term intersex is not interchangeable with or a synonym for transgender (although some intersex people do identify as transgender).

LGBTQQIAPP+: A collection of identities short for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, aromantic, pansexual, polysexual (sometimes abbreviated to LGBT or LGBTQ+). Sometimes this acronym is replaced with "queer." Note that "ally" is not included in this acronym.

Monosexual / Multisexual / Non-monosexual: Umbrella terms for orientations directed towards one gender (monosexual) or multiple genders (multisexual/non-monosexual).

Nonbinary (Also Non-Binary): Preferred umbrella term for all genders other than female/male or woman/man, used as an adjective (e.g. Jesse is a nonbinary person). Not all nonbinary people identify as trans and not all trans people identify as nonbinary. Sometimes (and increasingly), nonbinary can be used to describe the aesthetic/presentation/expression of a cisgender or transgender person.

Packing: Wearing a penile prosthesis.

Pansexual: Capable of being attracted to many/any gender(s). Sometimes the term omnisexual is used in the same manner. "Pansexual" is being used more and more frequently as more people acknowledge that gender is not binary. Sometimes, the identity fails to recognize that one cannot know individuals with every existing gender identity.

Passing/blending/assimilating: Being perceived by others as a particular identity/gender or cisgender regardless how the individual in question identifies, e.g. passing as straight, passing as a cis woman, passing as a youth. This term has become controversial as "passing" can imply that one is not genuinely what they are passing as.

Polysexual: Capable of being attracted to multiple gender(s).

Queer: General term for gender and sexual minorities who are not cisgender and/or heterosexual. There is a lot of overlap between queer and trans identities, but not all queer people are trans and not all trans people are queer. The word queer is still sometimes used as a hateful slur, so although it has mostly been reclaimed, be careful with its use.

Stealth: To not be openly transgender in all or almost all social situations.

T: Short for testosterone.

Top Surgery: Chest surgery such as double mastectomy, breast augmentation, or periareolar (keyhole) surgeries.

Trans: Prefix or adjective used as an abbreviation of transgender, derived from the Latin word meaning "across from" or "on the other side of."

Trans*: An outdated term popularized in the early 2010's that was used to signify an array of identities under the trans umbrella. However, it became problematized online due to improper usage. See our page on the asterisk.

Transmisogyny: Originally coined by the author Julia Serano, this term designates the intersectionality of transphobia and misogyny and how they are often experienced as a form of oppression by trans women.

Transphobia: Systemic violence against trans people, associated with attitudes such as fear, discomfort, distrust, or disdain. This word is used similarly to homophobia, xenophobia, misogyny, etc.

Trans Woman / Trans Man: Trans woman generally describes someone assigned male at birth who identifies as a woman. This individual may or may not actively identify as trans. It is grammatically and definitionally correct to include a space between trans and woman. The same concept applies to trans men. Often it is good just to use woman or man.
Sometimes trans women identify as male-to-female (also MTF, M2F, or trans feminine) and sometimes trans men identify as female-to-male (also FTM, F2M, or trans masculine). Please ask before identifying someone. Use the term and pronouns preferred by the individual.

Two Spirit: An umbrella term indexing various indigenous gender identities in North America.

For additional excellent LGBTQ resources, visit the [Trans Student Educational Resources](#)
page. Trans Student Educational Resources is a youth-led organization dedicated to
transforming the educational environment for trans and gender nonconforming students through advocacy and
empowerment.

INTERSEX

by Sable Liggera, Smith College

Intersex people are an extraordinary part of our LGBTQ family because the term intersex has to do with a sex classification rather than sexual orientation or gender identity.

A person who is intersex has an unique combination of hormones and chromosomes that lead to them being born with both male and female biological sex organs. While such people were previously referred to as hermaphrodites, this term is outdated and has been replaced by intersex.

Intersex people face difficult circumstances regarding their sex assigned at birth. In the past and still now, the common medical procedure when an intersex child was simply to remove one pair of sexual organs so the child only had either male or female parts. Usually, most intersex children have their penis removed and are left with only female parts as it is an easier medical procedure.

In recent times, the intersex community has spoken out against this practice. Because they are automatically forced to undergo this operation as infants, they are not given the time to grow up and learn for themselves what their gender identity is, whether it is anything from female, to male, to bigender, to any other gender classification. The intersex community argues that medical practitioners inflicting surgery without their input can deprive them from choosing themselves what they want and how they feel such as what surgery they want to undergo (or if they want surgery at all). For example, by automatically removing the infant's penis (which is the most common practice), if the infant grows up to identify as a man, they are trapped into having a female body.
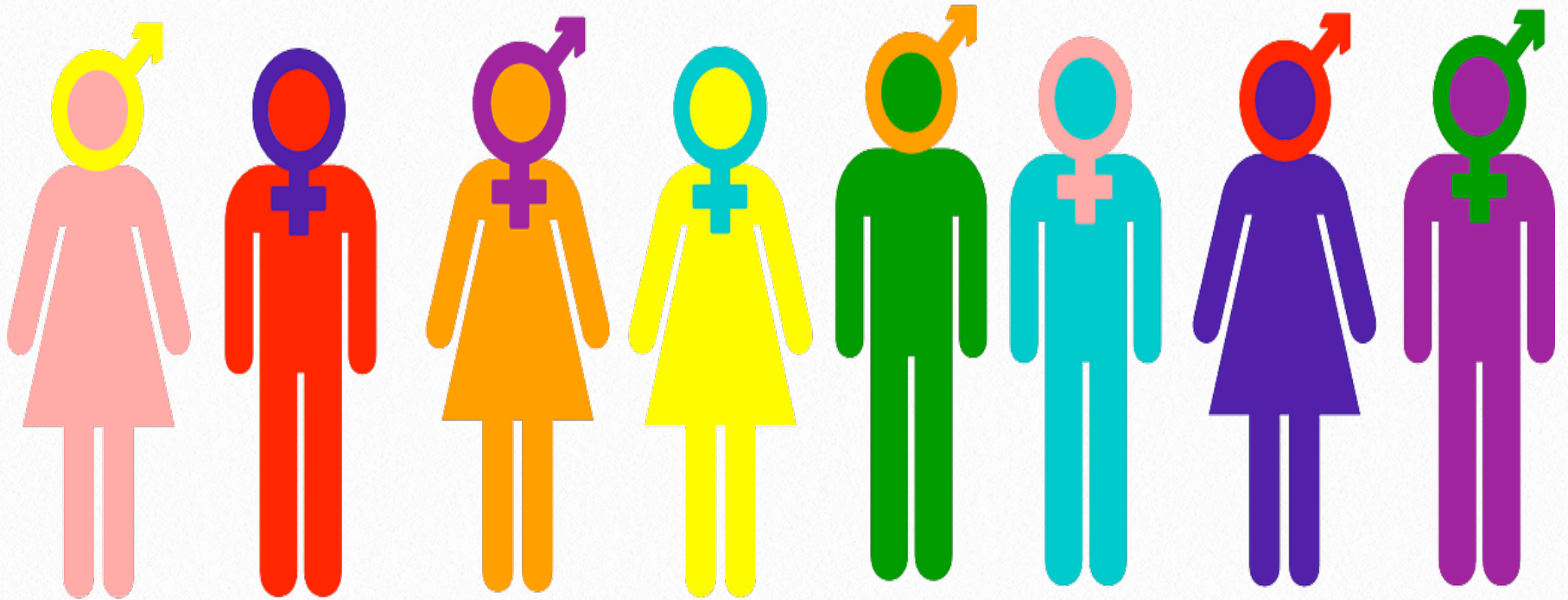
For a more detailed medical explanation on what it means to be intersex, visit Medline.
For more information, resources, and access to a support group, visit the Intersex Society of North America.

TRANSGENDER

THE GENDER UMBRELLA

Gender Umbrella

By Sable Liggera, Smith College

Just as sexuality can be expressed in many different ways, so can gender. While some people believe that gender can only be defined as being a man or women, in fact, there are many different ways that gender can be portrayed.

To explain it briefly, a person who is transgender is simply someone who feels that their gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at birth.

For example, someone, let's say Steve, was born with male reproductive organs, i.e. a penis. If Steve also feels internally like a man, he is cisgender. If Steve feels that internally to be not man but a woman, Steve would be transgender.

Although some transgender people transition purely from male to female, or vice versa, other trans-people are somewhere in between. People can identify as a man, woman, as neither, somewhere in between, or both.

An example of someone who identifies as both is someone who is genderfluid. Someone who is genderfluid feels their gender identity differently from time to time. One day, they might feel more like a women, and use she/her pronouns and dress as such, while another day they may feel more like a man and portray themselves that way.

Another way that gender can be expressed is by being genderqueer or agender, which means they do not identify as male or female and instead perhaps identify as somewhere in between. Meanwhile, someone who is bigender identifies as both male and female.

For a great visual explaining the difference between gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, check out the Trans Student Educational Resources' Gender Unicorn:

The Gender Unicorn
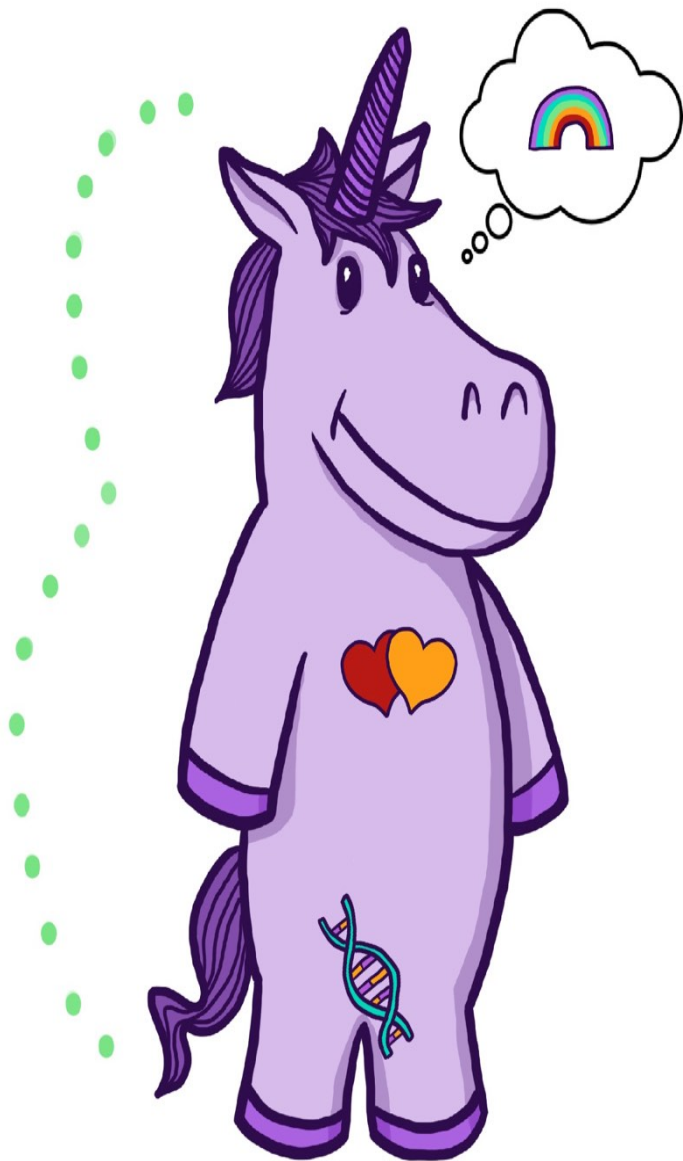
Gender Identity
- Female/Woman/Girl
- Male/Man/Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression
- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth
- Female
- Male
- Other/Intersex

Physically Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

For tips on how to be a good ally to the trans community, visit GLAAD.

For a general FAQ on what it means to be transgender, visit the Human Rights Campaign.

WHY TRANS PEOPLE NEED MORE VISIBILITY

With more visibility comes more understanding. These statistics can and will get better as trans people become more visible in our society.

80% of trans students feel unsafe at school because of their gender expression
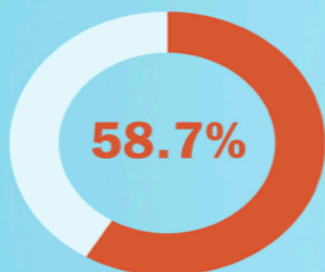
58.7% of gender non-conforming students have experienced verbal harassment in the past year because of their gender expression, compared to 29% of their peers
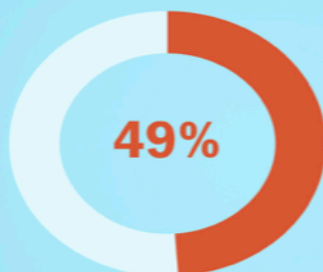
49% of trans people reported physical abuse in a 2007 survey

The Gender, Violence, and Resource Access Survey found that
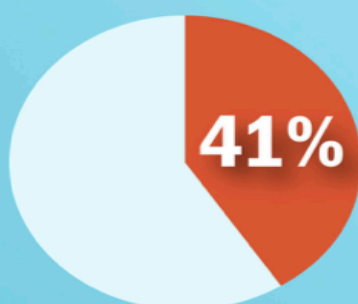
50% of trans people have been raped or assaulted by a romantic partner

Trans people of color are...
6X more likely to experience physical violence when interacting with the police than white cisgender survivors of violence

41% of trans people have attempted suicide

1 in 5 transgender people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives

1 in 8 have been evicted due to being transgender

t transstudent
f /transstudent
@transstudent

For more information, go to transstudent.org/graphics

TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources

Infographic Design by Landyn Pan

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GENDER PRONOUNS

by Sable Liggera, Smith College

Firstly, what are gender pronouns? Pronouns are used to refer to a person in the third person. For example, saying "she is reading a book." She would be a gender pronoun. To continue the example, he and they are also pronouns.

According to the English language, pronouns are assigned a gender. This can most easily be described by comparing it to another language. So, back to the example of "she is reading a book." In English, the person who went to the store is clearly defined as female by the pronoun used in the sentence.

Now, take Chinese for example. A direct translation of "She is reading a book" is 她正在看书, pronounced ta zheng zai kan shu. But let's say now that we want to say a boy in reading a book. In English, we would use male gender pronouns and say "he is reading a book." In Chinese, however, you would say "他正在看书" which is still pronounced ta zheng zai kan shu-- the exact same pronunciation as when the sentence referred to a girl instead of a boy. Because Chinese verbally does not distinguish between men and women, it used gender-neutral pronouns, and, because English does, it has gender pronouns.

So how does this little grammar lesson apply to the LGBTQ community? It does so because it means the English language requires us to assign a gender when talking about another person. This is easy when you are referring to a clear-cut cisgender person, but, to a transperson, gender pronouns can be a source of stress because they run the risk of being referred to as the wrong gender (which relates back to the previous chapter on gender dysphoria).

The basic rule of thumb is to simply use the gender pronoun that a person wants you to use. If you aren't sure how they identify, ask them what they prefer. Of course you might feel awkward or afraid of offending them… but I can personally say that I always prefer if someone out front asks me what I prefer rather than being too afraid to ask and then referring to me as the wrong gender.

Furthermore, taking the initiative of making sure you refer to someone with the right pronouns can also make them more comfortable. Some trans-people feel uncomfortable correcting people who are using the wrong pronouns because they fear rejection, are tired of correcting people time after time and feel its not worth it in the moment, are simply shy… there are tons of reasons! Making the time to ask them what they prefer shows them that you are accepting and you care about respecting them.

So what are the pronouns that people can use? Of course, there are the typical she/her and he/his gender pronouns. However, they/their, the gender neutral term used to refer to a group of people, is now also being used a personal pronouns for people who are identified as outside the gender binary of male and female. Similarly, the gender pronoun ze/zir is also used to refer to non-binary people (for example: ze is reading a book/ I ran into zir).

For a chart demonstrating how to use different gender pronouns, visit Trans Student Educational Resources's Gender Pronouns graphic.

GENDER DYSPHORIA

by Sable Liggera, Smith College

Due to pressure and society, life as a transgender person can be very stressful. Not only do transgender people face societal and workplace discrimination, they also have to cope with incapability of their body with their gender identity. For this reason, many transgender people experience gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria refers to the anxiety felt due to conflict between internal gender identity versus the sex assigned to you at birth. Having to experience life in a body that doesn't fit your own internal perception of yourself can cause a lot of stress and anxiety.

While some people are able to alter their appearance to match their gender identity, not all people can. Sometimes, due to work, an unwillingness to jeopardize a personal relationships, or many other reasons, a transgender person is unable to express themselves. Even if they can, it also can be difficult without the proper resources or a certain physique to "pass," or, as defined by TSER, "be perceived by others as a particular identity/gender or cisgender regardless how the individual in question identifies." This is, of course, a horrible way of looking at it as regardless of physical appearance we should respect someone's gender identity. Still, when a person does not look the way they want to look, or is harassed or misidentifies as the wrong gender, it can cause significant stress and harm to self-esteem.

Naturally, it is important to know about gender dysphoria if you are transgender. Being able to identify the reasoning behind what you may be feeling can sometimes help you cope with the symptoms it causes. As a transgender person myself, I have been asked over and over what it "feels" like and when I realized and began to identify as trans. I believe gender dysphoria plays a large role in the lives of most transgender people. To put it simply, I began to identify as trans when I realized how unhappy I was with myself looking into the mirror. After I could finally identify what was making me so unhappy with myself and my appearance, I realized what I could do to make myself happier. Even things that may seem minor, such as wearing boxers or panties, skirts or ties, can go along way in making 'you' feel more comfortable with 'you', simply by countering dysphoria by wearing what makes you feel more confident and more like yourself.

Even if you are not transgender, and have never experienced gender dysphoria, knowing what your transgender friends and family may be feeling helps you be a better friend, ally, family member, and all-around person. If you have the tiniest glimpse of what a transgender person may be feeling, you can begin to emphasize and provide support.

GENDER EXPRESSION

by Sable Liggera, Smith College

Gender expression refers to the way a person physically displays their gender identity. For example, according to American societal norms, women will wear dresses to express their identity and men will wear ties… or any other example you can think of. Because a transgender person's sex does not match their gender identity, often, a person who identifies as transgender will transition.

Transitioning is when a person alters their gender expression, how they look outside, to match their gender identity, how they feel inside. This can be done by changing the clothes you wear, your hairstyle, taking hormones, or undergoing gender reassignment surgery to alter your sex organs.

You may have also hear of the term transsexual when referring to transgender people. Transsexual, however, is actually an outdated term. In the past, it was generally used to describe a transgender person who had undergone gender reassignment surgery. But because many transgender people actually decide not to undergo surgery, this term has fallen out of favor. Now, we tend to simply use the term transgender in order to refer all the ways people perceive and express their gender identity.

A person, however, can still be transgender regardless of how they display their gender externally (i.e. hairstyle, clothing), or if they choose to alter their body physically (i.e. undergoing gender reassignment surgery).

Despite the fact that many transpeople decide not to undergo gender reassignment surgery, often times, you will notice that society tends to fixate on whether or not they have undergone gender reassignment surgery. Although society tends to fixate this way, whether or not a transgender person decides whether or not to undergo gender reassignment surgery, or surgery to alter their biological sex organs does not make them any more or any less transgender.

Say for example that Steve changes her name to Sally and begins transitioning or living life according to how she internally identifies her gender. Whether or not Sally wants to have surgery to alter her physical appearance does not make her any more or any less of a woman. What is important is how she identifies, not how other people choose to interpret her gender. To put it bluntly, a person's body is nobody's business but their own. We would never ask cisgender people about their private parts, so why should we treat a transgender person differently? For an amazing example of a transgender person speaking out against this unfair societal practice, see Laverne Cox's outspoken interview with Katie Couric. In it, she points out how the media's fixation with transgender bodies distract from real issues regarding transpeople-- such as workplace discrimination, higher rates of suicide, and higher rates of assault.

ASEXUALITY: SCOPES OF ATTRACTION

by Sable Liggera, Smith College

Sexual orientation refers to "a person's physical, romantic, emotional, aesthetic, and/or other form of attraction to others." Sexual orientation can also be expanded to refer to a person's lack of attraction to others.

A person who does not experience sexual attraction refers to someone who is asexual. Asexuality, however, can be expanded past this brief definition to include people who identify as aromantic. A person who identifies as aromantic experiences sexual attraction but does not experience romantic attraction.

The difference between sexual and romantic attraction can be confusing to many, so I will now take a moment to dive into the differentiation. Sexual attraction refers to the desire a person has for sexual contact with another a person. Romantic attraction refers for the desire a person has for romantic emotional connection with another person. Therefore, a person who desires for sexual contact with other people but has no desire for romantic emotional connection can be referred to as aromantic. Someone who desires emotional connection but not sexual contact is asexual.

People can experience attraction in all different mixes and ways. For example, Tim Gunn, famous for his role as a fashion consultant for Project Runway, describes himself homoromantic and asexual. Homoromantic, as it sounds, means he experiences romantic attraction to people of the same gender, in this case men. However, as he is asexual, while he is romantically attracted to men be has no desire to have sex, either with men or with women. A lesbian would refer to someone who is both homoromantic (desiring a romantic emotional relationship with women) and homosexual (desiring a sexual relationship with women). A man who identifies as straight would classify as heterosexual (sexually attracted to the opposite sex) and heteroromantic (romantically attracted to the opposite sex).

For more information and resources regarding asexuality, be sure to visit the Asexual Visibility and Education Network, a great online community and resource network, to learn about asexual advocacy and the resource, What is Asexuality?

FOR EDUCATORS: LGBTQ YOUTH SAFETY

Educators can set the tone for school safety. Here are some ways to create a culture of safety and to include LGBTQ students:

Educator Guides, Curriculum Resources: GLSEN

Supports from HRC's Welcoming Schools

Specific resources from Teaching Tolerance

From Teaching Tolerance, recommendations for creating school climates where LGBTQ students will thrive:

Build an Inclusive School Climate

Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs (GSAs)

GSA's are a great way to educate students about diversity and support LGBT students. They can also be a valuable resource to administrators trying to gauge the temperature of their school climates.

Remember that a GSA club is no different than any other student club and cannot be subjected to any extra regulations.

Get Started
Empower GSA members to educate their peers by providing venues for communication (e.g., airtime during the daily announcements, a wall on which to hang posters or a school assembly).

Inclusive Leaders and Allies

Leaders who promote a safe and inclusive environment are essential in creating a positive school climate, and they should be rewarded accordingly.

Publicly praise staff members who actively promote an inclusive environment. This practice both affirms their positive action and creates a culture in which other staff members are unafraid to be allies to LGBT and gender-nonconforming students.

Get Started
At end-of-the-year award ceremonies, present special "Diversity Leader" certificates to educators who actively promoted an inclusive school environment throughout the year.

Clothing and Dress Codes

Clothing is a key way students express their various identities—and many fashion choices are protected by the First Amendment.

• Enforce dress codes among all students equally. A school cannot constitutionally forbid male students to wear dresses, for instance, if other students are allowed to wear dresses.
• Empower students to express themselves. Messages supporting LGBT rights are protected speech, whether they're spoken, worn on a button or printed on a T-shirt.

Get Started
Check your dress code today. Are there rules that apply only to some students? If so, take immediate steps to remove them from your student handbook.

Transgender and Intersex Students

Gender (how a person feels) and biological sex (the physical makeup of a person's anatomy) are two different things, and they are not always aligned. For example, a person may be raised as a girl but identify as a boy. Others may have been born with a condition that places their biological sex between male and female; they may still be deciding which gender they will ultimately adopt.

• Help students whose gender is incorrectly listed on paperwork to correct the situation and ensure school staff and students address them using their preferred pronouns.

• Designate a gender-neutral restroom. Binary (women/men or boy/girl) restrooms aren't inclusive and can be unsafe spaces for transgender and intersex students. Allow each transgender or intersex student to use the restroom in which that student is most comfortable, whether it's the gender-neutral restroom or the restroom that corresponds with the student's self-identified gender.

Get Started
Evaluate your administrative forms and communications. Do they use gender-neutral language or provide an opportunity for students to communicate their gender identity? If not, make the needed updates.

Proms and Other School Events

LGBT students and students who do not conform to gender norms can easily feel excluded from extracurricular events like proms if care is not taken to implement inclusive practices and language.

• Use gender-inclusive language on all event communications, including invitations.

• Educate event organizers about students' First Amendment right to attend events with a same-sex date and to wear clothing of their choice.

Get Started
Designate one member of your prom committee as the "Inclusivity Planner" to ensure that every student feels welcome.

Privacy

Four of ten LGBT youths say the community in which they live is not accepting of LGBT people, which makes it absolutely imperative that educators respect students' right to privacy.

Never reveal a student's sexual orientation or gender identity without the student's permission—even to the student's family.

Get Started
Include language in school privacy policies that explicitly states the confidentiality of information pertaining to students' sexual orientations and gender identities.

Preventing and Addressing Problems

Anti-Bullying Policy
Before a school can be inclusive of all students, it must be safe for all students. Your school's anti-bullying policy or code of conduct is the most public statement of its commitment to student safety. A strong policy protects all students, but many schools need explicit guidance on safeguarding LGBT students.

• Include language specifically prohibiting harassment based on nonconformity to gender norms, gender identity and gender expression.
• Give examples of harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation.
• Evaluate the effectiveness of your school's anti-bullying program annually using student and staff surveys.
• Designate an anti-bullying coordinator as well as an anti-bullying task force. Staff members specifically trained to prevent and respond to bullying incidents play a pivotal role in developing and maintaining your school's anti-bullying program and are essential if a bullying incident occurs.
• Communicate effectively and often with students, parents or guardians and the community about school climate issues such as bullying. Post the name and contact information for your schools' anti-bullying coordinator in the office, on the school website and in the student handbook.
• Ensure that reactions to reports of harassment do not further stigmatize students who were targeted for their real or perceived LGBT identities.

• Educate teachers and administrators about common bullying myths, such as the idea that LGBT students are "asking for it" by expressing their sexual orientations or dressing in their preferred manners.

Get Started
Review your current anti-bullying policy. Don't forget to get input from students, parents, guardians, educators and the community.

Bullying Hot Spots

Bullying often occurs when adults aren't present. Identifying areas where bullying takes place and taking action to make those places safer is an important step in the school climate improvement process.

Identify "hot spots" where bullying often occurs (inside or outside) and take immediate corrective actions to eliminate them, such as training and assigning students or staff to monitor these locations and/or adding cameras.

Get Started
Teaching Tolerance's mapping exercise helps you begin identifying your school's "hot spots."

Training

From students to district administrators, everyone has a role to play in creating an inclusive school climate. Proper training gives all school community members a thorough understanding of the part they play in making their school an environment that welcomes all students.

Conduct student training once a year, including age appropriate discussion of the following:

- The importance of diversity (including nonconformity with gender norms) in the student body;

- Behaviors that constitute bullying;

- The negative impact of bullying;

- How students should respond to bullying;

- How teachers should respond to bullying;

- Disciplinary consequences for students who bully their peers; and

- The process for reporting bullying.

Conduct teacher and administrator training once a year, including the following topics in addition to those above:

- Root causes of bullying;

- Steps to foster an inclusive education environment for all students—specifically students who don't conform to gender norms or who might be perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender;

- Review of the school's bullying policy, emphasizing staff's responsibility to respond to all bullying; and

- Disciplinary consequences for school staff who engage in or ignore bullying.

Get Started
Teaching Tolerance's guide, Speak Up at School, gives both educators and students practical strategies for speaking up against biased speech.

Religion

Religion can be a hot topic when discussing LGBT issues. All students are entitled to their religious viewpoints, but those viewpoints may not intrude on the rights of others.

Harassment based on religious beliefs is unacceptable and should be addressed according to your school's anti-bullying policy.

Get Started
Include faith groups in your school's multi-cultural club as an opportunity for crosscultural understanding.

Conversion Therapy

Also known as reparative or sexual reorientation therapy, this pseudo-scientific "therapy" has been denounced by all major medical and psychological associations and may cause a student great psychological harm.

• Educate school staff about myths perpetrated by those who conduct conversion therapy. It is impossible to "turn" an individual from gay to straight.

• Prepare counselors and teachers to support students who are coping with the emotional side effects of conversion therapy. Students who have undergone this so-called therapy have reported increased anxiety, depression, and in some cases, increased thoughts about suicide.

SAMHSA's Ending Conversion Therapy: Supporting and Affirming LGBTQ Youth is highly recommended.

GSA'S – WHAT'S THAT?

GSA's (gay-straight alliances - also sometimes called QSA's, or queer, straight alliances) are student-led clubs that aim to make the school community a safer place for all students regardless of their sexual orientation. Their members include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ) youth and their straight allies.

Canadian schools with explicit anti-homophobia interventions such as gay-straight alliances may reduce the odds of suicidal thoughts and attempts among both
sexual minority and straight students, according to a new study. Read the study.

Ten Tips for Starting a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)

Overview:
From school rules to food to ground rules, these simply steps can help make a GSA's launch successful.

1. Follow guidelines. Establish a GSA the same way you would establish any other club. Look in your Student Handbook for the rules at your school. This may include getting permission from an administrator, finding an adviser and/or writing a constitution.

2. Find a faculty adviser. Find a teacher or staff member who you think would be supportive or who already has proven to be an ally around sexual orientation issues. It could be a teacher, counselor, nurse or librarian.

3. Inform administration of your plans. Tell administrators what you're doing right away. It can be very helpful to have an administrator on your side. That person can work as a liaison on your behalf with teachers, parents, community members and the school board. If an administrator is resistant to the GSA, let him or her know that forming a GSA is protected under the Federal Equal Access Act.

4. Inform guidance counselors and social workers about the group. These individuals may know students who would be interested in joining.

5. Pick a meeting place. You may want to find a meeting place that offers some level of privacy or confidentiality. A high-profile meeting place may discourage reluctant participants.

6. Advertise. Figure out the best way to advertise at your school. It may be a combination of school bulletin announcements, fliers and word of mouth. If your fliers are defaced or torn down, don't be discouraged! Keep putting them back up. Posting fliers with words like "end homophobia" or "discuss sexual orientation" can help raise awareness and can make other students feel safer – even if they never attend a single meeting.

7. Get food. This one is kind of obvious. People are more inclined to come to meetings when you provide food.

8. Hold your meeting. You may want to start out with a discussion about why people think the group is important. You can also brainstorm things your club would like to do this year.

9. Establish ground rules. Many groups create ground rules to ensure that group discussions are safe, confidential and respectful. Many groups adopt a rule that no assumptions or labels are used about a group member's sexual orientation. This can help make straight allies feel comfortable about attending the club.

10. Plan for the future. Develop an action plan. Brainstorm activities. Set goals for what you want to work toward. Contact GLSEN or the GSA Network (for students in California) to connect with other GSAs in your state and to learn about ways to get involved.

These ideas were adapted from the GSA Network.

Additional helpful resources:

http://www.glsen.org/jumpstart

https://www.aclu.org/library-lgbt-youth-schools-resources-and-links?redirect=lgbt-rights_hiv-aids/library#access

https://gsanetwork.org/resources

http://www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/osr-admin_helping-students-start-gay-straight-alliances.pdf

http://cogsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/OC_DevelopmentGuide_M3.pdf

http://humaneeducation.org/blog/2014/02/10/humane-education-gsa-suicide-link-highlights-influence-school-culture/

http://www.liveoutloud.info/resources/lesson-plans/

https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2012/06/21/11802/gay-straight-alliances/

http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2013/08/primary-sources-how-are-lives-lgbtq-youth-improved-gay-straight-alliances

https://www.txca.org/images/tca/Documents/Conference/PGC13/Handouts/75.pdf

Business GSA:
https://www.outandaboutnashville.com/story/nissan-s-gay-straight-alliance-helps-raise#.VphpeTbnvow

7

SIGNS, RISKS & ACTION

Recognize Warning Signs, Risk Factors, Know What To Do

Need Help? Have A Question?

Don't Hesitate, Call The Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

In this chapter:

- What leads to suicide

- Warning signs

- Risk factors

Important note:
This chapter outlines what have been identified as some warning signs of suicidality, however it is not possible to recognize every sign or possible to prevent every suicide. Suicide survivors and family members should proceed with caution in this section, always keeping in mind that no one is to blame for "missing something." Some suicidal individuals are very secretive and we personally know of instances within hospital psychiatric units where medical professionals and therapists never suspected patients' suicidal intent. Blame doesn't help - love and support DOES.

If you have a question, call the Suicide Prevention hotline: 1-800-273-8255

If you have a question or need help, call the Suicide Prevention hotline: 1-800-273-8255

What leads to suicide?
From the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:

There's no single cause for suicide. Suicide most often occurs when stressors and health issues converge to create an experience of hopelessness and despair. Depression is the most common condition associated with suicide, and it is often undiagnosed or untreated. Conditions like depression, anxiety and substance problems, especially when unaddressed, increase risk for suicide. Yet it's important to note that most people who actively manage their mental health conditions lead fulfilling lives.

Suicide Warning Signs

Something to look out for when concerned that a person may be suicidal is a change in behavior or the presence of entirely new behaviors. This is of sharpest concern if the new or changed behavior is related to a painful event, loss, or change. Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do.

If a person talks about:

- Killing themselves

- Feeling hopeless

- Having no reason to live

- Being a burden to others

- Feeling trapped

- Unbearable pain

Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss or change: change:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs

- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for materials or means

- Withdrawing from activities

- Isolating from family and friends

- Sleeping too much or too little

- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye

- Giving away prized possessions

- Aggression

- Fatigue

Mood

People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:

- Depression

- Anxiety

- Loss of interest

- Irritability

- Humiliation

- Agitation

- Rage

Suicide Risk Factors
Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take their life.

Health Factors

- Mental health conditions

- Depression

- Substance use problems

- Bipolar disorder

- Schizophrenia

- Personality traits of aggression, mood changes and poor relationships

- Conduct disorder

- Anxiety disorders

- Serious or chronic health conditions and/or pain

- Traumatic brain injury

Environmental Factors

- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs

- Prolonged stress, such as harassment, bullying, relationship problems or unemployment

- Stressful life events, which may include a death, divorce or job loss

- Exposure to another person's suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

Historical Factors

- Previous suicide attempts

- Family history of suicide

- Childhood abuse, neglect or trauma

What to do:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals. 1-800-273-8255 https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/

If you simply have a question you can call the helpline.
This resource is here to help you help others - use it.

About Be The 1:
The five action steps for communicating with someone who may be suicidal are supported by evidence in the field of suicide prevention.

#BeThe1To

If you think someone might be considering suicide, be the one to help them by taking these 5 steps:

ASK. KEEP THEM SAFE. BE THERE. HELP THEM CONNECT. FOLLOW UP.

Find out why this can save a life at
www.BeThe1To.com

If you're struggling, call the Lifeline at
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

ASK

How – Asking the question *"Are you thinking about suicide?"* communicates that you're open to speaking about suicide in a non-judgmental and supportive way. Asking in this direct, unbiased manner, can open the door for effective dialogue about their emotional pain and can allow everyone involved to see what next steps need to be taken. Other questions you can ask include, *"How do you hurt?"* and *"How can I help?"* Do not ever promise to keep their thoughts of suicide a secret.

The flip side of the "Ask" step is to "Listen." Make sure you take their answers seriously and not to ignore them, especially if they indicate they are experiencing thoughts of suicide. Listening to their reasons for being in such emotional pain, as well as listening for any potential reasons they want to continue to stay alive, are both incredibly important when they are telling you what's going on. Help them focus on their reasons for living and avoid trying to impose your reasons for them to stay alive.

Why – Studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts. In fact, studies suggest the opposite: findings suggest acknowledging and talking about suicide may in fact reduce rather than increase suicidal ideation.

KEEP THEM SAFE

How – First of all, it's good for everyone to be on the same page. After the "Ask" step, and you've determined suicide is indeed being talked about, it's important to find out a few things to establish immediate safety. Have they already done anything to try to kill themselves before talking with you? Does the person experiencing thoughts of suicide know how they would kill themselves? Do they have a specific, detailed plan? What's the timing for their plan? What sort of access to do they have to their planned method?

Why – Knowing the answers to each of these questions can tell us a lot about the imminence and severity of danger the person is in. For instance, the more steps and pieces of a plan that are in place, the higher their severity of risk and their capability to enact their plan might be. Or if they have immediate access to a firearm and are very serious about attempting suicide, then extra steps (like calling the authorities or driving them to an emergency department) might be necessary. The Lifeline can always act as a resource during these moments as well if you aren't entirely sure what to do next.

The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health notes that reducing a suicidal person's access to highly lethal means (or chosen method for a suicide attempt) is an important part of suicide prevention. A number of studies have indicated that when lethal means are made less available or less deadly, suicide rates by that method decline, and frequently suicide rates overall decline. Research also shows that "method substitution" or choosing an alternate method when the original method is restricted, frequently does not happen. The myth "If someone really wants to kill themselves, they'll find a way to do it" often does not hold true if appropriate safety measures are put into place. The Keep Them Safe step is really about showing support for someone during the times when they have thoughts of suicide by putting time and distance between the person and their chosen method, especially methods that have shown higher lethality (like firearms and medications).

BE THERE

How – This could mean being physically present for someone, speaking with them on the phone when you can, or any other way that shows support for the person at risk. An important aspect of this step is to make sure you follow through with the ways in which you say you'll be able to support the person – do not commit to anything you are not willing or able to accomplish. If you are unable to be physically present with someone with thoughts of suicide, talk with them to develop some ideas for others who might be able to help as well (again, only others who are willing, able, and appropriate to be there). Listening is again very important during this step – find out what and who they believe will be the most effective sources of help.

Why – Being there for someone with thoughts of suicide is life-saving. Increasing someone's connectedness to others and limiting their isolation (both in the short and long-term) has shown to be a protective factor against suicide. Thomas Joiner's Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide highlights connectedness as one of its main components – specifically, a low sense of belonging. When someone experiences this state, paired with perceived burdonsomeness (arguably tied to "connectedness" through isolating behaviors and lack of a sense of purpose) and acquired capability (a lowered fear of death and habituated experiences of violence), their risk can become severely elevated.

In the Three-Step Theory (or more commonly known as the Ideation-to-Action Framework), David Klonsky and Alexis May also theorize that "connectedness" is a key protective factor, not only against suicide as a whole, but in terms of the escalation of thoughts of suicide to action. Their research has also shown connectedness acts as a buffer against hopelessness and psychological pain.

By "being there," we have a chance to alleviate or eliminate some of these significant factors.

HELP THEM CONNECT

How – Helping someone with thoughts of suicide connect with ongoing supports (like the Lifeline, 800-273-8255) can help them establish a safety net for those moments they find themselves in a crisis. Additional components of a safety net might be connecting them with supports and resources in their communities. Explore some of these possible supports with them – are they currently seeing a mental health professional? Have they in the past? Is this an option for them currently? Are there other mental health resources in the community that can effectively help?

One way to start helping them find ways to connect is to work with them to develop a safety plan. This can include ways for them identify if they start to experience significant, severe thoughts of suicide along with what to do in those crisis moments. A safety plan can also include a list of individuals to contact when a crisis occurs. The My3 app is a safety planning and crisis intervention app that can help develop these supports and is stored conveniently on your smartphone for quick access.

Why – Impact of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline found that individuals that called the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline were significantly more

likely to feel less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful by the end of calls handled by Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training-trained counselors. These improvements were linked to ASIST-related counselor interventions, including listening without judgment, exploring reasons for living and creating a network of support.

FOLLOW UP

How – After your initial contact with a person experiencing thoughts of suicide, and after you've connected them with the immediate support systems they need, make sure to follow-up with them to see how they're doing. Leave a message, send a text, or give them a call. The follow-up step is a great time to check in with them to see if there is more you are capable of helping with or if there are things you've said you would do and haven't yet had the chance to get done for the person.

Why – This type of contact can continue to increase their feelings of connectedness and share your ongoing support. There is evidence that even a simple form of reaching out, like sending a caring postcard, can potentially reduce their risk for suicide.

Studies have shown a reduction in the number of deaths by suicide when following up was involved with high risk populations after they were discharge from acute care services. Studies have also shown that brief, low cost intervention and supportive, ongoing contact may be an important part of suicide prevention.

If you have a question or need help, call the Suicide Prevention hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Afterward

This is a pre-publication version of a portion of the forthcoming e-book:
Faith Forward, Faith-based Approaches to Preventing and Addressing LGBTQ Youth Suicide and Homelessness, a ministry of Parity.

Parity works to help religious, spiritual and faith communities and organizations to affirm LGBTQ people, and for LGBTQ organizations to affirm faith, religion and spirituality.

If you have suggestions for resources and additional information to include, please contact us at info@parity.nyc

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