



LGBTQ+ Minds Matter
a guide to making your club a safer space



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LGBTQ+ Minds Matter

Let's Talk About It

LGBTQ+ young people are more than just a term or a definition. They are groups of people from all different backgrounds and cultures that live their truth outside of what society tells us is the “norm.” Many young LGBTQ+ people are full of pride and embrace every part of themselves. Some folks aren't anywhere near that yet, for so many different reasons. And lots of people are somewhere in between. All of that is valid. It's important to remember, whether you're a part of the LGBTQ+ community or you are working on being an ally, that LGBTQ+ people and LGBTQ+ mental health are about so much more than struggle and hardship. There is also joy, vibrance, pride, humor, love, and all the things that make a person whole.

If you are an LGBTQ+ club leader and are looking for resources for yourself or a friend, check out our resources section below on page 11 for support during a crisis, how to find help, and info on how to take care of yourself and your community.

That being said, it cannot be denied that young LGBTQ+ folks face a unique set of challenges when it comes to their mental health. Across the nation, LGBTQ+ people face oppression, hate, threats, exposure to conversion therapy, invalidation, misgendering, and so many other things that can cause mental health challenges. While being LGBTQ+ is not a risk factor, the oppression that the community faces is a risk factor for mental health conditions and concerns. The [National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021](#) shines light on this very issue.

Key Findings

- 75% of LGBTQ youth reported that they had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at least once in their lifetime.
- 2 in 3 LGBTQ youth reported that someone tried to convince them to change their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Half of all LGBTQ youth of color reported discrimination based on their race/ethnicity in the past year, including 67% of Black LGBTQ youth and 60% of Asian/Pacific Islander LGBTQ youth.



- 42% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth.
- Only 1 in 3 LGBTQ youth found their home to be LGBTQ-affirming.
- LGBTQ youth who were subjected to conversion therapy reported more than twice the rate of attempting suicide in the past year compared to those who were not.
- Nearly half of LGBTQ youth said that COVID-19 impacted their ability to express their sexual orientation.
- Nearly 60% of transgender and nonbinary youth said that COVID-19 impacted their ability to express their gender identity.

These statistics are upsetting and should not remain the status quo. However, this National Survey also found some uplifting findings as well:

Hopeful Key Findings

- Transgender and nonbinary youth who reported having pronouns respected by all of the people they lived with attempted suicide at half the rate of those who did not have their pronouns respected by anyone with whom they lived.
- Transgender and nonbinary youth who were able to change their name and/or gender marker on legal documents, such as driver's licenses and birth certificates, reported lower rates of attempting suicide.
- LGBTQ+ youth who had access to spaces that affirmed their sexual orientation and gender identity reported lower rates of attempting suicide.

So what can we learn from all of this? Why does all this research matter? It matters because we are working to change school culture around mental health and work toward a day where no teen dies by suicide—including LGBTQ+ teens. And from this data we can see that when LGBTQ+ young people have their identities respected and embraced, their mental health drastically improves. Sounds like a call to action for us, doesn't it?

Read on for tips and guidance on how to make your OMM club and school more inclusive, safe, and welcoming for all LGBTQ+ folks!



Activities

Check out these activities designed specifically to start conversations around gender and sexuality. Create a welcoming space for everyone to discuss these topics, learn, and explore how to make a positive change in your school for LGBTQ+ folks.

Gender Euphoria- Explore concepts of gender and encourage students to make their school and club more inclusive and welcoming to people of all gender identities, particularly trans and nonbinary folks.

LGBTQ+ Community & Mental Health- Collab with your school's GSA club to hold an information session open to students & staff on mental health in the LGBTQ+ community.

Gender & Mental Health- How does our gender identity and expression impact our mental health? Explore how different genders may express different emotions.

Who Says?- Folks of all genders are invited to explore the expectations society has of them based on their gender identity, and how to bust out of those expectations.

LGBTQ+ Allyship- Show the school that your OMM club is a safe space for LGBTQ+ folks! Check out templates for how to run a number of combined club meetings with a school's Gender & Sexuality Alliance (GSA) or comparable club



How-To

5 simple actions you can take to make your OMM club and school a safer place for LGBTQ+ students

1. Show your commitment to creating a safe space.

Identify a meeting space for your OMM club and post Pride flags around the space or at the door. This is a simple step that definitely requires some followup to ensure the space is actually safe, but it's a great and easy way to let LGBTQ+ folks know they are welcome at your meetings. [Check out this printable inclusive flag here!](#)

2. Make your introductions intentional.



At the start of each meeting, encourage folks to introduce themselves with their names and pronouns. Normalizing the use of pronouns can make trans and nonbinary people feel more comfortable in that space, and it lets everyone in the room know how to address each other respectfully. Remember to gently hold everyone accountable to honoring all pronouns shared!

3. Use and encourage inclusive language.

Inclusive language goes beyond pronouns. Inclusive language acknowledges diversity and conveys respect to all people. Some ways to incorporate that into your meetings include:

- Using gender neutral language when speaking about groups of people with different genders/unknown genders (instead of ladies and gentlemen or boys and girls, say “folks,” “friends,” or “y’all”)
- Don't assume you know the gender of someone's significant other, friend, or family member. Let them tell you or politely ask how you should refer to the person/ask what pronouns they use.
- Be mindful of the language you use when sharing examples or scenarios. Try to incorporate different pronouns and relationships in any examples you might use when leading a meeting (i.e. They have a boyfriend who lives with anxiety; She and her partner are going to prom and want to be responsible).

4. Listen Up. Speak Up.

LGBTQ+ young people face struggles that others do not. While we shouldn't assume that someone is struggling with their mental health just because they are LGBTQ+, we should always listen, believe, and validate when someone opens up about their gender and sexuality, especially when it comes to their mental health. We may not be able to relate to or understand their experience, but we can show up and listen with love and affirmation. Once we Listen Up, we also need to be ready to Speak Up. If we hear someone saying something hurtful or offensive, call them in and explain why language matters. Some people just need to be educated on how their words can hurt others, and we can all support our LGBTQ+ peers and loved ones by speaking up to educate others.



5. Take Action.

Host one of the activities listed above at an OMM meeting, get involved with your school's GSA (or found one if it doesn't exist yet!), and pay attention to school policies; and push back if you see anything harmful. Action is one of the strongest forms of support, and it's always best to let LGBTQ+ folks lead the way in that action. Is there a way you can show up and take action for the LGBTQ+ students at your school that we didn't mention? Let us know so we can share the idea with all OMM clubs!

Bonus

This brief how-to guide was inspired by materials from the following organizations: The Trevor Project, The Human Rights Campaign, and



GLSEN. If you're ready to take your education, support, and activism to the next level, check out some of their more in-depth guides:

- [Black & LGBT: Approaching Intersectional Conversations](#)
- [The Coming Out Handbook](#)
- [A Guide to Being an Ally to Trans and Nonbinary Youth](#)
- [Being an LGBTQ+ Ally](#)
- [Take Action with GLSEN](#)

What Does LGBTQ+ Mean?

A Glossary

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

Gay: A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.

Bisexual: A person who experiences attraction to more than one gender. Sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual.

Transgender/Trans: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, trans people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Queer: An umbrella term to describe individuals who don't identify as straight and/or cisgender. Formerly used as a slur but has been reclaimed by many in the LGBTQ+ community.

Intersex: Term for a combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals that differs from the two expected patterns of male or female.

Asexual: Experiencing little or no sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behavior.

Aromantic: Experiencing little or no romantic attraction to others and/or has a lack of interest in romantic relationships/behavior





Two-Spirit: An umbrella term traditionally within Native American or Indigenous communities to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both feminine and masculine genders.

Pansexual: Sexual, romantic or emotional attraction to an individual regardless of their sex or gender identity.

Sex Assigned at Birth: The sex, male, female or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

Gender Identity: One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Non-Binary: Describes a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

Cisgender: Describes a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth are the same.

Coming Out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.

And so much more that can be found on the [Human Rights Campaign's helpful glossary of terms!](#)



Additional Resources

For Crisis

- TrevorText: [Text START to 678-678](#) for free and instant support
- TrevorLifeline: [1-866-488-7386](#). Crisis intervention and suicide prevention phone service available 24/7/365.
- Trans Lifeline: [\(877\) 565-8860](#) for trans-led 24/7 support

For Finding Help

- [National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network](#)
- [Psychology Today](#) (allows you to filter by therapist's identity)
- [GLMA](#) for queer affirming medical care
- [Association of LGBTQ+ Psychiatrists](#) for affirming psychiatric care

For LGBTQ+ Folks

- [The Coming Out Handbook](#)
- [It Gets Better Project](#)
- [Unhealthy Relationships and Dating Violence](#)
- [Navigating LGBTQ+ Identities and Religion](#)
- [Celebrate Pride Safely with the Safer Partying Checklist](#)
- [Queering Sex Ed for Inclusive Sexual Education and Health Resources](#)

For Aspiring Allies

- [10 Ways to be an Ally and Friend](#)
- [A Guide to Being an Ally to Trans and Nonbinary Youth](#)
- [The Straight Ally Guide](#)

For Taking Action

- [Start a GSA at Your School](#)
- [Volunteer with SMYAL](#)
- [Volunteer with the Trevor Project](#)
- [Volunteer with the Human Rights Campaign](#)

