



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



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LGBTQ+ Youth Minds Matter

Let's Talk About It

LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer+) young people 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, anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, and so many other things that can cause stress and mental health challenges. While being LGBTQ+ is not a risk factor, the oppression and the threat to safety (both physical and emotional) that the community faces is a risk factor for mental health conditions and concerns. The [National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health 2024](#) from The Trevor Project shines light on this very issue.



Key Findings

- 90% of LGBTQ+ youth reported that their wellbeing was negatively impacted due to recent politics.
- 45% of transgender and nonbinary young people reported that they or their family have considered moving to a different state because of LGBTQ+ related politics and laws.
- More than 1 in 10 (12%) LGBTQ+ youth attempted suicide in the past year.
- 50% of LGBTQ+ youth who wanted mental health care in the past year were not able to get it.
- Nearly half (49%) of LGBTQ+ young people ages 13-17 experienced bullying in the past year, and those who did reported significantly higher rates attempting suicide in the past year than those who did not experience bullying.

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

- LGBTQ+ young people who reported living in very accepting communities attempted suicide at less than half the rate of those who reported living in very unaccepting communities.
- More than half (54%) of transgender and nonbinary young people found their school to be gender-affirming, and those who did reported lower rates of attempting suicide.
- Transgender and nonbinary young people who had access to gender-affirming clothing, gender-neutral bathrooms at school, and had their pronouns respected by the people they live with had lower rates of attempting suicide compared to those who did not
- LGBTQ+ young people named several ways that people can show that they support them, with the top responses being: Trusting that they know who they are, standing up for them, and not voting for politicians that advocate for anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

So what can we learn from all of this? 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 and School-Wide Campaigns

Check out these activities and campaigns designed specifically to start conversations around gender and sexuality, create a welcoming and inclusive space for LGBTQ+ youth, and explore how to make a positive change in your school for LGBTQ+ folks.

Under My Umbrella- LGBTQ+ teens and allies alike celebrate the impact the LGBTQ+ community has on your school and the world with a colorful and simple bulletin board campaign.

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

It Gets Better- Queer youth and allies can all take part in this coping skills activity that encourages participants to tell a story about how they overcame a difficult time via art. This will empower everyone to practice coping and resilience strategies when they're struggling.

Who Says?- Folks of all genders are invited to explore the expectations society has of them based on their gender identity, and how to challenge those expectations while protecting their mental health.

LGBTQ+ Allyship- Collaborate with a school's Gender & Sexuality Alliance (GSA) or comparable club in a joint advocacy effort to support wellbeing and safety of LGBTQ+ students.

We All Feel How do our gender and cultural identities impact emotional expression and help-seeking behavior? Explore how different genders are encouraged to express emotion and its link to mental health.

The Meaning of Pride- Work together to create a poster representing that your OMM club is a safe space celebrating students from all gender & sexual identities.



How To

6 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, the safe space poster your club creates in The Meaning of Pride activity, or this [printable OMM safe space poster](#) 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.

2. Have LGBTQ+ specific resources readily available.

Print these [LGBTQ+ mental health resource cards](#) yourself or reach out to OMM and use some club funds to order them directly from us. Having these resource cards visible and accessible to all students increases the likelihood that someone who is struggling might take one and use it to get help. Consider putting them in the counseling office, on a bulletin board or resources table, the nurse's office, and even in some classrooms.

3. Make your introductions intentional.

At the start of each meeting, encourage folks to introduce themselves with their names and pronouns if they are comfortable doing so, starting with yourself. 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! Also, never force anyone to share their pronouns.

4. 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 and daily life 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 driving home).

5. 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. Involve an adult if you need to! 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.

6. 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!), host the Under My Umbrella school-wide campaign, 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!

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 the resources on page 11.



What Does LGBTQ+ Mean?

A Glossary

Lesbian: A woman or nonbinary person 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](#)
- [Black & LGBTQ+: Approaching Intersectional Conversations](#)
- [Youth Pride Virtual Peer Support](#)
- [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](#)
- [Advocate for School Policy Change with Youth Pride](#)

