Becoming an Ally: Understanding and Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth

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Mental health concerns are continuing to rise throughout the United States; especially among those within marginalized communities. The Trevor Project's (2022) National Survey provided insight into the increasing rates of mental health needs among those who identify as LGBTQ+. It was determined that LGBTQ+ youth have been experiencing startling levels of anxiety and depression. 73% of the 34,000-youth surveyed reported general anxiety disorder symptoms, within the past two weeks, while 58% noted major depressive disorder symptoms. Additionally, it was determined that those who identified as transgender and non-binary had an even higher likelihood of developing anxiety and/or depressive symptoms. The survey also indicated that rates of suicidal attempts among those who identified as transgender, non-binary, or questioning were higher than that of cisgender youth.

Finding appropriate, gender-affirming, support can be particularly difficult for LGBTQ+ youth. Gender-affirming environments are used to support an individual's gender identity. 73% of LGBTQ+ youth have reported experiencing discrimination based on their sexual/gender identity within their lifetime; as well as one out of three LGBTQ+ youth finding their homes to be a non-gender-affirming environment (Trevor Project, 2022). The Trevor Project's (2022) data determined gender-affirming spaces were significant linked to reduced suicidal risk, indicating that lower rates of suicide attempts were found among those who had access to gender-affirming supports. There are many ways in which you can learn to become a supportive ally.

- **Educate Yourself:** Allowing yourself to learn about others needs and experiences will only help reduce stigma in our society. Educate yourself about gender as a non-binary construct, as well as learning appropriate definitions, such as the difference between "assigned sex at birth" and "gender identity."
- **Build Awareness of Biases:** Be open to confronting previously held stigma and beliefs. This can be done through educational resources, as well as attending psychotherapy yourself.
- **Use Inclusive Language:** Mislabeling an individual can cause unintentional harm. It is important we utilize appropriate pronouns, and not assume others' sexuality and gender. If you are unable to obtain appropriate labels, utilize neutral terms (e.g. they/them).
- **Promote Change:** Since the start of 2022 until this publication, 28 states have introduced anti-LGBTQ+ bills, and 8 states have passed such bills into law (Human Rights Campaign). Be willing to become an advocate and speak out in order to promote inclusivity in your community.

Remember that you can also talk to someone who can help. If you would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our [Psychologist Locator](#). Be aware that services are available online so that you can get support you need in a private, online setting without leaving your home

Support Resources:
- https://genderspectrum.org/
- https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/lgbtq-definitions-gender-sexuality-terms
- https://www.mypronouns.org/
- https://www.hrc.org/