

BEST PRACTICES IN SUICIDE PREVENTION AMONG LGBTQ+ YOUTH

PREVENTING SUICIDE AMONG LGBTQ+ YOUTH IS A NATIONAL HEALTH PRIORITY

LGBTQ + YOUTH ARE AT A GREATER RISK FOR SUICIDE COMPARED TO HETEROSEXUAL YOUTH:

- Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) youth are 3 times more likely to report having thoughts of suicide.
- LGB youth are 5 times more likely to have attempted suicide.
- 17% of LGB populations and 40% of trans people have made suicide attempts.

WHAT DO I SAY TO SOMEONE WHO IS COMING OUT TO ME?

It can be difficult to know what to say to someone when they are coming out to you. However, thanking the person for sharing with you, being present, validating their experience, and expressing love for the person are ways to show support. It is important not to use denying phrases (e.g., “it’s just a phase”), and rather, show support (e.g., “thank you so much for sharing with me”). Try to be supportive of the person regardless of personal feelings. If you have strong religious beliefs or other beliefs about the LGBTQ + community, work through them with the support of a therapist. After someone comes out to you, call them, continue to do activities with the person, include the person’s partner in plans (as you would with other people), and learn more about the LGBTQ + community to demonstrate your support.

SUPPORTIVE PHRASES:

“Thank you for sharing with me. What does your identity mean to you?”

“I’m so happy you told me, and I want you to know this won’t change our relationship in anyway.”

“I’m really excited for you.”

DENYING PHRASES:

“You don’t really mean that, do you?”

“It’s just a phase – I’m sure you’ll grow out of it.”

“Everybody’s experimenting with their sexuality these days.”

USING LGBTQ+ AFFIRMING LANGUAGE

- Eliminate gendered language, and instead use affirmative, inclusive, and person-first language. For instance, use the phrase “you all” instead of “you guys.”
- Ask how someone identifies AND what that means to that person.
- Include your pronouns when you introduce yourself (e.g., she/her/hers; he/him/his; they/their/theirs; ze/hir/zir/hirs/zirs).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Core Vocabulary Handout:

<http://bit.ly/2tvaMDP>

Inclusive Language Handout:

<http://bit.ly/2tooTdX>

Genderbread Person: <http://bit.ly/2SRZSpL>

Queer Umbrella: <http://bit.ly/2ldk41h>

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS OF SUICIDE AMONG LGBTQ+ YOUTH

RISK FACTORS

- **Mental Illness:** LGBTQ+ populations are 3 times more likely to experience a mental illness
- **Perceived burdensomeness and low sense of belongingness**
- **Stigma and discrimination**
- **Higher rates of victimization and trauma**
- **Rejection from family or friends**
- **Lethal means:** LGBTQ+ populations are more likely to use firearms when attempting suicide

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- **Connection with mental health or substance use resources**
- **Connection with supportive faith-based organizations and other communities**
- **Being accepted after coming out**
- **Social support (from family, friends, clubs)**
- **Sense of making a difference in the world (i.e., meaningful employment, volunteering, mentoring)**
- **Coping, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills**
- **Positive role models**

SUICIDE INTERVENTION WITH LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Assess family dynamics: When discussing a support system, gain a knowledge of family dynamics, as not all families are supportive of the youth's identity. Assess whether it is appropriate to recommend seeking family support, and also, emphasize a "chosen family" rather than "blood family."

Assess access to lethal means: Because LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to use firearms when attempting suicide than heterosexual individuals, assess for access to lethal means and create a means safety plan.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Chase Brexton Health Services
Phone: 410-837-2050
chasebrexton.org

Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center and Safe Space Training
Hotline: 410-531-6677
Website: grassrootscrisis.org

GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network)
Maryland chapter: (443) 509-1108
8 Market Pl. Ste 300, Baltimore, MD 21202

My3 Safety Planning App
<https://my3app.org/>

SPRC Counseling on Access to Lethal Means Training
<https://training.sprc.org/enrol/index.php?id=20>

The Safe Zone Project
thesafezoneproject.com

Trans Lifeline
translifeline.org

Trevor Project
Trevor Lifeline: 1-866-488-7386
TrevorText at 202-304-1200

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