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/zir/zirs).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
- Core Vocabulary Handout: http://bit.ly/2tnMDP
- Queer Umbrella: http://bit.ly/2Idk41h

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SUICIDE PREVENTION IN MARYLAND VISIT: HTTPS://HEALTH.MARYLAND.GOV/SUICIDEPREVENTION/PAGES/HOME.ASPX OR EMAIL MDH.SUICIDEVENTPREVENTION@MARYLAND.GOV
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 supportative 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 positive role model, coping, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills. Sense of making a difference in the world (i.e., meaningful employment, volunteering, mentoring).

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: 410-637-2050
  chasobrexton.org
- Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center and Safe Space Training
  Hotline: 410-531-6677
  The Safe Zone Project
- Maryland chapter: (443) 509-1108
- GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network)
  Website: grassrootscrisis.org
  Hotline: 410-531-6677
- Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center and Safe Space Training
  Phone: 410-837-2050
- Chase Brexton Health Services

REFERENCES