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the best mental health resources for LGBTQ+ individuals

Mental healthcare and access to resources is essential for all people, but particularly LGBTQ+ people. 42% of LGBTQ+ individuals between the ages of 13 and 24 have contemplated suicide in the last 2 months, including more than half of transgender and non-binary youth. And that 12% of white, 31% of Native and Indigenous youth, and 21% of Black LGBTQ+ youth actually attempted suicide. Sadly, given that the LGBTQ+ community has a long-documented increased risk of depression, attempted suicide, addiction, and PTSD, these statistics do not come as a surprise. Still, the findings beg the question: Where can LGBTQ+ community members find support?

Here, we discuss statistics on mental health conditions prevalent in LGBTQ+ community, explore why the statistics are as high as they are, and share resources to help LGBTQ+ people and their loved ones find support.

Why LGBTQ+ community members face mental health challenges

This is important: LGBTQ+ individuals do not face a higher risk of mental health issues, suicidal ideation and attempts for any innate reason, but rather because of the ways in which they are oppressed and othered by a predominantly cisgender, heteronormative society.

From school to work, the sports field to the streets, the dinner table to the park, LGBTQ+ individuals face much higher levels of assault and harassment compared to people outside the community. One 2017 study put out in partnership between NPR and Harvard School of Public Health reported that 57% of LGBTQ+ individuals have been harassed (nonsexually) and 51% have been sexually harassed. And a second study published in 2019 found that those percentages are even higher among working individuals, with 68% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people reporting having been sexually harassed at work for their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It should go without saying, but of course this level of harassment, as well as fear of future harassment, negatively impacts mental wellbeing.

Where LGBTQ+ individuals can go for mental health support

For immediate support, try a help line.

If you're reading this because you need immediate help, your best bet is to call a 24/7 helpline.

If you are under 25 call the TrevorLifeline at 1-866-488-7386. Or connect with TrevorText by texting START to 678-678. If you are 25 or older, try the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender National Hotline at (888) 843-4564 or Trans Lifeline at (877) 565-8860 instead.

For Ongoing Support, Try a Queer-Inclusive Therapist

Designed to give you the skills to explore your feelings, communicate, and problem-solve, an ongoing relationship with the right therapist can give you the skill sets needed to get through difficult times.

While all therapists go through some training about LGBTQ+ individuals, if you are queer it's best to work with an LGBTQ-affirming, also know as queer-inclusive, therapist. Going to a therapist who doesn't specialize in LGBTQ+ issues to get help with LGBTQ+ issues would be like ordering a cheeseburger at a Chinese food restaurant. You may leave fulfilled, but it's not the best goods you can get.

To find LGBTQ+ therapist that best-fits your needs search the GLBT National Help Center's LGBT guide, the National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network, or the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's (WPATH) provider directory.

Find queer community

There's nothing quite like finding an in-person community of people where you'll meet people with shared experiences. Lots of people feel a bit uncomfortable about walking into a room of strangers, but there are ways to ease into it.

Try a virtual event first or ask a friend to go with you. To find communities, check out your local PFLAG chapter (you can search for a location near you here) or find a community center through CenterLink.

To feel part of a community, consume queer content

If you want to better-understand your own LGBTQ+ identity or feel like you belong to a larger community, reading an LGBTQ+ memoirs or listening to a queer podcast can help.

If you're an avid reader, consider picking up a copy of *Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde, *Sissy* by Jacob Tobia, *The Fixed Stars* by Molly Wizenberg, *Leaving Isn't The Hardest Thing* by Lauren Hough, *How We Fight For Our Lives* by Saeed Jones, and *Fun Home* by Allison Bechdel.

If you prefer to learn by listening, check out *Two Bi Guys*, *Gender Reveal*, *En(ba)by*, *Bad in Bed*, *Queery*, *LGBTQ+A*, or *Nancy*.

Family members of LGBTQ+ individuals may need mental health support, too

It's not just LGBTQ+ individuals who might benefit from mental health support — their loved ones too may need their own mental health support systems.

Anyone who has ever been a pillar of support for someone going through a mental health journey knows that doing so can be emotionally, mentally, and spiritually draining. In fact, research shows that caregivers of people with mental illnesses suffer without adequate mental health support for themselves. As such, a care provider of a LGBTQ+ individual suffering from anxiety or depression may benefit from building up their own mental health support systems.

Mental health care can also be useful for family members struggling to accept their loved ones' queerness. One 2019 study published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior* found that most parents of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth go through a two-year adjustment period after their kids come out.

A mental health professional may help shorten this timeline by minimizing duress and giving the loved one the skill-set they need to work through their emotions and fears.

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