
STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

Inclusivity in the LGBTQ+ Community

In a world full of differences, sexual and gender identity, along with gender expression, evokes a myriad of areas for discussion — from someone's sense of being male or female (known as their gender identity) to how they present themselves to the world (defined by their gender expression). We can either freely discuss these topics or shy away from them, keeping them in the proverbial closet. It's important for us to be culturally aware of concerns facing the LGBTQ+ population, particularly for those who have spent their entire lives being seen as different.



Why are LGBTQ+ People at Risk?

Once someone is labeled as different, they are more likely to be a target of bullying, have trouble socializing productively and can suffer delays in their emotional development. It can affect their ability to build healthy relationships and connect with peers due to a lack of trust and acceptance, and they may struggle to find their place in society and feel a part of something greater. It can be difficult to define a clear sense of self, as they try to reconcile their known self with what is expected. These issues are often exacerbated when the person is unaware of or unable to connect with appropriate resources or assistance.



Common Mental Health Issues Facing the LGBTQ+ Population

- » Increased depression and suicide rates
- » Heightened anxiety
- » Low self-esteem
- » Feelings of alienation
- » Discrimination and victimization in a heterosexism/heteronormative culture
- » Religious and social ostracism
- » Higher risk of interpersonal and intrapersonal violence
- » PTSD



These issues are even more prevalent among minorities in the LGBTQ+ community, many of whom are trying to reconcile sexual orientation with their race, culture or religion. Many are often faced with stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, especially as it relates to behavior and expression. It is also not uncommon for minority communities to be mistrustful of the mental health system. There have been times when people of color have felt there was a lack of mental health professionals that looked like them and could understand their plight. When working with someone who identifies as an LGBTQ+ person of color, stay culturally aware and learn how to support them.

The Coming-Out Process

For LGBTQ+ individuals, coming out is a process that is ongoing and invisible. During this time, it's not uncommon for mental health concerns to crop up, often related to emotional, mental or physical safety or wellbeing. Here are some things to be aware of if someone you know is in the process of coming out:

- » Recognize that the person coming out makes the decision to come out — not society and not family or friends.
- » They must come out to themselves before they can come out to others.
- » Knowing that there are protective factors in place can determine whether they feel accepted or rejected.

- » Being conscious of the extent to which a person is “out” is paramount. They may be out to one parent but not the other, or they may be out to one group of friends but not their co-workers.
- » If you want to be an ally or advocate...
 - Don't announce that you are an ally or an advocate. Just be one!
 - Be affirming, be validating, be empathetic, be encouraging and be compassionate.
 - Avoid putting your prejudices or fears on others.
 - Don't make assumptions. If you don't know something, just ask.
 - Use a person's preferred pronouns (i.e. he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, ze/zir/zirs, ze/hir/hirs, fae/faer/faers).

LGBTQ+ Resources: Where to Turn When You Need Help



LOCAL RESOURCES

- UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center: 205-934-2281
- UAB Student Health and Wellness Center: 205-934-5816
- Birmingham Crisis Center: 205-323-7777
- Magic City Acceptance Center: 205-774-1173
- 1917 Clinic at UAB: 205-934-1917
- SHAPE (within 1917 Clinic): 205-996-4119
- [Alliance of LGBTQ Equality](#)



ONLINE RESOURCES

- [CenterLink](#)
- [GMHC \(Gay Men's Health Crisis\)](#)
- [Matthew Shepard Foundation](#)
- [Out & Equal](#)

- [Anti-Violence Project](#)
- [COLAGE \(Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere\)](#)
- [Straight for Equality](#)
- [The Williams Institute](#)
- [Movement Advancement Project](#)
- [PFLAG \(Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays\)](#)



RESOURCES FOR MILITARY

- [Palm Center](#)
- [Veterans for American Ideals](#)
- [American Veterans for Equal Rights](#)



RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

- [Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network \(GLSEN\)](#)
- [LGBTQ Student Resources & Support](#)

- [GSA Network](#)
- [Point Foundation: LGBTQ College Scholarships](#)
- [Safe Schools Coalition](#)
- [Trevor Project](#)



TRANSGENDER RESOURCES

- [Sylvia Rivera Law Project](#)
- [Transgender Law Center](#)
- [Transgender Legal Defense & Educational Fund](#)
- [National Center for Transgender Equality \(NCTE\)](#)



LEGAL RESOURCES

- [Lambda Legal](#)
- [The LGBTQ Bar](#)
- [National Center for Lesbian Rights \(NCLR\)](#)
- [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#)
- [National LGBTQ Task Force](#)