Why are our graveyards full of rainbows?

Suicide Prevention for Queer Youth

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What to expect?
Compassion and the Complexity of LGBTQIA+ Identity and Experience

- LGBTQIA+ 101 Terms & Definitions
- Tools for Interventions that Help instead of Hurt
Why specify LGBTQIA+ and youth identities in suicide prevention?

Interpersonal Theory of Suicide
Thwarted Belongingness
Perceived Burdensomeness.
Areas for Intervention

- Media
- Schools
- Families
- Peers
- Professionals
Worried about suicide risk?

Warning Signs:

- Threatening, talking about, or planning suicide
- Giving away possessions
- Feeling hopeless/helpless
- Depression/irritability
- Increased drug/alcohol use
- Feelings of Failure, guilt, or shame
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Risky Behaviors
- Previous Attempts to Self Harm
Shame

How do we communicate it?
How do we combat it?
Hopelessness

“No one will ever understand me.”
Alphabet Soup: “Why so many %*#$&! letters? What do they all mean?”

Lesbian
Gay
Bisexual & Pansexual
Transgender & Cisgender
Queer
Intersex
Asexual & Aromantic
Misconceptions about Identity
Homo/Trans-phobia, Microaggressions, and Representation

Lesbian and Gay
Misconceptions about Identity

Hypersexualization and Confusion

Bisexual and Pansexual
Asexual & Aromantic
Queer & Questioning
Gender & Sexually Fluid
Gender-Queer, Non-Binary, Pan & Bisexual:

“It would be so much easier (for me) if they could just choose and stick with it.”
Transgender & Cisgender
Encompasses any individual who crosses over or challenges their society's traditional gender roles and/or expressions.
## Percentages of respondents who selected that they “strongly” indentified with term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTF (male to female)</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transsexual</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender non-conforming or</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTM (female to male)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderqueer</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-spirit</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-dresser</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androgynous</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third gender</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine male</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine female or butch</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersex</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drag performer (King/Queen)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG or Aggressive</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Statistics

- **34% of Trans People Attempt Suicide.**
- **64% of young Trans People are Bullied.**
- **73% of Trans People are Harrased in Public (ranging from insults to physical abuse).**
- **21% of Trans People avoid going out in Public due to Fear.**

*Being Transgender is not a choice. Choosing to hurt someone is.*

*Transgender Remembrance Day*
Is it a choice to be queer? 

….SCIENCE!
Intersex
The Gender Unicorn

To learn more, go to: www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan
Why this baseline understanding matters:

- 50% of trans patients educate their doctors.
- 1 in 4 delayed seeking care due to discrimination.
- 19% were refused care.
Why specify LGBTQIA+ and youth identities in suicide prevention?

Experiences of marginalization and disempowerment
All it means when people say “you’re speaking from a place of privilege” is that you’re likely to underestimate how bad the problem is by default because you are never personally exposed to that problem. It’s not a moral judgement of how difficult your life is.
Helplessness

“Change is too slow.”
Heterosexual Privilege

I have positive media images of people with whom I can identify.

I have no fear that if my family finds out about my sexual orientation, there will be economic, emotional, physical and psychological consequences.

I can hold hands with my partner in public without fear for my safety.

I have immediate access to my loved ones in the case of an accident or emergency.
Cisgender Privilege

I can use public restrooms without fear of verbal abuse, physical intimidation, or arrest.

Strangers don’t assume they can ask what my genitals look like or how I have sex.

I have the ability to walk through the world and generally blend-in, not being constantly stared at, whispered about, or laughed at because of my gender expression.

Hollywood depicts people of my gender, and does not consistently make my identity the punchline of a joke.

I do not have to remind friends and family repeatedly which gender pronouns to use when referring to me.

I am able to purchase clothes that match my gender identity without being refused service, mocked, or questioned about my genitals.
Feeling Hopeless

Media Influence on parents, teens, and professionals

I have positive media images of people with whom I can identify.

Name a popular character who is LGBTQIA+ whom you would consider a role model?

Can you think of a character for every letter in LGBTQIA?
Feeling Hopeless

Media, Peers, Schools, Family

I do not have to remind friends and family repeatedly which gender pronouns to use when referring to me.

Bruce or Caitlyn? Why does it matter?
Someone you know is gay.
Maybe even someone you love.
Think before you speak hate.

Soldiers For Homophobia Exposed
Feeling Hopeless

Family and Professionals

I do not need the approval of a therapist to consent to a medical procedure to improve my self-image.
Promoting Shame, Isolation, and Risky Behaviors

The Role of Educational Institutions

I have positive media images of people with whom I can identify.

Banned books
Libraries
School Clubs
“No Promo Homo”
Feeling Hopeless

Media Influence on parents, teens, and professionals

I have no fear that if my family finds out about my sexual orientation, there will be economic, emotional, physical and psychological consequences.

Responsible Reporting

Suicide contagion Statistics Cause
Feelings of Failure, Guilt, or Shame (Worthlessness)
Worried about suicide risk?

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Heteronormativity and
Cisnormativity
What’s the deal with coming out anyways?

Shame and Social Isolation
LGBTQIA+ Experiences of Family & Community Rejection

**Rejecting Behaviors**

- No longer being included in family or friend activities because of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Trying to change their sexual orientation or gender identity (conversion therapy)
- Prevented from learning about their identity or finding LGBTQIA+ resources
- Refusing to talk about person’s LGBTQIA+ status
- Blaming a person who experiences discrimination
- Pressuring to be more (or less) feminine and masculine
- Telling them you are ashamed of how they look or act
Experiences of Family & Community Rejection

Accepting Behaviors

❖ Talk/listen respectfully about their LGTBQIA+ identity
❖ Advocate when mistreated because of LGBTQIA+ status
❖ Require that others respect the LGBTQIA+ person
❖ Express positive regard when person discloses LGBTQIA+ status
❖ Welcome LGBTQIA+ friends into the home
❖ Do not allow anti-gay sentiments to be expressed
❖ Support person in attending LGBTQIA+ local events or activities
❖ Support person’s gender expression
Research

Results

Highly rejected people were:

- 8x as likely to attempt suicide
- 6x as likely to report high levels of depression
- 3x as likely to use illegal drugs
- 3x as likely to be at high risk for HIV and STIs

Small changes in behavior have direct impact on:

- Depression
- Suicide
- Homelessness
- Substance abuse
- HIV and STIs
- Self-esteem
- Life satisfaction
- Hope for the future
Worried about suicide risk?

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The importance of Allies:
Creating safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ people
The Role of Helping Professionals

Brave Spaces vs. Safe Spaces
What do youth need from professionals?

Don’t forget the code of ethics
Schools

- Address bullying
- Teach comprehensive and inclusive sex education
- Support GSAs
- Include facts about queer people in art and history
Dignity and Worth of the Person

Client Self-Determination

- Do we make decisions FOR or WITH people?
- Does it cause harm? vs. Does it make me uncomfortable? vs. This is something I’ve never seen before?
- How would I handle a situation if a person was not LGBTQIA+? (or was in the closet, so I didn’t know their LGBTQIA+ identity)
Confidentiality

- It is a violation of confidentiality to disclose to other patients someone’s LGBTQIA+ identity.
- Does it impact this person’s care to disclose LGBTQIA+ identity?
- Does suicidal ideation need to be disclosed to parents? How can we manage that and keep the youths’ trust?
It is a violation of confidentiality to disclose to other patients someone’s LGBTQIA+ identity.

Does it impact this patients’ care to disclose LGBTQIA+ identity?

Housing & HIPPA Concerns
People are not zoo animals
Empathy is simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of “You’re not alone.”
Are you communicating that you’re uncomfortable with the topic?

Talking About Risk Factors and Identity
Don’t be afraid to say, "I don't understand, but I want to be respectful of you." Being a good ally does not mean that you never get confused or make mistakes. It means that you are doing everything in your power to learn and act in a respectful way, always - even when you don't understand.
Resources
What does WPATH say?
Support Groups Offered at Utah Pride Center:

- Trans+ Adults
- Trans+ Youth
- Survivors of Suicide Attempts
- Queer Youth
- AA Groups
- Men’s Support Group
- Poly Q
- Kids Like Me
- Teens Like Me
- 1-5 Club
- Narcotics Anonymous
- People with mental illness
PFLAG Chapters:

- Ephraim/Sanpete County:
  - drbuck55@hotmail.com

- Logan/Cache Valley:
  - Active FB Page & pflaglogan@gmail.com

- Price
  - pflag.price@gmail.com

- Provo/Utah County
  - provopflag.org Active FB page provopflag@gmail.com

- Salt Lake City:
    slcpflag@gmail.com

- St. George
  - (435) 313-3366
  - pflag.saintgeorge@gmail.com
Q & A
- It’s okay to be confused. Gender and sexuality are very complex. LGBTQIA+ people spend lifetimes trying to understand their experience.
- Ultimately, you don’t need to understand. You need to be able to provide compassionate care. Accept people for who they are, and treat them with human decency.
- Always remember that clients are the experts on their own experience. If you’re not sure what to do, ask the client what they would like to have happen.

The Takeaway
Before You Speak...

THINK

- Is it true
- Is it helpful
- Is it inspiring
- Is it necessary
- Is it kind
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