

Mental health for LGBTQ+ youth



Many teens worry about fitting in. And teens who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or queer (LGBTQ+), also face possible stigma and discrimination. This can put LGBTQ+ youth at an increased risk for mental health concerns.

Discrimination and mental health

LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience discrimination than their heterosexual and cisgender (people whose gender identity matches their physical sex) peers. For example, something as simple as having access to a restroom can impact the mental health of a young person who is transgender.

Here are some statistics to consider:¹

- 60 percent of LGBQ youth report being so sad or hopeless they stopped doing some of their usual activities.
- LGBQ young people are more than twice as likely to feel suicidal and over four times as likely to attempt suicide.
- Transgender youth are nearly four times as likely as their non-transgender peers to experience depression.
- Transgender students who were denied access to gender-appropriate facilities were 45 percent more likely to attempt suicide.

Your acceptance matters¹

Parents play a vital role in the mental health of their LGBTQ+ children. In fact, having strong family supports, safe schools and caring adults in their lives can help protect them from depression and suicide. Here are some important numbers to consider:

- LGBTQ+ children with unaccepting families were more than three times as likely to consider and attempt suicide than those whose families accepted them.
- LGBTQ+ youth with affirming families reported higher self-esteem and overall health.
- Transgender children whose families affirmed their gender identity were as psychologically healthy as their non-transgender peers.

So, above all, it's important that parents accept and love their children for who they are.

What can you do?

You may have a lot of questions and concerns about your child's wellbeing. You may wonder how you can be accepting and supportive. Here are some ideas:

- **Educate yourself.** Take time to learn about LGBTQ+ topics
- **Do your best.** Parenting means making mistakes and learning
- **Seek to understand.** Ask "What does this mean to you?" and "How can I support you?"
- **Advocate for your child.** Even if you accept your child, other people may not
- **Get support.** Talk to a trusted friend or family member, a mental health professional or join a group like PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)

There are mental health professionals and life coaches who specialize in helping heterosexual and cisgender parents better support their LGBTQ+ children. So know that you and your child are not alone.

¹[Mental health and the LGBTQ community. Human Rights Campaign.](#) Accessed February 2021.

