

DATING MATTERS[®]

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE HEALTHY TEEN RELATIONSHIPS

NURTURING HEALTHY, SAFE RELATIONSHIPS FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
LGBTQ+ Youth & Relationships	4
Peer Relationships	4
Family Relationships	4
Dating Relationships	5
LGBTQ+ Youth & Mental Health	6
Promoting Strengths	7
Supporting Healthy Relationships for LGBTQ+ Youth	8
Seeking Relationship Help as an LGBTQ+ Youth	8
Communicating with your LGBTQ+ Child	9
Coming Out	10
Tips for Healthy Communication with Your Child	10
Tips for Talking with Your Child About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	12
References and Notes	14
Appendix 1: Resources	17
Appendix 2: Glossary	20
Appendix 3: The Genderbread Person	22

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard the term LGBTQ+ used by a co-worker, friend, or on TV and wondered what it meant? LGBTQ+ refers to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning, with a “+” sign to recognize the many different sexual orientations and gender identities, such as nonbinary, used by members of the community. People who identify as LGBTQ+ are important parts of our families, neighborhoods, schools, and communities. It is estimated that 1 of every 20 adults in the United States identifies as LGBTQ+.¹ The numbers are higher among U.S. teenagers—with as many as 1 in 10 teens identifying as LGBTQ+.^{2,3}

Changes in society have made it safer for some people to be openly LGBTQ+ today than it was in the past. However, LGBTQ+ youth still face risks. They are more likely to have negative experiences in school and are at increased risk of bullying and some types of violence.^{4,5} It is important to recognize that these risks are not the fault of LGBTQ+ youth. Rather, they result from societal discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. We can work to decrease these risks and better address the needs of LGBTQ+ youth and their families.

The goal of this resource⁶ is to help you support any LGBTQ+ youth in your life—whether they are your child or others like nieces, nephews, or neighbors—in having safe and healthy relationships. It will give you the information you need to have helpful conversations and provide them with the resources they may need. Having supportive relationships with parents and other adults can help LGBTQ+ youth live happier, healthier lives!^{7,8}



LGBTQ+ YOUTH & RELATIONSHIPS

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Risks exist in any relationship, but research shows that LGBTQ+ youth are at increased risk for bullying and are more likely to experience rejection compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers.^{3,9,10} Bullying behaviors can include teasing, name-calling, pushing, shoving, spreading rumors, or damaging property. Bullying can also take place online; this is called cyberbullying. This includes teasing or harassment in posts or direct messages on social media. More U.S. high school students who self-identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual report having been bullied on school property (32%) and cyberbullied (27%) than their straight peers (17% and 14%, respectively).³

Some LGBTQ+ youth who experience bullying, particularly cyberbullying, may be more hesitant to report it than their non-LGBTQ+ peers.^{11,12} There are several potential reasons they may be hesitant to report. They may not want their access to technology to be restricted. They may think that there is nothing that their parents or school personnel can do. They may fear they won't be supported or think they have the situation under control. They may also fear retaliation.¹⁰

Parents and trusted adults can all play important roles in supporting LGBTQ+ youth as they establish healthy peer relationships. LGBTQ+ youth deserve safe and supportive schools, neighborhoods, and communities. We all have a part in making this a reality. Maintaining open and judgment-free communication with the LGBTQ+ youth in our lives is important to help identify and stop bullying. If an LGBTQ+ youth tells you about an experience with bullying, ask yourself what you can do to help. This may include seeking help from other parents, teachers, or school administrators. Take care not to accidentally out them to someone while seeking help.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

LGBTQ+ youth may encounter rejection at home. It can come from parents or other caregivers, siblings, or extended family members. Family members may have misconceptions about the LGBTQ+ community. Family members who want to be accepting may not feel like they have the right words to talk about relationships among LGBTQ+ people or may react poorly when a child comes out to them. Rejection at home for LGBTQ+ youth may also lead to emotional or physical abuse or neglect, such as being kicked out.

LGBTQ+ youth deserve a safe and supportive family life. LGBTQ+ youth who go through family rejection may feel shame and be reluctant to talk about it. To help ensure they have a supportive family environment, it's important to communicate effectively, openly, and without judgment. This includes active listening skills, like taking turns talking and rephrasing to ensure understanding and using positive and nurturing language. As a parent, you can also model inclusivity at home and combat stigma against people who identify as LGBTQ+. You can teach your children about LGBTQ+ history, talk with them about issues impacting LGBTQ+ people, and develop friendships with people who identify as LGBTQ+.



DATING RELATIONSHIPS

The percentage of LGBTQ+ youth in dating relationships is similar to that of non-LGBTQ+ youth.¹³ Relationship abuse happens just as often, or sometimes more, in relationships that include one or more LGBTQ+ partners. In fact, 61% of bisexual women, 44% of lesbian women, 37% of bisexual men, and 26% of gay men have experienced dating or intimate partner violence at some point in their lives, compared to 35% of heterosexual women and 29% of heterosexual men.¹⁴ Similarly, transgender individuals are more than twice as likely to experience physical or sexual intimate partner violence.¹⁵ Stigma and discrimination toward LGBTQ+ people can contribute to relationship abuse.

As a parent or caregiver, you can help minimize the risks of relationship abuse by forming a loving and supportive relationship with your child. Keep open lines of communication and teach your child what healthy relationships look like. Other adults can help, too. The more supportive adults in a young person's life, the better!

Just as in peer relationships, abuse in youth dating relationships can happen in-person or virtually, including online (for example, on social media) or through texts. For LGBTQ+ youth, relationship abuse may include a partner threatening to "out" them before they are ready. It can also include pressuring them to be out or threatening to share personal videos or photos that might embarrass or out them. Other examples of LGBTQ+-specific abuse include:

- Sharing personal information about someone's body or expressing contempt, disapproval, or ridiculing someone's body. This is never OK but can be particularly high risk for transgender or gender non-conforming people.
- Threatening to interfere with gender transition.
- Pushing someone to be physically intimate in a way they are not comfortable with.
- Asking a partner to hide the relationship or their identity.
- Making fun or questioning a partner's identity.
- Not respecting their partner's name or pronouns.



SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ YOUTH IF THEY ARE BEING BULLIED AT SCHOOL

If an LGBTQ+ youth you know is being bullied at school, you may be able to get additional support from trusted teachers, school counselors, or administrators. Talk to the young person first to find out if there are people at school that they trust more than others. Resources from organizations like [STOMP Out Bullying™](#) or [stopbullying.gov](#) may also be helpful.



LGBTQ+ YOUTH & MENTAL HEALTH

Because of societal stigma and discrimination, LGBTQ+ youth are more likely than their non-LGBTQ+ peers to have mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression.¹⁶ Abuse and violence, including bullying, can contribute to poor mental health outcomes, including suicide. This is particularly concerning for transgender youth. They face higher rates of abuse and mental health challenges than other LGBTQ+ individuals.¹⁶ In fact, in 2017, approximately one-third of transgender youth attempted suicide in the past year.^{17,18}

Healthy relationships with parents and trusted adults can help decrease these risks for LGBTQ+ youth. As a parent or caregiver, you can be on the lookout for signs of mental distress. These include changes in mood or withdrawal from social activities. Other signs to look out for include:¹⁹

- Behavior change (for example, your outgoing, social child becomes withdrawn)
- Discipline or behavioral problems at school
- Declining grades
- Unexplained absences
- Sudden shifts in friend groups
- Risky behaviors

If you suspect an LGBTQ+ youth in your life is experiencing poor mental health, talk to them. It is important that they know they can share their thoughts and feelings with you, without fear of judgment and that you are there to help. You can talk with them and ask if they think talking with a counselor or therapist would be helpful. You can also discuss what support systems they may want to explore. These support systems can help them navigate the coming out process, manage rejection, bullying, or anything else they are worried about. If your child is interested in talking to a counselor or therapist, you can support them by reaching out to a licensed mental health professional who will provide LGBTQ+-affirming care.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

There are several national mental health resources available for LGBTQ+ youth who may be feeling sad, hopeless, or alone, including thoughts of self-harm and suicide, including:

- The **Trevor Project**, which offers a 24/7 confidential hotline that offers mental health supports for LGBTQ+ youth.
- The **Trans Lifeline Hotline**, which offers peer support services for transgender and nonbinary youth.
- The **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline), which is available to anyone who is experiencing a mental health crisis in the U.S. by calling or texting 988 from any phone.



SEEKING A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Keep in mind that, due to prejudice and stigma, not all counselors and therapists are affirming of LGBTQ+ people. An LGBTQ+-affirming therapist is one who believes that youth who identify as LGBTQ+ are normal and that their identities are valid. Be intentional about selecting a counselor or therapist who is welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQ+ people and has experience working with LGBTQ+ youth. You may want to ask several therapists about their approaches before you select one.



PROMOTING STRENGTHS

A defining characteristic of the LGBTQ+ community is its enduring tradition of hope and strength. You can help promote strength among the LGBTQ+ youth in your life by teaching them to:

- **Find community.** Encourage (and help) them to find people like themselves who affirm and accept them just as they are. This might be a school-based Genders and Sexualities Alliance (GSA). It can also include an affirming online community, such as [TrevorSpace](#), which is an online community for LGBTQ+ young people ages 13-24 that is run by the TrevorProject. Connecting with others who may share similar experiences can provide a powerful opportunity to ask questions, find their own voice, and develop a positive self-image.
- **Self-validate.** People who identify as LGBTQ+ are often told that they are weird or unnatural, that parts of their identities are not valid, or that they are just confused. Remind the LGBTQ+ youth in your life that their identity is valid and that they are just the way they are meant to be. Teach them to affirm and validate themselves.
- **Take care of both mind and body.** Encourage the LGBTQ+ youth in your life to get enough sleep, eat healthy, and get physical activity that they enjoy. Also remember the value of good mental health. Provide resources for them, whether related to meditation and mindfulness, therapy, or something else.
- **Put yourself first.** Teach LGBTQ+ youth the importance of self-value and boundaries. This may mean saying “no” if someone is asking them to do too much or walking away from unhealthy relationships and people.
- **Find time for fun.** Fun can be different for different people, so this can look however a specific child wants it to. Fun may mean watching their favorite movie or having a spontaneous dance party in the living room. Encourage them to think of different things that sound fun to them and remind them that fun reduces stress!



SUPPORTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH

LGBTQ+ youth deserve to have safe, healthy, and respectful relationships of all types. Many elements of healthy relationships – like resolving conflicts with respect or having open, honest communication with a partner – are true regardless of a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. However, LGBTQ+ youth can also experience unique challenges in their relationships. For example, some characteristics of healthy relationships that are unique to LGBTQ+ youth include a partner who:

- Accepts and supports who they are, including their gender and/or sexual identity
- Respects their name and gender pronouns
- Respects boundaries and never threatens to out someone

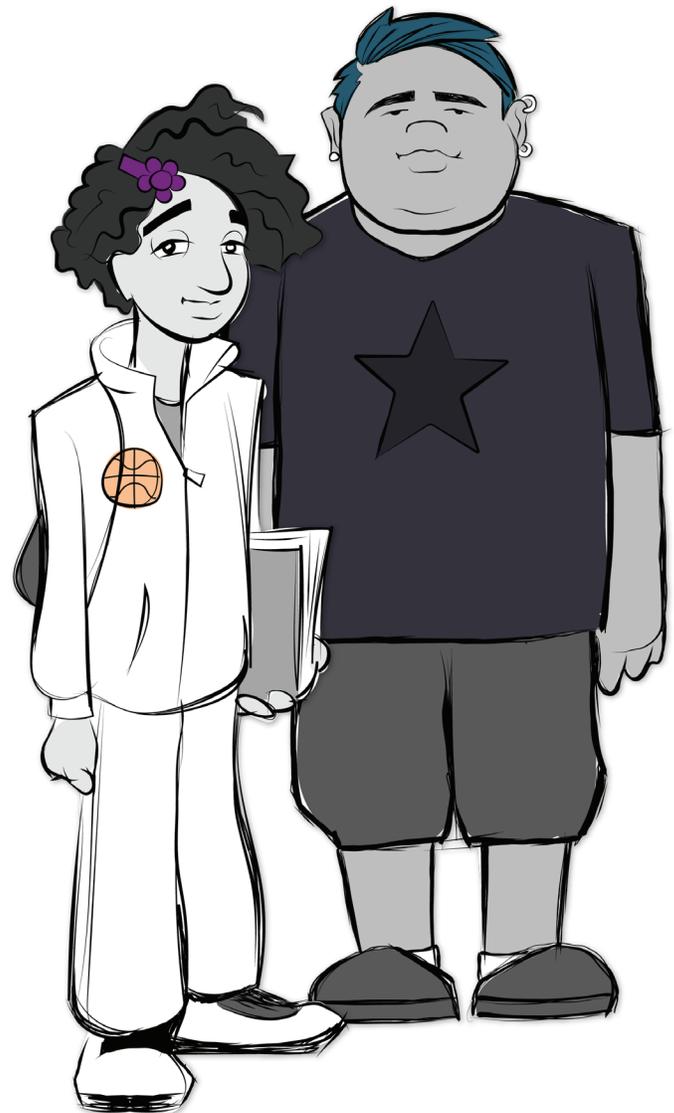
There are many specific ways you can help support any LGBTQ+ youth as they navigate having safe and healthy relationships. To start, you can support their emotional development by:

- Talking with them about their LGBTQ+ identity
- Responding with warmth and care when you learn that they are LGBTQ+
- Supporting their identity even if you feel uncomfortable
- Advocating for them when they are mistreated
- Expecting other family members to respect the LGBTQ+ youth in your family
- Welcoming their LGBTQ+ friends and partners into your home
- Supporting their gender expression, including their gender pronouns
- Helping them access the care they need to support their mental and physical well-being
- Believing they can have a happy future as an LGBTQ+ adult and telling them that

You can help your child connect with positive LGBTQ+ organizations by bringing them to events, like a local Pride event. You can also help connect them with an LGBTQ+ adult role model. You may find other ideas and information by reaching out to organizations that support parents with LGBTQ+ children, such as [PFLAG](#), which runs local chapters across the U.S. that provide both support and resources to parents and family members. Parents and caregivers can be a big source of support for youth as they develop healthy relationships.

SEEKING RELATIONSHIP HELP AS AN LGBTQ+ YOUTH

While it can be difficult for anyone to ask for help when they need it, when LGBTQ+ youth need help, they may face some unique barriers. For example, they may be fearful of being outed or worry they will need to come out to get help. For youth who are questioning, they may worry that they need to figure out their gender or sexuality to get help. They may also be worried family or friends will reject them. Lack of awareness can also be a barrier for LGBTQ+ youth. They may be unaware or unsure of resources they can go to, and those who offer to help, such as school counselors or parents, may not know much about LGBTQ+ issues. You can help by being a trusted adult that LGBTQ+ youth can come to for help if they are in an unsafe relationship.



COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR LGBTQ+ CHILD

Be prepared to talk with your child openly about how to have safe, healthy dating relationships when they are ready. This may be more challenging if you feel like you do not know much about the kinds of relationships your child is having. Learning more about relationships among LGBTQ+ youth and concerns will help prepare you to support your child with these important discussions.

As a parent, you can help support your LGBTQ+ child by educating yourself about available resources. You may also need help navigating your own emotions. You may need more information to educate yourself and support your child. It may be difficult for you to know how to react if your child comes out to you but providing the best support possible for your child can make a huge difference. It can even be an opportunity for you to develop a closer relationship.

Many resources are available that discuss how to have conversations with children about gender and sexual identity. Selected resources at the end of this guide can be helpful. You can also take the steps below to help LGBTQ+ (including questioning) youth in your life feel more comfortable talking with you about their gender identity, sexual orientation, dating relationships, or other issues.

6 TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX

- Be prepared. Think about what you might say in advance.
- Relax. You do not need to know all the answers.
- Start now. Don't wait for your child to talk to you about relationships and sex.
- Listen to your child and their point of view.
- Talk about relationships and sexual health again, and again, and again.
- Use the "facts + expectations" formula. Provide accurate information without any value judgment or opinions. Then share your perspective and experience.
- **Be aware of comments or jokes you and others around you make about the LGBTQ+ community, including anti-gay or transphobic language (for example, "that's so gay").** If your child hears you make or support negative comments about people who identify as LGBTQ+, they may be more hesitant or nervous to talk with you about their own identity. If you made comments or jokes in the past, you could apologize and tell them you will do better in the future.
- **Let your child know that your love is unconditional.** Tell your child you are proud to be their parent and you will always be there to support them. Avoid using phrases such as "I will always love you, *even if you are...*" or "I will support you *despite...*". These phrases can make your child feel that their gender identity or sexual orientation is something that is wrong with them or a negative aspect of who they are. Instead, you might say, "I love everything about you." Tell them you love them because of the person they are – because they are your child.
- **Avoid making assumptions about your child's sexual orientation or gender identity.** Ask open-ended and inclusive questions such as "Who do you find attractive?" Don't make gendered comments such as "What girls do you think are cute? I bet any girl you want to ask to the dance will be ecstatic to come with you." It is easy to make assumptions about your child's sexual orientation or gender identity. Don't be hard on yourself if you have done this in the past. You can change your approach moving forward and encourage others to do the same.
- **Start conversations about inclusivity and respecting and accepting others while your child is young.** Include discussions about gender identity and sexual orientation. Early conversations can help them figure out their own identity at an early age and help them feel comfortable and confident in who they are.
- **Show your support for the LGBTQ+ community.** Talk about LGBTQ+ news stories, put a rainbow flag in the yard, attend or walk in a Pride parade, join or support an LGBTQ+ organization, and enjoy friendships with LGBTQ+ people. These small steps can show your child you are accepting and can make them feel more confident talking with you.



COMING OUT

Your response to a child coming out as LGBTQ+ can have a long-term impact on their health and well-being. Communication will be key to understanding your child's challenges on this life-changing journey. If you are coming to these materials after learning that a child is LGBTQ+ and feel like you have made mistakes, keep in mind this is a learning process. The tips and resources below can still be helpful for you. Remember that it is never too late to tell someone that you love them just the way they are and work toward creating a supportive and healthy relationship.

Maintaining open communication when a child comes out as LGBTQ+ is important. There may be things you don't understand, or you may have questions when it comes to discussing gender identity and sexual orientation. Try these tools from Dating Matters® for communicating with your child:

TIPS FOR HEALTHY COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD

1

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY LANGUAGE.

- Make eye contact.
- Keep your verbal and nonverbal messages the same. Your facial expressions and body language say as much about what you are saying as what comes out of your mouth.

2

ACTIVELY LISTEN.

- Be open to their views.
- Take turns talking.
- Make sure you understand what is being said. Try rephrasing what has been said: "It sounds like you are saying..." If you don't understand something, ask them, "What do you mean by that?" or "Can you tell me more about that?"
- Ask questions about what they are saying and feeling.

3

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR VOICE AND YOUR TONE.

- Try not to raise your voice.
- Avoid using sarcasm or any hurtful tone. This may make your child less likely to listen to you or approach you in the future.

4

USE "I" MESSAGES TO DESCRIBE HOW YOU FEEL.

- Describe the way you feel and wait for a response.
- Avoid "you"- statements, such as "You don't know what you are talking about" or "You can't do this to me." Instead, you could say, "Thank you for telling me. This caught me by surprise, and I have some questions. Is it okay if I take a minute to think?"

When your child comes out, you may have a variety of feelings. You might be surprised, or excited because they opened up, or you may have expected this conversation for a while. You may experience or feel confusion, worry, or anger. Do not let these emotions stop you from expressing unconditional love for them. Anyone who is going through the process of coming out will have their own emotions to deal with; they are not responsible for handling yours. Try to remain calm and listen. It has taken a lot of courage to talk to you about this! Anyone who comes out to you is showing you they trust you by talking about this.

Initial coming out conversations may not involve a child clearly saying, “I am gay” or “I am transgender.” For example, they may casually talk with you about being attracted to someone of the same gender. Additionally, they may not be ready to talk about everything at once. They may want to have several conversations. For many people, sexual orientation and gender identity evolve over adolescence and into adulthood. Coming out is often an ongoing process and you can support them by affirming wherever they are in the process. Do not force conversations. Wait until they are ready to directly discuss their sexual orientation or gender identity and let them set the pace.²⁰ As noted above, you can use “I” statements if you need a minute to collect your thoughts.

If your child wants to discuss their sexual orientation or gender identity, respond with curiosity rather than judgment. As a parent, you can show support and respond positively to their coming out in many ways. You can tell them that their sexuality/gender identity is important and encourage them to be who they are. Young people want to know it is okay to be themselves, that their LGBTQ+ identities exist and are valid, and that their family loves them.²¹ You can reassure them by telling them that you hope your relationship will become closer now that they can be themselves. Avoid insisting they present themselves a certain way (for example, masculine or feminine) in public to protect themselves.²¹ Instead, help them embrace themselves and support them on this journey.

Reassure your child that if they encounter prejudice, adversity, or harmful comments and actions, they should not let those experiences define them. Instead, encourage your child to confide in you or seek help from another trusted adult. Your understanding, support, and advocacy will make all the difference for them! To ensure discussions with your child are positive, you can:

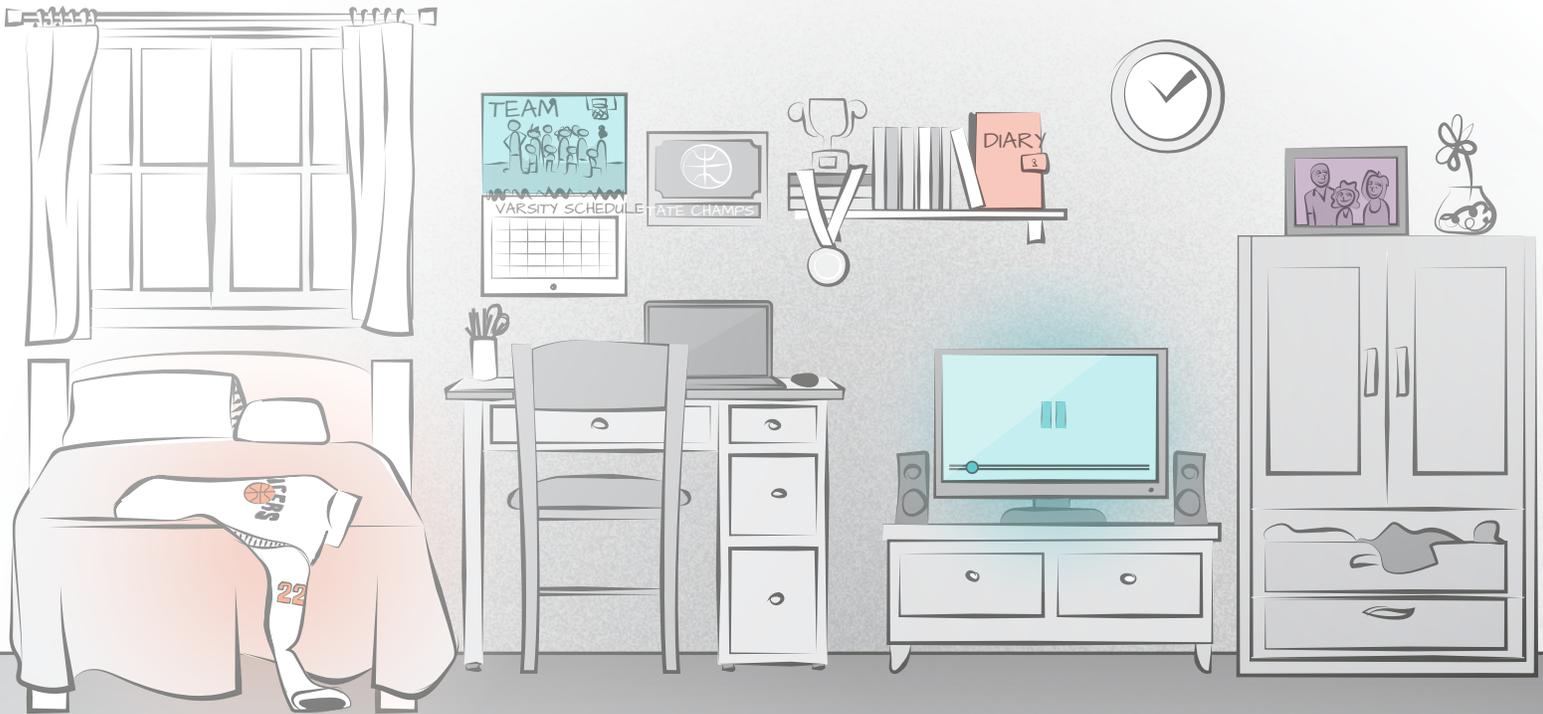
- Support your child’s sexual orientation and gender identity
- Let your child set the pace and don’t push your child to talk when they’re not ready
- Normalize all sexual orientations and gender identities
- Use age-appropriate language, including:
 - Easy to understand medically accurate words
 - Providing the same level of detail and honesty you’d share when talking about opposite gender relationships



TIPS FOR TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

In addition to responding positively to your child when talking about sexual orientation and gender identity, try to avoid saying anything that will make them feel unsafe or rejected.²² The table below highlights several “Red Flag” statements to avoid when discussing sexual orientation and gender identity with your child.

Red Flag Statements to Avoid - Examples	
“It’s just a phase. You will grow out of it.”	Statements like these make your child feel like their thoughts and emotions don’t matter and can prevent further conversations. These statements can also diminish the importance of having coming out conversations.
“Okay, if this is the lifestyle you want to choose.”	Being LGBTQ+ is a matter of identity and not a matter of lifestyle. Research shows that sexual orientation and gender identity emerge early in life. ²³ They are not influenced by home life. However, people do choose how they express themselves and to whom. People who identify as LGBTQ+ face many challenges in a society that is not always accepting. Show support and allow your child to voice their feelings.
“We can get you the treatment you need to fix this.”	Conversion “therapy” is sometimes referred to as sexual orientation change efforts or gender identity change efforts. Research shows that conversion therapy is ineffective and extremely harmful and can lead to depression, anxiety, and suicide. ^{24,25} People who identify as LGBTQ+ are not broken and do not need to be fixed or changed. ^{26,27}



How you react to your child coming out and interact with them about their sexual orientation and gender identity can impact them in many ways. **Parental acceptance of LGBTQ+ youth has been shown to improve the parent-child relationship. LGBTQ+ youth with accepting parents use fewer substances and engage in fewer risky sexual behaviors.**^{28,29} **Parental acceptance can also protect LGBTQ+ youth from depression and suicide risk.**^{30,31} The table outlines things to avoid and alternative options that may be helpful as you work towards using more positive and nurturing language as you talk to your child.^{30,31,32}

Avoid This...	Try This Instead...
Using negative or harmful language about the LGBTQ+ community	<p>Use positive language about the LGBTQ+ community.</p> <p>Speak up against those using negative comments about the LGBTQ+ community.</p> <p>Educate yourself about the LGBTQ+ community.</p> <p>Ask if you are unsure whether a question or comment is offensive. If you accidentally say something offensive, quickly apologize and learn from your mistake.</p>
Addressing your child as he/him after they told you they identify as a girl and prefer she/her pronouns	<p>Use the gender pronouns your child is most comfortable with.</p> <p>Refer to your child by the name they ask you to use.</p>
Trying to convince your child to be straight or cisgender	<p>Encourage your child to be themselves.</p>
Making threats or demands	<p>Be receptive to what your child has to share with you even if you disagree or don't understand it.</p>
Assuming someone is straight	<p>Use gender-neutral statements (e.g., "Are you planning to ask anyone to the dance?").</p> <p>Ask your child what pronouns they prefer and how they would like you to use those pronouns around other people.</p>
Suggesting that your child coming out is temporary – a phase or just experimenting	<p>Acknowledge how far your child has come, that they have an exciting future ahead of them, and that you will be with them at every step.</p>
Assuming sexual orientation or gender identity is a choice	<p>Use statements that show you love your child for who they are.</p> <p>Recognize that your child's sexual orientation or gender identity is not a choice. The choice they made in this situation is to confide in you.</p> <p>Acknowledge that your child has likely had these feelings for a long time and that you're grateful that they're talking to you.</p>
Assuming your child's sexual orientation or gender identity conflicts with their religious identity	<p>Find LGBTQ+-affirming religious organizations and leaders. Affirming means they will not attempt to change someone's gender identity, expression, or sexual identity, or make someone feel shame or guilt for who they are.</p>

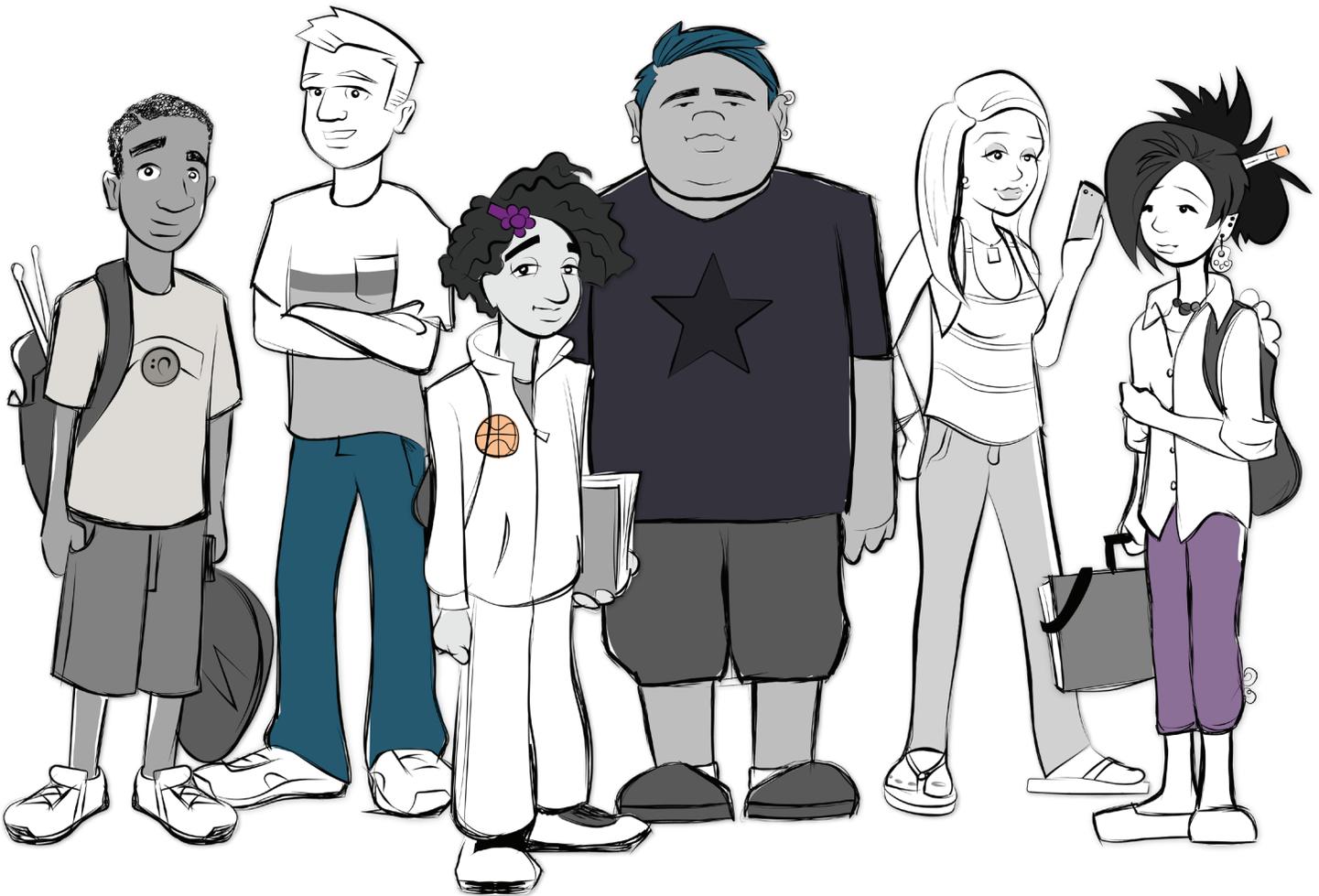
Many resources exist for having coming out and other conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity with your child. As you review resources, be cautious since some resources might try to appear LGBTQ+-affirming or even neutral but are not. Ask yourself whether the information you see includes messages around celebrating a person exactly as they are. [PFLAG](#), the [Family Acceptance Project](#), and the [Strong Family Alliance](#) are resources to explore for information as you consider the best ways to communicate with your child about sexual orientation and gender identity. These and other selected resources are available in the next section of this guide.

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APPENDIX 1: RESOURCES

A great way to support LGBTQ+ and questioning youth is to educate yourself about the issues they may be facing. There are many other resources available that cover topics ranging from how to have coming out conversations with your child to LGBTQ+-inclusive sexual and relationship health to crisis support. Parents and families can be essential sources of support for LGBTQ+ youth as they begin to celebrate their unique strengths and become their authentic selves. The more you know, the better you can support LGBTQ+ youth in your life. This guide is a great place to start!

Disclaimer: The list of resources here and the examples provided throughout this guide are not intended to be exhaustive. Instead, they are included to provide a starting place for parents and caregivers who might be looking for more information or for ways to support LGBTQ+ youth better. Links to non-Federal organizations are provided solely as a service to our users. These links do not constitute an endorsement of these organizations or their programs by CDC or the Federal Government, and none should be inferred. CDC is not responsible for the content of the individual organization web pages found at these links.

GENERAL RESOURCES

CENTERLINK	https://www.lgbtcenters.org/	CenterLink is an international nonprofit organization and member-based association of LGBTQ+ centers and other LGBTQ+ organizations serving local and regional communities. Their work focuses on strengthening, supporting, and connecting LGBTQ+ community centers throughout the U.S. and the world.
FAMILY ACCEPTANCE PROJECT	https://familyproject.sfsu.edu/	The Family Acceptance Project is a research, intervention, education, and policy initiative to prevent health and mental health risks for LGBTQ+ children. They provide resources to help diverse families learn how to support their LGBTQ+ children. They also provide training and consultation for families on topics such as helping families to support LGBTQ+ children and preventing suicide and homelessness for LGBTQ+ youth, among others.
FREEDHEARTS	www.freedhearts.org	FreedHearts is a nonprofit organization that provides information for Christian parents of LGBTQ+ children who may be struggling with reconciling their love and faith.
GENDER SPECTRUM	https://genderspectrum.org/	Gender Spectrum is a nonprofit organization that works to create gender sensitive and inclusive environments for kids and teens.
HEALTHYCHILDREN	www.healthychildren.org	HealthyChildren provides information for parents of LGBTQ+ children including information on accepting your child's gender identity and sexual orientation, parenting a gender-diverse child, and providing mental health support to youth.
NATIONAL QUEER AND TRANS THERAPISTS OF COLOR NETWORK	https://nqttcn.com/en/community-resources/	The NQTTCN offers resources specifically tailored to queer and trans people of color, including crisis hotlines, online support, and organizations.

PFLAG	www.pflag.org https://pflag.org/resource/pflag-national-faith-resources/ https://pflag.org/resource/faith-resources-for-non-judeo-christian-abrahamic-denominations/	PFLAG is the largest organization for people who identify as LGBTQ+, their parents and families, and allies. PFLAG runs local chapters across the United States as well as an extensive website that includes resources about gender identity and sexual orientation and family acceptance.
THE SAFE ZONE PROJECT	https://thesafezoneproject.com/	The Safe Zone Project offers free, online allyship training.
UNDERSTANDING NEOPRONOUNS	https://www.hrc.org/resources/understanding-neopronouns	This guide by the Human Rights Campaign explains neopronouns— or pronouns other than those most commonly used— and answers questions about their use.
WORLD PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR TRANSGENDER HEALTH (WPATH)	https://www.wpath.org/	WPATH is a nonprofit, interdisciplinary professional and educational organization devoted to transgender health. Their site includes a “find a provider” tool that you can use to locate a provider who is also a member of the WPATH organization.

CRISIS INTERVENTION

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE	https://988lifeline.org/	Anyone experiencing a mental health emergency in the United States can access the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline through the three digit code “988.” Users can call, text, or chat to be connected with trained counselors.
LGBT NATIONAL HELP CENTER	https://www.lgbthotline.org/	The LGBT National Help Center runs several hotlines, including one specifically for youth that provides resources, peer-support, and information for individuals through age 25. Additionally, they have weekly moderated group chatrooms for youth younger than 19 focused on finding community and support.
NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE	https://www.thehotline.org/resources/abuse-in-lgbtq-communities/	The National Domestic Violence Hotline is available 24/7 by texting “START” to 88788, through live chat, or by calling 1-800-799-SAFE. Their website includes a section on abuse in LGBTQ+ communities.
STOMP OUT BULLYING	https://www.stompoutbullying.org/	STOMP Out Bullying™ works to reduce bullying and cyberbullying of all types, including through education against homophobia and discrimination against LGBTQ+ youth. They run the STOMP Out Bullying™ HelpChat Crisis Line staffed with trained crisis counselors several days a week that is free and confidential for ages 13-24.
TRANS LIFELINE HOTLINE	https://translifeline.org/	The Trans Lifeline Hotline offers peer support services for transgender and nonbinary youth.
THE TREVOR PROJECT	https://www.thetrevorproject.org/	The Trevor Project provides a 24/7 confidential hotline that offers mental health supports for LGBTQ+ youth. They also provide TrevorSpace, which is an online community for LGBTQ+ young people ages 13-24.

SEXUAL HEALTH

<p>AMAZE</p>	<p>https://amaze.org</p>	<p>AMAZE uses animated and short videos to provide medically accurate and age-appropriate sex education information to youth. They also have materials for adults, including parents and caregivers, to help encourage effective communication about sex and sexuality with the youth in their lives.</p>
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COMING OUT

<p>STRONG FAMILY ALLIANCE</p>	<p>www.strongfamilyalliance.org</p>	<p>Strong Family Alliance provides information to help children come out and parents become informed supporters and allies. They provide insights on the transition for both parents and children, ways to keep LGBTQ+ children safe and healthy, and encouragement for parents.</p>
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CDC RESOURCES

<p>CDC DIVISION OF ADOLESCENT AND SCHOOL HEALTH</p>	<p>https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/</p>	<p>CDC provides information for families to protect and improve the health of youth. DASH has done extensive research on the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth. See the specific links below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Health Considerations for LGBTQ Youth Disparities Adolescent and School Health CDC ● Protective Factors for LGBTQ Youth Protective Factors Adolescent and School Health CDC ● Health Disparities Among LGBTQ Youth Health Disparities Adolescent and School Health CDC ● HIV Information and Youth DASH CDC
<p>CDC'S LGBT YOUTH AND TRANSGENDER PAGES</p>	<p>https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/transgender.htm</p>	<p>CDC's LGBT Youth Page includes sections focused on LGBTQ+ experiences with violence, effects on education and health, what schools and parents can do, ways parents can influence the health of LGBTQ+ youth, and additional resources. CDC also offers several fact sheets and resources on transgender health for both community members and healthcare providers.</p>
<p>DATING MATTERS®</p>	<p>https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/datingmatters/</p>	<p>Dating Matters®: Strategies to Promote Healthy Relationships is a dating violence prevention program that aims to educate younger teens (11-14 years old) about healthy relationships and provide them with skills to reduce their risk for dating violence.</p>

APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY

There are a lot of words that we use when talking about gender identity and sexual orientation.

SEX AND GENDER

- **Sex:** means a person’s biological status as **male**, **female**, or **intersex**. It’s usually assigned at birth by a doctor. It’s based on a person’s physical traits.
- **Intersex:** is a person who is born with physical traits that don’t fit the boxes of “male” or “female.” Intersex traits happen naturally. Being intersex is not a medical problem.
- **Gender identity:** is how we view ourselves. It’s how we see ourselves as boys, girls, or something else. Only you can define your gender. It often develops early in life, and it can continue to change over time. It does not have to match someone’s sex assigned at birth.
- **Transgender:** is a person whose gender identity is not the same as their sex assigned at birth. Transgender includes:
 - **Transgender boy:** Someone who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a boy.
 - **Transgender girl:** Someone who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a girl.
- **Cisgender:** is someone whose current gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Genderfluid:** is someone whose gender expression or gender identity changes. That change might be in gender expression, like dressing as a boy one day and a girl on another day. Gender fluidity can look different for different people.
- **Genderqueer:** describes a person who identifies as something other than what we traditionally think of as “boy” or “girl.” People use the word **genderqueer** to mean different things. Some people use it to mean the same thing as nonbinary. Others consider the term to cover any identity that isn’t cisgender.
- **Gender pronouns:** are the different pronouns that people use. They can change based on the person’s gender. Common **gender pronouns** are she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs. There are also other **gender pronouns** a person may use.
- **Gender expression:** is how a person communicates their gender. It can be how they dress or behave.
- **Nonbinary person:** is someone who identifies as a gender other than boy or girl.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- **Sexual orientation:** a person’s attraction to others. Like gender, only you can define your sexual orientation. It may change over time.
- **Straight or heterosexual:** means a person is only attracted to members of another gender. For example, a boy who is attracted to girls or a girl who is attracted to boys.
- **Gay:** refers to someone who is attracted primarily to members of the same gender. It is used most frequently to describe boys who are attracted primarily to other boys, although it can be used for boys and girls.
- **Lesbian:** refers to girls who are attracted to other girls.
- **Bisexual:** refers to a person who is attracted to more than one gender.
- **Pansexual:** refers to a person who is attracted to people no matter what their gender is. They might be attracted to boys, girls, and people of other genders.
- **Asexual:** refers to a person who might not be attracted to people of any gender. It can also include people who are **demisexual**.

- **Demisexual:** means a person experiences some physical attraction, but only sometimes. They might need a strong connection with a partner before they're attracted to them.
- **Queer:** describes someone who isn't straight or cisgender. Although it's sometimes used as a positive term among LGBTQ+ people today, it was an insulting word in the past, so some people may not like to use it.
- **Questioning:** describes people who are exploring their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

OTHER RELEVANT TERMS

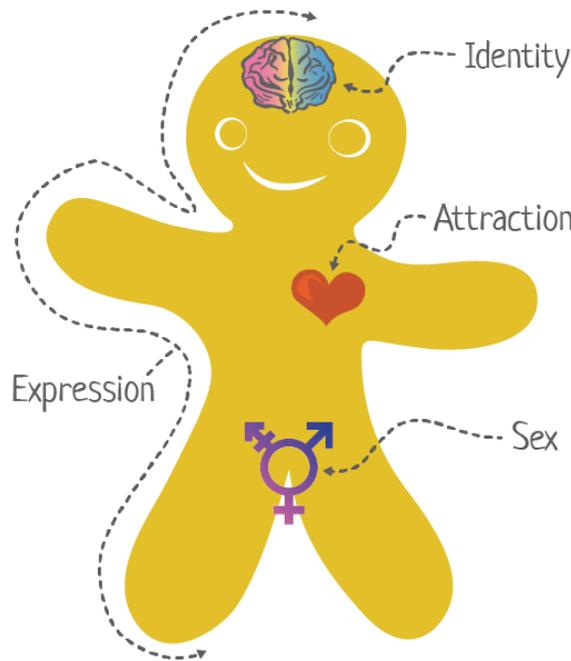
- **Coming out:** is a process where a person accepts and appreciates their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Then they begin to share it with others. It will look different for everyone and should happen in each person's own way and on their own timeline.
- **Ally:** describes someone who is supportive of LGBTQ+ people. Allies can be straight and cisgender or people in the LGBTQ+ community who support each other. For example, a lesbian can be an ally to the bisexual community.
- **Genders and Sexualities Alliance (GSA):** are student-run groups that unite LGBTQ+ students and allies. They build community and organize around issues affecting their schools and communities. These may sometimes be called "Gay-Straight Alliances."
- **LGBTQ+:** is a term that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and other people. The + includes all the gender identities and sexual orientations that are not covered by the other initials.

APPENDIX 3: THE GENDERBREAD PERSON



The “Genderbread Person”^{*} is a good tool to understand the difference between sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Remember sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation are not the same. Also, keep in mind that sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation apply to everyone, not just to people who identify as LGBTQ+.

The Genderbread Person v4 *by its pronounced METROsexual.com*



⊖ means a lack of what's on the right side

Gender Identity

- ⊖ → Woman-ness
- ⊖ → Man-ness

Gender Expression

- ⊖ → Femininity
- ⊖ → Masculinity

Anatomical Sex

- ⊖ → Female-ness
- ⊖ → Male-ness

Identity ≠ Expression ≠ Sex
Gender ≠ Sexual Orientation

Sex Assigned At Birth
 Female Intersex Male

- ♥ Sexually Attracted to... and/or (a/o)
- ⊖ → Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People
 - ⊖ → Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People

- ♥ Romantically Attracted to...
- ⊖ → Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People
 - ⊖ → Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People

* <https://www.genderbread.org/resource/genderbread-person-v4-0>