



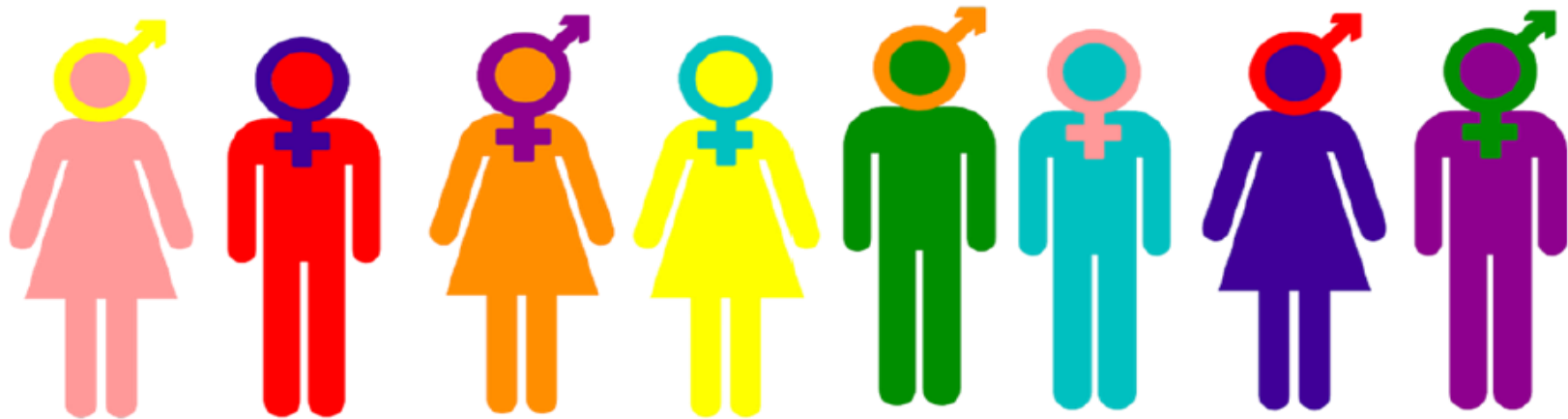
MENTAL HEALTH IN THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANS + COMMUNITIES



WHAT DOES LGBT+ MEAN?



'LGBT+' stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and others. We use the phrase LGBT+ to describe people who may fit under this general term. Some people may not feel they fit into one of those terms - it's important to recognise everyone is different.



Lesbian, gay and bisexual: A person who is sexually attracted to people of their own gender or both genders.

Transgender: a term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves in many different ways including non-binary, transgender and gender queer.

Others (+): The plus (+) is included to recognise that many people do not identify as LGBT, but do not fit into traditional categories of gender or sexuality such as people who are non-binary, intersex or pansexual.

MENTAL HEALTH AND BEING LGBT+



Being LGBT+ does not automatically mean you will have mental health issues. However, mental health issues have been found to be common among people who identify as LGBT+. One review of studies on mental health issues in the LGBT+ community found the following:

- LGBT+ people are at more risk of suicidal behaviour and self-harm than non-LGBT+ people.
- Gay and bisexual men are four times more likely to attempt suicide across their lifetime than the rest of the population.
- LGBT+ people are 1½ times more likely to develop depression and anxiety compared to the rest of the population.

The reasons why there are mental health issues among LGBT+ people are complex and may have been increased during lockdown with increased isolation, the cancellation or postponement of significant community events such as Pride, and suspension of therapeutic services.



CHALLENGES TO GOOD MENTAL HEALTH FOR LGBT+ PEOPLE



Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia: LGBT+ people may experience bullying, humiliation or violence that can be very traumatic. It can run deeper than any specific incident and can feel like an everyday part of the world you live in, shaping the way you see the world for a long time.

Internalised negative feelings: Everyone is exposed to homophobia, biphobia or transphobia in society, but for LGBT+ people this can make them feel badly about their sexuality or gender identity.



Difficult experiences of coming out: LGBT+ people may have to come out many times during their lives. It may be liberating, allowing people to be themselves, it could also be very difficult and have painful consequences.

Social isolation, exclusion and rejection: If those around you don't accept you, you may feel excluded and rejected from important parts of your life such as family, work, social events and faith communities.



Experiences of stigma and discrimination: While there has been progress towards equality for LGBT+ people in recent years, there may still be times when people are judged or treated unfairly.

Minority stress: Everyone experiences stress in their lives, but not everyone lives with social stigma and discrimination. When you face this because you are in a minority community, like being LGBT+, we call it 'minority stress'. It means people in this group live with higher stress compared to the general population.

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH WITH SOMEONE WHO IS LGBT+



It's important to remember that feeling able to embrace your LGBT+ identity can also have a positive impact on your wellbeing. It might mean you have:

- Increased confidence
- Improved relationships with your friends and family
- A sense of community and belonging
- The freedom of self-expression and self-acceptance
- Increased resilience.

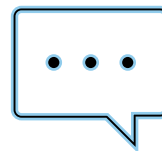


A good support network helps all of us have higher self-esteem and better mental health. This is especially true for LGBT+ people, who may be facing extra challenges.



Don't make assumptions

Everyone's experience is different. Try to avoid making assumptions based on what you already know about mental health problems or LGBT+ issues. Instead, ask the person what is going on for them.



Listen to their experiences

Growing up with a different sexual or gender identity means it's likely they have faced negativity. They may feel worried to open up and speak about their experiences. Give them space to talk.



Show them you care

Internalised stigma means many LGBT+ people struggle with low self-esteem. It may seem obvious to you that you care about them, but they may not realise this. Try to find ways to show them you care

SUPPORT FOR LGBT+ COLLEAGUES



LGBT+ Mental Health Support



LGBTQ mental health service

Mind Out Provide practical support and advocacy, working to improve the mental health and wellbeing of LGBT+ communities

Switchboard provide a listening service for LGBT+ people on the phone, by email and instant messaging
Tel: 0300 330 0630



Be a brilliant Ally

BE VISIBLE: Make clear in what you say and do that you are committed to inclusion.



UNDERSTAND: Find time to speak to your colleagues, friends and family to understand the issues

TAKE POSITIVE ACTION: People around you take cues from your behaviour. Don't just talk about inclusion, join Rainbow as an Ally



Join the **Rainbow LGBT+ Colleague Network** as a member or ally to connect with colleagues across the Group

TAKE YOUR LEARNING FURTHER...



Key dates for lesbian, gay, bi and trans equality

An overview of key dates in the development of lesbian, gay, bi and trans history in terms of social, political and legislative change, representation and visibility.

Further reading suggestions...

