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EMPOWERED

IMPROVING LGBTQ+ MENTAL HEALTH

The Power of LGBTQ+ Peer Support Groups

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As individuals, we all crave friendship, understanding, and support. Throughout different points in our lives, we find opportunities to find those friends and relationships that help cultivate who we are and who we want to be. Companionship is especially needed for folks in marginalized communities that have less access to individuals who are like them. For example, LGBTQ+ youth need access to support— whether informal or formal— as a protective factor.

There is a critical need to focus on the mental health of LGBTQ+ folks and especially youth. **A large study** conducted in Australia showed that almost half of 859 young transgender and gender diverse people (ages 14 to 25) had made attempts at taking their own lives. Across the globe, LGBTQ+ youth have a significant and prevalent risk of suicide. Other **risk factors** that can lead to suicide are discrimination, bullying, and isolation— all of which increase vulnerability within LGBTQ+ communities. However, peer and social support can act as a protective factor and reduce the negative impacts of challenges unique to LGBTQ+ folks and other marginalized groups. In this case, peer support helps folks build resilience.

Social or peer support from others with lived experience provides an opportunity for youth to feel less alone. This includes building relationships with trusted individuals, like friends, classmates, family members, and teachers. As this study by the Trevor Project states, "Youth who reported high

levels of family acceptance were 2/3 less likely to report suicide ideation and suicide attempts compared to those with low family acceptance." It's the recognition of the LGBTQ+ youth's struggles and potential hardships, and helping them identify their individual needs, that can save lives.

Peer support can manifest in many forms. Formal mental health peer support groups date back to the 1920s in the USA. Peer support programs involve individuals who have experienced mental health challenges and want to pass their knowledge and coping



mechanisms onto other struggling individuals. Peer advocacy is a positive and community-centered approach to addressing and helping the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth. As **this study** states, "It is contingent upon advocates having adequate training in terms of safety, boundaries, and cultural sensitivity." Informal peer support has also taken on many forms and can be extremely beneficial for LGBTQ+ youths who are

struggling. One informal type of peer support is found family, a concept not unique to the queer community but certainly integral to it. Found family can provide a needed **sense of building**.

LGBTQ+ peer support can improve health outcomes through access to shared information, resources, and camaraderie. Peer support is essential for young LGBTQ+ folks to feel proud, healthy and connected.

[Click here to see Envision:You in the news](#)



Benefits of LGBTQ+ Peer Support

1. Finding a sense of belonging
2. Learning to navigate health and well-being
3. Finding empowerment through knowledge
4. Addressing and destigmatizing mental health issues
5. Amplifying advocacy and activism
6. Creating inclusivity and equity
7. Cultivating resilience and empathy
8. Finding identity and self-expression



Q is for Questioning Workshops in September



Q is for Questioning has two great workshop series in Broomfield and Denver this month. This three-session hybrid workshop series is for trusted adults in the lives of LGBTQ+ youth. Whether you're a caregiver, teacher, counselor, grandparent, etc., this program provides education, support, resources, and strategies to best affirm your LGBTQ+ loved one(s). One of our staff members, who identifies as queer and genderqueer themselves, really likes leading this workshop series because they learn an immense amount from the other facilitators

and participants about how vital it is to create and sustain open dialogue with LGBTQ+ youth. With the help of our partners, we're able to reach communities that need it. The Broomfield dates are September 4, 11, and 18 in partnership with Broomfield Library and Communities that Care. Working with Petals & Pages Bookshop, the Denver workshop series is September 19, 26 and October 2. Please [register here for the Broomfield workshop series](#) and [register here for the Denver workshop series](#).