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# EMPOWERED

IMPROVING LGBTQ+ MENTAL HEALTH

## What is Queer Joy and Why Does it Matter?

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Often, as queer people and allies, we can feel disappointed if we focus on the current socio political climate too much. **Anti-LGBTQ+ legislation is rampant** and sometimes it may feel like societal attitudes aren't improving. It can feel disheartening to know that there are folks out there who don't like you simply because you're not their status quo.

We – a resilient, fierce, and authentic community – must not forget how far we have come – as a society, as a community, and as individuals.

We should feel proud that we have created our own status quo. One that aligns with our spirit and doesn't have rigid boundaries. Our queer joy is the new status quo. No rules.

No expectations. No judgment. Our status quo acknowledges the inherent beauty in all things on this planet. No matter who you are, you are welcome here.

We get to reclaim 'queer' and define for ourselves what joy means.

Therefore, queer joy is an act of resistance.

Queer joy is not reserved for the LGBTQ+ community; it's meant to be shared amongst all of us.

Queer joy is not any one thing. It's what you want it to be.

It's attending your first or fiftieth Pride event. It's seeing your queer friends fall in love.

It's a walk through the park on a blue-bird, 70-degree day. It's seeing your queer heroes and idols fight for you. It's belting show tunes on the way to work. It's sitting in solitude. It's empowering others. It's walking through a neighborhood flooded with Pride flags. It's feeling gender euphoria for the first time. It's connecting and laughing with others. It's relating compassionately with all parts of yourself regardless of your missteps or regrets. It's stepping into your inherent value and worth. It's feeling proud of how far you have come.

Queer joy is for everyone.



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## Three Ways to Cultivate Queer Joy

- 1. Surround Yourself with a Supportive Community - *Everywhere is Queer*** is a public resource for LGBTQ+ folks and allies to discover welcoming and queer-owned spaces to connect with your community. Explore the website and you will find anything from salons to restaurants to clothing shops. Connecting with your community is a great way to meet new people, discover new passions, and network with like-minded people.
- 2. Celebrate LGBTQ+ Culture -** Storytelling fosters connection, which can be used as a tool for building empathy, compassion, and love towards the self and others. Dive into diverse and nuanced LGBTQ+ culture by seeking out new **literature, art, and film**. Learn how **drag cultivates possibility, authenticity, and fierceness**. Volunteer at an LGBTQ+ organization and get involved in life-changing advocacy work.
- 3. Engage in Self-Care and Embrace Self-Expression -** The wonderful thing about being you is that you're the only you. You get to decide what makes you, you. Explore possibilities by trying new **fashion**, makeup, and **hobbies**. What makes you feel good inside? What makes you feel most alive?



## Program Highlight

Even with friends and loved ones we are close to, it's normal and valid to feel unsure about how to ask about one's mental health. For LGBTQ+ individuals, reaching out for help can be a challenge due to things like fear of discrimination, harassment, and rejection.

To help you show support for the mental health and well-being of the LGBTQ+ people in your life, Envision:You launched one of its flagship programs, **How To Have The Talk**, in 2021. The purpose of this public health awareness campaign is to destigmatize and normalize conversations around mental health and substance use within families

and communities. How To Have The Talk provides tip cards, or pocket cards, with LGBTQ+ affirming crisis resources and helpful ways to start a discussion that makes mental health and substance use less taboo and uncomfortable. Thanks to funding from the Metro Denver Partnership for Health, Envision:You refreshed these tip cards with updated resources and person-centered, trauma-informed conversation starters.

To learn more, visit [envision-you.org/how-to-have-the-talk](https://envision-you.org/how-to-have-the-talk). If you are interested in obtaining copies of How To Have The Talk tip cards (available in English and Spanish), please contact [info@envision-you.org](mailto:info@envision-you.org).