

A photograph of two hands, one from the left and one from the right, positioned to form a heart shape. Both wrists are adorned with colorful, knitted rainbow wristbands. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The hands are the central focus, with the fingers interlaced to create the heart's outline.

# LGBTQ+ and Mental Health

Factsheet



# LGBTQ+ and Mental Health

Some of us identify as LGBTQ+. This means we may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer or questioning. The '+' is used to signify all the other gender identities and orientations that are not specifically covered by the other six initials. This includes asexual, pansexual, agender, non-binary and genderqueer individuals. **Stonewall's glossary** lists many more terms.

## Mental health problems

Anyone can experience poor mental health, but research shows that people that identify as LGBTQ+ are more likely to develop problems such as:

- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Anxiety, including social anxiety
- Eating problems
- Misusing drugs and alcohol
- Self-harm
- Suicidal feelings

Being LGBTQ+ doesn't cause these problems. The reasons are most likely to do with facing:

- Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia
- Stigma and discrimination
- Difficult experiences of coming out
- Social isolation, exclusion and rejection

Other things such as age, religion, area, and ethnicity can add extra complications to an already difficult situation.



# LGBTQ+ and Mental Health

## Talking it through

It might not be easy, but getting help with issues you're struggling to deal with on your own is one of the most important things you can do.

Talking with a therapist who's trained to work with LGBTQ+ people can help with:

**Difficulty accepting your sexual orientation**

**Coping with other people's reactions to your sexuality**

**Feeling your body doesn't reflect your true gender (gender dysphoria)**

**Transitioning**

**"It helps  
to talk it  
through"**






# LGBTQ+ and Mental Health

## Dealing with depression and anxiety




If you're not feeling yourself and finding it difficult to cope. If you've lost your sense of joy or feeling run down, they could be signs of depression or anxiety.

Depression is a long-lasting low mood disorder. It affects your ability to do everyday things, feel pleasure or take interest in activities.

### Depression is

-  A mental illness that's recognised around the world
-  Common
-  Something that anyone can get, and treatable

### Depression isn't

-  Something you can 'snap out of'
-  A sign of weakness
-  Something that lasts forever as one episode

Anxiety is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. If your feelings of anxiety are extreme, last for longer than six months, and are interfering with your life, you may have an anxiety disorder. **The first step to getting treatment is to speak to your GP.**

Types of therapy that can help depression and anxiety:

- Cognitive-behavioural therapy
- Psychodynamic therapy
- Problem-solving therapy
- Interpersonal therapy
- Behaviour activation
- Group therapy
- Relationship counselling
- Bereavement counselling
- Mindfulness based therapy
- Counselling

## Embracing your identity

If you're part of the LGBTQ+ community, accepting and championing LGBTQ+ identity can have a positive impact on your health and wellbeing.

You might find your confidence increases and your relationships improve. You might discover a sense of community and belonging, with the freedom to self-expression and self-acceptance.

**"I decided to come out as bisexual to my family and friends. It really helped me grow in my confidence. And my mental health has improved too."**

# LGBTQ+ and Mental Health

## Coming out

Every coming out experience is unique and must be planned in the way most comfortable to each individual.



### Trust your gut

Don't feel forced to come out by friends or situations. Coming out is a process. Different people are ready for it at different times in their lives. You might want to be open about who you are, but you also need to think about your own security.



### Weigh all the possibilities

Ask yourself these questions: "How might coming out make my life more difficult? How could it make things easier? Is it worth it?" The Human Rights Campaign's **Guide to Coming Out** has lots of tips and things to think about.



### Have a support system

If you can't talk openly about your identity, or if you're trying to figure out if you should come out, it can help to speak to a therapist. Having support systems in place can help you plan how to come out (or not).



### Let go of expectations

People you come out to might not react the way you expect. You'll probably find that some relationships take time to settle back to what they were. Some might change permanently.



### Think about privacy

You might be lucky to have friends who respect your private information. But whenever you share, there's a risk it could leak to others before you're ready. Therapists are required to keep everything private, unless they think you're at risk of harming yourself or others.

## Support organisations

### for members of the LGBTQ+ community

If you'd like to talk to someone about your mental health, these organisations are a great places to start:

#### Albert Kennedy Trust

Supporting young people between 16 and 25 years old.

#### Gendered Intelligence

Working with the trans community and those who impact on trans lives.

#### Imaan

The UK's leading LGBTQ+ Muslim charity.

**Stonewall and LGBTQ+ Consortium** Helping you find LGBTQ+ mental health services in your local area.

#### Switchboard

provides a one-stop listening service for LGBTQ+ people on the phone, by email and through Instant Messaging.