

Challenging Misperceptions

- **Mentally ill people are violent or dangerous**

People who have a mental health condition are actually more at risk for experiencing violence

- **Mentally ill people are weak and are just over-exaggerating**

People with mental illness expend a lot of energy every day in an attempt to function in society, which is the opposite of weakness. Moreover, some days the effects of the mental illness may be more extreme or intolerable than others

- **Therapy and self-help are a waste of time. Why bother when you can just take a pill?**

Medications can do a lot to help a person but medication alone cannot fix everything.

Therapy can teach someone new skills and coping mechanisms that are better at helping the person function. Just like with physical health, it is important to speak with a trained professional about what is best for the individual

- **If you're LGBTQIA+, then you need help**

A person who is LGBTQIA+ doesn't need help with their identity. However, the stress that people face for being a part of a marginalized group can cause a decline in mental health

LGBTQIA+ Friendly Hotlines

- **Trevor Project Lifeline:** 866-488-7386
- **LGBT National Hotline:** 888-843-4564
- **SAGE LGBT Elder Hotline:** 888-234-7243
- **LGBT National Youth Talk-line:** 800-246-7743
- **Trans Lifeline:** 877-565-8860

Finding Support & More Information:

- **The Trevor Project**
www.thetrevorproject.org
- **American Psychological Association**
www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness**
www.nami.org/find-support/LGBTQ

Local Resources:

- **The Center on Colfax**
www.lgbtqcolorado.org/resources
- **Transgender Center of the Rockies**
www.transgendercenteroftherockies.org
- **Queer Asterisk**
www.queerasterisk.com/

*We would like to note that sex, gender, and sexual orientation are defined as different entities, although they do inform each other and are not necessarily mutually exclusive

**For more information on sexual orientation, check out our Sexual Orientation and Asexuality & Aromanticism 101 pamphlets

***For more information on gender identities, check out our Transgender and Genderqueer 101 Pamphlets

†The list of mental disorders presented is not comprehensive and only provides the basic definitions

††Pamphlet written and compiled by the LGBTQ Student Resource Center staff

LGBTQIA+ Mental Health 101



Understanding Mental Health in the LGBTQIA+ Community

Some Definitions:

- **Mental Illness** is a behavioral or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning and may occur as a single episode, or be persistent
- **Neurotypical** means having a pattern of brain functions that lie within the dominant societal standards of “normal”
- **Neurodivergent** means having a pattern of brain functions that significantly deviate from the dominant societal standards of “normal”
- **Neurodiversity** is the idea that neurological differences are expressions of variation in humans, and should be recognized and respected as such
- **Psychotherapy** usually refers to an individual receiving talk therapy with a mental health professional. Also referred to as counseling
- **Psychiatrist** is a mental health professional with a medical doctorate degree who can write prescriptions
- **Crisis** is a situation in which someone is experiencing extreme distress, and might result in injuring themselves or others
- **Attempted Suicide** is when someone attempts suicide but survives
- **Completed Suicide** happens when someone intentionally causes their own death.
Completed suicide is more appropriate to say instead of “committed”
- **Suicidal Ideation** is thinking about or having a preoccupation with suicide. It can vary from fleeting thoughts, extensive thoughts, or detailed planning to incomplete attempts

Being LGBTQIA+ is not a Disease

Having a LGBTQIA+ identity in and of itself has not been found to be a source of mental illness. Instead, the discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people creates obstacles for well-being.

- **Coping** is the means by which a person responds to psychological distress or an adverse environment. Meditation and self-harming behaviors are examples of coping
- **Mood Disorders** are a group of conditions where a disturbance in the person's mood is the main underlying feature. Examples of this include Bipolar Disorder, and Depression
- **Anxiety Disorders** are a group of conditions where the prominent feature is significant fear and/or unease. Examples include Social Anxiety, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and Panic Disorder
- **Eating Disorders** are a group of conditions where the main feature is disordered eating habits, sometimes developed as coping mechanisms, that significantly affect the person's physical health. Examples include Anorexia, Bulimia, and Binge Eating Disorder.
- **Neurodevelopmental Disorders** are a group of conditions that often present in childhood, and are most often lifelong conditions. Examples include Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Dyslexia
- **Treatment** is when someone is seeking or in the process of receiving help for their specific needs. This is commonly achieved through medical techniques, psychotherapy, or both
- **Trauma** results from a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that exceeds one's ability to cope with it. This experience can be a single occurrence, or multiple ones. Experiencing trauma can increase a person's risk for developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, mood disorders, and anxiety disorders
- **Ableism** is the prejudice and discrimination that people face due to having developmental, psychological, or physical disabilities

Statistics

LGBTQIA+ people are much more likely to experience a wide range of mental health issues and engage in higher rates of problematic behaviors than their straight and cisgender counterparts. Here are just a few examples:

- LGBTQIA+ youth are 4 times more likely to experience suicidal thoughts, engage in self-harm, or attempt suicide
- Up to 65% of transgender individuals experience suicidal ideation
- An estimated 20-30% of LGBTQIA+ people abuse substances, compared to about 9% of the general population
- Bisexual adults have double the depression rate than their heterosexual and gay counterparts
- Bisexual adults are more likely to have suicidal ideation, engage in self-harming behaviors, and attempt suicide compared to heterosexuals, lesbians, and gay men
- Transgender youth are 4 times more likely to report an eating disorder
- Gay and bisexual men are 12 times more likely to report purging, an eating disorder behavior
- Lesbian and bisexual women are 2 times more likely to report binge-eating
- New evidence has found that in the transgender population, there is a higher frequency of autistic-like traits and diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder



Mental Health
Awareness Ribbon



Neurodiversity
Symbol