HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR QUEER, TRANS, AND NON-BINARY YOUTH

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Through These Doors
Domestic Violence Resources & Advocacy
Content Warning: violence against LGBTQ+ people and dating violence -

Take care of yourself! -

Ask questions! -

The word “queer”

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Goals:

1. Identify and address the challenges LGBTQ+ youth face in forming healthy relationships

2. Discuss the need to contextualize conversations around consent in the experiences of queer, trans, and non-binary youth

3. Compose specific changes you can make to your own work to better support LGBTQ+ youth

4. Examine the ways in which teen dating violence may specifically appear in LGBTQ+ relationships
WHY WE ARE FOCUSING ON QUEER YOUTH

- 3.2% of students identify as transgender or are unsure of their gender
- 41% of trans youth reported forced sexual contact (vs 11% cisgender)
- 31% LGB youth reported forced sexual contact (9% non-LGB)
- 28% of trans youth have dated someone who physically hurt them on purpose (vs 8% cisgender)
- 16% of LGB youth have dated someone who physically hurt them on purpose (vs 7% non-LGB)

From 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey
WHY WE ARE FOCUSING ON QUEER YOUTH

LGBTQ+ Youth report:

- Lack of trust in the adults in their lives for support around dating or sexual violence
- Lack of connection to the community supports available to them
- Lack of LGBTQ+ visibility and representation in school curriculum
  - Sexual Education and History specifically
- Lack of adults prepared to effectively engage LGBTQ youth

From “Maximizing LGBTQ+ Best Practices for LGBTQ+ Youth in Portland, ME Strengths and Needs Assessment”
GENDER IDENTITY

SEXUALITY

GENDER EXPRESSION
**GENDER IDENTITY**

One’s internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or other gender(s).

**Transgender (Trans)** – Wide range of people whose identity differs from the societal norms associated with their assigned sex at birth

**Cisgender (Cis)** – when your gender aligns with your assigned sex at birth
GENDER EXPRESSION

The physical manifestation of one’s gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. (typically referred to as masculine or feminine).

https://genderphotos.vice.com/2nd and 4th photos from: The Gender Spectrum Collection: Stock Photos Beyond the Binary
SEXUALITY

WHO WE ARE ATTRACTED TO SEXUALLY & EMOTIONALLY

**Gay**
- attracted to members of the same gender

**Bisexual**
- attracted to same gender and other genders/ regardless of gender

**Pansexual**
- attracted to people regardless of gender

**Lesbian**
- women attracted to other women

**Queer**
- umbrella term for non-conforming

**Asexual**
- not feeling desire for sexual activity in their romantic relationships
• The messages LGBTQ+ youth are receiving:
  - That queer relationships are wrong/unhealthy

• The messages LGBTQ+ youth cannot get enough:
  - That queer relationships come in healthy, unhealthy, and abusive
  - That learning healthy relationships skills is something we all have to do
  - Specific skills that address their specific experiences as queer/trans/non-binary youth
  - That they, like everyone, deserve healthy and empowering relationships
DATING VIOLENCE
TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Dating abuse is when one person in the relationship intentionally uses abusive tactics to GAIN POWER AND MAINTAIN CONTROL over their partner over a period of time.

Emotional ~ Verbal ~ Psychological ~ Sexual ~ Digital ~ Physical

Exists across demographics — gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity, dis/ability, or geographic location
“I’m going to out you at work”
“If you were a ‘real’ man...”
“This is how lesbians have sex!”
“No one will believe you because you’re trans.”
“Are you even a real gay man? If you were, you would be into me!”
“You cannot go to (queer space) without me!”
“We have all of the same friends, if you start something they’re all going to take my side!”
“Don’t dress like that!”
Experiencing Dating Violence as an LGBTQ+ Youth

**Coercion**
- Threatening to out you
- Threatening to tell your parents
- “If you were a real man/woman you would…”

**Isolation**
- Controlling your ability to use LGBTQ+ spaces
- Telling you that no one will believe you because you are LGBTQ

**Emotional Abuse**
- Questioning if you are a “real” lesbian/gay man/woman/man/butch
- Attacking your gender identity/attempting to invalidate it
- Reinforcing insecurities about family or community acceptance about your gender or sexuality

**Denying/Minimizing/Blaming**
- Women can’t abuse women/men can’t abuse men
- Abuse does not exist in LGBTQ relationships
- “If you weren’t confused about your ______ identity”

**Sexual Abuse**
- Telling you this is the way ______ have sex if you do not want to do something
- *Not following boundaries set out due to gender dysphoria

**Using Privilege**
- Using ability to “pass”
- Making the decisions about the roles within the relationship
Prevent Intervene & Respond

**DO** the work to have inclusive prevention education

**DO** intervene when you see or hear anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric or dating violence

**DO** respond to a student reaching out for help with validation, resources, and support
REMEMBER: HUMANS ARE COMPLEX AND SO ARE RELATIONSHIPS!

- Empowering students with skills and then asking them what they want is building resiliency.
- Holding space
  - Gender, sexuality, race, class, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, language spoken, dis/ability, age, family structure.
- Offering complex examples is reminding youth the power of their choices.
- Prevention education disrupts “this is the way things are”
UNIQUE CHALLENGES

Adapted from University of North Carolina LGBTQ Center’s “Healthy Relationships Online Workshop” by Dr. Terri Phoenix, Ph.D.
Lack of healthy relationship models

**ACTION STEPS**

- Including examples of all types of relationships
- Using she, he, and they pronouns
  - *Imbedded within, not a token*
- Using inclusive media examples
  - Foster’s
  - Good Trouble
  - Dear White People
  - Sex Education
  - Pose
- Source the room!
- Ask them!
Lack of social support and (sometimes) family support

**ACTION STEPS**

- Showing YOUR support
- Having resources to offer that support families of LGBTQ+ youth
  - PFLAG
  - Out Maine
  - Family Acceptance Project
  - Trans Youth Equality Foundation
  - Maine Trans Net
- Getting them extra **affirming** support
  - School social worker/counselor
  - The Trevor Project
- Having a GSA at your school
Gender dysphoria for trans & non-binary youth

Gender dysphoria – psychological distress that results from an incongruence between one’s sex assigned at birth and one’s gender identity.

- Not all trans or non-binary people experience this
- Those who do, it is specific to them, their body, and their experience

**ACTION STEPS**
It all comes down to... CONSENT!

- Teaching respect
- Teaching understanding
- Teaching compassion
- Teaching “checking-in”
Small LGBTQ communities & Lack of venues for socializing

**ACTION STEPS**

- Having resources available to offer to LGBTQ+ youth looking for community
  - Portland or Lewiston–Auburn Outright
  - MaineTransNet
  - Equality Maine
  - Out Maine
  - Gender & Sexuality Alliances (GSA)

- Online Community
  - Safe and affirming
  - Welcome questions!
Lack of knowledge by providers and educators

**ACTION STEPS**

- Teaching LGBTQ+ informed sexual education to ALL students
- Having your school (or at least yourself) get ongoing education
  - *Maine Trans Net*
  - *Equality Maine*
- Utilizing online resources
  - *Did a LGBTQ+ person write this?*
- Model being okay with not knowing
  - *And doing the follow up*
- Ask more of our community
Through These Doors – DVRC for Cumberland county
Follow @ttdteen on Instagram!
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MCEDV – Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence

Equality Maine – working for LGBTQ+ equality

Love Is Respect – teen dating violence

OutMaine – LGBTQ+ youth support organization

Trevor Project – suicide hotline for LGBTQ+ youth

the Network la Red – ending relationship violence for the LGBTQ+ community

FORGE – national transgender anti-violence organization
LGBTQ+ Education

Digital:

*Inqueery by Them*
https://www.them.us/video/series/inqueery

*Glossary by UC Davis*
https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary

*Scarleteen – Sex Ed for the Real World*
https://www.scarleteen.com/

Maine:

*OutMaine*
https://www.outmaine.org/

*Equality Maine*
https://www.equalitymaine.org/

*Maine Trans Net*
https://www.mainetrans.net/
THANK YOU!!!

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