

Mental Health Challenges faced by LGBTQ Individuals.

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LGBTQ+ Mental Healthcare is complex

Fact or Fiction?

It's not much different than anyone else.

The complex part is driven by acceptance of
their family and social environment.

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When do young people know they are an LGBTQ+ person?

Some young children ages 3-6 years old may exhibit cross gender tendencies.

They may want to play with toys or wear clothes of the gender opposite of their physical gender.

Are they just trying to be more like their friends and explore gender or are they Transgender?

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How do we know if a child is LGBTQ+?

What types of toys they play with?

What games they like to play?

What clothing do they like to wear?

Who do they like to play with?

What is their personality like?

How strong are they?

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How does parenting help or hinder growth?

Do Parents have support from LGBTQ family or friends?

Do they embrace sexual or gender diversity?

Do they have traditional Religious beliefs?

Are they open minded role models

How important are Traditional Sex or Gender roles of their children?

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The truth is...

We don't know enough to help support all of our LGBTQ diversity community.

There haven't been enough definitive studies.

And most of society doesn't want to know or care.

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Misconceptions

- Only Male and Female couples can have sexual relationships.
- All other relationships are forbidden by many religions
- Women are subservient to men and shouldn't display masculine attributes.
- Men are leaders and shouldn't display feminine attributes.
- Transgender Women are Drag Queens and sexual deviants.
- LGBTQ people can be normalized with conversion therapy.

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The reality

- Most LGBTQ mental health issues are created by “societal norms.”
- We inflict pain on our children when we tell them “only Girls can do that” or “only Boys can do that.”
- We wrongly assume that boys will join sports teams and become all stars!
- We wrongly assume that girls will become great dancers, moms or secretaries.
- Gender roles don't define who we are supposed to be.

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Society is very slow to change

- Same sex relationships and marriage are more acceptable now that they were 10 years ago.
- Women are taking on more jobs that used to be men only.
- It's okay for boys to learn how to cook in School.
- And girls to take shop classes.
- Women should be making the same wages as men.
- Men are starting to take on child raising roles

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Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Mental Healthcare

- While most of our society is changing, many people are not changing with it.
- The biggest influence is the church.
- "It's against God's law for a Man to lay down with another Man."
- You'll go to hell if you keep on doing that!
- You'll be fired and banned from teaching children if you are Gay!
- The penalties for same sex relationships continue to be harsh.

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What about the “T” in LGBTQ?

- The term Transgender is a relatively new term used to describe people who don't conform to the physical gender they were identified at birth.
- Transgender people have existed for centuries.
- Many more cases of transgender people have gone unnoticed or unreported over the years. They were kept hidden from us by individuals who feared being ostracized in their communities

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Sexual Orientation vs. Gender Identity

- Most of us (but not all) realize that Gay and Lesbian couples can have successful family relationships. Same sex couples are becoming normalized in society.
- Gender Identity is much more difficult to understand, even for those of us who identify as Transgender. In essence, we are not comfortable in our own bodies. Our brains and bodies just don't match

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Transgender Healthcare – The Basics

- What Healthcare Professionals are needed to care for a Transgender person considering transition?
 - A PCP
 - A Therapist
 - An Endocrinologist for hormone therapy
 - An Electrologist for MTF
 - A Speech therapist
 - Surgeons (cosmetic, plastic, reconstructive and craniofacial surgeons)

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Transgender Children - Healthcare

Parents need to show their love for their transgender children and become an active part of their care.

They need Doctors and Therapists knowledgeable about Transgender children

Extended family acceptance is very important.

Finding accepting Schools and Churches will help provide some family normality.

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Transgender youth - Healthcare

- When young children identify as transgender, they blend with friends of both genders more easily than when they get older. "Birth" gender is not an issue.
- Transgender children with the support of family and friends, grow up socialized with children of the gender they identify as.
- The only time they are treated differently is when they start attending middle school and questions arise about the use of gender specific facilities.

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Transgender Children - Healthcare

- Young Transgender children may need to learn that other children and adults need an education about transgender people. In some situations, they may need to learn ways to protect themselves.
- School policies need to be put in place to address bullying situations. Parents need to be aware of difficult situations and find solutions with the schools.
- These situations could be the seeds of future Mental Health problems.

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LGBTQ adolescents

- The most vulnerable group!
- Increased Gender awareness
- Increased hormone activity
- Sexual awareness and interactions
- Self awareness of body and changes
- Substantial increase in Social interactions
- Sound familiar?

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Transgender and Non-binary Adolescents Healthcare

- LGB Adolescents – need awareness of STD's
 - LGB Parents – may need counseling to better understand their child's Sexual Identity.
- Transgender & Non-binary Adolescents
 - Parents need to find therapists with knowledge of transgender healthcare to determine a diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria.

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Transgender adolescent care

- Therapy
 - Need to address Gender dysphoria issues before medical intervention.
 - Socialization (Need to find peer support)
 - Voice coach/therapy (Primarily MTF)
 - Parental support and therapy
 - Need to address educational challenges due to societal stresses

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Transgender adolescent care

- Medical care
 - Hormone management, potential use of hormone blockers until Age 18
 - Potential surgical interventions – Breast reduction or augmentation
 - Patients and Physicians should follow the WPATH Standards of Care. (World Professional Association for Transgender Health)

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Transgender Adults – Healthcare

- Each transgender adult will have a unique transition experience.
- The earlier in life a transgender person starts their transition the easier it is for them to integrate with society.
- The later in life a person starts their transition, the more psychological baggage they bring with them.

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Transgender Adults – Healthcare

- Even with new legislation to make Transgender and Non-binary people equal with others. They will still experience discrimination.
- Some Family situations will be “normal” and others are fractured.
- Community support or social rejection varies based on geography.

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Transgender Adults Healthcare

- When an adolescent reaches the age of 18, they can decide on their own hormone treatments and gender surgical procedures.
- Mental health counseling, Hormone therapy and real-life experience living as their preferred gender is recommended for a period of 2 years before undertaking gender confirmation surgical procedures.

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Transgender Adults Healthcare

- In NH, Transgender adults can change their name and Gender marker on their Driver's license and Passport.
- In NH, Birth records can only be changed if a person has undergone full gender surgery and has petitioned the court for a change.

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LGBTQ+ Seniors

- AARP Maintaining Dignity Study, March 2018
- 1762 LGBTQ+ people \geq 45 years old were surveyed
- Their biggest concerns?
 - 76% concerned about having adequate family/social support as they age
 - 73% do not have access to LGBT-specific senior services
 - 60% are concerned about long-term care; including neglect, abuse, limited access to services, verbal/physical harassment

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LGBTQ+ Seniors Health Disparities

- Knowledge gaps for providers
- Financial challenges
- Insurance coverage limitations
- Institutional/organizational concerns
- Legal constraints

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Knowledge Gaps for Healthcare providers

- Struggle to find providers who are knowledgeable about LGBTQ+ specific health concerns
- Patients know more than the provider
- Inappropriate treatment
- Refusal of treatment
- Common forms of discrimination:
 - Refusing to touch the patient
 - Using harsh or abusive language
 - Blaming the patient for their health status
 - Being physically rough or abusive

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Financial & Health insurance challenges

- Increased risk of homelessness
- Job discrimination
- Housing discrimination
- Health insurance challenges
- Lack of coverage
- Non-recognition of same-sex partners by employers

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Institutional concerns

- 78% of LGBTQ seniors in long term care (LTC) settings are not comfortable being open about their sexual orientation or gender identity
- 50% of LGBTQ seniors were refused admission to a nursing facility
- Many struggle with the reality that they may have to “go back into the closet” for fear of refusal of care, discrimination, & abuse

Gen Silent documentary:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PO0iPRjTRS8>

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Coming out at end of life

- **The decision to “come out” is regularly faced by LGBTQ+ individuals throughout their life**
 - **At end-of-life, people are even more vulnerable**
 - **Common worries:**
 - Will the team be welcoming and respectful?
 - Will I be rejected, harassed, or mistreated?
 - Is the team competent to care for me?
 - Will I have to “come out” to members of the team over and over?
 - Will I be “outed” to family members who don’t know I’m LGBTQ?
 - What if my condition requires me to seek care outside the safety of my home?
- SAGECare (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders). <https://sageusa.care/>

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Conclusions

- Is LGBTQ+ Healthcare complex?
 - Yes and No
 - Your LGBTQ Patient may know more than you about their healthcare needs.
 - Listen to them!
- Do they need your/our help?
 - YES!
 - We need more LGBTQ+ trained professionals.
 - Especially Transgender knowledgeable Therapists, PCP's and Endocrinologists

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Citations

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