

Sexuality & Gender

LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, aromatic/asexual and all other identities that fall under the gender and sexuality diversity umbrella) young people continue to face stigma and discrimination based on their identity.

The Writing Themselves In (4) national report highlights the challenges that young people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community face. Continued stigma and discrimination mean that LGBTQIA+ young people without proper support from peers, family and the wider community are at greater risk of school avoidance, harassment, homelessness, self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.

Australian Statistics to consider:

Almost one-quarter (22.8%) of participants reported in the past 12 months experiencing sexual harassment or assault based on their sexuality or gender identity.*

Over one-third of secondary school (38.4%) and TAFE (34.4%) students and one-sixth of university students (17.2%) reported missing day/s at their educational setting in the past 12 months because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable*

Almost three-fifths of Writing Themselves In 4 participants aged 16 to 17 years had seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous 12 months, more than five times the proportion observed in a sample of the general population aged 16 to 17 (11.2%).*

*https://www.latrobe.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1198945/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf



To Future Me would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are gathered and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.



We celebrate and value diversity. To Future Me has the HEART for providing support to the community in the most inclusive manner.

Importantly, these negative statistics are not a result of being LGBTQIA+; they are due to discrimination and the way they are treated, as well as the lack of adequate supports available to the LGBTQIA+ community.

Every young person has the right to feel safe all of the time, and all young people should feel safe to express themselves free of discrimination. Including a module on gender and sexuality diversity allows LGBTQIA+ youth to learn about themselves whilst encouraging their peers to develop understanding and empathy towards different identities, and promotes safe and healthy relationships for everyone.



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Some key terms our To Fututre Me students learn about

Gender Expression

The way you express your gender, usually through the way you dress or behave e.g. someone who identifies as a girl, may like to wear skirts and dresses.

Gender Identity

The personal sense of a person's own gender. This might be the same as the sex a person is assigned at birth, or it can be different.

Homophobia

Negative feelings or behaviours toward gay or queer people.

LGBTQIA+

Stands for: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, other sexual or gender identities like pansexual.

Pronouns

We use pronouns every day to refer to people and things. Examples of pronouns used for people are: he/his, she/her, they/theirs. Currently in Australia: he, she and they, are the most commonly used pronouns – however some non-binary or genderqueer people may also use: xe, ze, sie, co, and ey.

Sexual Attraction

Romantic and/or sexual feelings

Sexual Behaviour

What we do sexually with ourselves and others



Sexual Identity

The way that a person thinks of themselves in terms of who they are romantically and/or sexually attracted to. This can be fluid throughout a person's life.

Transphobia

Negative feelings or behaviours toward transgender or gender diverse people.

How to avoid gender assumptions:

Our understanding of gender and gender identity is constantly evolving. In the past, people attributed biological sex to gender. However, we now know that people can feel differently about their gender identity, and the genitals someone has or the gender they are assigned at birth does not dictate their gender identity.

The way someone looks does not define their gender identity. A person's gender identity is an internal sense of who they are and their place in the world; sometimes, a person's gender identity matches their gender expression (such as the clothes they wear or their behaviours) but sometimes a person's gender expression is different from their identity. Ensuring you don't assume a person's gender based only on the way shows respect for gender diverse people and acceptance for our evolving understanding of gender.

Talking respectfully about gender:

Our understanding of gender is evolving; it's important that our language evolves with it. One way to use respectful language is by ensuring you are using the right pronouns for a person.

Introducing yourself by using your pronouns, or asking someone what pronouns they use, can be a good way to signal respect. However, it's important to note that some gender diverse people may not feel safe or ready to share their pronouns, or they might only want to share with some people and not others; be mindful of the environment you're in when talking about pronouns, and never push someone to share something they're not yet ready to share.



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A person's gender identity can be fluid – it is not uncommon for gender diverse people to use different names and pronouns at different times, especially if they are still discovering their identity/working out what fits best for them. Showing acceptance by following the lead of gender diverse people and respecting the names and pronouns they are currently using is important.

How to talk respectfully about sexuality:

Like gender, our understanding of sexuality is evolving. Who a person is (or is not) romantically and/or sexually attracted to can influence how they see themselves and can be an important part of a person's identity. Just like people don't choose their eye colour, people don't choose who they are attracted to.

The language that people use to refer to their identities is evolving, too. If a person uses a certain label for themselves, follow their lead and use the language they are using, even if this differs from your understanding of the word.

Avoid making assumptions about a person's sexuality. For example, don't assume you know someone's identity based on who they are dating; sexuality can be fluid throughout a person's life, and they may exist anywhere on the spectrum of sexuality, despite who their current partner is.

If someone shares their identity with you, this often means that they see you as a safe person. Responding positively, e.g. by thanking them for sharing with you, can show that you respect their identity. It's important to be aware that just because they have shared with you doesn't mean they are ready to be "out" in all environments; check in about who else knows and where they feel comfortable.



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Conversation starters

- Talking about people in the media who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community can be a good way to bring up the topic with your child. Many celebrities, media personalities, politicians and sports people identify as LGBTQIA+
- Asking about pronouns, such as asking what pronouns your child's new friend uses or asking about what pronouns their teachers use, can normalise that people use different pronouns and promote acceptance.

Support available for parents

Does your child identify as LGBTQIA+? The following resources and organisations can help you to best support your child, as well as to help you to understand their identity further.

<https://qlife.org.au/resources>

<https://www.minus18.org.au/resources/>

https://www.pgdc.org.au/parent_hub

<https://zbgc.org.au/resources/>

<https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au/home>

<https://au.reachout.com/identity>

<https://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/supporting-a-young-person/navigating-life/sexuality-and-gender-1/>



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KIDS HELP LINE 1800 55 1800

LIFELINE 13 11 14

Q LIFE 1800 18 4527