



Mental Health

Prejudice, discrimination, and anti-gay violence may lead members of the LGBT community to experience mental health problems and stress related disorders, such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and substance abuse. Years of negative experiences can also lead to internalized homophobia, which further contributes to mental health problems. While living in a homophobic society creates special challenges that lead some of us to experience mental health issues, the majority of our community lives happy and healthy lives.

- Among gay men, drug use, combined with low self-esteem, result in behavior that increases the risk of HIV transmission.
- Among lesbians, coping with stress has led to higher rates of alcohol and drug dependence.
- LGBT youth who reveal their sexual orientation may risk ostracism from family and friends, which can lead to feelings of self-hatred, depression and anxiety. In fact, reports suggest that gay and lesbian youth are more likely to attempt suicide than their non-gay peers.
- Prejudice against transgender individuals is pervasive, and most mental health professionals do not have adequate training or experience to properly serve transgender individuals in need of support services.
- Lesbians and gay men who are very “out” among friends, family and community report lower rates of emotional distress and substance use/abuse.
- Gender Identity Disorder (G.I.D.) is a stigmatizing diagnosis, which forces many transgender people to admit mental illness to obtain services specific to transgender care. GID is also used with LGBT youth to pathologize sexual orientation and gender variant behavior and as a result can be psychiatrically hospitalized for long periods of time without recourse.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- If you or someone you know has signs or symptoms of depression or anxiety, get help from an LGBT-competent mental health professional.
- If you or someone you know depends on drugs or alcohol for a “good time” or to “get by,” talk to a professional substance abuse counselor.
- If you feel isolated and alone, find a support group or join a community group that can provide peer support and friendship.
- If you are struggling with your sexual orientation or gender identity, reach out to others who have been there. You are not alone.

take charge of your health. your mental health matters.



A PROJECT OF:
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LGBT HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK
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