

The background of the entire page is a vertical rainbow stripe pattern. The stripes are in the following order from left to right: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple.

# SAFELY OUT

**LGBT Youth  
Resources**

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## THE OUT AND PROUD PROGRAM AT THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF TORONTO

### *What We Do...*

**Consultations and Referrals:** As part of the Out and Proud program at The Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAST), experienced staff are available to meet with youth who may be questioning their sexual orientation or struggling with coming out. Staff can answer questions, offer support and provide referrals to outside agencies. 416-924-4640 ext 3055 or 3059.

**Life House Program:** CAST has a series of residences for youth moving on from foster care towards independence. One of these residences is specifically designated for LGBT youth. Speak to your worker about a referral to this program.

**Training for Staff and Youth:** Training for staff includes both a basic understanding of LGBT issues and more advanced "what-to-do-when" training to give a full understanding of how to deal with issues related to homophobia and coming out. Youth training involves bringing in peer educators to talk about the impact of homophobia and its relation to other oppressions.

These programs are made possible by the generous support of our funders: The Children's Aid Foundation, The Ontario Trillium Foundation, The Change Foundation, The Laidlaw Foundation, and The Lesbian and Gay Community Appeal.

## DID YOU KNOW?

More than one in ten individuals identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. 1.8% identify as transgendered or transsexual.

Toronto is home to one of the largest LGBT communities in North America. A good central point to start is Church Street, between Bloor and Dundas. Check out the 519 Community Centre at 519 Church Street where a variety of programs and services are offered to LGBT youth and adults.

Any criminal act committed against people or property that is motivated by hate or bias because of their sexual orientation is considered a hate crime. If a crime is proven to be caused by hate, the judges can give a harsher sentence. Other categories of hate crimes include race, religion, ethnicity, sex and ability/disability.

The American Psychological Association removed homosexuality from its list of psychological disorders in 1973.

There are many LGBT-focused publications such as Xtra, Fab, Out, Curve, The Advocate. Some, like Xtra, are free. You can find Xtra in Xtra newspaper boxes at many subway stops.

Every last weekend in June, Toronto holds a celebration known as Pride. Over one million people from all over the

## DID YOU KNOW?

world and from all sexual orientations attend Pride each year. On Saturday, Pride includes a Dyke March for lesbians and features Froot Loopz, a stage for youth talent only. Sunday is the Pride Parade as well as many stages where famous and not so famous groups show their talent. All of the entertainment is free. Numerous organizations and services have information booths.

## COMMON MYTHS

- MYTH:** LGBT people are perpetrators of abuse.
- FACT:** 90% of sexual abusers are heterosexual males. Sexual abuse is an expression of power and not of sexual orientation.
- MYTH:** Homosexuality is a phase.
- FACT:** Claims that sexual orientation can be changed have not been proven by research. It is important to recognize that sexual orientation can involve a range of different feelings.
- MYTH:** You can spot a homosexual.
- FACT:** While some LGBT individuals do act and look like some stereotypes and are more easily identified as part of the LGBT community, the majority do not fall into the stereotypes. You do not need to fit into the stereotype in order to belong. Remember that coming out is a process of being your true self, so do what feels right and comfortable to you.
- MYTH:** We know what causes homosexuality.
- FACT:** It is not known what causes homosexuality, just as we do not know what causes left-handedness. What research has found is that we can safely say that homosexuality is NOT caused by sexual

## COMMON MYTHS

abuse, growing up without a mother or a father, a broken home, not enough peers of the opposite sex, etc. The important thing to recognize is that there is nothing wrong with being LGBT, so we do not need a cure.

**MYTH:** HIV & AIDS is a gay male disease.

**FACT:** Although HIV and AIDS originally seemed to affect just the gay population, we know today that AIDS does not discriminate. Statistics show that right now, young women between the ages of 16 and 24 are at the highest risk of getting the virus. To be in the low-risk population, protection like condoms or dental dams must always be used.

**Homosexual:**

An individual who is primarily attracted to another individual of the same gender. Attraction can be physical, emotional and/or sexual.

**Lesbian:**

Refers to women who are attracted to other women physically, emotionally and sexually.

**Gay:**

Refers to men who are attracted to men physically, emotionally, and sexually. Sometimes gay is used to refer to lesbians and bisexuals as well as gay men.

**Bisexual:**

An individual who is attracted to members of both sexes. Attraction can be physical, emotional and/or sexual.

**LGBT:**

This stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and transsexual

**Queer:**

A term that has been used to hurt LGBT people but is being reclaimed by LGBT people. For straight (heterosexual) people it is not a term that should be used easily since it is still used to



hurt LGBT people.

**Heterosexual:**

A person who is attracted to the opposite sex. Attraction can be physical, emotional and/or sexual. Also referred to as straight.

**Transsexual:**

People who feel that they do not match the biological sex into which they were born. They may or may not choose to change their bodies through hormone treatments and/or surgery. Transsexuals may or may not identify as gay or lesbian or bisexual.

**Transgendered:**

A term that describes people who deviate from traditionally accepted gender (male/female) roles. Transgendered people may or may not identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

**Two-Spirited:**

A word used by First Nations People of North America to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and transsexual individuals. Two-Spirited people were often awarded special status by their community and acted as spiritual leaders (Shamans).

**Gender Identity:**

A personal view or self-concept of one's gender, not related to one's physical sex.

**Sexual Orientation:**

Sexual or romantic attraction to others ranging from heterosexual to homosexual to bisexual to nonsexual. Sexual orientation is self-identified.

**Intersexed:**

Individuals born with some combination of male and female chromosomes, genitals and/or reproductive organs, or those with ambiguous sex organs at birth.

**Pansexual:**

A broader term than bisexual because it includes not only loving both men and women, but also transgendered people and gender fluid people who do not feel they fit into categories of male or female.

### **No more lies.**

Keeping up all the complicated lies that you may have to tell in order to keep your sexuality a secret takes a lot of energy and wears away at your self-confidence. It can feel like a huge relief once the secret is out.

### **You find real support for who you are.**

You will learn who can accept the real you, not some fictitious person you have had to invent. This will deepen your friendships. The people who cannot accept you will be replaced by those who do.

### **Possibility of acceptance.**

Even though families have mixed reactions, many come to a place of acceptance. Once this process starts, many LGBT people say they feel a big sense of relief that they have stopped lying to the people they love. It also can begin a deeper sense of trust with others and with yourself.

### **You begin to feel like you fit in.**

Although most LGBT people always feel some degree of being an outsider, when you are comfortable being out, it will help you be more genuine in your relationships. You begin to see that everyone is different, that it's the differences that make life interesting.

Knowing what to expect before you tell your care providers/parents that you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or transsexual is important. You might want to talk about it to someone you can trust.

This pamphlet lists supportive and trustworthy places to call if you want help in coming out. It is strongly suggested that you use these resources in order to get support if things get difficult.

### **SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. Are you comfortable with your sexuality? If you are not sure and maybe experiencing guilt or periods of depression, have a trusted person to talk to after coming out in order to help deal with these feelings. Coming out can be tiring and can require a lot of energy. Having a positive feeling about being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered/transsexual can really help when you are faced with any negative reactions
2. Do you have support? If the reaction is horrible, are there others that you can confidently turn to for emotional support and strength?

## COMING OUT

3. Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality? If you've done your research, you will be able to help them by sharing information.
4. Is there room and time for your care providers to give attention to your coming out? Consider timing and if there is time to deal with such a serious matter. Are there too many other issues taking up time and emotions? Some families, however, always seem to be in crisis. Only you can determine when may be the best time to come out.
5. Are you ready to be patient? Your care providers may require time to deal with this information. It can take two months or two years.
6. What is your reason for coming out at this time? Make sure you are not coming out as a way to punish your family. Using your sexuality to get back at your family will not be helpful; it will only make things more complicated.
7. Do you have available resources? Since most non-gay people know little about homosexuality, having a book, website or phone number available might help. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

is an excellent place to start and their number is in the back of this pamphlet.

8. Are you financially dependent on your care providers? If you suspect they may be capable of cutting you off financially, you may want to wait or have a backup plan.
9. Is this your decision? Do not be pressured into coming out if you are not ready.

## **CARE PROVIDERS AND CHILDREN SWITCH ROLES**

When you come out you may find the parenting/child roles reverse. They may need to learn from your experience. As they deal with your coming out, you may be asked to allow them time to accept what you have told them. It will be easy for you to become impatient. They may need you to repeat many things you have already talked about. Their understanding will come slowly. Allow them time and space. Consider your own journey. You've been working on this issue for a long time. Although the issues your parents or care providers will work through are similar, the difference is that you are ahead of them. Be patient!

## STAGES CARE PROVIDERS CAN GO THROUGH

### **Stage 1: SURPRISE**

If they had no idea, it can last a few minutes to weeks, but it should wear off in a few days. Explain that it is important for you to be positive about your orientation or gender identity, as it is a part of who you are. You have been afraid to be completely honest and you don't like the barrier it creates. Affirm your love for them and after some time alone they may remember how much they love you too. Remind them you are the same person today that you were yesterday. You will need to repeat this over and over!

### **Stage 2: DENIAL**

Denial helps protect a person from a threatening or painful message. Denial takes many forms:

Hostility: "No one under this roof is going to be a faggot."

Non-registering: "That's nice; what do you want for dinner?"

Non-caring: "If you choose that lifestyle, I don't want to hear about it."

Rejection: "It's just a phase, you will get over it."

If their denial takes the form of "I don't want to talk about it," be patient. If this has not changed in about a week, raise the subject again. Answer only what they ask. They will get to other questions at another time. Remember that each person will react differently, so you'll have to respond on an individual basis.

## STAGES CARE PROVIDERS CAN GO THROUGH

### **Stage 3: GUILT**

Homosexuality is often seen as a “problem” and people ask, “What caused it?” They believe that if they can find a cause they can find a cure. Many care providers look for what they may have done wrong or what they should have done differently. When care providers feel guilty, they are self-centred and are not yet concerned with what you have been through. Often they are not able to admit their sense of guilt. Tell them it is not their fault. Assure them that you don’t believe they caused it, as there is no known cause for being gay. Provide resources and books. Be patient and understanding. Suggest your care providers call Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) whose number is in the resource section of this pamphlet.

### **Stage 4: FEELINGS EXPRESSED**

Your care providers acknowledge their emotions. When it is clear that guilt is not useful, they may be ready to ask questions, listen to answers and acknowledge their feelings. This is where some of the most helpful conversations between you and your care providers will take place. Expect a full range of feelings: disappointment about the future, shame, fear, not wanting you to tell others, hurt and sometimes relief. Since you may have experienced many of the same feelings (isolation, fear of rejection, hurt, confusion, relief), you can share similarities. Allow them time to express themselves.



## STAGES CARE PROVIDERS CAN GO THROUGH

### **Stage 5: MAKING DECISIONS**

As the emotions subside, care providers will increasingly deal more rationally. It's common for them to retreat a little and consider what lies ahead. Usually, the most important factor is their relationship with you. They may reach a point where they choose to go no further but this does not mean they do not accept you.

Some care providers may stay in a constant state of warfare. They blame everything you do on your sexuality: your grades, the hours you keep, what you eat, your friends, your language. By attending a support group (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) or by talking to someone with more insight, the care provider may be able to see things in a more positive light. If all attempts fail, do not let it get you down. Find a friend or someone you trust whom you can turn to for support.

### **Stage 6: TRUE ACCEPTANCE**

Some care providers can experience love without fully accepting the youth's life. Many reach a point where they can celebrate a child's/youth's uniqueness. At this stage they face up to their own guilt. They re-examine their behaviour over the years and begin to understand the problems they unknowingly created for their child. They can come to a point where they share in your pride in being who you are as an LGBT person.

## WHEN SOMEONE COMES OUT TO YOU

“Coming out” or telling others about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or transsexual is an important step in self-acceptance. Like most people, LGBT people are more likely to accept themselves if they are accepted by others.

Someone who is coming out to you feels close enough to you and trusts you enough to be honest and share with you that part of their life. It is difficult to know what to say and do and how to be supportive to someone who has come out to you. Because they have chosen you to tell does not mean they are “coming on” to you. Here are some suggestions you may wish to follow:

Thank them for having the courage to tell you. It means they have a great deal of respect and trust for you.

Do not judge them. If you have strong religious or other beliefs about homosexuality, keep them to yourself for now. There will be plenty of time in the future for you to think and talk about your beliefs in light of their orientation.

Respect that they are probably not ready to tell others right away and may want to tell them in their own way. Unless they tell you otherwise, do not share this news with anyone else.

## WHEN SOMEONE COMES OUT TO YOU

Tell them you still care about them no matter what. Be the friend you have always been. The main fear for people “coming out” is that their friends and family will reject them.

Do not be overly serious - humour used carefully may ease the tension that you are probably both feeling.

A simple pat on the back or a hug (with permission) can let them know that you still care and that you don't think you will “catch” anything.

Ask any questions that you may have but be prepared that they may not have all the answers. You can save some for later, or better yet, you could find some of the answers together.

If they have a boyfriend or girlfriend, include them in plans as much as you would with any other friend.

Be prepared to include them in more of your plans. They may have lost the support of other friends and family and your time and friendship will be even more precious. This may include family times such as spiritual/religious holidays.

Offer and be available to support them in telling others.

### FUN STUFF

***Supporting Our Youth (SOY)***: Lots of different types of groups offering everything from writing workshops to movie nights. Specific groups include: BQY (Black Queer Youth) and Express (newcomers to Canada) and a Monday night drop-in that includes a hot meal. Call or check their website for a listing of all the groups currently meeting.  
tel 416-324-5077 ([www.soytoronto.org](http://www.soytoronto.org))

### SOMEONE TO TALK TO FOR YOUTH:

***Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Youthline***: Anonymous and confidential peer support line run by trained youth for ages up to 26 years.  
tel 1-800-268-YOUTH or 416-962-YOUTH  
([www.youthline.ca](http://www.youthline.ca))

***Pride and Prejudice Program of Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS)***: Groups and individual counselling for LGBT Youth.  
tel 416-924-2100

### FOR FAMILIES:

***Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)***: Offers support groups and discussions to families dealing with a family or friend who has come out as lesbian or gay.  
tel 416-406-6387 ([www.pflag.ca/toronto.html](http://www.pflag.ca/toronto.html))

### MEDICAL ISSUES

***CAST Medical Services:*** The staff provide safe, confidential medical services for youth in care. Talk to your worker about an appointment.

***Sherbourne Clinic:*** Comprehensive medical services for LGBT youth and adults. Counselling and workshops also available. 333 Sherbourne St.  
tel 416-324-4180 ([www.sherbourne.on.ca](http://www.sherbourne.on.ca))

***Shout Clinic:*** For youth without OHIP and for street-involved youth. Free chiropractic and dental are available. 467 Jarvis St.  
tel 416-927-8553

### SCHOOL

***Triangle Program:*** A high school program that is part of Oasis Alternative School and the Toronto District School Board. You can earn regular high school credits in a small setting. Talk to your worker about registering in this program. Schoolwork is based on LGBT issues. Continuous intake of new students.  
tel 416-406-6228 ext 169 (<http://schools.tdsb.on.ca/triangle>)

**COMING OUT ISSUES**

<http://www.comingoutstories.com>

**SPECIFIC TO YOUTH**

[http://www.youth\\_one.com](http://www.youth_one.com)

<http://www.youthresource.com>

<http://www.youthline.ca>

**BISEXUAL ISSUES**

<http://www.bisexual.org>

[http://www.bi\\_the\\_way.com](http://www.bi_the_way.com)

**TRANS SITES**

<http://www.transgender.org>

<http://www.tgforum.com>

<http://www.ftm-intl.org>

**BLACK LESBIANS**

<http://www.zunainstitute.org>

**GAY MEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT**

<http://www.gmad.org>

**MORE**

<http://www.lesbian.com>

<http://www.gaygate.com>

<http://www.queernet.com>

<http://www.outproud.org>

<http://www.planetout.com>



### RAINBOW FLAG

The rainbow flag began as a symbol for the LGBT community in 1978 when it appeared at the San Francisco Freedom Parade with eight colours. In 1979 it was finalized with six colours, each representing a part of the community.

**Green** for nature

**Red** for life

**Yellow** for the sun

**Orange** for healing

**Royal Blue** for harmony

**Violet** for spirit

It is now widely known for the symbol of pride and diversity it is today.





### **THE PINK TRIANGLE**

This symbol dates back to Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s. Homosexuality was outlawed and gays and lesbians were sent to the concentration camps. Gay men were forced to wear the pink triangle just as the Jews were forced to wear the yellow star to identify which group they belonged to. In 1970, gay liberation groups reclaimed the pink triangle as a symbol for gay rights, drawing attention to oppression and persecution then and now. Today the pink triangle represents pride, solidarity and a promise never to allow another Holocaust to happen.



### **THE BLACK TRIANGLE**

The black triangle was also used in Hitler's concentration camps. It was used to designate women prisoners with anti-social behaviours. Black triangle prisoners included lesbians, prostitutes, women who refused to bear children and women with other "anti-social" traits. The black triangle has become a symbol of pride and solidarity for lesbians.



### **BISEXUAL TRIANGLES**

The interlocking pink and blue triangles are sometimes referred to as the “biangles.” The pink triangle is taken from the gay symbol and the blue has been added as a foil for pink -- pink for girls and blue for boys. The overlapping purple represents the middle ground bisexuals fall into.



### **TRANSGENDER SYMBOL**

The International Foundation for Gender Education Logo, or Transgender Symbol, is the widely recognized symbol for cross-dressers, transvestites, transsexuals and transgendered people.

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[www.cafdn.org](http://www.cafdn.org)

[www.trilliumfoundation.org](http://www.trilliumfoundation.org)



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