

# ENCOURAGING HEALTHY HABITS

## HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

Help-seeking behavior, sometimes referred to as “health-seeking behavior,” describes any action taken by a young person in an effort to obtain help in a positive way when they feel like they need support. For instance, when a young person visits a guidance counselor to discuss their gender identity and the challenges they’re facing as a student, they are engaging in help-seeking behavior. Our role as adults is to create environments where young people feel able to ask for help, and to promote healthy responses when these inquiries occur.

Everyone reacts differently in a crisis, but research shows that several factors contribute to a young person’s likelihood of exhibiting help-seeking behavior (Barker, 2007, p.35):

- ◇ Knowledge of helpful resources
- ◇ Gender norms related to help-seeking behavior (ex: the belief that boys don’t need help)
- ◇ A perception that other people and institutions can be “helpful”
- ◇ Personal coping skills and self-care strategies
- ◇ A level of autonomy
- ◇ Previous experiences of seeking help
- ◇ Rational ability to identify/articulate personal needs

Does your school or organization work to address these factors? If not, what are some things you can do to make it easier to ask for help? Remember, the role of youth in determining their own needs should not be undervalued. As adults, we should be aware of making decisions that stem from own perceptions of what young people need, rather than letting them determine this for themselves.

## NOTES

Visit [TrevorEducation.org](https://www.trevorproject.org/education) for self-care activities.

# RECOGNIZING THE WARNING SIGNS

For many LGBTQ youth, life can sometimes feel like a roller coaster: filled with ups and downs. While some of these feelings can be normal, it's important to keep an eye out for warning signs of potentially harmful behaviors, like suicide.

When you learn to recognize and respond to the warning signs of suicide, you may be able to help save a life. Keep in mind that many young people use social networking sites and may also exhibit warning signs online. The most important thing is to be alert and aware.

- **Having a specific plan for suicide:** Knows when, where, and how they would take their life
- **Expressing suicidal feelings on or offline** – “I want to die,” “I’m going to kill myself,” “Sometimes I think I’d be better off dead,” “Nothing matters anymore,” “Nobody would miss me if I were gone.”
- **Signs of depression:** Sad mood, loss of enjoyment, changes in sleeping or eating patterns (both increases or decreases), feelings of hopelessness, loss of interest in usual activities, irritability
- **Increased isolation from friends and family:** Withdrawal from usual friend group or social media, a sudden disinterest in socializing, claiming that people “just don’t understand” them
- **Taking excessive risks:** Stealing, vandalizing, high-risk sexual activity, or other risky or unlawful behaviors
- **Change in regular behavior:** Doesn’t care about schoolwork, starts failing tests, disinterested in personal hygiene
- **Making final arrangements:** Writing a will, asking someone to take care of their pets
- **Giving away meaningful items and prized possessions**
- **Preoccupation with death and dying:** An uncommon interest in death or violence expressed through poetry, essays, doodling, other artwork
- **Increased alcohol and/or drug use**
- **Sudden positivity or calmness after previous “lows”:** If a young person has been in a very low, depressive state and suddenly feels positive and calm, be aware. This can be a sign of being “at peace” with a decision to end their life.

**NOTE:** While we encourage you to use this information to educate yourself as an adult who works with youth, we do not recommend having a direct conversation with youth about the warning signs of suicide without appropriate training, like our Lifeguard Workshop at [TrevorLifeguard.org](https://www.trevorlifeguard.org).

# HOW TO HELP

There are many ways to help a young person who is struggling. However, if you find yourself speaking with a young person who may be in crisis, there are some general suggestions to follow:

- **Listen:** Many youth in crisis feel as though no one understands them and that they are not taken seriously. Show them they matter by giving your undivided attention.
- **Validate their feelings.** Avoid making overly positive statements (ex: “It will get better!”) or trying to manage their emotions (ex: “Snap out of it!” or “You shouldn’t feel so bad.”).
- **Express concern:** Let them know that you care by actually telling them.
- **Discuss suicide directly:** Contrary to what some might believe, you will NOT be putting ideas into their head. It can actually be dangerous to avoid asking a person directly if they have thought about suicide.
- **Ask about a suicide plan:** Do they already have details about what they would do, or when?
  - ◇ **IF YES:**
    - Comply with your school’s suicide prevention plan, if available.
    - Remove anything dangerous (as long as your safety is not put in jeopardy).
    - Connect them to a helpful resource, and don’t leave them alone. For example, Trevor Lifeline, social worker, guidance counselor, etc.
    - If they are in immediate danger, you may choose to call emergency services.
- **Don’t pretend you have all the answers.** It’s okay to be honest.
- **Remind them gently that depressed feelings can change over time.**
- **Point out that death is permanent and cannot be undone.**
- **Develop a safety plan:** Help the person brainstorm realistic ways to calm down or relax when stress or crises happen. These “self-care” strategies can be life-saving.
- **Remind them that they can always call the Trevor Lifeline (866-488-7386).**
- **Help them understand how to help keep their friends safe:** If they are worried about someone else, like a friend or sibling, it’s ok to share information. They can always reach out to The Trevor Project, or tell a trusted adult.

**NOTE:** While we encourage you to use this information to educate yourself as an adult who works with youth, we do not recommend having a direct conversation with youth about how to help prevent suicide without appropriate training, like our Lifeguard Workshop at [TrevorLifeguard.org](https://www.trevorproject.org/lifeguard-workshop).

# APPENDIX I - TREVOR RESOURCES

## TREVOR RESOURCES FOR YOUTH:

**Trevor Lifeline** – the only nationwide, 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention lifeline for LGBTQ young people, available at 1-866-488-7386.

**TrevorChat** – a free, confidential, secure instant messaging service that provides live help to LGBTQ young people, through The Trevor Project website at TrevorChat.org. Available at designated times every day of the week.

**TrevorSpace** – an online, social networking community for LGBTQ young people, 13-24, their friends and allies (www.TrevorSpace.org).

**Trevor Support Center** – a place where LGBTQ youth and their allies can find answers to frequently asked questions, and explore resources related to sexual orientation, gender identity and more (www.TrevorSupportCenter.org).

**Trevor Lifeguard Workshop** – a structured, age-appropriate digital curriculum that addresses topics including sexual orientation and gender identity, the impacts of language and behavior on LGBTQ youth, and suicide prevention skills in schools (TrevorLifeguard.org).

## TREVOR RESOURCES FOR ADULTS – TrevorEducation.org

**Trevor Ally Training** – This training for adults informs participants about the needs and experiences of LGBTQ youth and the best practices associated with supporting and serving this unique community.

**Trevor CARE Training** – This training for educators, school staff, mental health professionals, and other adults discusses LGBTQ-specific risk factors for suicide, explores protective factors, and helps attendees understand how to support LGBTQ youth in crisis.

**Kognito Interactive Trainings** – The Trevor Project and Kognito Interactive have collaborated to create and distribute three exciting online interactive programs to help support LGBTQ youth in middle and high school and on college campuses.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

*For Youth (Ages 16-21)*

**Youth Advisory Council** – Young leaders from across the U.S. who are trained to help deliver The Trevor Project's programs and advise our services from a youth perspective.

*For Young People and Adults (18 years-old and up)*

No matter where you live in America, you can volunteer! Learn more about our volunteer opportunities for supporters who are at least 18 years old by visiting Trvr.org/Volunteer.

## PARTNER PREVENTION RESOURCES:

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800.273.8255)**

This lifeline is available 24/7 in both English and Spanish and serves all adults and youth. This lifeline is appropriate for anyone who identifies outside of the LGBTQ spectrum or people who prefer a general lifeline.

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP.org)**

AFSP is the leading organization that funds research, offers educational programs, advocates for public policy, and supports those affected by suicide.

**American Association for Suicidology (AAS) (suicidology.org)**

AAS is a non-profit organization that works to understand and prevent suicide with comprehensive research, trainings, conferences and resources.

**Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide (sptsusa.org)**

The mission of the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide is to reduce the number of youth suicides and attempted suicides by encouraging public awareness through the development and promotion of educational training programs.

## APPENDIX II - PARTNER RESOURCES

### PARTNER LGBTQ RESOURCES:

#### **GLSEN: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN.org)**

The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

#### **GSA Network (gsanetwork.org)**

Gay-Straight Alliance Network is a youth leadership organization that connects school-based Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) to each other and community resources through peer support, leadership development, and training.

#### **PFLAG National (PFLAG.org)**

PFLAG unites people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) with families, friends, and allies. PFLAG has over 350 chapters and 200,000 members and supporters crossing multiple generations of American families in major urban centers, small cities, and rural areas in all 50 states.

#### **GLBT Near Me (glbtnearme.org)**

The GLBT National Help Center is a non-profit, organization that is dedicated to meeting the needs of (GLBT) community and those questioning their sexual orientation and gender identity. This is a national database of local resources.

#### **The Institute for Welcoming Resources (welcomingresources.org)**

The purpose of this ecumenical group is to provide the resources to facilitate a paradigm shift in multiple denominations whereby churches become welcoming and affirming of all congregants regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

#### **Gender Spectrum (genderspectrum.org)**

Gender Spectrum provides education, training and support to help create a gender sensitive and inclusive environment for all children and teens. Gender Spectrum provides consultation, training and events designed to help people understand and address the concepts of gender identity and expression.

#### **Advocates for Youth (advocatesforyouth.org)**

Advocates for Youth champions efforts to help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. Advocates believes it can best serve the field by boldly advocating for a more positive and realistic approach to adolescent sexual health.

#### **Family Acceptance Project™ (familyproject.sfsu.edu)**

The Family Acceptance Project™ is a research, intervention, education and policy initiative that works to prevent health and mental health risks for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children and youth, including suicide, homelessness and HIV – in the context of their families, cultures and faith communities. The Family Acceptance Project uses a research-based, culturally grounded approach to help ethnically, socially and religiously diverse families to support their LGBT children.

#### **Trans Student Educational Resources (transstudent.org)**

Trans Student Educational Resources is a youth-led organization dedicated to transforming the educational environment for trans and gender nonconforming students through advocacy and empowerment. In addition to our focus on creating a more trans-friendly education system, our mission is to educate the public and teach trans activists how to be effective organizers.

#### **The Gender Book (thegenderbook.com)**

An illustrated book - similar to educational children's books - with no age limit featuring hand-drawn graphics and easy to understand information on gender identity and expression. The goal of The Gender Book is to educate everyone (for example: doctors, friends, schoolteachers, family and individuals who are exploring their gender) about gender, to be a free & widely disseminated resource that points readers towards comprehensive sources and to alleviate oppression and misunderstanding of gender minorities through education.

## APPENDIX III - KEY TERMS

As with many words, terms that describe our identities can mean different things to different people. With young people, it's important to allow for fluidity and self-expression as they navigate the terms that best fit who they are. Here are a few key terms that may help you understand and empathize with the young people in your life.

**Asexual:** A term describing individuals who do not experience sexual attraction or do not have interest in or desire for sex. It is different from celibacy, which means to abstain from sex. Like LGBTQ identities, asexuality is often viewed as a spectrum – meaning there are varying levels and identities regarding someone's emotional, spiritual, romantic, and sexual attraction. The best way to refer to the asexual community is to use the umbrella term "Ace" or "Aces" as in "the Ace Community," which acknowledges that spectrum.

**Binary System:** A binary system is something made up of two parts that often serve as polar opposites of each other. Gender (man/woman) and sex (male/female) are examples of binary systems that society has created.

**Bisexual:** Describes someone who is attracted to men and women, or more than one gender.

**Cisgender:** Someone who identifies with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth. For example, if you were assigned woman at birth and still identify as a woman, you would be cisgender.

**Gay:** Describes men who are only attracted to other men. Women who are attracted to other women may also use this term to describe themselves.

**Gender:** A social construct based on a group of emotional, behavioral and cultural characteristics that informs how we expect people to express themselves.

**Gender Expression:** How we express our gender on the outside.

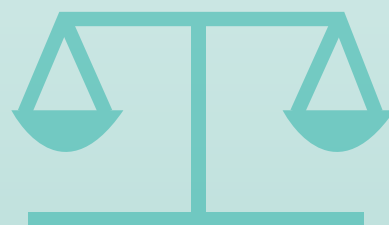
**Gender Identity:** How we label our internal, personal sense of who we are as it relates to our gender, with terms like woman, transgender, genderqueer, man, agender, trans woman, cisgender, and many more. Gender identities aren't necessarily static and can change with time. You don't have to be an expert about every gender possibility but affirming someone's gender identity is an important part of being an LGBTQ youth ally.

**Gender Non-Conforming:** Describes a person whose gender expression is (or appears to be) different from what is expected of their assigned gender. Other similar terms include "genderqueer," "gender variant," or "gender non-binary."

**Gender Presentation:** How the world perceives and understands our gender.

**Genderqueer:** An identity and/or expression of gender that is neither only male nor only female. Sometimes, genderqueer present their gender expression as a combination of the two or as neither.

For more  
information, visit  
[TrevorSupportCenter.org](https://TrevorSupportCenter.org)



## APPENDIX III - KEY TERMS

**Intersex:** A sex identity for individuals whose hormones, chromosomes and anatomy are different than the medical community's standard sex binary system.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is only attracted to other women.

**Non-Binary:** Something that falls outside of the binary system. For example, someone who is not just male or female exclusively may identify as "gender non-binary."

**Pansexual:** Describes people who are attracted to multiple sexes and genders.

**Pronouns:** Pronouns can be important for some people in the LGBTQ community. Just as some genderqueer or trans people might use a different name when they come out, they may want to use different pronouns that better correspond to their gender identity. Some common pronouns are "he, him, his," "she, her, hers," or singular "they, them, theirs." For example "Jenessa went to the movies. They'll be back in about an hour," or "Casper said she's going to the movie with Jenessa." We recommend making space for all students to identify their pronouns if they want to as a helpful way to cut back on assumptions about someone's gender identity or expression.

**Sexual Orientation:** Describes a person's physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction to another person.

**Trans:** Trans is often used as an umbrella term that encompasses any gender identity that falls outside of the gender binary system (male/female).

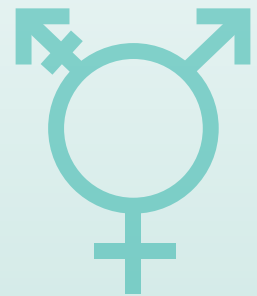
**Transgender:** An umbrella term that describes people whose sex assigned at birth is different than their internal, personal sense of what their sex or gender truly is. For example, someone who is transgender may have been assigned "male" at birth but identifies and lives authentically as a woman today. There are many identities within this term; however, not all genderqueer, non-binary, and non-confirming people identify as transgender.

**Transitioning:** Transitioning can be a large milestone in many trans people's lives, and it means different things to different people. People can transition in various ways: medically, legally, and socially. For some, medically transitioning is not wanted. Regardless of how a person transitions, it is important to respect their identity.

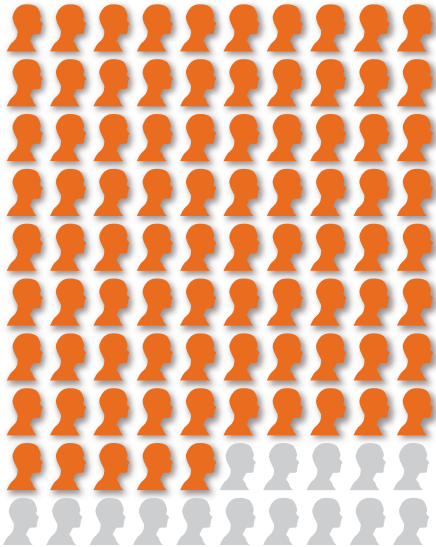
**Queer:** A broad term that is inclusive of people who are not straight and/or cisgender. In the past this word was used to put-down LGBTQ people. Today many within the LGBTQ community identify as queer and have reclaimed this language to be an affirming word/identity. Queer also has political contexts for some individuals who use it.

**Questioning:** Describes a person who is unsure of or is questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity before labeling themselves as LGBT, queer, straight or any other identity.

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information, visit  
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## APPENDIX IV - STATISTICS

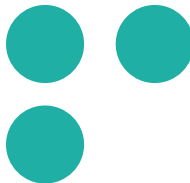


**85% of LGBT students were verbally harassed at school in the past year** (GLSEN National School Climate Survey, 2013).



Black and Hispanic

White



**Suicide attempts are nearly two times higher among Black and Hispanic youth than White youth** (CDC, 2011).



**Only 10% of LGBT students reported having a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that included sexual orientation and gender identity/expression** (GLSEN National School Climate Survey, 2013).

**61%**

**Only 61% of youth who need mental health care services actually receive them** (National Survey of Children's Health, 2011/12).



**Among non-LGBT youth, 67% report being happy while only 37% of LGBT youth say they are happy** (Human Rights Campaign, 2013).

**Each incident of LGBT victimization, like physical or verbal harassment or abuse, increases the likelihood of self-harming behaviors, including suicide attempts, by 2.5 times on average. -**

(IMPACT Project, 2012)

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