

ASSET

Affirmative Supportive Safe and Empowering Talk A School-Based Group Program with LGBTQ Youth



An eight week, strengths-based program for establishing an affirmative, supportive, safe and empowering group where multiethnic LGBTQ youth can talk about critical issues.

2016

Affirmative Supportive Safe and Empowering Talk (ASSET):
School-based Groups with
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth
Group Manual

Shelley L. Craig, LCSW, RSW, PhD
Associate Professor
Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work
University of Toronto

Michelle Thompson, BSW, MI(c)
Faculty of Information
University of Toronto

Lauren B. McInroy, RSW, PhD(c)
Doctoral Candidate
Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work
University of Toronto

Authors
Toronto ON
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Contact:

Dr. Shelley Craig
Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work
University of Toronto
246 Bloor Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada, M5S 1V4
shelley.craig@utoronto.ca

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ASSET Background

Affirmative Supportive Safe and Empowering Talk (ASSET) is an evidence-based, affirmative school-based group counseling intervention for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The intervention was developed to help address minority stress experienced by LGBTQ youth as a result of elevated rates of school-based victimization, social exclusion, isolation, bullying, and interpersonal issues with peers among the population. These issues affect school performance. LGBTQ youth also experience stress resulting from their homes and communities, including violence, rejection, discrimination, health and mental health challenges, substance use, and other maladaptive behaviours and traumatic experiences.¹ Healthy coping is particularly critical for LGBTQ youth, as the population frequently encounters identity-based discrimination and are at greater risk of mental health issues. The ASSET framework provides school-based facilitators with targeted strategies to address stressors experienced by LGBTQ youth and enhance their wellbeing. **ASSET has been shown to significantly increase self-esteem and proactive coping for a sample of 263 multiethnic LGBTQ youth.**^{1,2}

ASSET Objectives

This manual provides the framework for establishing an affirmative, supportive, safe, and empowering group where LGBTQ youth can talk about critical issues within the school context with the aid of a facilitator who will promote resilience using a strengths-based approach. ASSET is most frequently delivered in schools, but is also appropriate for a variety of community-based settings.

ASSET Facilitators

ASSET facilitators are typically school social workers, counselors, psychologists, or nurses; although suitability for facilitation of the program is best determined by knowledge of the program and skill in facilitating groups with youth. Facilitators should ideally have experience providing strengths-based services to LGBTQ youth in an open and consistent manner.

Program Overview

ASSET is an eight session program. Sessions average forty-five minutes, and typically serve 6 – 12 participants. Participants may be self-referred or be referred by school social workers or counselors. In previous iterations of ASSET, the majority of participants have tended to self-refer.¹ Groups often include a wide range of non-majority sexual minority and gender minority identities. These diverse groups are often based on participants' desire to include peers and a lack of feasibility of having multiple single-identity groups in the school context.

Groups are discussion-based and focus on exploring shared experiences among LGBTQ youth in a safe, supportive environment promoting collective problem solving and coping.¹ The format includes five elements: (1) warm up; (2) exploring “Hot Topics” in the participants' lives; (3) exploring thematic and relevant topics; (4) exploring and practicing healthy decision making; and (5) group reflection and facilitator summary (debrief and wrap-up). During the first session, discussion topics are chosen by the group to promote engagement and capture experiences of all

participating LGBTQ youth. Topics covered within the eight session program often consist of: identity development, coming out, assertiveness, stereotypes and discrimination, stress management, sexual health, family relationships, and dating.

Throughout the eight sessions, activities help youth manage stress, integrate their sexual and/or gender minority identities, and acknowledge their strengths. Psycho-educational elements may be included in the groups if the need is identified by youth (e.g., safe sex). A document folio or binder is strongly recommended for each participant, as it will allow students to gather important resources and techniques to use after the program is completed. Finally, suggestions for evaluation are provided.

Overview of Sessions and Exercises

Session	Themes and Topics	Activities	Materials	Facilitator Notes
1	<p>Intro and Overview</p> <p>Discussion Topic Selection</p> <p>Themes:</p> <p><i>Who am I? What are my strengths? (Part 1)</i></p> <p>Topics:</p> <p><i>The myriad of identities within the LGBTQ community.</i></p> <p><i>Articulating your own identity.</i></p> <p><i>Debunking myths about sexual and gender minorities.</i></p> <p><i>Reasons for joining group.</i></p> <p><i>Identifying personal strengths.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductions and Overview, and Pre-Intervention Survey(s) (10 mins) 2. Establishing Ground Rules (5 mins) 3. Icebreaker Exercise (10-12 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise 1.1 4. Group Selection of Discussion Topics (15 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise 1.2 5. Closing Activity: Personal Contract (5 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise 1.3 • Handout 1 6. Wrap Up (3 mins) 	<p>Pre-Intervention Survey</p> <p>Flip Chart</p> <p>Markers</p> <p>Paper</p> <p>Pens</p> <p>Handout 1: Personal Contract</p>	<p>Exercise 1.2: Assist group in selecting seven or eight topics. These should be participant driven and promote active engagement by all LGBTQ youth participants. Common topics are listed in the <i>Themes and Topics</i> section of this table.</p> <p>After Session: Establish which session these topics fit into and plan to include them in session discussions.</p> <p>Note: Make copies of personal contracts in Session 1 and bring these to the group for review in Session 8.</p>
2	<p>Themes:</p> <p><i>Who am I? What are my strengths?(Part 2)</i></p> <p>Topics:</p> <p><i>The myriad of identities within the LGBTQ community.</i></p> <p><i>Articulating your own</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warm Up (5 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise 2.1 2. Hot Topics Discussion (25-30 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group discussion exploring “hot topics” in students’ lives based on a topic selected in Session 1; Talking about healthy decision making 	<p>Flip Chart</p> <p>Markers</p> <p>Post-Its</p> <p>Notepad</p> <p>Pens</p> <p>Handout 2: Glossary of Terms</p>	<p>Topics may vary according to participant driven selections.</p> <p>Warm Up: Focus on comfort and safety of group rather than stressors through the use of exercises such as icebreakers.</p> <p>Group Reflection: Encourage each</p>

	<p><i>identity.</i></p> <p><i>Debunking myths about sexual minorities.</i></p> <p><i>Reasons for joining group.</i></p> <p><i>Identifying personal Strengths.</i></p> <p><i>Process of coming out.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise 2.2 <p>3. Group Reflection (8-10 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying positive ways of showing leadership and strength Exercise 2.3 <p>4. Wrap Up (2 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask youth to bring an image of an influential LGBTQ-positive role model of their choice (e.g. Chaz Bono, Ru Paul, Ruby Rose, Frank Ocean, Jazz Jennings) to present to the group next session. Handout 2 		<p>participant to identify one behavior or characteristic that they exemplified during the group that made them proud. Ask about their plans to transfer what they're learning in the group to outside activities during the session.</p>
3	<p>Themes:</p> <p><i>Where am I going and what's in my way?(Part 1)</i></p> <p>Topics:</p> <p><i>Assertiveness</i></p> <p><i>Stereotypes and discrimination.</i></p> <p><i>Hopes for the future</i></p> <p><i>Successful LGBTQ role models</i></p> <p><i>Which mirror your identity</i></p> <p><i>Sexual health and dating (safe sex)</i></p>	<p>1. Warm Up (5 mins)</p> <p>2. Hot Topics Discussion (25 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The characteristics of LGBTQ-positive role models. Exercise 3.1 <p>3. Group Reflection (15 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing exercise Exercise 3.2 <p>4. Wrap Up (5 mins)</p>	<p>Flip Chart and Markers (Optional)</p> <p>Paper</p> <p>Pens</p> <p>Trash Can</p> <p>Media Clips</p> <p>Publications</p>	<p>Warm Up: Ask youth to talk about how their week went and if they practiced any strategies learned in the previous session.</p> <p>Discussion: Ask youth to present an influential LGBTQ-positive role model of their choice (e.g. Chaz Bono, Ru Paul, Ruby Rose, Frank Ocean, Jazz Jennings).</p> <p>Guest Speaker: Ask students to select a guest speaker (use local examples of out, successful adults as potential guests). Your selection should reflect the identities of</p>

				participants.
4	<p>Themes:</p> <p><i>Where am I going and what's in my way? (Part 2)</i></p> <p>Topics:</p> <p><i>Assertiveness.</i></p> <p><i>Stereotypes and discrimination.</i></p> <p><i>Hopes for the future as a successful adult.</i></p> <p><i>Successful LGBTQ role models.</i></p> <p><i>Which mirror your identity.</i></p> <p><i>Sexual health and dating (safe sex).</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Guest Speaker (2-3 mins) 2. Guest Presentation and Question Period (30-40 mins) 3. Wrap Up and Thank You (2 mins) 	Thank You Card and Pen	<p>Note: Approach guest speaker well in advance to ensure availability. Consider proposing potential speakers to the group in Session 1 and having group members sign the card in Session 3.</p> <p>If a guest speaker is unavailable, ask students to select a film they would like to view and arrange for audio-visual equipment to be available prior to the session (e.g., projector, laptop).</p>
5	<p>Themes:</p> <p><i>What causes me stress and what can I do about it? (Part 1)</i></p> <p>Topics:</p> <p><i>Strategies for healthy coping.</i></p> <p><i>Causes and impacts of minority stress.</i></p> <p><i>Forms of oppression.</i></p> <p><i>Highlighting personal strengths.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warm Up (3 mins) 2. Hot Topics Discussion (20 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share stories of using personal strengths to create positive change in their lives and relationships • Exercise 5.1 • Handout 5 3. Group Reflection (20 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round table to identify strategies from earlier sessions on how to counter 	<p>Handout 3: Assertive Communication Strategies (5.2)</p> <p>Handout 4: Identifying Your Feelings (5.2)</p> <p>Note Pad & Pen (5.2)</p> <p>Handout 5: LEARN Cards</p> <p>Flip Chart and Markers</p>	<p>Discussion: Encourage youth to counter negative messages they receive from others by reminding them of their personal strengths discussed in earlier sessions.</p> <p>Group Reflection: Take note of positive coping strategies and strengths.</p> <p>Outside Session: Consider other exercises related to the group topic selection for this session.</p>

	<i>Family relationships and coming out to parents.</i>	negative messages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise 5.2 Handouts 3 and 4 4. Wrap Up (2-3 mins)	Tape	
6	Theme: <i>What causes me stress and what can I do about it?(Part 2)</i> Topics: <i>Strategies for healthy coping.</i> <i>Causes and impacts of minority stress.</i> <i>Forms of oppression.</i> <i>Highlighting personal strengths.</i> <i>Family relationships and coming out to parents.</i>	1. Warm Up (5 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What Are My Personal Strengths? Exercise 6.1 2. Hot Topics Discussion (15 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify forms of discrimination and other sources of stress 3. Group Reflection (10 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What we can do about discrimination, stress and negative messages Exercise 6.2 Handout 6 4. Wrap Up (5 mins)	Handout 6: Discrimination Pyramid (6.2) Post-Its Pens Flip Chart	Discussion: Encourage youth to recognize signs and causes of stress while focusing on healthy ways of dealing with challenges.
7	Theme: <i>How will I remember my brilliance?(Part 1)</i> Topics: <i>Reflecting on personal growth.</i> <i>Identifying new strengths.</i> <i>Applying new knowledge and skills in the future.</i>	1. Warm Up (5 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did your week go? Did you try any of the strategies we talked about in the previous weeks? How did they work for you? 2. Hot Topics Discussion (20 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practicing communicating in challenging situations Communication Skits Exercise 7.1 	Handout 7: My Social Support Network (7.2)	Discussion: Encourage youth to identify strategies on their own using what they've learned during the sessions. For Session 8: Identify relevant community resources (e.g., crisis line, counseling services, support groups) and assemble them on paper to share with the group during the final debrief.

		3. Group Reflection (15 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on external supports • Exercise 7.2 • Handout 7 4. Wrap Up (5 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary • Debrief 		
8	<p>Theme:</p> <p><i>How will I remember my brilliance?(Part 2)</i></p> <p>Topics:</p> <p><i>Reflecting on personal growth.</i></p> <p><i>Identifying new strengths.</i></p> <p><i>Applying new knowledge and skills in the future.</i></p>	1. Warm Up (2 mins) 2. Group Exercise (5 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going back to the personal contract • Exercise 8.1 3. Hot Topics Discussion (10 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any topics selected in session 1 one could be covered here, or a review of strategies learned during the 8 sessions • Exercise 8.2 4. Wrap Up, Debrief, and Post-Intervention Survey(s) (10 mins) 5. Celebration (20 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise 8.3 	List of Community Resources Copies of Personal Contracts Pens Snacks Previous Flip-Chart Lists of Strengths and Strategies Post-Intervention Survey	<p>Note: Expect this session to be less structured and allow members to openly exchange ideas in the future as this program wraps up. Remind members of the resources they have at their disposal.</p> <p>Note: Use copies of personal contracts made during Session 1 for Group Exercise.</p>

Evaluation

A pre-intervention survey can be helpful in determining overall group needs prior to participants attending the ASSET intervention, and should be administered upon registration or at the beginning of Session 1. In Session 8, a post-intervention survey has also been included in the agenda as a group activity. Both survey results can be compared after the program has ended in order to assess the effectiveness of the sessions and determine what went well and what can be improved upon. In addition, facilitators should use any measures or survey questions that they feel will help them better understand the impact of the ASSET program.

More extensive outcome measures can also be implemented prior to and following the intervention. Several options are offered below.

Sample Pre-Intervention Survey

1. What do you hope to get out of being in this group?

2. What help or information would you like to learn in the group?

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Sample Post-Intervention Survey

1. What did you get out of coming to this group?

2. What help or information did you learn and will you try using any of it?

3. Is there anything you wish we had talked about but didn't?

Suggested Outcome Measures

Doing full outcome measures has the benefit of providing detailed additional data on the impact of the intervention for participants. A variety of suggested outcome measures are available in the public domain and should be administered (1) immediately before the first session and (2) again directly after the final session. **Contact the authors for additional suggestions.**

Contact:

Dr. Shelley Craig
shelley.craig@utoronto.ca

1. Proactive Coping

Reference: Greenglass ER, Schwarzer R, Laghi S. The Proactive Coping Inventory for Adolescents (PCI-A): A multidimensional research instrument. 2008

[To Get This Measure Click Here!](#)

2. Self Esteem

Reference: Rosenberg M. Self-esteem scale. In: Rosenberg M, editor. Society and the adolescent self-image. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 1965: 305–307.

[To Get This Measure Click Here!](#)

3. Social Connectedness

Reference: Lee RM, Robbins SB. Measuring belongingness: The social connectedness and the social assurance scales. Journal of Counseling Psychology. 1995; 42: 232–241.

[To Get This Measure Click Here!](#)

Session 1

Who Am I? What Are My Strengths? (Part 1)

Introduction

In Session 1, provide students with an overview of ASSET, and introduce them to themes and administrative details (e.g., duration, breaks, pre-intervention survey). The main themes discussed include:

Who am I?

What are my strengths?

Students will have the chance to introduce themselves and share their reasons for joining the group. They will also discuss which topics they would like to see covered in subsequent sessions. Students will be asked to sign a contract to affirm their engagement in the process. They will also have the opportunity to establish ground rules as a group.

The Pre-Intervention Survey (optional) can be distributed and completed during the first part of the group (usually best after introductions).

Lesson Objectives

- Introduce members of the group
- Introduce ASSET
- Establish ground rules and build trust
- Select discussion topics for upcoming sessions

Lesson Agenda

1. Introduction and Overview, and Pre-Intervention Survey(s) (10 minutes)
 - Overview of sessions
 - Who am I? Why did I join?
2. Establishing Ground Rules (5 minutes)
 - Format and length
 - Ground rules
 - The contract
3. Ice Breaker Exercise (10 – 12 minutes)
 - Exercise 1.1

4. Group Selection of Discussion Topics (15 minutes)

- Exercise 1.2

5. Closing Activity (5 minutes)

- Exercise 1.3
- Handout 1

6. Wrap Up (3 minutes)

- Summary of session topics/themes

Expected Outcomes

Establish a participant-driven, strengths-based approach and provide a safe supportive place to talk. Participants will be engaged in the process and will contribute to session discussions by selecting their own topics.

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Exercises

Establishing Ground Rules

Ground Rules help the facilitator set expectations from the first session. Since ASSET uses a participant-focused model, participants should decide on rules that everyone can agree on.

Sample Rules:

Listening attentively when someone speaks without interrupting.

Respect others opinions even when they differ from your own.

Be respectful of individual choices and opinions.

Communicate in a non-judgmental non-aggressive way.

Avoid put-downs.

Give everyone a chance to speak during discussions.

Turn off lap tops and cell phones during the session.

Ground Rules should be visible to participants during each session (e.g., posted on a wall).

Exercise 1.1 – Who Am I? (Ice Breaker)

Give participants a piece of paper (or post-it) and pencil. Ask everyone to write down three things about themselves without writing down their name. Have everyone hand in their paper and re-arrange the stack in a different order. Hand every member a post it/paper (not their own),

and have everyone read the things on the paper they've been given out loud. Have everyone guess who wrote those things.

Materials: Paper, Pens

Exercise 1.2 – Topic Selection

Facilitator Note: A discussion is facilitated on which topics will be covered during the eight session intervention. This activity is participant driven and often begins with a question such as “What would you like to cover during this group?”

Suggested Topics:

The myriad of identities within the LGBTQ community.

Articulating your own identity.

Debunking myths about sexual minorities.

The group can briefly discuss these topics and after the session, the facilitator can add any selected topics to the appropriate session agenda according to the best/appropriate theme. Facilitators can use the suggested exercises below or incorporate their own group activities, always keeping the session objectives in mind.

Materials: Flip Chart, Markers

Outcome: Participant-driven topics will be included in the sessions.

Exercise 1.3 – Personal Contract

Facilitator Note: This exercise is an ideal closing activity. The Personal Contract establishes participants' objectives in terms of doing something positive for themselves (e.g., self care) and serves as an agreement to reward themselves when these objectives are achieved.

Have participants identify several personal objectives as well as a number of rewards they would like to give themselves once these objectives are achieved. Then have participants fill out and sign the Personal Contract (Handout 1). It is recommended that the facilitator retain a copy of each completed contract for use in Session 8.

Session 2

Who Am I? What Are My Strengths? (Part 2)

Introduction

In Session 2, recap discussion topic selections from the previous session and explain how these will fit into future sessions. During this session, group members have the opportunity to examine their own LGBTQ identity while addressing myths about LGBTQ youth. The themes are:

Who am I?

What are my strengths?

Students will have a chance to discuss their personal strengths and how they can use these to develop healthy coping strategies for dealing with discrimination and negativity.

Potential Topics:

Articulating your own identities.

Identifying personal Strengths.

Talking about discrimination and how to cope with it.

Process of coming out.

Lesson Objectives

- Identify personal strengths and community resources
- Identify strategies for coping with discrimination and negativity.
- Share personal experiences about coming out as LGBTQ

Lesson Agenda

1. Warm Up (5 minutes)
 - Exercise 2.1
2. Hot Topics Discussion (25-30 minutes)
 - Exploring past situations and how members dealt with them.
 - Sharing healthy decision making and coping skills.
 - Exercise 2.2
3. Group Reflection (8 – 10 minutes)
 - Exercise 2.3

- Debrief

4. Wrap Up (2 minutes)

- Ask youth to bring an image of an influential LGBTQ-positive role model of their choice (e.g., Chaz Bono, Ru Paul, Ruby Rose, Frank Ocean, Jazz Jennings) to present to the group next session.
- Handout 2

Expected Outcomes

Participants will verbalize their personal experience as LGBTQ youth and identify internal and external strengths and resources. Participants will also have an understanding of the diversity of identities within the LGBTQ community. Participants will share their healthy coping strategies with others and increase their own strategies in the process.

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Exercises

Exercise 2.1 – Warm Up Activity

This ice breaker activity allows participants’ to identify a personal strength and to share it with the group. Ask members to write down their strength on a post-it with a marker and stick it to the flip chart. The flip chart should be titled “Our Group Strengths”. This exercise allows participants to get to know each other while learning how their personal strengths make up the group’s strengths.

Materials: Flip-Chart, Markers, Post-Its, Pens

Outcome: Participants will get to know each other while learning to trust and see the group as a source of strength.

Exercise 2.2 - Hot Topics Discussion

Ask each member to talk about something challenging that happened during the past week. Participants each take turns talking about their Hot Topic and are asked to answer the following questions:

What happened?

How did you deal with it?

What was the result?

A recap of the strategies used to deal with the Hot Topic is done at the end of the round table and the group is asked the following question:

Were you happy with the outcome or could you have dealt with this differently?

Make note of strategies used by participants for dealing with their issues and encourage group members to decide if these strategies are healthy or not.

Materials: Notepad, Pen

Outcome: Group members will learn several healthy coping strategies for dealing with difficult situations.

Exercise 2.3 – Group Reflection on Strength and Leadership

This exercise is a group reflection on the different ways we show strength and leadership in our life. Pre-record the list of leadership abilities below and share this list with members, explaining that these things can make a person a strong leader. Ask each participant to name at least one thing they are able to do on this list and to give an example:

- Ability to see the positive side of things
- Ability to say what you think and feel
- Ability to get involved or get others involved in things that are important to you.
- Ability to find support in your community or offer support yourself
- Ability to finish what you start (commit)
- Ability to be part of a team and work with others

Materials: Flip Chart, Markers

Outcome: Participants are able to recognize their own strengths and leadership abilities.

Session 3

Where Am I Going? What's In My Way? (Part 1)

Introduction

Session 3 addresses the following theme:

Where am I going and what's in my way?

The goal is for youth to learn about discrimination and stereotypes faced by LGBTQ people.

Potential topics include:

Stereotypes and discrimination.

Hopes for the future.

Successful LGBTQ role models.

Which mirror your identity.

Lesson Objectives

- Identify positive LGBTQ role models
- Identify barriers to positive feelings and thoughts

Lesson Agenda

1. Warm Up (5 minutes)
2. Hot Topics Discussion (25 minutes)
 - How to deal with Negative Messages and Stereotypes
 - Exercise 3.1
3. Group Reflection: Closing Exercise (15 minutes)
 - Exploring positive characteristics and strategies of LGBTQ role models
 - Exercise 3.2
4. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Expected Outcomes

Participants will identify several positive role models in the LGBTQ community and be familiar with media resources about these individuals.

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Exercises

Exercise 3.1 – Dealing with Negative Messages and Stereotypes

Facilitator Note: In this exercise, each participant identifies one negative message or stereotype that they've heard during their lifetime about LGBTQ people or being LGBTQ. Have each person write it down on a piece of paper and pass around a trashcan to throw the paper away.

Ask each person to tell the group how it felt to throw away the negative message/stereotype.

How did that feel?

What other ways can you use to get rid of these messages?

Suggest a few other ways of dealing with negative messages (e.g., writing about it in a journal, talking to the person about their feelings). Encourage discussion on how these are things you can do at home when negative messages are bothering you.

Materials: Paper, Pens, Trash Can

Outcome: Participants are able to identify which negative messages and stereotypes are bothering them and find healthy ways of dealing with these.

Exercise 3.2 – Positive LGBTQ role models

This group exercise involves asking participants the following question:

Who do you identify as a positive role model in the LGBTQ community?

How do these role models relate to your own personal identity?

How do you think they deal with discrimination?

Encourage youth to discuss the characteristics of LGBTQ positive role models and compare these individuals to their own identity as LGBTQ youth. Participants are asked to bring in their own articles, video clips, social media posts, or books about someone they consider to be a personal role model. Facilitators can share additional positive LGBTQ individuals.

Materials: Media clips (e.g., videos, social media), Publications (e.g., books, articles)

Outcome: Participants will be able to recognize LGBTQ positive role models and how they deal with discrimination.

Session 4

Where Am I Going? What's In My Way? (Part 2)

(Guest Speaker or Film Screening)

Introduction

Session 4 provides an opportunity for participants to hear a guest speaker from the LGBTQ community of their choosing. Suggested topics to be discussed by the speaker include topics related to the session theme:

Where am I going and what's in my way?

The guest speaker should be encouraged to share healthy coping strategies and decision making used in the speaker's daily life. *As an alternate exercise, a film screening featuring a positive role model from the LGBTQ community can be arranged.*

Materials: Thank You Card and Pen

Lesson Objectives

- Identify positive LGBTQ role models
- Recognize positive coping strategies and decision making

Lesson Agenda

1. Introduction of Guest Speaker (2-3 minutes)
2. Guest Presentation and Questions (30-40 minutes)
3. Wrap Up and Thank You (2 minutes)

Expected Outcomes

Participants will hear first-hand about positive coping strategies for relevant issues faced by LGBTQ community members from the perspective of a positive LGBTQ role model.

Session 5

What Causes Me Stress? What Can I Do About It? (Part 1)

Introduction

Session 5 focuses on the following theme:

What causes me stress and what can I do about it?

Suggested topics of discussion include:

Strategies for healthy coping.

Causes and impacts of minority stress.

Forms of oppression.

Highlighting personal strengths.

Family relationships and coming out to parents.

Lesson Objectives

- Identifying strategies for healthy coping
- Identifying the causes and effects of stress
- Recognizing forms of oppression

Lesson Agenda

1. Warm Up (3 minutes)
2. Hot Topics Discussion (20 minutes)
 - Themes/Hot Topics
 - Healthy decision making
 - Exercise 5.1
 - Handout 5
3. Group Reflection (20 minutes)
 - Exercise 5.2
 - Handouts 3 and 4
4. Wrap Up (2-3 minutes)

Expected Outcomes

Participants will be able to recognize sources of oppression in their lives and develop several strategies for dealing with discrimination and harassment.

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Exercises

Exercise 5.1 – Coping Strategies for Discrimination or Harassment (LEARN)

Facilitator Note: This exercise introduces five strategies for coping with discrimination or harassment in a healthy way. Begin by presenting the following statement to the group (or something similar):

People may sometimes react negatively to friendliness because of their own prejudices and discrimination. This next exercise will show you 5 things you can do to deal with those kinds of situations. You can remember them very easily because they spell the word LEARN.

Then present a flip chart with the letters L – E – A – R – N written vertically, leaving space next to them. 5 LEARN cards (Handout 5) are handed out to 5 group members and these cards have a title on one side and descriptive text on the other. For example, one card will have “Look for Allies” on one side and the other side will have the questions associated with that strategy.

For Card 1:	Mention that schools are required to act on bullying and discrimination but not all schools do this well. Group members may want to contact an community organization (see resource list from session 8) if they don’t feel safe from harassment or bullying.
For Card 2:	Mention that if possible, you should try and move towards a public place. Or try to call or text a friend to come to where you are or bring an adult.
For Card 3:	Talk about the difference between assertive, aggressive, and passive reactions. (Handout 3, Assertive Communication Strategies)
For Card 4:	N/A
For Card 5:	Give the handout called “Identifying Your Feelings” and ask the group what kinds of feelings usually come up in these types of situations. Group members can use the handout to identify their feelings.

After participants read each card out loud, ask them to stick it next to the appropriate letter on the flip chart before moving on to the next card. At the end, remind the group of the five strategies and how they spell LEARN. Consider creating a handout that lists these strategies.

Materials: Cards from Handout 5, flip chart, markers, tape or adhesive putty

Outcome: Participants will learn 5 ways of dealing with negative messages or behaviors and how to make safe decisions in challenging situations.

5.2 – Assertiveness Activity

Facilitator Note: Encourage participants to share personal stories of a situation where they found it difficult to respond. 3 Steps to Identifying Your Feelings (Handout 4) can be used as a tool to explore the experiences. After the activity is complete share the Assertive Communication Strategies (Handout 3) and discusses the benefits of assertive communication. Assertive people are less stressed because they know their personal power and don't feel like victims. They're doers that get things done because they know their abilities. They're good problem solvers because they feel empowered to find solutions.

Remind the group that using their personal strengths can help create positive change in their lives and relationships.

Materials: Handouts 3 and 4

Outcome: Participants will learn a number of strategies for communicating in an assertive way when they encounter difficult situations.

Session 6

What Causes Me Stress? What Can I Do About It? (Part 2)

Introduction

In Session 6 continue to examine the previous theme:

What causes me stress and what can I do about it?

Potential discussion topics for this session include:

Strategies for healthy coping.

Causes and impacts of minority stress.

Forms of oppression.

Highlighting personal strengths.

Family relationships and coming out to parents.

Lesson Objectives

- Sharing your coming out experience
- Discussing family relationships and their positive/negative impact
- Reflecting on healthy coping strategies and decision making
- Highlighting personal strengths.

Lesson Agenda

1. Warm Up (5 minutes)
 - What Are My Personal Strengths?
 - Exercise 6.1
2. Hot Topics Discussion (15 minutes)
 - Identify forms of discrimination and other sources of stress.
3. Group Reflection (10 minutes)
 - What we can do about discrimination, stress and negative messages
 - Exercise 6.2
 - Handout 6
4. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Expected Outcomes

Students will recognize the role families play in their lives as a source of stress or strength and support and will be able to easily recognize their own personal strengths.

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Exercises

Exercise 6.1 – What Are My Personal Strengths?

Ask members to think about three things they are good at and write them on a piece of paper without adding their name. The counselor then asks each member to go to the flip chart and write down at least one thing from their list. Once every member has added their strengths the counselor lists out loud the various personal strengths of the group and explains that when we are in a group, our personal strengths become strengths for our group.

Materials: Post-Its, Pens, Flip-Chart

Outcome: Members will recognize their personal strengths as well as the importance of the groups to which they belong and how they play a role in strengthening the group.

Exercise 6.2 – What Can We Do About Discrimination?

Facilitator Note: Hand out the Discrimination Pyramid (Handout 6) and ask members to take turns reading each level described (beliefs, policies, myths) and then talks about how people often buy into these. Ask the group if they've used any of the strategies proposed in the pyramid and suggest they try using these techniques next session with family or friends.

Materials: Handout 6

Outcome: Group members are able to recognize the things that impact LGBTQ community members and formulate their own opinions.

Session 7

How Will I Remember My Brilliance? (Part 1)

Introduction

In Session 7, explore the theme:

How will I remember my brilliance?

Suggested Topics:

Reflecting on personal growth.

Identifying new strengths.

Applying new knowledge and skills in the future.

This session highlights the importance of recognizing our own personal strengths and how these can help up in our daily lives with making decisions and dealing with stressful situations.

Lesson Objectives

- Applying new strategies to daily life
- Using personal strengths for healthy decision making and coping

Lesson Agenda

1. Warm Up (5 minutes)
 - How did your week go?
 - Did you try any of the strategies we talked about in the previous weeks?
 - How did they work for you?
2. Hot Topics Discussion (20 minutes)
 - Practicing communicating in challenging situations
 - Communication Skits
 - Exercise 7.1
3. Group Reflection (15 minutes)
 - Discussion on external supports
 - Exercise 7.2
 - Handout 7
4. Wrap Up (5 minutes)
 - Summary

- Debrief

Expected Outcomes

Group members will have experience putting their new knowledge and skills into practice in various situations (e.g., family, friends).

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Exercises

Exercise 7.1 –“Practicing Communication” Skits

Facilitator Note: This activity is generally appropriate for Sessions 6 – 8. Participants will be creating short skits and presenting them to the larger group. Remind the group of the various strategies for communicating assertively. Groups of 2 – 3 are chosen (by participants or by the facilitator). Each group should write a storyline about someone who is finding it difficult to be assertive with a person in their life. One member plays the role of “difficult person” and the other plays the role of “assertive/non-assertive” person. They must then illustrate a scenario where: (1) the person is first unable to be assertive (passive) and then (2) that person uses one of the strategies discussed in group earlier (e.g., scripting) to be assertive. After 10-15 minutes of preparation, return to the large group and take turns presenting skits. Skits should not be longer than 3 minutes each. At the end of the activity ask participants to try one of the techniques this session if they run into any stressful situations to see if it works.

Materials: Flip chart with steps to scripting method of being assertive (event – feelings – needs – consequences).

Outcome: Participants will have practiced their assertiveness techniques and will have several strategies for communicating effectively and resolving issues.

Exercise 7.2 – My Social Support Network

Facilitator Note: This activity helps participants identify external supports such as school, family, friends, and other community resources. Using My Social Support Network (Handout 7), have participants add names of people and groups in each square to identify their support network. Discuss the importance of asking supportive people for help in times of stress.

Materials: Handout 7

Outcome: Participants will have a list of supportive people, groups and services to use in times of stress.

Session 8

How Will I Remember My Brilliance? (Part 2)

Introduction

During the Session 8, wrap up discussions about the previous session's theme:

How will I remember my brilliance?

Take the time to summarize lessons learned in the past sessions and remind participants about all of the strategies they can use in their daily lives.

Suggested Topics:

Reflecting on personal growth.

Identifying new strengths.

Applying new knowledge and skills in the future.

Lesson Objectives

- Summarize coping strategies learned in previous sessions
- Review personal strengths and external supports available

Lesson Agenda

1. Warm Up (2 minutes)
2. Group Exercise (5 minutes)
 - Review Personal Contract from Session 1
 - Review strengths and coping strategies listed on flip chart
 - Exercise 8.1
3. Hot Topic Discussion (10 minutes)
 - Any topics not covered members would like to discuss.
 - Exercise 8.2
4. Final Wrap Up, Debrief, and Post-Intervention (10 Minutes)
5. Celebration (20 minutes)
 - Exercise 8.3

Expected Outcomes

Participants will leave the group with an arsenal of personal coping strategies, and an understanding of their personal strengths and the external resources at their disposal. Facilitators will have encouraged group members to collect various handouts as tools for the future.

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Exercises

Exercise 8.1 – Reviewing the Personal Contract

Facilitator Note: Hand a copy of each member’s Personal Contract from Session 1 over to them and ask them to review it. Members must decide if they reached their personal goals and are asked to think about whether or not they gave themselves the rewards they promised.

Materials: Copy of Personal Contracts, Pens

Outcome: This activity reminds group members about the importance of self-care and celebrating accomplishments.

Exercise 8.2 – Final Recap Discussion

Facilitator Note: This exercise will vary depending on the topics selected in the first session however in general an open discussion should be facilitated about a relevant subject related to decision making and using positive coping skills. Ask the group questions such as these:

Are there any situations that we didn’t cover here that you find difficult to deal with?
Are there any strategies that you learned here which you could use in this situation?

Consider doing a round table and asking each person to describe:

What can you take from this group to help you in your life after the group ends? How do you think you will use it?

After the discussion is finished take time to do a final debrief with the group by asking them to open their binder/portfolio and review what they’ve collected over the eight sessions. This is a great opportunity for facilitators to provide a list of local resources or pamphlets for LGBTQ friendly programs and services available in their community.

Materials: Previous Flip-Chart Lists of Strengths and Strategies; List of Community Resources

Outcome: Participants are able to apply their new coping skills to a variety of real life situations.

Exercise 8.3 – Celebration and Post-Intervention Survey

The final activity will give participants a chance to exchange thoughts and ideas about what they learned. A suggestion would be to invite the group to have some refreshments and have them ask the person sitting next to them the following questions:

Did you like coming to the group? If so, why?

The Post-Intervention Survey should be administered directly before or during this activity (see the sample Post-Intervention Survey in the Evaluation section).

Encourage open discussion and wrap up by thanking group members for having participated. Remind them of external resources (support network activity and community resources handout).

Materials: Refreshments (If Budget Allows)

Outcome: Participants will recognize internal and external supports and have several strategies they can use when faced with discrimination, negative messages and other stressful situations.

Handout 1

Personal Contract

I, _____, establish the following contract with myself:

Objective: During the next eight sessions, I will do the following activities to reduce stress:

Reward:

1. If I achieve my objective, I will reward myself with:

2. I will give myself this reward no more than two days after having achieved my objective.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Date I achieved my objective: _____

Dates I gave myself my reward: _____

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Handout 2

Glossary of LGBTQ Terms³

The following is not an exhaustive list of terms. To explore others you may choose to visit:

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/about/understanding-gender>

<http://www.Transequality.org>

LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning or Queer): is an umbrella term that is used to represent both sexual minority and gender non-conforming communities

Terms for Sexual Orientation:

Bisexual (or “bi”): a person who loves or is attracted to both men and women (they may or may not have had relationships with both)

Dyke/Fag/Fairy/etc: these terms have been used in derogatory ways, but some members of LGBTQ communities have reclaimed them and use them as terms of endearment. However it is generally not appropriate for those outside of the community to use these terms.

Gay: a man who loves or is attracted to other men (however he may or may not have had relationships or attractions to women in the past or present). Gay may also be used as an adjective to describe people of all genders for example “a gay woman.”

“Human” “Fluid” or “I don’t like labels”: Many youth find the above terms confining and many chose not to label themselves or to make up their own labels.

Lesbian: a woman who loves or is attracted to other women (however she may or may not have had relationships or attractions to men in the past or present)

Pansexual: someone who loves or is attracted to multiple genders. This is a more expansive than bisexual.

Queer: an umbrella term to describe anyone who is not straight, may also be used to describe someone who is attracted to all genders, a more inclusive term of trans individuals than bisexual (note: this term has been used in a derogatory way in the past but has been reclaimed. However it may still be offensive to some members of LGBTQ communities)

Questioning: a term for someone who is currently questioning their sexual orientation

Straight: slang for heterosexual, meaning men who love or are attracted to women, or women who love or are attracted to men. However there are many cases of people who identify as straight who might have had experiences or attractions considered to be bisexual by others)

Terms for Gender:

Gender non-conforming: an adjective describing someone does not fit into the traditional gender roles (example: a boy wearing nail polish may be gender non-conforming)

Genderqueer: a term to describe a person who does not identify as male or female. They may identify as both male and female, or neither male nor female (similar terms include third gender, pangender, omnigender, and others)

Transgender/Trans: a term describing someone who does not fit into the traditional roles of male or female or someone who crosses from one gender to another.

Transgender man/transman/FTM (female to male transsexual): these terms vary slightly in meaning but all describe someone who was assigned the sex of female at birth who is transitioning or has transitioned to live as a boy or man.

Transgender woman/transwoman/MTF (male to female transsexual): these terms vary slightly in meaning but all describe someone who was assigned the sex of male at birth who is transitioning or has transitioned to live as a girl or woman.

Two-Spirit: a term coined by American Indian (Native-American) activists to describe traditional roles and responsibilities for those who did not fit into the gender role of male or female. This may be used by Aboriginal Inuit and Metis people to describe gender or sexual orientation.

Other Important Terms:

Ally: a term for a person who does not identify as LGBTQ but is supportive of LGBTQ rights and individuals.

Biphobia: fear, hatred, violence, stereotypes and/or discrimination towards people perceived to be bisexual. Biphobia may come from the dominant straight culture or the LGBTQ community.

Heterosexism: the dominant cultural belief that straight is the norm and that anything else is abnormal, less than, evil, or sinful. An example of heterosexism is believing that everyone is straight unless they tell you otherwise.

Homophobia: fear, hatred, violence, stereotypes and/or discrimination towards people perceived to be gay or lesbian

Outing: the act of telling another person someone's gender or sexual orientation, often without their permission. Outing can have serious negative consequences for LGBTQ individuals and should not be done without their permission.

QUILT BAG: an inclusive term for sexual and gender minorities including Queer/Questioning, Undecided, Intersex, Lesbian, Trans, Bisexual, Asexual, Gay.

Transphobia: fear, hatred, violence, stereotypes and/or discrimination towards people who are transgender or those who do not fit into traditional gender norms

Handout 3

Assertive Communication Strategies⁴

Here are a few ways of communicating assertively:

- **SHOWING EMPATHY:** “I understand you’re finding it hard to talk about this...” or “I understand your really busy today...”
- **“I” STATEMENTS:** “I feel safe when someone talks to me without yelling.” Or “I feel ignored when I don’t get a response from you.”
- **ASKING FOR TIME:** “I’m not sure if I can, let me have some time to think and let’s talk tomorrow”. Or “I don’t know if I have the time, let me check my schedule and get back to you”.
- **BROKEN RECORD:** “This class is important to me because...” and later “This class is really important to me...” And again later “This is very important to me because...”
- **SCRIPTING:**
 1. **The event:** tell the other person exactly how I see the problem.
“When I’m in my room and someone walks in without knocking it upsets me.”
 2. **Your feelings:** describe how I feel about the event using words to express my emotions clearly.
“This makes me feel like I don’t have any privacy or personal space in the house.”
 3. **Your needs:** tell the other person what I need so they don't have to guess.
“I need you to knock on my door and wait until I respond before entering.” Or I need you to not enter my room when I’m away.”
 4. **The consequence:** describe the positive outcome if your needs are fulfilled.
If my privacy is respected we won’t argue about these things and will get along better.

Handout 4

3 Steps to Identifying Your Feelings

These are a few ways of learning to identify your emotions and acknowledge how you are feeling. This is an important step to finding your voice.

1. Take Inventory of What Your Body is Feeling

Are you sweating? Do you have a headache? Are you light-headed? Emotions like anger and anxiety can make our bodies react. Everyone can react differently. List your usual physical responses to stress.

2. The ‘Why?’ Test

Dig deeper into what’s causing you an emotion by asking the hard questions. Where is the stress coming from?

Why do I feel like I want to cry right now?

Possible Answer: I am angry

Why am I angry?

Possible Answer: That comment was offensive.

Why was I offended?

This line of questioning can get you to the root of an issue very quickly. Once you know why you’re feeling a certain way you can address the cause. Try using a journal for this exercise.

3. Know Your Triggers

Triggers can be people, places, subjects, smells, or sounds that emotionally affect you. Different emotions can be triggered by different situations. For example, for many people hearing a song brings back good or bad memories. As a result, they can feel anxious or even sad. Think about the things that cause you to feel a strong emotion.

Handout 5

LEARN CARDS

Card 1

LOOK FOR ALLIES

Is there a safe adult you can report the discrimination to? Do you have friends who can walk with you to class or walk home with you? Can you tell your parents what happened?

Card 2

EVALUATE FOR SAFETY

Notice your surroundings. Is it safe to respond assertively or is it better to walk away? Are you outnumbered? Are you in a public place? Could this person hurt me? Are there teachers or adults around?

Card 3

ASSERTIVELY RESPOND OR WALK AWAY

Depending on your level of safety in the situation, you may choose to either respond or not respond to the comment and walk away.

Card 4

REMEMBER YOUR STRENGTHS

Use the positive coping strategies and your list of personal strengths from previous sessions to remind yourself that you already know ways of dealing with many of these difficult situations.

Card 5

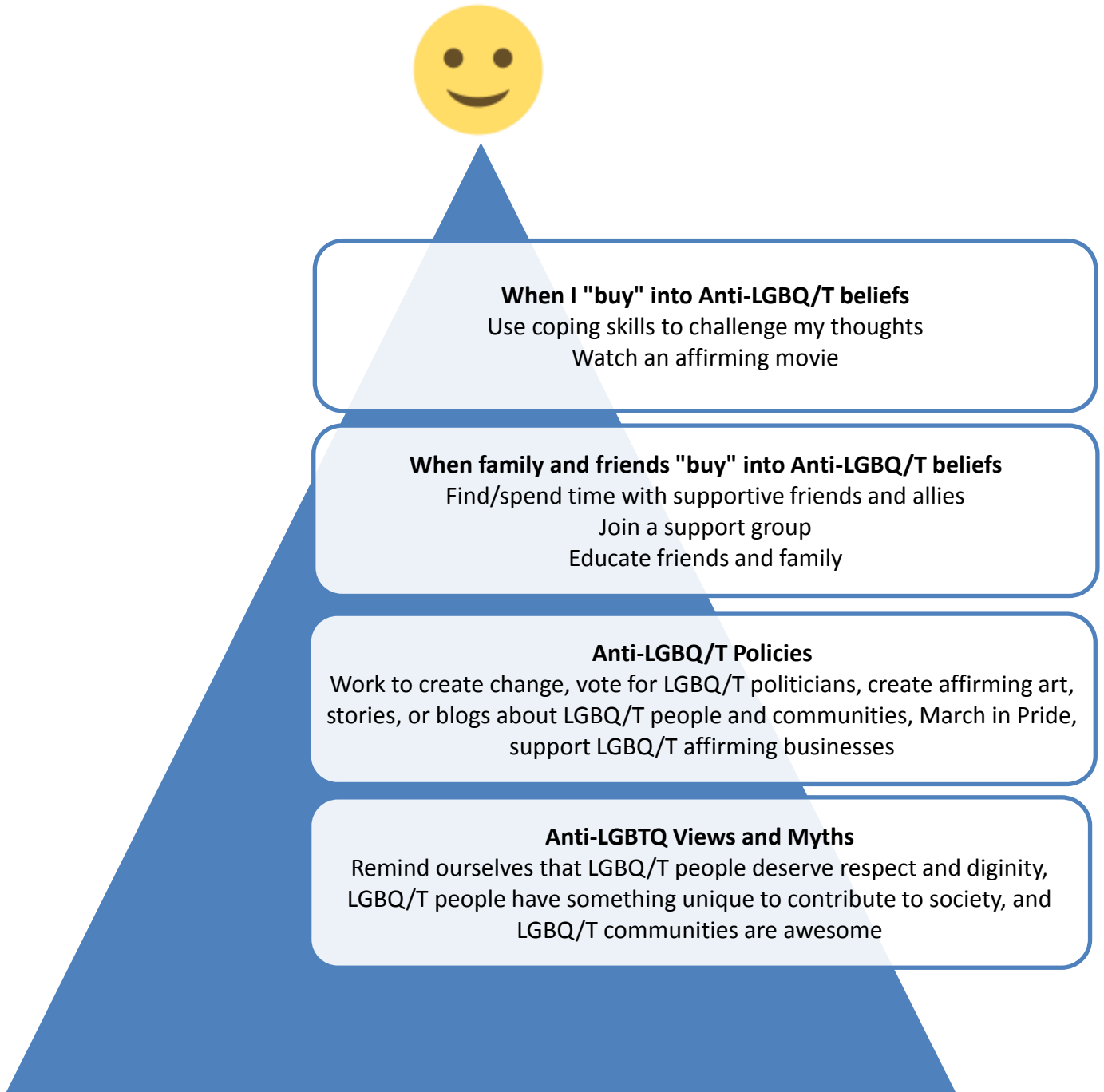
NOTICE YOUR FEELINGS

When someone says or does something that is upsetting to you pause and notice how you feel. Are you angry? Scared? Sad?

Handout 6

Discrimination Pyramid^{3,5}

What We Can Do About Discrimination?



Handout 7

My Social Support Network⁶

Put yourself in the center star and then write names of supportive people in your life.

The diagram consists of a central five-pointed star. Surrounding the star are five dashed rectangular boxes, each representing a different category of social support. The boxes are arranged in a circle around the star, with one box at the top left, one at the top right, one on the left, one on the right, and one at the bottom.

- Family Members** (Top Left, purple dashed border)
- Professionals
(Doctors, Counselors, Teachers)** (Top Right, green dashed border)
- Friends** (Right, red dashed border)
- Alternative Supports
(Social Media, Clubs)** (Bottom, blue dashed border)
- Peer Support
(Groups, LGBTQ Students)** (Left, orange dashed border)

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