



## SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ YOUTH THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE CARE:

# TIPS FOR THERAPISTS

a checklist to support therapists looking to provide affirmative care to LGBTQ+ youth



### 1. Establish the relationship!

#### Ask for...

- Chosen name** and **pronouns** early on, and use that information throughout session.
- The **context** of chosen name and pronoun use. For example, they may want their chosen name during face-to-face interactions but not on medical files.



#### Strive to be...

- Open and collaborative in describing the process of therapy.
- Transparent about what your **credentials** mean. For example, explain your training, experience with LGBTQ+ populations, and any differences between professions (e.g., coach, psychologist, social worker).
- Clear about your socially location.** Identify your own pronouns and note whether you have cis or trans experience. Remember that shared identities don't equate to shared experiences.
- Open to learning about issues that impact queer youth.
- Able to **ask hard questions** as you build your therapeutic alliance. LGBTQ+ people are at a high risk of mental health concerns. Don't be afraid to ask about their safety, about suicide, healthy sexuality, harm reduction, etc.
- Accountable and apologetic about your mistakes.
- Trauma-informed by recognizing distressing events related to LGBTQ+ identity experiences.



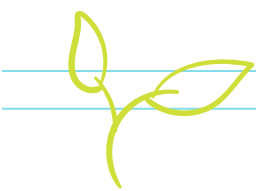
#### Instead...

- Consistently evaluate progress.
- Maintain neutrality for the youth to **make their own decisions** and **evolve in their understanding of their identity and sexuality**. As a therapist, don't have a vested interest in the outcome.
- Commit to being in the space to support the person in their trajectory of change, whichever way it may manifest.
- Encourage self-determination and self-empowerment.**
  - Speak up and not over.
  - Support youth in advocating for themselves, teaching skills instead of fixing things.

### 3. Improve your knowledge

#### Remember...

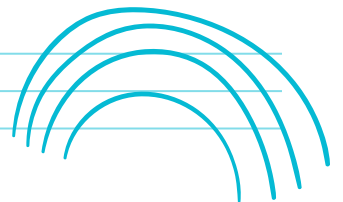
- Language is complex and always evolving. Consistently develop your vocabulary, understanding, and skills.
- To ask yourself: **Do I have an awareness of my knowledge limitations?**
  - If I don't know the answer, who can I go to for that information?
  - Do I need to refer the youth to someone else?
- Look up and be aware of local LGBTQ+ resources – if you don't know, find out!
- Ensure that you maintain strict confidentiality** with caregivers/parents of LGBTQ+ youth. Understand what your client is open to sharing or keeping from their parents



### 2. Challenge your assumptions

#### Don't assume...

- you understand what someone is going through because you relate to what they're going through.
- the **goals of the client**. For example, if someone is not out, their goal may not be to come out.



*This list was compiled by AFFIRM group therapy facilitators who identify as members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and are informed by their extensive experience providing therapy to queer clients and facilitating AFFIRM groups. For more information, visit [projectyouthaffirm.org](http://projectyouthaffirm.org).*