Mental Well-Being: Mental Health and the LGBTQ Population

Written by: CAMHI Anti-Stigma Workgroup

Mental illness can affect persons of any age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic status. The history of mental health treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning/queer (LGBTQ) population could be described as a distressing one by some. In the 1950's and 60's, many psychiatrists believed that homosexuality and bisexuality was a mental disorder and members of this population were often subjected to treatment against their will, including forced hospitalizations, aversion therapy, and electroshock therapy.

Fortunately we've progressed and have made great strides in education and mental health. Being a part of the LGBTQ population is NOT a mental illness. Homosexuality was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) over 30 years ago. However, many still face discrimination from coworkers, family members, peers, and others. Recent studies have indicated that experiencing social discrimination is a strong predictor of mental health issues.

FACTS

- LGBTQ youth are up to six times more likely to attempt suicide during adolescence than their heterosexual counterparts.
- LGBTQ people are 2.5 times more likely to experience a mental illness. In particular, LGBTQ adults are more likely to report depression, panic and anxiety disorders, and substance abuse.
- LGBTQ youth are up to six times more likely to have a serious substance abuse or mental health problems such as anxiety and depression
- Roughly 9 million adults in the United States identify as LGBTQ.
- Nearly 71,000 military service members identify as LGBTQ and some research as shown possibly more than 150,000 active duty service members and reservists identify as such.

Things to Keep in Mind

- Avoid assumptions about sexual orientation.
- Honor and respect a person's decision and pacing during their coming out process.
- Avoid questions or words that assume heterosexuality. Ask about their relationship status vs boy/girlfriend or wife/husband. Use words like spouse, partner or significant other.
- Be supportive: Make sure to listen and provide support; ask questions to learn more while remaining open and non-judgmental.

- If a person self-identifies as transgender, ask them which pronoun they would like to be referred to. If you make a mistake, apologize, and then correct yourself.
- Take the time to learn more about the LGBTQ population. Demonstrating a desire to better understand their situation is a good way of becoming an ally.

LGBTQ Resources in St. Cloud
LGBT Resource Center
Atwood Memorial Center 142
St. Cloud State University
720 4th Ave S
St. Cloud, MN 56301
320-306-5520
lgbt@stcloudstate.edu

St. Cloud Pride
PO Box 5114
St. Cloud, MN 56302
320-308-5166
info@stcloudpride.org

Prism Mental Health, LLC
14 7th Ave N, Suite 107
St. Cloud, MN 56303
320-217-9964
Prismmentalhealth.com

LGBTQ Resources in the Twin Cities
Twin Cities Pride
www.tcpride.org
612-255-3260

OutFront Minnesota
www.outfront.org
612-822-0127

PFLAG- Twin Cities Chapter
(Parents and Friends of Lesbian And Gays)
www.pflagtc.com
612-825-1660

National LGBTQ Resources
National LGBTQ Task Force
www.thetaskforce.org
612-821-4397

GLAAD
www.glaad.org

Human Rights Campaign (HRC)
www.hrc.org
202-628-4160
Veteran Specific sites
Center for Disease Control and Prevention- LGBT Health
https://**www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth**

LGBT Program Office
https://www.patientcare.va.gov/**LGBT**/index.asp

VA Patient Care Services
www.PatientCare.VAGOV

References:

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NAMI (2019) LGBTQ. Retrieved from: https://www.nami.org/find-support/lgbtq

LGBT Resource Center. (n.d.) Safe space training handbook