



SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ YOUTH THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE CARE:

# TIPS FOR THERAPISTS

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



## 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 social 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 LGBTQ+ clients.
- 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.



## 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.

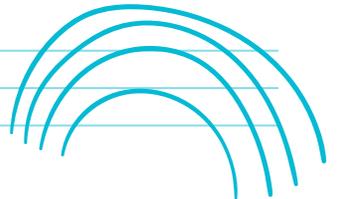
### Instead...

- Consistently evaluate progress.
- Maintain neutrality so the client can **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 client in their trajectory of change, whichever way it may manifest.
- Encourage self-determination and self-empowerment.**
  - Speak up and not over.
  - Support clients 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 client 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 with their caregivers



*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).*