



GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

Only you have the right to define who you are

Navigating Gender and Sexual Identity for Young People and Parents



GIVING EVERYONE A VOICE TO START A CONVERSATION

Learning, sharing and connecting

The purpose of this Back on Track Teens mini-series is to amplify the voices of young people from the LGBTQ+ community. This is so their stories, insights and lived experience might help their peers who are questioning and/or exploring their gender and sexual identities. The series offers a platform to access a collection of authentic resources, including:

- 10 personal story [podcast interviews](#)
- 11 [blog articles](#) repurposed from the podcast interviews
- Downloadable ebook (which you're reading right now!)
- Free online activities
- A [glossary of terms](#) relating LGBTQ+ identities, experiences, and challenges

Back on Track Teens want to encourage conversations to take place between friends, families and work colleagues that give young people an opportunity to learn from those who have already embarked on their own journey of discovery.

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It doesn't matter what other people think, it matters how you feel.

Tayshan





WHO IS THIS EBOOK FOR?

For anybody who has questions and wants to learn

The stories shared and resources gathered for the mini-series are for anybody who wants to learn more about LGBTQ+ identities and experiences. The truthful stories and practical activities are for young people to learn from those who have already embarked on their journey exploring their gender and sexual identity.

Are you questioning or contemplating your own gender or sexual identity? Are you a parent or caregiver whose child may have questions about their gender or sexual identity? Do you know someone who might be curious about what it all means? Do you just love to learn about the human experience? If so, this ebook is for you. It offers guidance and tools to empower you to start having conversations about LGBTQ+ identities and, if relevant, explore how you can access a supportive community.

Questions and conversations are part of growing up, regardless of how you identify. It's not just young people who are growing up either - adults are also on their own journey. There are people out there who are realising something new and exciting about their gender and/or sexual identity at 80 and beyond. Life

will always be full of questions and it's OK that you don't have all the answers, because no one does.

This ebook also offers practical advice and references for carers, teachers and coaches of young people to support a journey of discovery together.

WHAT WILL THIS EBOOK CONTAIN?

An abundance of resources for young people, parents and caregivers

This ebook includes extracts from the stories of nine incredible young people who identify as LGBTQ+, alongside the stories of an older LGBTQ+ person and two parents who each have a child who identifies as LGBTQ+.

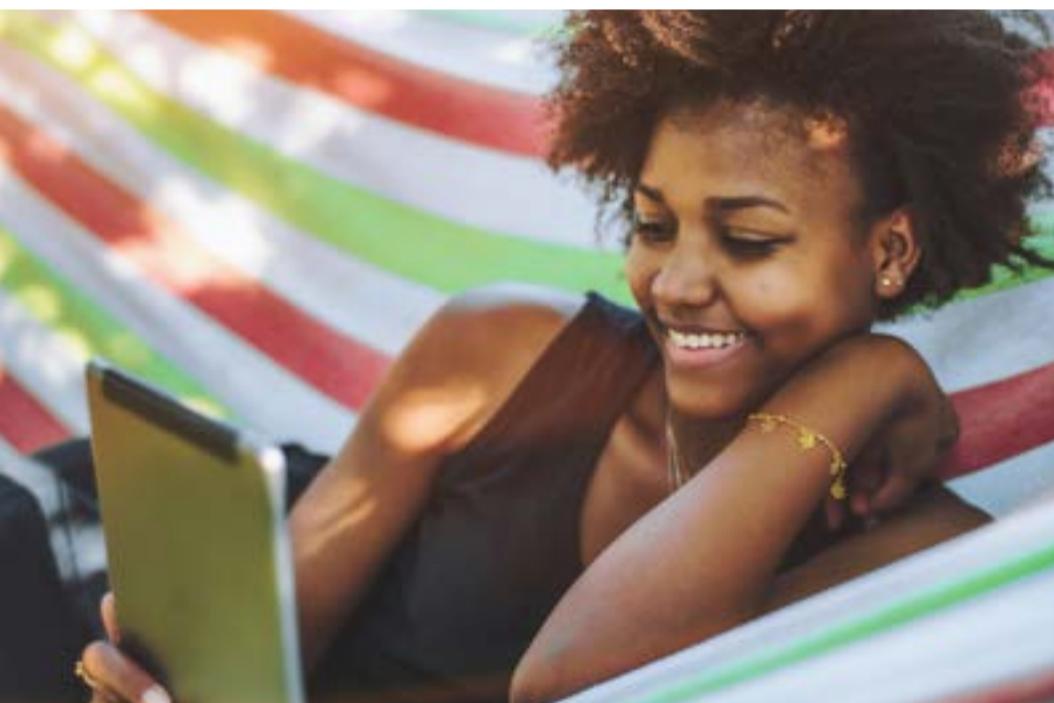
Alongside the stories relating to the lived experience of people from the LGBTQ+ community, there are also lists of helpful resources designed to expand and build on people's understanding of different gender and sexual identities. Back on Track Teens wanted to use our years of experience coaching and uplifting young people from all walks of life to produce materials

bursting with helpful definitions, real-life stories and support signposting.

The information contained in this ebook will help you to learn about important life topics and help you to have open and honest discussions around:

- LGBTQ+ representation and visibility
- Labels and pronouns
- Stereotypes and homophobia
- Sex education in schools

This ebooks also contains advice for parents and a glossary of terms relating to LGBTQ+ identities, from technical definitions to snapshots of history.



HOW TO USE THIS EBOOK

Developing knowledge and understanding

This ebook aims to answer many of the questions you may have around gender and sexual identity. It aims to clarify uncertainties and encourage you to take the next steps to connect with others; there is likely to be a huge community and support network out there for

you to access. What you read in this ebook may well raise more questions, and that's OK. You will also have the opportunity to access tools and resources that will help you tap into your innermost thoughts, feelings, and emotions, with the intention of getting closer to feeling comfortable with how you choose to identify.

This ebook is intended as an educational resource which you can read from cover to cover or pick it up as and when. From this point forward, single words and phrases you see in **blue** will be included in a glossary at the end of the ebook.

Practical examples and exercises appear throughout this ebook to encourage you to dig deep about how you think and feel. Reflection is a powerful tool helping you come to your own conclusions and feel comfortable and confident in your choices. Exercises are designed for both individual consideration and/or group discussion. You decide how interactive you want your reading experience to be and with whom.

THE STORIES SHARED WITHIN THIS EBOOK

Real-life, relatable stories of authentic experience

Eleven stories shared in this ebook are honest accounts of self-discovery relating to gender and **sexual identity**^{*}. Each person shares the questions they had, the moments of euphoria they experienced when they realised who they were (and the low points, too), their coming out experiences, and how they were treated by others. The stories related by the two parents, who each have a child who identifies as **LGBTQ+**, are equally honest and insightful.

Each story can also be listened to in full on the podcast or read in more detail on the Back on Track Teens blog. Hyperlinks are listed at the beginning of each story.

The Back on Track Teens, Spark to Your Success podcast, and Ignition! programme founder TeeJay Dowe, and her daughter Tayshan (who conducted nine of the podcast interviews and identifies as LGBTQ+ herself), are available to answer any further questions you may have. Their contact details can be found at the end of this ebook.



TeeJay Dowe, and her daughter Tayshan

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER READING THIS EBOOK?

Continuing your journey

After accessing the resources on offer, we hope you will have a richer understanding of gender and sexual identities.

It's OK for you to begin a journey where you don't necessarily know what the destination is. The choices you make about yourself and how you identify can change and evolve. It's your life, you are unique and only you have the right to define yourself. Take your time.

Please feel free to share this ebook with friends, family members and colleagues who you think may benefit from or be interested in its content. We also welcome you to subscribe to the [Spark to Your Success podcast](#) and explore the [Back on Track Teens blog](#) (and if you'd like to), perhaps share something you find there with your chosen communities. We created this mini-series to be the start of many vital conversations around this topic.

Much ♥

TeeJay Tayshan

P.S.

“Be happy and comfortable with who you are, whoever it may be.

Colbie Caillat

**The Back on Track Teens Spark to Your Success gender and sexual identity mini-series was produced during the summer of 2021.*



AMPLIFYING LGBTQ+ VOICES TO ACHIEVE EQUALITY

It's OK to be you

Representation matters. Seeing yourself and a version of your experience played out on a grand stage (such as a popular TV series) can have such a powerful impact. The lack of LGBTQ+ representation in popular culture, entertainment and education is a missed opportunity to share a wider, richer variety of stories and personal experiences.

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The only time people hear asexual is in terms of cell reproduction in year nine.

Hannah

From the perspective of someone who identifies as LGBTQ+, it also means they don't get to see their perspective and identity normalised and celebrated. Their **straight, cisgender** peers don't get see LGBTQ+ existence normalised either. Lack of representation means that we are not as well equipped to connect with, empathise, and understand one another.

POSITIVE MEDIA INTERVENTION AND TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

The internet, social media and mobile technology have given rise to activists and campaigning organisations, empowering the LGBTQ+ community to have a louder voice.

It can make a big difference for young people to see influencers who have come out on social media, and following their story brings a sense of belonging and validation. This is especially powerful when a

young person can't find that experience in the same mainstream channels. Social media has the power to not only normalise conversations around LGBTQ+ gender and sexual identities, but protect and nurture the individuals themselves.

Through positive, accurate representation, the media can gently educate everyone, however they identify. There's no one 'right' way to be, and the media has the power to reinforce that message by ensuring LGBTQ+ stories are as accessible and uplifted as those that centre the heterosexual, cisgender experience.

That's not to say that LGBTQ+ representation and stories in mainstream media are not already present. There are plenty of examples, especially in recent years but unfortunately, much of this representation involves LGBTQ+ characters experiencing trauma or tragedy. You may have heard of the '[bury your gays](#)' trope, where LGBTQ+ characters are far more likely to be killed off for dramatic effect.

We need to gain a balance of real-life stories and integrate LGBTQ+ characters seamlessly into television series, movies, performing arts and books. This will improve and enrich our culture by promoting diversity and reducing gender and sexuality discrimination.

POSITIVE INTERVENTION IN EDUCATION

Sex education in schools forms a big part of this book in a later section.

LGBTQ+ identities and experience needs to be included in sex education to normalise all gender and sexual identities.

Aside from curriculum education, an excellent place for schools to start championing inclusion among staff, students and parents is to look at policies supporting LGBTQ+ pupils. Maintaining LGBTQ+ rights in schools at a policy level will ensure more safe places to hold safe, validating conversations. Having gender-



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I definitely felt I couldn't be a lesbian because I'm not butch and I wear makeup.

Carolyn

neutral policies communicates to students who are LGBTQ+ or questioning their identity that schools care about the wellbeing of all students.

Schools could choose to establish regular LGBTQ+ groups led by staff and students held in lunchtime breaks or online. This could provide students a dedicated space to talk about identities, history and culture. Such groups increase representation and knowledge for national awareness campaigns and providing support in the community.

Increasing visibility for LGBTQ+ issues can really help individual students. Schools could organise events, putting up posters and leaflets, signposting to resources and answering frequently asked LGBTQ+ questions relating LGBTQ+ identities.

THE IMPACT OF BEING DEFINED BY WHAT YOU ARE NOT

We currently live in a heteronormative society, in which it is assumed that someone is heterosexual unless they state otherwise. Heteronormativity contributes to the harmful perception that being heterosexual is “normal” or “neutral”, and any other sexual identity is a deviation from that.

As an oppressive belief structure, heteronormativity has been around for quite a long time. Whereas being heterosexual wasn't always so strictly enforced as the only “normal” or “healthy” way to be, it's certainly been the prevailing (and systemically enforced) viewpoint in Western cultures for the past few hundred years.

Like gender, heteronormativity is a social construct, which means it's a belief, rather than objective reality. It exists because some humans agree that it



exists. Like any social construct, it can be challenged and disrupted.

As a fundamentally unfair and oppressive, our society will naturally benefit once it's removed.

PROGRESS IS BEING MADE

In the last ten years, positive changes in the UK and beyond include:

- the dismissal of asexuality as a mental disorder in 2013
- same-sex marriages being made legal in England, Wales and Scotland in 2014 (Northern Ireland in 2020)
- and the World Health Organisation revoking the classification of transgender as a mental and behavioural disorder in 2019.

Honest, open and anti-prejudiced conversations help to spread awareness. The conversations we have with each other have the potential to disrupt oppressive power structures and bring us closer to understanding one another. Thanks to activists and allies campaigning for equal rights for LGBTQ+ people, the future looks like it could involve some big changes.



FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS FOR YOU

How labels and pronouns support inclusion, acceptance and connection

Labels can be important to many people because they help to confirm identity and offer a sense of self-affirmation and belonging. For many people in the LGBTQ+ community, a label, self-identifying labels like **lesbian**, **bi**, **gay**, **pansexual** or **trans** helps individuals figure out and define who they are. Labels can also be used to connect and share community with people who share the same identity or experience.

Just as some people will experience validation and comfort from identifying with a certain label, many don't feel the need to assign themselves with one. It's a choice based on who you are and whatever you feel fits you best.

Labels can help foster a better understanding of

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You can be whoever you want to be. Some people will find comfort in a label, but labels can change, and you can change. How you identify can change.

Carolyn

different gender and sexual identities. If it feels right for you, you can use a label to explain how you identify if someone asks. Remember, this is always a personal choice and you never have to divulge personal information to anyone if you don't want to.

Not all labels are positive. It's important to be aware that some labels also have negative connotations. As such, they could be used to bully, harass or otherwise abuse someone who may or may not identify with that label. This is why you should try not to assume which labels people use.

USING PRONOUNS

In the English language, **pronouns** are words used to refer to people in conversation by way of their gender identity - for example, he/him or she/her. Some people may use other pronouns such as they/them and ze/zir. Some people may use more than one set of pronouns, such as she/they.

You may have seen pronouns online or printed in text next to a person's name. Pronouns indicate how people wish to be referred to. Everyone uses pronouns however they identify, so the practice of being explicit or forthcoming about which ones you use can be helpful to ensure people know how to refer to you. The use of pronouns can change for the same person depending on the individual and how they feel.



Asking about pronouns can be an effective way of making sure that some people who identify as LGBTQ+ feel safe, comfortable and accepted. Using the wrong pronouns for someone is likely to be unpleasant however you identify, but for a trans or non-binary person, **misgendering** them by using the wrong pronouns can cause real harm.

HOW BEST TO USE LABELS AND PRONOUNS?

Gender is a social construct, which means that we, as people, made it up. Within that belief is the gender binary, which suggests that there are only two genders, male and female. The increasing use of pronouns that represent gender identities outside this binary (such as they/them) is a step in the right direction for gender equality.

If you don't know which pronouns someone uses, you can ask if you're unsure. Remember, it doesn't make you a bad person if you accidentally get someone's pronouns wrong! All you need to do is apologise quickly and move on - try not to make it "about you" by over-apologising or putting pressure on the other person to reassure you. Think of it this way: you've just referred to someone as Sammy, when their name is actually Dani. Do as you'd do in that situation; apologise, correct yourself, and move on.

Everyone makes mistakes and as long as you're making an effort to remember and get it right, that's what counts.



DEMANDING THE RIGHT TO BE YOURSELF

Disrupting ignorance and challenging prejudice

The fear of encountering hostility, harm or violence is a genuine concern for many people who identify as LGBTQ+, especially when they're sharing their identity with someone for the first time. It's completely understandable to fear the opinions of others and to compare yourself negatively to your peers. If you are comfortable in yourself and your identity, it's possible to build resilience against the effects of harmful stereotyping or certain levels of **homophobic** or **transphobic** behaviour. Of course in an ideal world, you shouldn't have to worry about it at all.

Stereotypes occur through the perpetuation of harmful, reductive misrepresentation. A stereotype reduces a complex individual with a unique perspective and life experience to a single, cartoonish interpretation of a trait (that they may or may not even have). When you reduce someone to a stereotype, you dehumanise them. You're skipping over someone's

individual characteristics, personality, preferences, values and beliefs.

Part of homophobia or transphobia (or any other phobia that discriminates against and/or endangers a LGBTQ+ identity) reducing someone to a caricature or stereotype. It's fuelled by assuming something about their identity based on harmful misinformation. Again, this is a way of dehumanising someone - especially when homophobia escalates from making assumptions about an identity to verbal abuse and discriminatory oppression.

Sexualising sexual identity also leads to incorrect, harmful assumptions that erases an individual's personhood. One example could be the experience endured by some lesbians, bisexual women or femmes, when people assume that someone who identifies in this way is automatically 'up for' a

threesome. A current trend pointed out in our podcast series is couples registering on dating apps looking for a 'unicorn'; a third person to engage in sexual activity with the couple. Assumptions like these don't account for the person's emotional wellbeing or positive mental health and it has a dehumanising effect.

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

There is a lot of power in talking openly in a safe space about thoughts and feelings. It encourages people to challenge harmful and prejudiced beliefs.

For parents, a great place to start is not assuming their child will be heterosexual or thinking they may identify as LGBTQ+ because of stereotypical traits. By doing this, parents reduce the chance of judgement and misunderstanding.

For many LGBTQ+ people, behaving in the same way as a heterosexual couple might do in public, such as holding hands or kissing, causes intense feelings of anxiety or fear. This is because we, as a society, are not creating a world where all people who identify as LGBTQ+ feel safe to do so. As derogatory labels and harmful stereotypes are challenged and disrupted, people who identify as LGBTQ+ are more likely to be able to live openly and authentically, safe to be true to who they are.

RECLAIMING WORDS AND LANGUAGE

As with any minority group that challenge, threaten, or disrupt the systems created by fluctuating seats of power, slurs are coined and used to dehumanise and harm individuals within the group. Slurs often fall into general usage by wider society and begin to be used without an understanding of their violent and oppressive origins. For example, a group of young men using the word 'gay' to describe something as rubbish or uncool.

Language changes as new words evolve, old words fall out of common usage. Some words that are commonly understood to be slurs (and therefore a tool of oppression) are reclaimed in the name of empowerment, such as the word queer. Historically, 'queer' meant "odd or strange" before it was adopted as a slur. In this case, some members of the LGBTQ+ community took it back and decided to wear it as a badge of honour, lifting the middle finger to the systems that were benefitting from the harmful, trickle-down effects of this kind of oppression.

However, it's worth noting that just because a word has been reclaimed does not mean that it is no longer used as a slur to harm and control people who identify as LGBTQ+. Because of this, some people prefer not to use certain words while others might choose to embrace it.





IMPROVING SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Ensuring the inclusion of LGBTQ+ identities and their emotional welfare

The lack of sex education in schools is a big issue. Teachers often feel uncomfortable teaching the topic (possibly because they have no formal, or limited, training in the subject). Even more alarming is that many adults still believe that young people will

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[As a teacher], I carry my rainbow bag and LGBTQ+ flag and students often come up and thank me.

Tegan

automatically become sexually active once exposed to sex education.

Young people have far more access to material with which they can research sex and possibly engage in sexual activity. This is mainly thanks to online and mainstream media making sexual material (in all its forms) readily accessible.

Education in schools need to emphasise the importance of safe sex, emotional wellbeing, positive mental health, and awareness of what is and isn't acceptable. This needs to be a priority to prevent young people from finding themselves in physically and emotionally dangerous situations.

MAKING SEX EDUCATION MORE EFFECTIVE

Sex education in schools has traditionally been clinical and scientific, focusing on biological reproduction

and contraception. The bias has been towards heterosexual relationships and explaining how male and female reproductive systems work.

Procreation is just one aspect of a sexual relationship, and for many people (such as same-sex partnerships or people who are not able to have children) it is not relevant to their personal experience. On the other hand, a healthy understanding of sexual activity, different orientations, consent and pleasure is just as important to ensure young people are safe.

LGBTQ+ young people are more at risk of being bullied, abused, groomed and exploited because they are not adequately protected from abusers and/or offered enough education. Some of the podcast interviewees expressed that young people often turn to pornography to learn about sex. The depiction of sex in porn is often inaccurate; both in terms of how bodies look and function, and in terms of how people should treat themselves or one another during sex.

Consent is crucial to safe, healthy, enjoyable sex. It involves the practice of communicating and respecting boundaries between sexual partners. Talking about what is and is not acceptable in sex and relationships keeps everyone involved emotionally and physically safe.

THE FUTURE OF SEX EDUCATION

A 2020 report found that around half of the students surveyed said they had little to zero positive messaging about being LGBTQ+ in school over the last year. Upsettingly, LGBTQ+ young people are more than twice as likely to be worried about their mental health daily, and if they are Black, disabled or on free school meals and part of the LGBTQ+ community, they face even more challenges (see [intersectionality](#) for more details).

British legislation introduced just before the 2020 lockdown supports compulsory sex relationship education from five to 18 years old that is 'holistic' in nature. At one time, parents could withdraw their children from being taught if they disagreed with the discussion topics, but that power has been removed and schools cannot opt-out of it regardless of their religious association.

This is good news, but due to the pandemic, many children have fallen behind in school, so at the time of writing this ebook, it's uncertain how quickly this new approach will be embedded.





REAL-LIFE LGBTQ+ STORIES OF DISCOVERY AND ACCEPTANCE

Understanding gender and sexual
identity from beautiful souls

Each of the following extracts shares a story from a young person who identifies as LGBTQ+. Hyperlinks are included with each extract, from which you can listen to the full podcast interview or read a more detailed account of their story in blog form.

The stories are honest accounts of each person's journey of self-discovery around gender and sexual identity.





Name: Tayshan Dowe

Age: 23

Pronouns: She/her

Sexual identity: Lesbian

Gender identity: Cisgender

Occupation:

Specialist recruitment consultant

“

I am cisgender and identify as the gender I was born (female), but I'm not straight. I realised this at around 15 years old. When I look back now, it's clear that I wasn't straight. At the age of 12 I had a best friend and all we talked about was living together, getting married and having children. I realise now that was clearly a lesbian relationship.

”

TAYSHAN'S STORY

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

"I originally came out at the age of 15 as bisexual and I identified as this until the beginning of 2021. It was easy and never bothered me. I said, 'Yeah I like girls too' and I was always OK with that. I remember saying to my boyfriend once that 'I wouldn't be with another man if I wasn't with you' ... but when we split up in 2020, I went through a sexual crisis.

I knew I didn't want to date men, but the lesbian label didn't really fit. Queer didn't fit either. It was a different experience for me to come out as a lesbian aged 23 - it took six months for me to realise that I identified as a lesbian. Identity is a fluid process and I identify as lesbian now. But that could change – and that's still OK."

DISCUSSING STEREOTYPES AND HOMOPHOBIA

"I think people knew. I wasn't secretive. I told two close friends who were supportive - and it even helped one of them to figure out their

own sexuality. I'm lucky because I've never been subject to biphobia and I'm very grateful for that.

I think there's a lot more stigma for men. The hypersexualising of women almost makes it easier for them.

I read something on Instagram that said bisexual women are often still seen as straight whereas bisexual men are seen as gay. A lot of the narrative still revolves around men, and I think it's hard for society to recognise a relationship that doesn't revolve around masculinity. Every relationship is valid."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD TAYSHAN GIVE TO HER 15-YEAR-OLD SELF IF SHE GOT THE CHANCE?

"It doesn't matter what other people think, it matters how you feel. I would teach myself about feminism and that your worth is not based on females being conditioned to please men. It's all about the journey."

Tayshan





Name: Layton

Age: 22

Pronouns: He/they

Sexual identity:

Not discussed, specified and/or disclosed during interview

Gender identity:

Transgender/trans man

Occupation: Postgrad student

“

Stick with the people who support you. There will always be people who will be rooting for you to be your most authentic self. You do not need to prove anything to anyone apart from yourself.

”

LAYTON'S STORY

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

“I came out at 16 as bisexual ... [later] I was really drunk when I came out as trans. I texted my family in the WhatsApp chat. [When] I started hormones...I think that was something that people around me needed to understand that I was going to be changing ... my name changed as well and I understand completely that might be difficult for people around me, especially those who raised me and have known me my entire life.”

DISCUSSING STEREOTYPES AND TRANSPHOBIA

“[My family] thought I just wanted to wear masculine clothing and have my hair short. As soon as it became real that I was changing it became awful. Mum only started speaking to me a few weeks ago and deadnames me on purpose. My dad hasn't been great [but we] had a very open conversation ... I can tell he's now making an effort.

I still get called a lady around five times a week. It will depend on what I'm wearing or how I brush my eyebrows. Things like this make you realise how gendered society is [and] if you want to correct them, correct them, but you don't need to. People slip up, apologise, correct and move on. As long as you are happy in your own skin that's all that matters.”

DISCUSSING SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

"I think I saw a quote for it once and it said, 'I was taught about World War Two in school but I'm not invading Poland' - I feel like I can say that because I'm Polish but yeah, that's how it works. I think trans education in school would be such a beautiful thing even if it was just touched upon for 10 minutes - 10 minutes of those kids' time and that has the power to normalise in a child's head when they're growing up like 'hey, I feel different but it's OK!'"

WHAT ADVICE WOULD LAYTON GIVE TO THEIR YOUNGER SELF IF THEY GOT THE CHANCE?

"Stop caring what other people think. The only opinion that matters is your own. You're gonna fall down a few times but you will get to the top eventually and the way you get to the top is through loving yourself and affirming things yourself."

Layton





Name: Bella

Age: 22

Pronouns: She/her

Sexual identity:
Bisexual (and still questioning)

Gender identity:
Not discussed, specified and/or
disclosed during interview

Occupation: Hairdresser

“

I think [I knew] probably about aged 13, 14 but never admitted to everyone.

I don't know if it was the school environment and I didn't want to be thought of differently, but when I got to college, so when I was about 16 years old, I'd say 'I'm bisexual, like I like boys and girls' – it changes on a daily basis, but I had to put a specific label on it.

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BELLA'S STORY

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

"I came out when I was 18 years old and still am kind of playing with different ideas about what I could be. I felt like I needed to, especially with my parents.

I'd never really spoken about girls... and then I started seeing a girl and, you know, it was getting a little bit more serious and I was like okay I can't hide this forever, so I was upstairs in my room, and I texted my mum and my sister who were sat downstairs ... and it was literally, 'look I like boys, I like girls and I'm seeing this girl, this is what's going on. My mum and my sister came upstairs straight away, and they were like 'we don't care', and my dad was the exact same.

I'm quite lucky they've all been really accepting. You love who you love and at the end of the day you're still the same person as you were before they knew."

DISCUSSING STEREOTYPES AND BIPHOBIA

"I've had it when dating a boy and they say, 'well I thought you were a lesbian' and it's like I shouldn't have to explain myself.

Girls say, 'well who's the girl and who's the boy?', and some don't think it's right to like boys. I like getting my nails done and people say, 'I bet you're a pillow princess'. This or that. Just because I take care of my appearance doesn't change who I am - all identities are valid."

DISCUSSING SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

"We were shown tampons, sanitary towels and the pill and boys were shown how to put a condom on. We learnt what STDs were but nothing else.

They don't teach the emotionally vulnerable side of it and mental health. One sexual experience could completely change your future. Going out and having

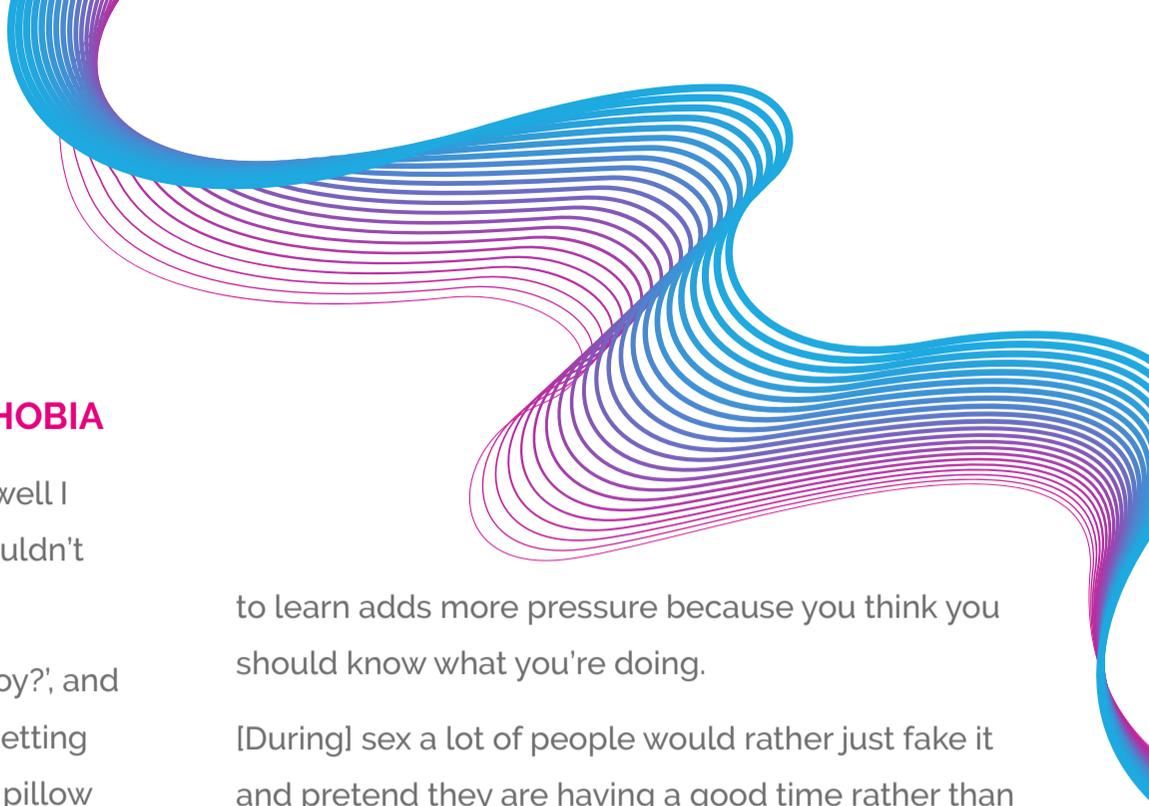
to learn adds more pressure because you think you should know what you're doing.

[During] sex a lot of people would rather just fake it and pretend they are having a good time rather than saying I would rather you do this - and because it's never taught that you can talk about it, it's considered rude. Now I explain what I enjoy before having sex."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD BELLA GIVE TO HER YOUNGER SELF IF SHE GOT THE CHANCE?

"Don't be afraid to come out earlier and ditch the people who would have judged you for it. Stick to the people who actually care about who you are and not what you bring to the table."

Bella





Name: Ryan

Age: 29

Pronouns: He/him

Sexual identity: Gay

Gender identity: Not discussed, specified and/or disclosed during interview

Occupation: Solicitor

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I thought that I was coming out quite late, close to 22 years old. Before that I had some feelings of attraction towards men, but I'd denied it. The turning point was when I was randomly talking to somebody, to a guy, and I started to feel romantically attracted to him. I came out as bi but within about six months I realised I've not been looking at women... yep, I'm gay.

”

RYAN'S STORY

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

“I had to come out to myself first and confront it on an individual level to accept myself. My mum asked me a few times growing up whether I was gay - she obviously saw it before I did, but I had denied it so many times that when I eventually did tell her she was genuinely surprised. I told my dad and he said, 'I completely support you no matter what and will always love you' which was lovely. My mum told my nan while she was lying on a hospital gurney experiencing chest pains!

It's a continual process and there will always be times when it's a bit more awkward than others, but it definitely does get easier because you know how to do it and get on with it.”

DISCUSSING STEREOTYPES AND HOMOPHOBIA

“In school I actually did [experience homophobia], and I think it's because I was exhibiting typical gay traits although I didn't realise it. Ignorant people will always make passive comments and pass slurs

but usually that's where it ends. [It] shocks you the first couple of times but after a while you come to expect it.

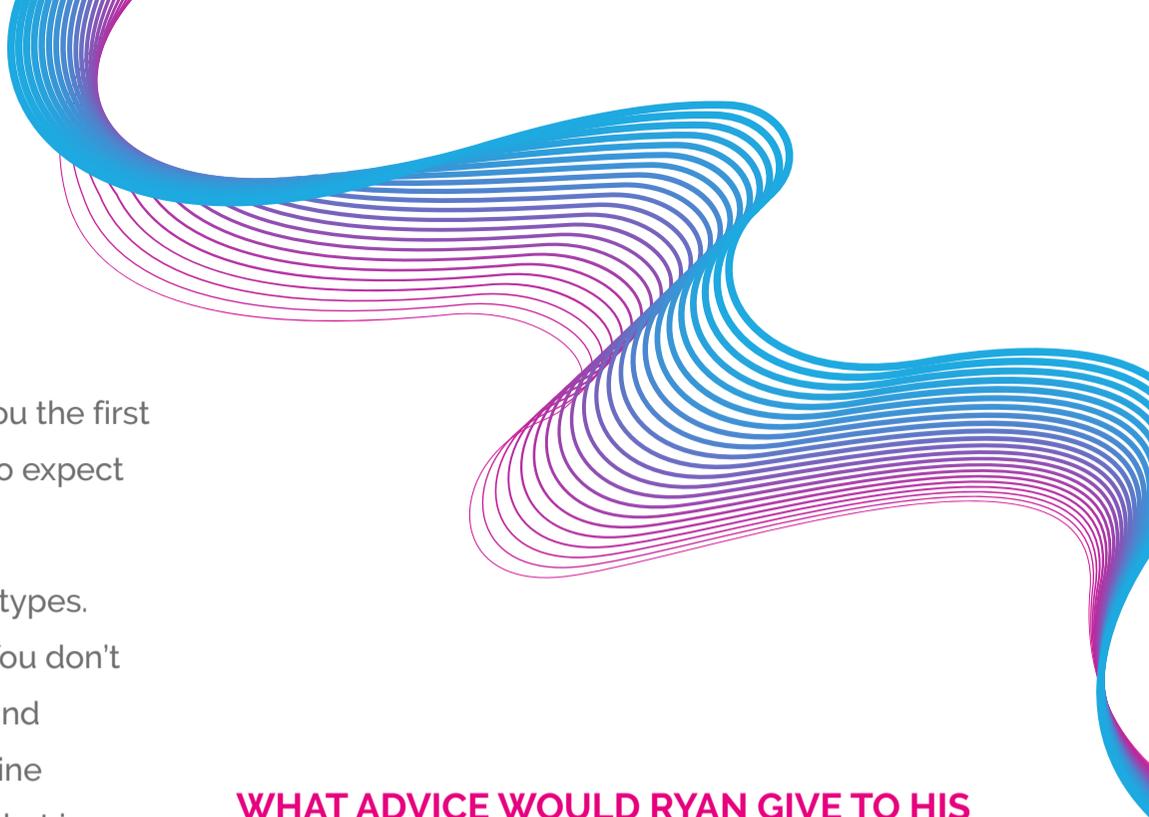
I have had people assume I fit certain stereotypes. They say, 'You don't walk like a gay person. You don't talk like a gay person'. Well what do they sound like or walk like? I don't think you have feminine and masculine traits. What is feminine and what is masculine? I mean, I used to sit on the train crocheting on the way to work - people always burst out laughing at the idea of a guy with a big beard in a suit on a train from Manchester to Stoke crocheting. I bake, I sew and all that stuff, so to some extent I do sort of play into what people would label as a 'homely gay'.

[When I first came out] I lost three stone. I hadn't been on many dates, and I put that down to not looking the right way. I felt I did need to fit into a stereotype. Now I don't care, I do whatever I want."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD RYAN GIVE TO HIS YOUNGER SELF IF HE GOT THE CHANCE?

"Given that I denied it for so long, if I could go back now, I would say it's not just a phase, it's not just a sexual attraction thing. I do feel like coming out at 21, I missed out on some of the things I would have experienced as a teenager growing up in high school as a gay boy. You will understand yourself a lot better if you give yourself the freedom to explore and don't be afraid."

Ryan





Name: Hannah

Age: 25

Pronouns: She/her

Sexual identity: Gay and asexual

Gender identity:
Not discussed, specified and/or
disclosed during interview

Occupation: Videographer

“

Recently I've been making more of an effort to come out as asexual [to more people] because I really feel like there needs to be more visibility around it.

”

HANNAH'S STORY

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

"I realised I was asexual just before I turned 18. [A realisation] moment for me was when I was in McDonald's with one of my friends and she just looked at a guy and said, 'I'd tap that' and I was like, 'How can you know just from this person walking past' and she's like 'yeah but you just know don't you?' It was at that point that I realised maybe there's something going on here that I don't really understand because, no, I don't know what you know!"

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

"I came out to my mum and a couple of friends not long after realised I was asexual, mainly because I just wanted the questions of when I was going to get a partner to stop! You know what parents can be like, and grandparents, and there's only so many times you can say 'I'm more interested in studying right now'.

Recently I've been making more of an effort to come out as asexual because I really feel like there needs to be more visibility around it. If people can know one asexual person, then that's one more than they might have known before, which was probably none.

I didn't realise that I was gay until I got with my partner Becca, which

was coming up to 20 years old, so it was about two years later, so yeah, I came out as asexual before I came out as being romantically attracted to women."

DISCUSSING STEREOTYPES AND ACEPHOBIA

"Some asexual people may see themselves as broken, or other people see them as broken. Certainly in the past it was treated as a medical condition not having a massive sex drive, but I think it's just separating the difference between having a sex drive and being sexually attracted to other people.

Asexuals can have sex drives, but it's just not necessarily directed towards anyone. Also people may not know the difference between sexual attraction and sexual desire, they might think that all asexuals are celibate, which is not the case. A lot of asexuals might enjoy the feeling of having sex but just not feel that they want to have it with a particular person."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD HANNAH GIVE TO HER YOUNGER SELF IF SHE GOT THE CHANCE?

"I would tell myself to chill out a little bit [and] that you're not going to feel alone for your whole life. The word will come and the second it does you're going to feel more secure in yourself and you're going to have a partner who's loving and supporting. It will all click into place, it's just a case of giving yourself the time to explore your identity."

Hannah





Name: Nathan

Age: 22

Pronouns: He/him or them

Sexual identity: Pansexual

Gender identity: Not discussed, specified and/or disclosed during interview

“

[Bullies] point out your insecurities because of their own insecurities. If you're not insecure, they can't affect you. I say, 'you do you and I'll get on with being me'.

”

NATHAN'S STORY

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

“I was young when I came out, I was 12 years old and had just kissed my first boy. I came out as bi but then suddenly lost interest in girls because I wanted to experiment with boys a lot more. I side-lined women and ended up thinking I was gay, but maybe I was gay for that period of time. Over the past couple of years I have been feeling more attraction to girls and, as that's developed, I've ended up considering myself pansexual because I like both or anything – I don't know if I like it until I see it!”

DISCUSSING STEREOTYPES AND DISCRIMINATION

“The worst time was when I was younger before I even came out. Bullying was emotionally bad. I would say I didn't care [to the bullies] but as soon as I said I was gay they were confused. I felt freer when I started being more open about it and it drives my personality - people can't get to me for it. It's like my shield and it's great not to care.

When you own it, it takes away other people's power. They point out your insecurities because of their own insecurities. If you're not insecure, they can't affect you. Bullies point out the obvious, the stereotypical. I say, you do you and I'll get on with me.”

DISCUSSING SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

"I had a 45-minute lesson on how things worked. All I remember seeing was two pictures and trying to understand. I don't think [teachers] understand how to teach it. It's such a taboo subject and teachers get awkward, therefore kids get awkward. If we had conversations regularly it wouldn't be awkward, and kids would have safer sex."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD NATHAN GIVE TO HIS YOUNGER SELF IF HE GOT THE CHANCE?

"Not a lot to be fair because I kind of like the path that I've been on that leads to understand where I am now. I think I'd say I wouldn't put a label on it ... as long as I own what I am that's when I feel comfortable to be open about things and because I understand it, I can then explain it to people."

Nathan





Name: Taz

Age: Early 20s

Pronouns: She/her

Sexual identity: Bisexual

Gender identity:

Not discussed, specified and/or disclosed during interview

Occupation:

Director of Volunteering at Just Like Us charity

“

I realised around 13 years old - I am bisexual. [It was] no big revelation. All that happened was that I recognised who I was fancying. Celebrities weren't just men.

”

TAZ'S STORY

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

“I was lucky that my school cared about anti-bullying in all its forms. I was in a friendship group who weren't really knowledgeable [about LGBTQ+] but were very chilled people. I knew I was different from the people around me but not that it mattered. I wasn't looking to find other people at that time, but I know that's not the case for everyone. People need to know they are in an accepting environment.

The label itself doesn't form a central part of my identity but being LGBTQ+ has led me to care about it more because I'm closer to the experience of it.”

DISCUSSING INTERSECTIONALITY AND PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE

“People are terrified of talking about it in the wrong way. Staff members are grateful for us because they fear not being able to talk about it correctly. It can be intimidating but we just talk about experiences.”

Taz explains that students often approach Just Like Us ambassadors to ask whether you can be LGBTQ+ and another identity, [such as] disabled, a person of faith, or a person of colour.

The answer is yes, you can be all those things. We are insistent on making the case for that. We've come across the viewpoint that you can't be those things at the same time. It's like someone is going to stop you."

DISCUSSING SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

"There's such a huge job to do in raising positive visibility of LGBTQ+ in schools [and helping young people] to connect and relate to more people around them. [LGBTQ+ people] live in a world where they are less understood and visible. They do experience higher levels of bullying and rates of mental health. They likely feel more isolated.

In schools with positive messaging, mental health is improved for LGBTQ+ and all people in schools. Our

research shows it. It has knock on effects in other areas of life – a great place for schools to start is to look at policies and procedures for supporting LGBTQ+ students."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD TAZ GIVE TO HER YOUNGER SELF IF SHE GOT THE CHANCE?

"To know that whatever you are is what you are. There's not a question of can – it just is. Everyone has the power within them to build an environment for themselves."

Taz





Name: Tegan

Age: 23

Pronouns: She/her

Sexual identity: Bisexual

Gender identity:
Not discussed, specified and/or
disclosed during interview

Occupation: Teacher

“

“[Around 16 years], going through puberty and understanding who I was, I realised I was probably bisexual. It helps to find people who are similar and explore together, you know – a new world, a new view. It makes you feel confident.”

”

TEGAN'S STORY

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

“It's not something I felt I needed to do. If you're typically straight you don't say, 'Hey mum, just so you know, I like men.' That's not expected, so I don't feel whoever you prefer should be justified or explained [but] I think there's a huge amount of pressure and stigma around that conversation that can keep people from discussing their feelings to a certain extent.

I know [my mum] would be accepting so it's not an issue, but I realise that not everybody has the privilege of having an understanding parent or friends.”

DISCUSSING STEREOTYPES AND HOMOPHOBIA

“I haven't received biphobia, possibly because everyone I've spoken to has been of a younger generation. It's important to speak out so that everyone is more knowledgeable. Asking about pronouns is a great way to make someone feel comfortable and accepted. I'm unsure about how my nan would handle my gender identity but certainly staff at work and friends have been great.”

PROMOTING ACCEPTANCE

"At my school [where I teach], we educate younger year groups on sexuality and gender. Sixth formers recently put together a video to highlight reviews and opinions and make it a more talked about topic. The response has been amazing. It's a powerful thing what young people are doing and good for the sixth formers to be involved in an active change for the whole school.

I carry my rainbow bag and LGBTQ+ flag and students often come up and thank me, saying it makes them feel so much more comfortable."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD TEGAN GIVE TO HER YOUNGER SELF IF SHE GOT THE CHANCE?

"Just to know that as long as I'm OK with myself it doesn't matter what other people think. It's not something that happens overnight but everything does happen for a reason, and you will be OK - people will have your back. I think the most important thing is to learn about yourself first and have all the self-love possible because the only person that will always be there for you is you. Look after yourself and find a safe space in your mind and with the people around you before you project that to the world. Be accepting of who you are."

Tegan





Name: Carolyn

Age: 22

Pronoun: She/her

Sexual identity: Lesbian

Gender identity:

Not discussed, specified and/or disclosed during interview

“

I first realised early in high school maybe year 7 or 8, I didn't have the same feelings as my friends towards boys. I didn't realise straight away but saw more exposure on social media to being lesbian or gay and it developed in that way. I didn't have a label for a few years.

”

CAROLYN'S STORY

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO COME OUT?

"I did feel pressured to come out because I didn't have any interest in boys, and I was at that age of starting to date. I felt pressure to share so that people knew and I didn't have to keep it hidden. At that age it's scary whilst you're in the closet but once you say it, there's no going back.

At first, I decided I was bisexual because I felt that was more normal, but it wasn't spoken about, and I wasn't comfortable talking about it until years later. Since I've been in a relationship, that's the only time I've felt comfortable.

The thing is you don't just come out once. You do it all the time. Every new person you meet there's a likelihood you might need to come out. It's a lifelong journey. The more times you have to do it though, the more you feel comfortable and the more comfortable you feel with yourself."

DISCUSSING STEREOTYPES AND HOMOPHOBIA

"I definitely felt at times when I was younger that I couldn't be a lesbian

because I'm not butch and I wear makeup and girly clothes, and I'm not into sports or anything. I think that's why maybe I first came out as bisexual because that seemed more fitting. It doesn't matter, you can be whoever you want to be. Some people will find comfort in a label, but labels can change, and you can change. How you identify can change."

DISCUSSING SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

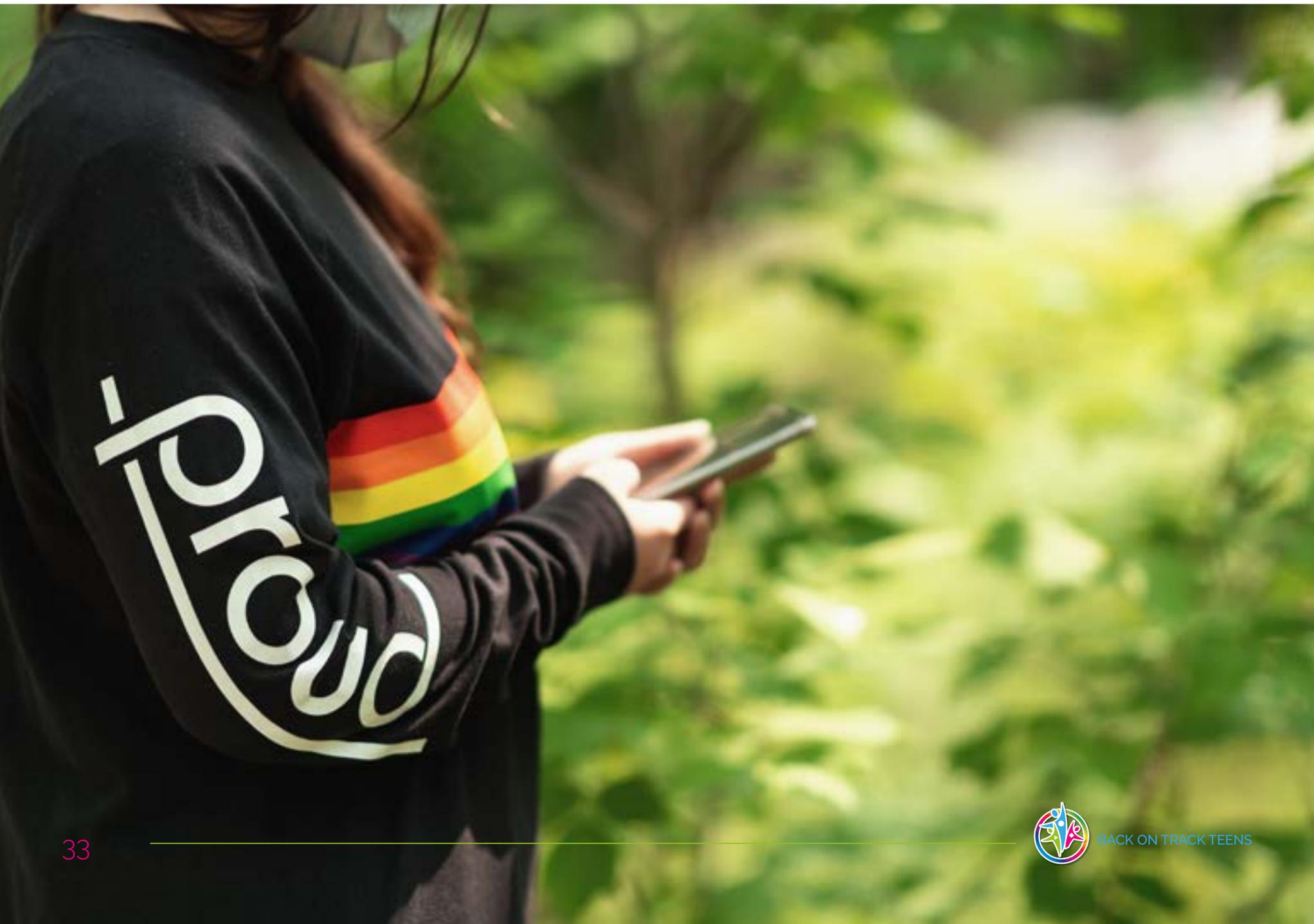
"I attended a Catholic high school so even straight sex education was not talked about. It was a taboo subject, so I think there needs to be increased normality, and that includes straight and LGBTQ+ sex education. Teachers feel awkward teaching it but that then

carries on the narrative [so] yeah I think there needs to be a big change in schools."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD CAROLYN GIVE TO HER YOUNGER SELF IF SHE GOT THE CHANCE?

"To accept myself [and] not try to fit in and believe you have to conform to stereotypes - to take the time to consider who you really are."

Carolyn



S.A.G.ESexuality And Gender
Empowerment**Name:** James**Age:** Early 40s**Pronouns:** He/him**Sexual identity:** Gay**Gender identity:**Not discussed, specified and/or
disclosed during interview**Occupation:**Charity founder [SAGE](#)

“

Most work [at SAGE] has been done over the telephone or through Teams online [but] hopefully, we'll have some face-to-face work now. It's important to create a safe space and we like to know what young people want from the service and have been asked to provide a youth service. A lot of LGBTQ+ activities are club-oriented and we want to move to creating a safe space where alcohol or self-medication are not involved.

”

JAMES' STORY

DISCUSSING STEREOTYPES AND HOMOPHOBIA

“Just because you identify as LGBTQ+ doesn't make you the expert but then it could be seen as **tokenism** and most people don't want to be seen as a token.

I don't tend to speak on behalf of all the LGBTQ+ community. I speak on behalf of my organisation and my experience.

The main issues faced, especially for teenagers, are that puberty can be difficult at the best of times but when you've got an extra couple of layers of your body doing things you really do not want them to, or just making you feel so uncomfortable, there can be issues of self-harm or complete confusion of where your head is at with all that's going on. It's important to support people, especially when they feel subject to bullying.”

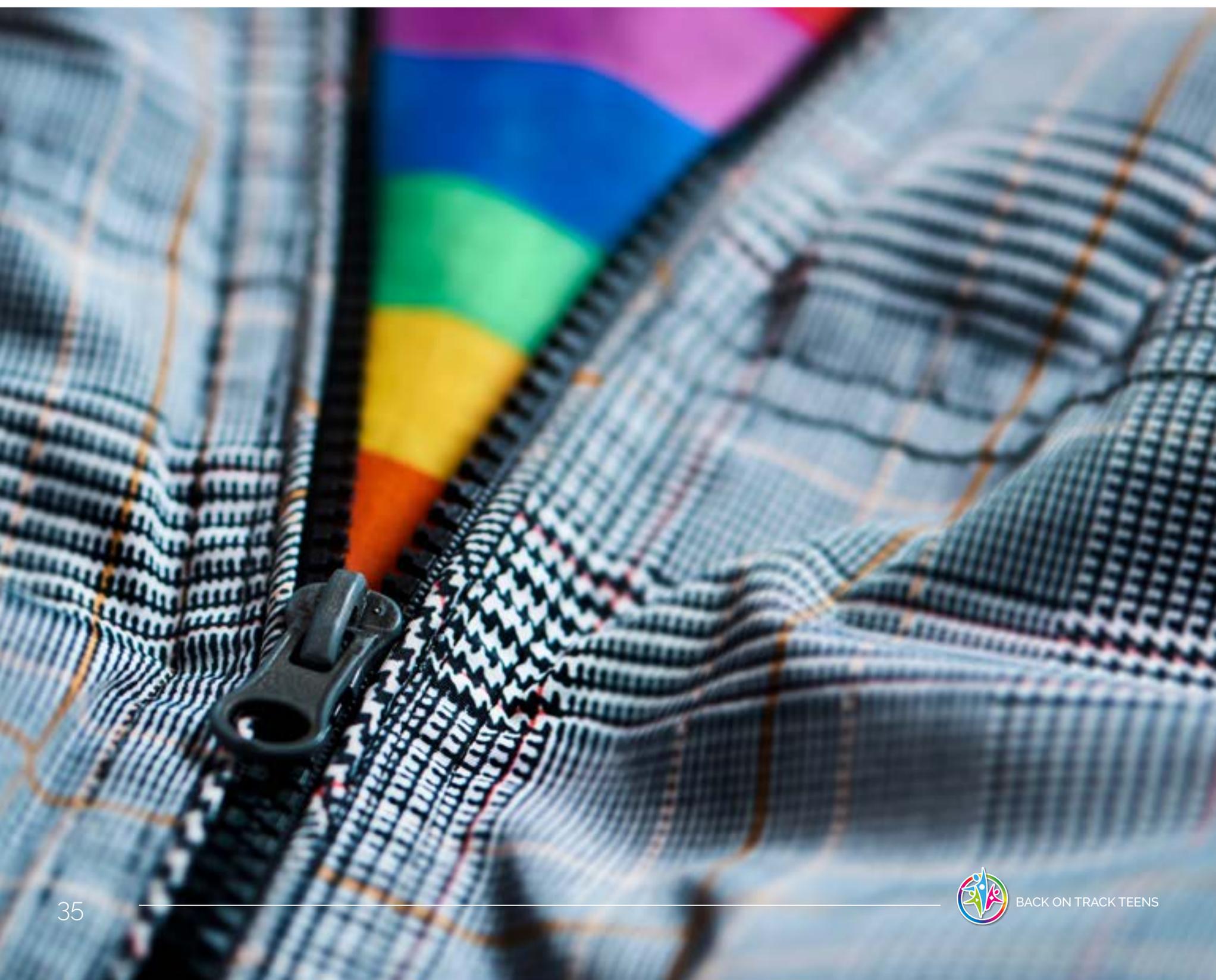
DISCUSSING SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

"Throughout school I felt I was not the same as other kids. Sex ed was comprehensive if you were heterosexual but [not] if you were gay. It will be a big change for schools and interesting to see what they do and don't teach. By 14 you should know how to put a condom on and what the menstrual cycle is. It's compulsory to teach it but there are no set guidelines. I see SAGE as an organisation to work with schools but also remind them of their responsibilities and ask questions to support their students."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD JAMES GIVE TO HIS YOUNGER SELF IF HE GOT THE CHANCE?

"I learn every day and take nothing for granted. Things evolve and there's never a dull moment. I meet some great people and when I see people broken through their circumstances, whether a parent or a young person, and I see them progress and develop and just be happy and comfortable with themselves. If I could bottle it, I really would."

James



Sarah and Keith are both trustees at Fflag, a national voluntary organisation and charity dedicated to supporting parents/caregivers and their children who identify as LGBTQ+. They became involved in the charity to offer support and become allies of LGBTQ+ people after embarking on their own gender and sexual identity journey through supporting their children who both identify as LGBTQ+.

Name: Sarah and Keith
Parents of LGBTQ+ children

SARAH & KEITH'S STORY

SARAH - MUM TO A TRANS PERSON

"It was about five years ago when my child, who was then 19, had gone off to university [in] London. I thought everything was going pretty well, they seemed happy [but when] they came back at Christmas, something was really wrong. I didn't know what it was, and they didn't want to talk about it. I was really worried. [It was] about six weeks before they broke the news to me.

It was obviously really difficult for them, they explained that over a number of years they'd been coming to terms with the realisation that they were trans and having been alone in London, spending so much time on their own, they'd been kind of forced to face up to this. I was hugely shocked and hadn't seen this coming. I mean, they've always been sensitive, quite quiet ... but never for one minute did I contemplate the idea that they might be trans."

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES SARAH FACED?

"I wanted to tell my parents and siblings because I needed the support. [With my parents] I had to do that on the phone because of distance. I was nervous and made a real mess of it. I got upset and cried and because of that, my parents reacted very negatively. They said, it was 'a phase' - [they] didn't accept it at all and said it was [just their grandchild] showing off."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD SARAH OFFER TO PARENTS?

"Lots of things can get better and that's the thing about equality, it's not just about making things better for minority groups, it is about making things better for everybody. Apply that mindset to other things and question your thinking. Nobody else can tell you who you are inside. So, if someone is thoughtful enough, brave enough and articulate enough to say that, then they deserve respect."

KEITH'S STORY – DAD TO A GAY MAN

"I remember saying to my wife on a phone call home one night 'I don't know what it is, but I feel I'm losing him'. It wasn't until the following May when he came out to my wife [when] she posed the question and said, 'so are you gay?' and he said yes.

It didn't come totally out of the blue but nevertheless, when these things happen, it's still a shock to the system. There will be challenges but as parents, we've got to be proud and stand up for our children."

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES KEITH FACED?

"My worry was depression, bullying and aggression. We know [now that] Ross suffered bullying at school but [we] didn't know at the time. I also worried about him going to work. One of Ross's peers committed suicide and I didn't want Ross to go through that, so I reminded him as often as I could that we were there for him."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD KEITH OFFER TO PARENTS?

"It is a life change. Parents automatically pick a future path. [When] you get the news and the future is torn up, you get confused because you don't know what the future will be. Don't worry, it will be fine. You are not the first and will not be the last. We have a three-year-old granddaughter now and we see 'everything' in the future."





ADVICE FOR PARENTS FROM THEIR CHILDREN

How can parents support children who are questioning their identity?

Parents and primary caregivers are the main role models for children and parental beliefs, standards and values have the capacity to strongly impact a child's conditioning. As the child develops, any difference of opinion in those same beliefs, standards and values may create uncertainty and possibly conflict and harm.

WHY A DISCONNECT CAN OCCUR

The language used by different generations, dissimilarities in likes and interests, and opinions will inevitably vary because times change. One truth will always remain; children don't enter this world with fears, phobias and biases - they are learned traits.

Some parents may struggle to accept LGBTQ+ identities, in part because we live in a heteronormative society of **compulsory heterosexuality**. Due to a lack of understanding or personal experience, some parents may find it challenging to start, or even hold,

conversations around LGBTQ+ identities. Not knowing anyone personally who identifies as anything other than heterosexual and cisgender (that they know of!) will also contribute to a lack of awareness.

There is immense social pressure to get married and have children. Even though it is still possible for LGBTQ+ people to have children, their parents may suffer disappointment if they believe they may not have grandchildren. It may also be difficult for them to tell grandparents or older siblings for fear of them not understanding.

Assumptions are made even before babies are born. Parents, families and friends choose décor, clothes and gifts - pink for girls and blue for boys. This binary gender focus is reinforced in many situations during education and activities where classes are divided into girls and boys, and children often don't play sports together. These notions are not limited to gender. They also form part of the larger equality conversation.

MOVING FORWARD

As a parent or caregiver, you don't have to understand everything to respect and support your children and make them feel comfortable. As young people growing up today have aunts and uncles, parents and older siblings who identify as LGBTQ+, these identities will become less socially marginalised.

Going through puberty and making life-changing education and career decisions is tough for a young person, but if you are also questioning your sexuality and gender, you can feel very alienated from the world.

Your child is still your child and that hasn't changed because they are questioning their gender and sexual identity - it is just one part of their whole being/personality. If you think your child has questions, providing a loving, supportive and safe environment for them to discover who they are is the first step.

HOW TO START A CONVERSATION AND WHAT TO DO

- Let your child know you are there for them no matter what
- Create a safe and supportive environment
- Listen without judgement
- Never make assumptions about their sexuality or gender
- Ask questions
- Take the time to improve your knowledge around LGBTQ+
- Learn about support groups and what your child's school can offer
- Talk to your child about their thoughts, feelings and emotions
- Share your thoughts, feelings and emotions – support each other
- Encourage your child to explore and express their identity in their own time
- Accept and love your child for who they are

If parents raise their children with an open mind and create a compassionate, safe place to develop, their children will be far more likely to be comfortable with their identity. It can be scary to come out and it takes courage.


“

My mum asked me a few times growing up whether I was gay - she obviously saw it before I did.

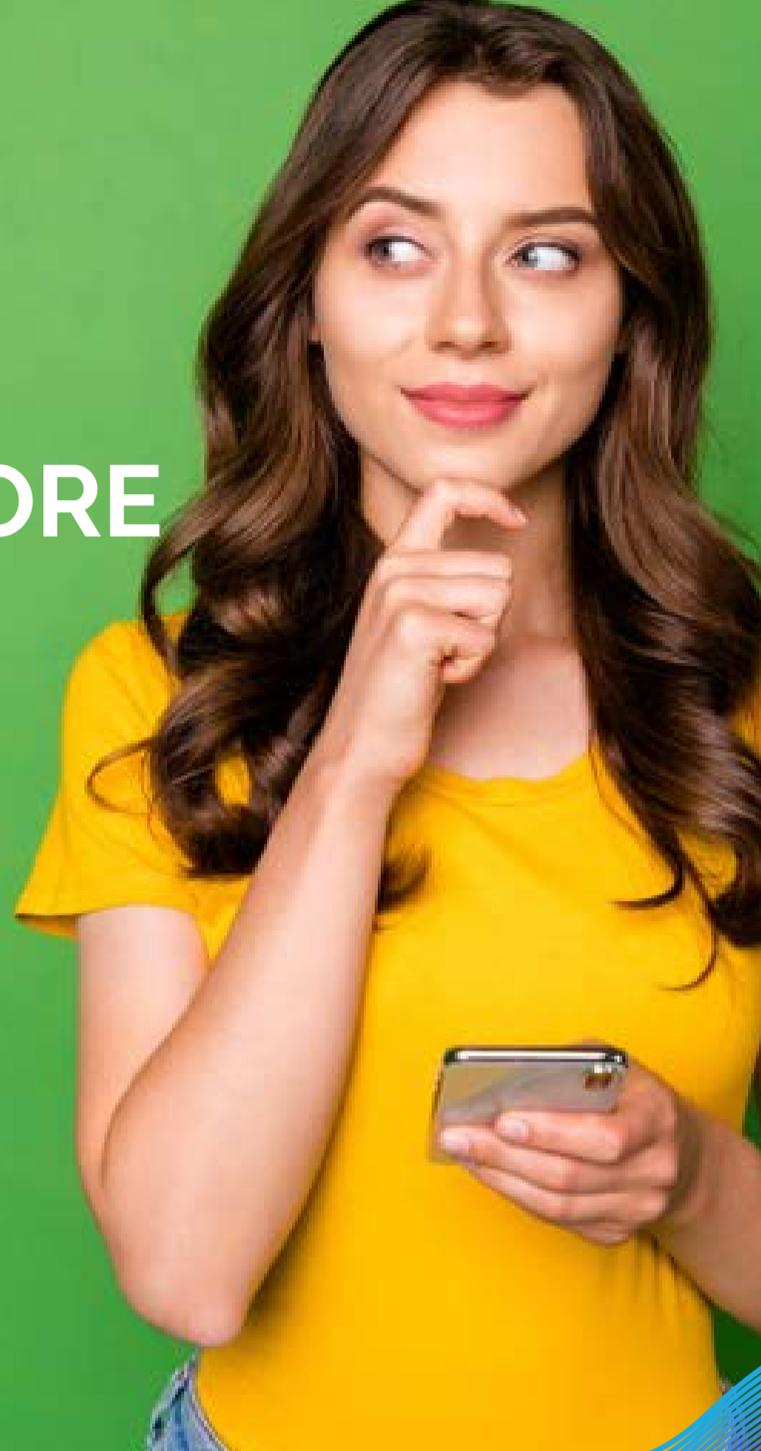
Ryan

RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

Discover more on your journey by learning, talking and sharing

You will find resources in the following pages in the form of organisation and charity website links, social media influencers, TV series, movies and a collection of Back on Track Teens guided meditations, books and activity links.

The resources are compiled from the recommendations of the nine amazing young people interviewed on the podcast and members of the Back on Track Teens team who identify as LGBTQ+. Their journeys have started and they are now sharing the resources they found helpful along the way. The resources are suitable for young people, parents, carers and anyone who wants to learn more.



CHARITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

- [NSPCC](#)
- [MIND](#)
- [Just Like Us](#)
- [Fflag](#)
- [SAGE \(Staffordshire\)](#) "Sexuality And Gender Empowerment"
- [The Asexuality Visibility and Education Network \(AVEN\)](#)
- [Stonewall](#)
- [Proud Trust](#)
- [Transwiki](#) – a Gender Identity Research & Education Society search engine
- [NHS](#) - link to gender dysphoria
- [Mayo Clinic](#) - link to gender dysphoria



SOCIAL MEDIA SITES AND INFLUENCERS

- [Alok Vaid-Menon](#)
- [Asher](#)
- [Blair Imani](#)
- [Ericka Hart](#)
- [GAY TIMES](#)
- [Jameela Jamil](#)
- [Jeffrey Marsh](#)
- [Jess Guilbeaux](#)
- [JoJo Siwa](#)
- [Lavern Cox](#)
- [Madison Werner](#)
- [Matt Bernstein](#)
- [Pink News](#)
- [Ruby Allegra](#)
- [Sapphicsigh](#)
- [Schuyler Bailar](#)
- [Sophie Hagen](#)
- [THEM](#)
- Travis Alabanza
- TSER (Trans Student Educational Resources)
- [Yasmin Benoit](#)
- [Jamie Raines](#)
- [Reddit](#)
- ['I am a Lesbian'](#) Google doc
- [#Thisiswhatanasexuallookslike](#)
- [#Whatsyourname](#) campaign

Searching for keywords on Google and hashtags on social media will present plentiful resources, organisations, charities and people who can help to answer your questions.



TELEVISION SERIES AND MOVIES

- [Starbucks advert](#) [#Whatsyourname](#) campaign
- [Disclosure](#) a Netflix documentary film
- [POSE](#)
- [Orange Is the New Black](#)
- [Glee](#)
- [Banana](#)
- [Cucumber](#)
- [My Generation](#)



EVENTS

- [UK Pride events](#)
- [School Diversity Week](#)



LEARN MORE ABOUT YOURSELF – FIND YOUR SPARK IN LIFE

Finding your spark in life and being comfortable in your skin and identity is far likelier to happen once you're empowered with an understanding your purpose and why you do what you do. Identifying the fuel that makes you feel alive is the key to igniting your spark and ensuring you feel in complete flow.

Everybody has a fuel – find the fuel that lights your spark.

>> [Find your fuel](#)



GUIDED MEDITATION RECORDINGS FOR TEENS

These four guided meditations have been recorded by a professional and created especially for children, teenagers and young people. You will find options with and without music, so try them all and settle on the ones that work best for you. Press play and simply relax and begin to calm some of the chatter in your head.

[Breath meditation](#)

[Guided meditation to release stress and anxiety](#)

[Guided meditation for teens to escape to your safe place](#)

[Guided meditation to help you drift effortlessly off to sleep](#)



Abundance is a flow of energy through you.

Steve Rother



LISTEN TO OUR PRACTICAL PODCAST THE SPARK TO YOUR SUCCESS

The Spark to Your Success podcast for teenagers and the young at heart releases a new episode every week, packed full of hints, tips and easy ways to maximise your life positively and healthily.

>> Subscribe to the [Spark to Your Success](#)



READ MORE INSPIRATION, GUIDANCE AND TRY OUT RESILIENCE-BOOSTING EXERCISES ON OUR BLOG

If reading is more your thing, absorb the Back on Track Teens blog series, which covers a whole host of ideas, exercises, guidance and real-life success stories where young people have overcome dark periods in their life.

>> Read the [Back on Track Teens blog](#) here



DISCOVER MORE IN THE SPARK TO YOUR SUCCESS BOOK SERIES

Feeling pressure as a teenager can be overwhelming because you encounter many obstacles for the first time. Learn powerful techniques to make you feel fabulous and uncover proven ways to overcome challenges. Grab opportunities when they present themselves by understanding what's going on in your head and learning how to find your fuel and flow.

These books are for teenagers who want to enjoy life to its absolute fullest – dive on in!

>> Order '[The Spark to Your Success - Helping Teens Build Resilience](#)' here

>> Order '[The Spark to Your Success – Mindset Magic for Teens](#)' here



MORE RESOURCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Browse the Ignition! online shop to explore some of the games and resources available. Remember, everyone is unique - that's what makes you the real you.

>> [Browse the Ignition! shop online here](#)

WHO IS BEHIND BACK ON TRACK TEENS?

Helping you to start being who you really are

Back on Track Teens places young people at the core of its work. Struggling to come to terms with your gender and sexual identity is a significant part of the challenges that young people face, but it's not the only part. Back on Track Teens offers accessible support in many ways for children, tweens, teens and their parents and caregivers.

Societal, cultural, religious, and familial conditioning and childhood development can all contribute towards young people feeling unworthy, powerless, incapable, invisible and alienated. These types of self-limiting beliefs are more common than you might think. It is super important to be able to recognise the thoughts and ingrained teachings that are not serving you well, in order to question and, if it feels right to you, let them go. No child or young person deserves to experience fear, uncertainty or anxiety because the world they live in is not letting them be totally themselves.

Back on Track Teens runs the Ignition! programme, an international coaching system that supports young people, parents and those who work with young people to build resilience, confidence and kickass against disempowering beliefs.

The Spark to Your Success podcast channel, blog series and books for teenagers provide real life stories, practical tools and online or face-to-face support. It's to help people tackle challenges that affect mental

and physical health so that you can live the life you deserve.

A WORD FROM TEEJAY DOWE – FOUNDER OF BACK ON TRACK TEENS

"This project has been bubbling away at the back of my mind for many months. The subject of gender and sexual identity has such an impact on young people's lives - their thoughts and feelings, and how they develop as incredible, unique individuals. We had the privilege of collaborating with many wonderful people from across the LGBTQ+ community, and with the support of my team, we created a mini-series that spoke on sexual and gender identity by uplifting the voices of those with lived experiences. I hope you enjoy reading, listening, learning and sharing."



TeeJay Dowe (she/her) is the creator of the Ignition! programme, founder of The Spark to Your Success CIC, CEO of Back on Track Teens and Momentum People, the Global Prosperity and Peace Initiative Ambassador for the UK, a STEM Ambassador and author of three best-selling books.

TeeJay's purpose is to empower the lives of 10 million young people to become tomorrow's confident, successful leaders, and empowering them to get there by feeling happy in their own skin.

>> Are you a parent or caregiver of a young person who's struggling with their identity? [Book a session with TeeJay Dowe](#)

>> Work at a school or organisation and want to know more?
[Book an awareness training session](#)

CHOOSE THE LIFE YOU WANT TO LEAD

Please do feel free to share your thoughts and ask questions within our social media community. Let's help each other and build resilience to become the very best version of your authentic self.

- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)

Remember, you are who you are and you're magnificent just the way you are.

- [Subscribe to the podcast here.](#)
- Access insightful stories, helpful exercises and more resources [on our blog](#) here.
- [Refer to the LGBTQ+ glossary here.](#)
- [Share this ebook online](#)





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YOU DONT HAVE TO BE A SQUARE PEG IN A ROUND HOLE

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LGBTQ+ LANGUAGE GLOSSARY

Sharing insight and knowledge
around gender and sexual identity



Welcome

Back on Track Teens have created this LGBTQ+ glossary as a helpful resource for anyone who wants to learn more about and understand the language associated with LGBTQ+ identities.

This glossary is by no means an exhaustive list of terminology. Further resources are referenced at the bottom of the document for you to explore. Some terms within this glossary are not specifically LGBTQ+ related but add to the context of the conversations included in the wider Back on Track Teen mini-series.

The glossary

ASEXUAL

A person who experiences little to no sexual attraction and/or interest in sexual activity. Some asexual people experience romantic attraction, while others do not. Asexual people who experience romantic attraction might also identify as gay, bi, lesbian, straight and queer etc and use these terms in conjunction with asexual to describe the direction of their romantic attraction.

ALLY

A typically straight and/or cisgender person who supports the LGBTQ+ community. For example, an ally might choose to speak up if they heard someone using a homophobic slur (if it's safe for them to do so).

BINARY

The technical definition of binary relates to something having two parts. In decision making, a choice in which there are only two alternatives is binary. In terms of LGBTQ+ identities, binary is often referred to in relation to the gender binary, which describes the classification of gender into two distinct, opposite forms of masculine and feminine, which is dictated by social system and/or cultural belief. Binaries can often be enforced through legislation, law, and societal pressure.

BISEXUAL/BI

Bi is an umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender (that's where the "bi", meaning "two" comes in!). Bisexuality is a rich spectrum and people who are bi may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bisexual, pan, queer, and some other non-monosexual and non-monoaromatic identities.

BIPHOBIA

The dislike of and discrimination against bisexual identities and any individual who identifies as bi. This includes systematic discrimination and biphobic abuse (physical, psychological or otherwise) targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi.

CAMP

An adjective that is most often used to describe a man or male-presenting person who is perceived as being or acting effeminate or like a stereotypical caricature of a gay man. While it's a term that is most often used as a light-hearted descriptor, keep in mind that this term could be perceived as or levelled at someone as a homophobic slur.

CISGENDER/CIS OR CISMALE/CISFEMALE

Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

COMING OUT/COME OUT

When a person first tells someone/others about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

DEADNAME/DEADNAMING

A deadname is often used to describe the name that a trans person received at birth, sometimes called their birth name. Deadnaming is the act of calling someone by their deadname (or birth name) after they have changed their name as part of their transition and/or in order to affirm their identity.

FEMINISM

Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of all the sexes.

FEMME

A term used in the context of LGBTQ+ culture to describe someone who expresses themselves in a typically feminine way. 'Femme' is also used by people to define their gender identity; for example, someone who is a non-binary femme does not identify as a woman, but their gender experience may overlap or intersect with femininity. It's important to remember that you shouldn't assume that someone is comfortable being referred to using this term unless they tell you otherwise!

GAY

Traditionally, the term refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards other men. However, it's also a word used by women and non-binary people who are attracted to women to describe themselves. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

GENDER

Often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is a social construct largely determined by culture. Gender is most often assumed based on the perceived biological sex that's assigned at birth. For example, if a baby is born with primary sexual characteristics that look like a vulva, they are determined to be biologically female and their gender is assigned; they are described as a girl and referred to with the pronouns "she/her".

GENDER BLIND

The experience of not discriminating or distinguishing between different genders.

GENDER DYSPHORIA

A term that describes when a person experiences discomfort, distress, or severe psychological harm because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.

GENDER FLUID

Describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two binary genders of male and female. They might also (or instead) experience themselves as having more one gender some days. It's all totally down to the individual's perspective and experience.

GENDER IDENTITY

A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or a gender outside of that binary. This sense may or may not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth.

GENDER AFFIRMATION THERAPY

Gender affirmation therapy refers to procedures that a trans person can choose to engage in order to support their transition. Some gender affirmation therapy involves medical intervention such as top or bottom surgery, or by taking hormones. Not every trans person feels the need to pursue this kind of gender affirmation therapy, and this decision does not make their gender identity any less valid.

The term also covers the more holistic elements of transitioning, such as the process of changing names and pronouns, and presenting (often through dress) in such a way that they feel affirmed in their gender.

HETEROROMANTIC (OR HETEROMANTIC)

Refers to a person who experiences romantic attraction towards a person of the opposite sex or gender, but does not experience sexual attraction. "Opposite" in this context means either male or female, which are the two genders that exist within the gender binary. See 'asexual' for more info.

HETEROSEXUAL

Refers to a person who experiences sexual attraction towards a person of the opposite sex or gender. "Opposite" in this context means either male or female, which are the two genders that exist within the gender binary. In general, this term describes someone who experiences both romantic and sexual attraction to someone of the opposite sex, but technically it specifically relates to sexual attraction. See 'heteroromantic' for more info.

HETERONORMATIVITY/ HETERONORMATIVE SOCIETY

The assumption that everyone is heterosexual unless they specify otherwise. Heteronormativity contributes to the harmful perception that being heterosexual is "normal" or "neutral", and any other sexual identity is a deviation from that. In some cases it can involve the incorrect view that heterosexuality or being heterosexual is superior or somehow preferable to any other sexuality.

We currently live in a heteronormative society, in which it is assumed that someone is heterosexual unless they state otherwise. Here's a scenario to illustrate: a lesbian woman has not yet disclosed her sexual orientation to her healthcare provider, but they are aware that she is married. When she is preparing to come in for surgery, the provider might ask "would you like your husband to accompany you to the ward?" In this instance, they have seen that a woman is married, and assumed that it is to a man.

This systematic prejudice is not necessarily as actively harmful as, say, a homophobic verbal assault, but it still has a very real, widespread and complex impact on people who identify as LGBTQ+.

HOMOSEXUAL

Refers to a person who experiences sexual attraction towards a person of the same sex or gender. Keep in mind that this is often used in a scientific or medical context, and some people who are homosexual strongly prefer to be referred to as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'queer' or a similar, accurate term. This is because of the history around the word 'homosexual', in that it was often used as a term to other or single out LGBTQ+ people. As always, if you're unsure it's best to either check with someone how they prefer to be referred as or simply not assume or ask if it's not appropriate.

In general, this term describes someone who experiences both romantic and sexual attraction to someone of the same sex, but technically it specifically relates to sexual attraction. See 'homoromantic' for more info.

HOMOPHOBIA

The hatred/dislike of and discrimination against homosexual identities and any individual who experiences attraction to people of the same sex as them and/or identifies as homosexual (see 'homosexual' for more info). It's worth noting that while the word 'homophobia' is used to describe this type of prejudice, people who are subject to this prejudice are more likely to refer to themselves as gay, lesbian, queer, or otherwise (rather than 'homosexual').

This word tends to be used to describe the systematic discrimination and homophobic abuse (physical, psychological or otherwise) levelled at people who are, or who are perceived to experience sexual and/or romantic attraction to people of the same sex as them. This could range from a gay couple being subject to homophobic verbal abuse while walking in public, to

the systematic implications of a heterosexual couple being able to marry but a homosexual couple not being able to until legislation changed in 2013.

However, it is sometimes used as a blanket term to describe discrimination, prejudice or harm toward any member of the LGBTQ+ community. For example, a young person might experience homophobic verbal abuse (based on the assumption that they are gay), while they are, in fact, pansexual.

INTERSECTIONALITY

The idea/acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of existing in relation to their identity. In terms of discrimination and oppression, intersectionality encourages you to consider everything and anything that can marginalise people that relates to their identity, including gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, etc.

Let's use this example to illustrate: two British women who identify as queer have some experiences in common, including feeling overjoyed in their queerness and experiencing prejudice because of their sexual identity. However, if one of those women happens to be Black and the other is white, then those two different identities affect their experience differently. The Black woman may experience prejudice because of her sexual identity and be subject to racist discrimination because she is Black, whereas the white woman will not experience negative effects because of her race. Taking this further, a Black, queer woman experiences life differently to, say, a Black, heterosexual woman or a Black, queer man.

While intersectionality is rooted in the appreciation for the individual experience, it's best used as a lens to examine who in our society has more privilege and power than others so we can begin to question and tear down those unfair systems.

INTERSEX

Intersex is an umbrella identity that describes a person who is born with primary, secondary or other sexual characteristics which don't fit into the medical binary of "female" or "male." Being intersex is as natural and normal as someone whose sex is assigned male or female at birth. Many intersex people choose to share

their identity, while others choose not to - it's all down to personal choice. Think of it this way, if you have a penis and were assigned male at birth, you're unlikely to think about telling your friends, family and partners that you do, in fact, have a penis and are biologically male!

Much like gender, biological sex is a spectrum and many people are born with bodies that overlap both the "male" and "female" sex profiles. Being intersex isn't necessarily something that can be deduced by the appearance of primary sexual characteristics (external indicators of sex, such as genitals). Some people who are intersex are born with vulva or a penis, but they may have secondary or other sex characteristics which correspond with the "opposite" sex they are assigned at birth. For example, a person may have a vulva and experience the same levels of testosterone in their body as someone assigned male. According to the strict binary of medical classifications, that person is "both female and male", but in this case they may actually be intersex. This is why some people are intersex without even being aware of it themselves.

Some intersex people are born with genitalia that does not fit into the binary model of what male or female genitals are supposed to look like. Sometimes, doctors do surgeries on intersex babies and children to make their bodies fit binary ideas of "male" or "female" - in the case of young people who are still dependants, this is a violation of bodily consent because they aren't being allowed to make a decision about their body.

LESBIAN

Refers to a woman or non-binary person who experiences romantic and/or sexual attraction towards women.

LGBTQ+

An acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and queer (although some people prefer to interpret the 'q' to mean 'questioning'). The '+' represents the many identities that are not included in the main body of the acronym, such as asexual, intersex, aromatic etc.

The acronym is often used as an umbrella term to describe any and all gender and sexual identities that exist outside of "traditional" binaries; namely heterosexuality and cisgender identities. You may have seen the acronym spelled as LGBT or LGBTQIA+ and it's typically understood to have the same sentiment. As a phrase, it's particular use is down to personal preference and much like any example of language, it's always evolving.

It's useful to know that some people use the term "the LGBTQ+ community" (we do, in fact, in this mini-series!). In this context, 'community' is being used as a collective term rather than in the sense that everyone within that group knows of or is aware of each other!

MISGENDER

To refer to someone, especially a transgender person, using a word that does not correctly reflect their gender identity. For example, referring to a trans man as "she". This could be done on purpose or by accident, but misgendering someone (particularly a trans person) can be very harmful and contribute to feelings of gender dysphoria.

NON-BINARY

Sometimes referred to as 'genderqueer', non-binary is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity exists outside of the gender binary of male (man/boy) and female (woman/girl) genders. Some non-binary

people use they/them pronouns whereas others may not. Some may use she/they or he/they. It's important to note that pronouns are not always indicative of gender identity and someone who uses she/her or he/him pronouns may still identify as non-binary.

Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who feel absolutely no affiliation with any gender or gender as a concept. Some may feel that because their gender not restricted to a binary, it is infinite and somewhat indefinable. A non-binary person might also identify with some aspects of the binary male and female genders; that doesn't make them any less non-binary!

ORIENTATION

Orientation is an umbrella term describing a person's attraction to other people. This attraction may be sexual (sexual orientation/attraction) and/or romantic (romantic orientation/attraction). These terms refer to a person's sense of identity based on their attractions, or lack thereof. Orientations include, but are not limited to, lesbian, gay, bi, ace and straight.

PANSEXUAL (PAN)

Refers to a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not affected by or occurs as a consequence of sex or gender. When considering who they find attractive, a pansexual person does not or is unable to consider the person's sex or gender.

PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

A patriarchal society is a social, political and economic system that seeks to maintain a power imbalance where (almost exclusively cisgender) men are in positions of power. This could manifest as men being predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of assets, such as property. However, a patriarchal society also refers to male domination in public and private spaces, such as the domestic sphere.

It's important to note that the patriarchy is not placing the blame for this imbalanced society at the feet of every individual man. The patriarchy refers to the system as a whole that prioritises, protects, and uplifts men above any other gender identity; a system that harms almost all men as well.

PORN/PORNOGRAPHY

Printed or video/visual media containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity. Porn is defined by and created with the intention to stimulate sexual excitement, however, it's important to note that the term is also used to describe material that is produced without the knowledge and/or consent of the people(s) involved. For example, "revenge porn" is used to describe sexually explicit photos or videos of a person shared publicly, usually by an ex-partner, without the consent of the person photographed.

PUBERTY

The period during which adolescents begin to reach sexual maturity. Some young people may become capable of reproduction during this time, but not all.

PRONOUN

Words used to refer to people in the second person in conversation by way of their gender identity - for example he/him or she/her. Some people may use other pronouns such as they/them and ze/zir. Some people may use more than one set of pronouns, such as she/they.

Pronoun	Alternatives
He/Him	His/Himself
She/Her	Hers/Herself
They/Them	Theirs/Themselves
Ze (or Zie)/Zir	Xe
Using their name	

QUEER

Queer is an umbrella term used by some people to describe their gender and/or sexual identity. Much like LGBTQ+, it's a word that communicates to others that: a) the person could identify as any sexuality aside from heterosexual, b) the person's gender identity lies outside of the male-female gender binary, or c) an intersection of multiple identities. Some people might like to use the word 'queer' to describe themselves because it rejects the reliance on specific labels that define what exactly their sexual or gender identity is. For example, a non-binary lesbian might tell someone that they are 'queer' because they are not comfortable sharing specifics about their identity.

It's very important to note that the word queer is a reclaimed term, and it was once used exclusively as a slur. The word historically means "odd or strange". Just because it has been reclaimed does not mean that it is no longer used as a slur to harm and control people who identify as LGBTQ+. Because of this, some people prefer not to use it while others embrace it.

ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Attraction based on romantic desire, contact or interaction with another person or persons. This does not include nor consider sexual attraction, as wanting to be romantically involved with someone doesn't necessarily mean there's sexual attraction or any desire for sexual activity.

SEX

A biological assignation, given to a person based on primary sex characteristics (such as external genitalia) and reproductive functions. For example, a baby who is born with what appears to be a vulva is assigned female because medically, we associate the presence of a vulva as that person being biologically female.

It's important to note, though, that primary sex characteristics are not a definitive method of deducing biological sex. Intersex people, for example, often have a mix of female and male primary and secondary sex characteristics. It's impossible to know exactly what someone's biological sex is without in-depth medical and scientific testing, and even everyone is born with a unique blend of sex characteristics. Therefore biological sex is more of a spectrum than a binary (male-female).

Sometimes the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are used interchangeably, however they are completely separate distinctions.

SEXUAL IDENTITY

An individual's innate, personal understand of sense of who they are sexually and/or romantically attracted to in relation to the other person(s) gender.

SEXUAL ATTRACTION

Attraction based on sexual desire or interest in sexual activity with and/or in relation to other people.

SEXUALISING/SEXUALISATION

The process or action of making something sexual in character or quality or to attribute sex or a sex role to.

SPLIT ATTRACTION MODEL

A term to describe how romantic and sexual attraction are two distinct orientations (or modes of experiencing attraction), and explaining how they are different from each other. See 'sexual attraction', 'romantic attraction', and 'asexuality' for more information.

STDs (SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE)

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), also known as sexually transmitted infections are bacterial, viral and trichomoniasis (parasitic) disorders or illnesses that are passed on through sexual activity.

TESTOSTERONE

A steroid hormone that stimulates development of male secondary sexual characteristics. The hormone is produced mainly in the testes, ovaries, and adrenal cortex.

THREESOME

A group of three people engaging in sexual activity.

TOKENISM

The practice of making an automatic or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from minority groups to give the appearance of equality within an environment. For example, if a business decides to hire an openly gay man to fulfill a "diversity quota".

TRANSFEMININE (ABBREVIATED TO TRANSFEM)

An umbrella term used to describe transgender people who, generally, are assigned male at birth and identify with a feminine gender identity, often to a greater extent than with a masculine gender identity.

Usually transfeminine people will choose to appear or express themselves as stereotypically feminine. This could be because it feels right to them or because they want to signal their dominant feminine identity to others in society.

As it's an umbrella term, transfem is used by a wide variety of individuals who do not identify as cisgender, from transgender women to non-binary or genderfluid people.

It's worth noting that transfem not the same as the word 'femme'. Femme is a feminine gender role which is sometimes used as a gender identity. It describes anyone in the LGBTQ+ community who is or feels feminine in nature.

Like any label, don't assume that a person identifies or uses this term to describe themselves unless they tell you otherwise.

TRANSGENDER/TRANS

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as or is beyond the binary of the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender, nongender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine, neutrois, and many more.

TRANSGENDER MAN (TRANS MAN)

A term used to describe someone who identifies as and is a man and was assigned female in terms of sex and gender at birth. This may be shortened to trans man. Some men who are trans identify as trans men, but not all. Others may simply identify as a man (who happens to have transitioned). Sometimes, trans men are referred to as, or FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male, however this is not the preferred way to refer to a person who is trans as it still centres and "points out" the fact that they assigned a sex (and therefore, gender) at birth that is not who they are.

TRANSGENDER WOMAN (TRANS WOMAN)

A term used to describe someone who identifies as and is a woman and was assigned male in terms of sex and gender at birth. This may be shortened to trans woman or trans femme. Some women who are trans identify as trans women, but not all. Others may simply identify as a woman (who happens to have transitioned). Sometimes, trans women are referred to as MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female, however this is not the preferred way to refer to a person who is trans as it still centres and "points out" the fact that they assigned a sex (and therefore, gender) at birth that is not who they are.

TRANSMASCULINE (ABBREVIATED TO TRANSMASC)

An umbrella term used to describe transgender people who, generally, are assigned female at birth and identify with a masculine gender identity, often to a greater extent than with a feminine gender identity.

Usually transmasculine people will choose to appear or express themselves as stereotypically masculine. This could be because it feels right to them or because they want to signal their dominant masculine identity to others in society.

As it's an umbrella term, transmasc is used by a wide variety of individuals who do not identify as cisgender, from transgender men to non-binary or genderfluid people.

It's worth noting that transmasc is not the same as the word 'masc'. Masc is a masculine gender role which is sometimes used as a gender identity. It describes anyone in the LGBTQ+ community who is or feels masculine in nature.

Like any label, don't assume that a person identifies or uses this term to describe themselves unless they tell you otherwise.

TRANSPHOBIA

The hatred/dislike of and discrimination against trans identities and any individual who identifies as trans. This word tends to be used to describe the systematic discrimination and transphobic abuse (physical, psychological or otherwise) levelled at people who are, or who are perceived to be trans. This could range from a trans man being subject to transphobic verbal abuse while walking in public, to the systematic erasure of trans human rights through transphobic legislation.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

A bias that is rooted in social stereotypes about certain groups of people. Unconscious bias is far more common than conscious prejudice and often goes against what the person conscious believes or feels.

While it's formed without the explicit knowledge of the individual with the unconscious bias, it can still cause a lot of harm. An example of unconscious bias might look like a cisgender person who does not engage in transphobic behaviours, but who feels uncomfortable if they run into a trans person in a gender-specific public toilet. The cisgender person in this scenario doesn't actively mean to be transphobic, they are behaving or responding to their unconscious bias. However, the trans person may pick up on the cisgender person's discomfort (e.g. staring, doing a 'double-take', or hurrying away) and experience harm from the encounter.

The unconscious bias we may harbour could refer to bias against a certain group, characteristic or identity, or for another group. In the case of 'for', it's most likely to be a bias for an identity that is familiar and/or reflects our own. For example, a straight, cisgender man believing the word of another straight, cisgender man over a gay cisgender man because the first man is more like him.

Unconscious bias is not the individual's fault, but it is their responsibility to question, challenge and break down those biases.

FURTHER RESOURCES

This glossary has been created by combining dictionary definitions, Wikipedia extracts, the paid labour of a person who identifies as LGBTQ+ and some of the following resources. For more terms not expressed in this glossary, please refer to the following resources and carry out your own research.

- The [Stonewall glossary](#)
- The [National LGBT Health Education Center Glossary PDF](#)
- [Sexual Health D&G](#)
- [Gender Identity Research and Education Society](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign](#)



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Please feel free to share this glossary with friends, family members and colleagues who you think may benefit from or be interested in its content.

We also welcome you to subscribe to the Spark to Your Success podcast and explore the Back on Track Teens blog (and if you'd like to, perhaps share something you find there with your chosen communities).

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**This glossary was produced in 2021. As with any language, some terms may become outdated and/or cause offence or harm in the future. Back on Track Teens is an organisation dedicated to uplifting and learning from people in the LGBTQ+ community, so if you notice any terms that need adding or definitions that need changing, we invite you to let us know if you'd like to. Let's learn and be better together!*