

Not so straight?



# You're Not Alone

Info for lesbian, gay, bi, trans\*, intersex, queer and questioning young people.



## You're Not Alone

**Produced by the WA AIDS Council's Freedom Centre**

Adapted from the Original *You're Not Alone* booklet produced by the WA AIDS Council's *Here For Life Youth Sexuality Project* Team in 1997. This version updated and rewritten in 2012 by Dani Wright and Freedom Centre staff, volunteers and visitors. Designed by Nadine Toussaint.

### Thanks to

all the young people at Freedom Centre for providing feedback, quotes and artwork.

©WA AIDS Council's Freedom Centre, 2012. Not to be reprinted or reproduced without permission. Contact [info@freedom.org.au](mailto:info@freedom.org.au).

## What's in this booklet?

<b>Getting started</b>	<b>1-2</b>
<b>Got questions?</b>	<b>3-6</b>
<b>Myths &amp; Facts</b>	<b>7-8</b>
<b>Sexual Diversity</b>	<b>9-12</b>
<b>Diverse Sex &amp; Gender</b>	<b>13-14</b>
<b>Being a Trans* Ally</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Famous LGBTIQ Peeps!</b>	<b>17-18</b>
<b>Coming Out</b>	<b>19-22</b>
<b>Healthy Relationships</b>	<b>23-24</b>
<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>25-26</b>
<b>Looking after yourself &amp; staying safe</b>	<b>27-28</b>
<b>Your Rights &amp; the Law</b>	<b>29-30</b>
<b>Culture &amp; Religion</b>	<b>31-32</b>
<b>Useful Terms</b>	<b>33-34</b>
<b>Services and more info</b>	<b>35-36</b>
<b>What is the Freedom Centre?</b>	<b>Back</b>

## Getting started...

It can be tough growing up in a world that seems to revolve around being attracted to the opposite sex, or a world that assumes that your physical sex represents your entire gender identity.

No wonder when people start to question their sexuality and/or gender identity, life can get rather confusing and complicated.



**Who do you turn to? What information do you need?  
Where can you go? Are these feelings OK?**

Everyone who helped make this book has had these feelings and experiences and we know it can be a lot to get your head around. We hope this book helps you out and gives you some useful info and support to get you started.

## Useful terms and definitions

Reading through this booklet you might come across words or terms you've never heard before. Check out the Useful Terms in this book or go to the glossary at [www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au).

## 3 Things to remember...

**When reading through this book, there are three things to keep in mind:**

- ★ It's OK to be attracted to someone of the same sex, or to feel like your gender isn't what we're told to expect.
- ★ Sexuality, sex and gender aren't just black and white. These are the natural facts of human diversity.
- ★ **You're not alone – support is out there.** Thousands of others have been through this and many more are questioning their sexuality or gender right now!

It takes time to know who you are. It's OK to question your sexuality or gender, it's OK to be unsure and it's OK to take your time. You have taken a big step just by opening this book.

**Feel proud of yourself  
and trust your feelings.**

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

## Am I the only one with these feelings?

There are thousands of people who feel attracted to others of the same sex. There are also many who have a gender identity that differs from their physical sex. We live across the nation and worldwide, and are a part of every culture's history. You are not the only one!

## Why do I feel attracted to people of my own sex?

This is a really common question. It's interesting that people don't ask "Why am I attracted to people of the opposite sex?" The answer is the same to both of these questions. Whether it's genetics, the environment we're raised in, or a combination of many things, it doesn't really matter! What matters is that we all have the ability to feel comfortable and safe being ourselves, and we trust and respect our feelings.

## Is it natural to be gay, lesbian, trans or bisexual?



Yes! The Australian Psychological Society states that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is as natural as being heterosexual. They also say that it is not possible to force someone to change their sexuality through any psychological or medical means.

Gender diversity is natural too!! We live in a world that often fears and questions difference. This is the reason for racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. But difference and diversity is part of being alive – even animals are sexually, sex and gender diverse!

*Being young and different can be hard, but everyone is different in some way. Your sexuality and your gender are just awesome parts of who you are!*

## I think I might be gay, lesbian, or bisexual but what if I don't know for sure?

You'll know when you know. It could take a while, and there's no need to rush.

Some gay, lesbian or bi people say that from the time they were very young they "felt different". They had crushes on same sex friends - and no one seemed to be talking about it. Often it took a while to put a name to their feelings - to begin to think of themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. But when they started thinking in those words, it made sense - it fitted in with the feelings they had growing up.

Many people don't begin to discover their sexual attraction until much later into adulthood and it can be just as confusing then. At some point, almost everybody gets a "crush" on someone of

the same sex like a great teacher or a friend's older sibling. Your closest relationship may be your best friend of the same sex. But none of that necessarily means you're gay, lesbian or bisexual.

One or two sexual experiences with someone of the same sex, may not mean you're gay, lesbian or bisexual either - just as one or two sexual experiences with someone of the opposite sex may not mean you're exclusively heterosexual. You do not need to be sexually active with other people to recognise or understand your sexuality.

Your feelings and your emotional and physical attractions will help tell you who you are. Your sexuality often becomes clearer over time. Don't worry if you aren't sure. Being young is a time of figuring out what works for you and strong feelings and exploration are often part of that. In time, you'll find that you're drawn mostly to men or to women or to all people, and you'll know then. You don't have to label yourself today or ever.

*Be very honest with yourself. Who do you love? Who could you love? I did a lot of reading before I realised it about myself.*

- Adam, 21

*I guess it is hard to know. You've just got to go with your gut feeling, it's generally right.*

- Sam, 17

**I'm questioning my gender but the 'opposite sex' doesn't fit either - is that all there is?**

It's not – sex and gender are not black and white. There are many people whose gender and sex don't fit neatly into the two boxes of "male" and "female."

Physically, about 1 or 2 in 100 people are intersex – with sex characteristics that aren't simply male or female. There are people whose gender identity and sense of their sex don't sit neatly into one of two boxes either.

**I think I might be Trans\* or the opposite sex to the one I was assigned at birth; but what if I don't know for sure?**

It's OK to take time figuring out who you are. Being trans\* (transsexual and/or transgender) or not identifying as the sex you were assigned is most importantly about how you feel comfortable identifying and being. It's not about what someone else thinks you are or what you have been told to be.

Many people don't feel they fit the gender role and stereotypes for their gender, but some people also feel the sex of their body doesn't fit right for them and that they would feel right as the opposite sex. The medical term for this is 'Gender Dysphoria', which has its pros and cons.



*Some labels people use to describe their gender and sex are; transgender, transsexual, gender-queer, bigender, androgyne, pangender, neuter, intersex and many more!*

**If I don't fit the stereotypes, am I still LGBTIQ?**

LGBTIQ people are young and old, Asian, Aboriginal, European, African and from every other nationality, religion and culture. They may be deaf, or use a wheelchair. They are construction workers, teachers, doctors, vets, students, secretaries, business people, police officers, politicians and athletes.

Stereotypes exist because of ignorance and a lack of diversity in mainstream representations of LGBTIQ people. In reality, same-sex attracted and transgender people are as diverse and varied as our heterosexual and cisgender (not transgender) peers.

Some people fit stereotypes, some don't. Trust your feelings and be yourself.

Many of the stereotypes and misunderstandings are because people often mix up sexuality and gender. We sometimes hear that gay men want to be women and lesbians want to be men or that you can tell someone's gay because of how they dress and act. This is confusing sexuality with issues about gender and expression.

Transgender and transsexual people may not identify with the sex or gender they were born with. This has to do with the feeling of not being born into the right physical body or feeling uncomfortable with how people treat you because of your gender.

People whose sense of their gender isn't simply 'guy' or 'girl' sometimes identify as genderqueer, pangender, or genderfluid. Questioning your gender is a very real issue, but does not necessarily have anything to do with sexuality or sexual orientation (see page 13 for more information on sex and gender diversity).

*I don't seem to fit into any stereotypes, but that is okay. If people don't approve of me not fitting in, it is their problem, and if people think I'm not gay because I don't fit a stereotype, well I guess I'll have to start a new stereotype all for myself!*

- Leah, 18

# Myths & Facts

**Myth:** Gay men and lesbians don't have long term relationships.

**Fact:** Same-sex, long term relationships are not rare at all but are often not as visible to the community. Check out couples stories at *The Commitment Project* [www.thecommitmentproject.net](http://www.thecommitmentproject.net)

**Myth:** Bisexuals just can't make up their mind.

**Fact:** The point is they have! Sexuality ranges from exclusively gay and exclusively heterosexual, and many people are somewhere in between. Everyone has a right to choose their identity!

**Myth:** Lesbians don't get Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs).

**Fact:** Lesbians are diverse, practice a wide range of sexual activities and can get STIs. Some STIs can be transmitted by skin-to-skin contact.

**Myth:** All gay men have anal sex.

**Fact:** Gay men are diverse, and have preferences for their sexual practises just like anyone else. Some practise anal sex, some do not.

**Myth:** All gay men get HIV/AIDS.

**Fact:** HIV is not a gay men's disease. No virus is smart enough to be able to tell what a person's sexuality is. It is the safety of the activities that a person practises that may put them at risk of HIV infection.

**Fact:** Homosexuality is present in over 300 species, but homophobia is only present in ONE!

**Myth:** LGBTIQ people don't have kids.

**Fact:** Many LGBTIQ people are parents. They may choose to have children by adoption, fostering, co-parenting or artificial insemination. They may also have had children in a heterosexual relationship earlier in life. There are many options for becoming a parent.

**Myth:** Trans\* people who don't have surgery aren't really trans\*.

**Fact:** There are lots of trans\* people who don't get surgery. This can be for a number of reasons including not wanting to or being medically unable to have surgical interventions, not being able to afford surgery, or surgery not being available where they live. It doesn't mean they're not trans\*, just that they haven't had surgery.

**Myth:** Transsexuals are just gay people who want to be "normal" straight people.

**Fact:** Some people are gay and trans\*! Sexuality (who we are attracted to and have relationships with) is different from sex and gender (our bodies, gender expression and sense of ourselves.)

**Myth:** Being Intersex is a disorder or disability.

**Fact:** Intersex is a normal part of human diversity – just like red hair, green eyes or being tall or short. Intersex people are often treated differently and without being informed of their options by the medical field, but this is unwarranted. Many people may not know that they are intersex.

**Fact:** Many animal species (including many fish, frogs, lizards and birds) have three or more genders that change over their life time!

really?

## Not as simple as Gay or Straight!

Some people are attracted to the same sex and ask if this means they're gay. It's important to remember that sexual diversity is not as simplistic as we're told. Our identity or what we call ourselves (gay, bi, straight etc) is something we get to choose. On the other hand, we can't choose who we are attracted to, but we can decide what we do in response to those attractions. It all depends on what feels right for us at the time.

The way you feel now and who you are attracted to might change over time. That's ok!

**Gay:** people whose sexual and romantic feelings are mainly for the same sex and who identify with those feelings. Both men and women identify as gay, however it more often refers to men.

**Queer:** an umbrella term used to refer to the LGBTIQ community. Some people in the LGBTIQ community prefer not to use this term as the history of the word had negative connotations. These days, the term has been embraced and is more about pride and inclusivity. Many people also use it as a label to describe their sexuality.

**Lesbian:** women whose sexual and romantic feelings are mainly for other women and who identify with those feelings.

**Bisexual or Bi:** people whose sexual and romantic feelings are for both men and women and who identify with these feelings.

**Pansexual:** Refers to people whose sexual and romantic feelings are for all genders, or exist regardless of gender; this rejects the gender binary of male/female and supports the idea that there are more than only two genders or gender identities. 'Pan' means 'all'.

## Sexual Diversity & the 'FBI' model

Getting your head around sexual diversity and figuring out what's right for you can be pretty difficult. The FBI Model can be helpful for understanding that diverse sexuality is not black and white but a whole spectrum of colours.

**It breaks sexuality down into three aspects:**

**F =**

### Feelings & Fantasies

This is about who you are attracted to and have romantic and sexual feelings and desires about.

**B =**

### Behaviour

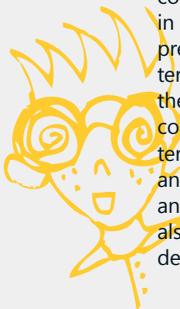
This is all about who you're with. Of course you don't need to have been sexually active with anyone to know your feelings.

**I =**

### Identity

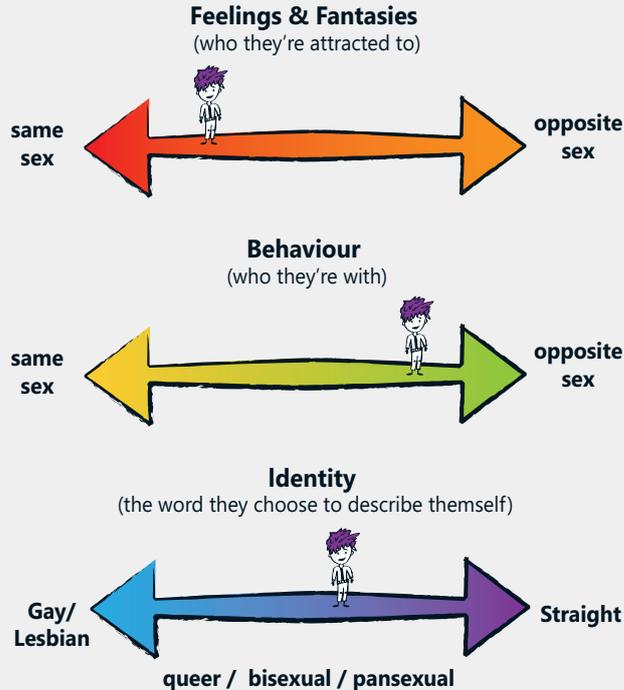
This means what word or label you use to describe your sexuality. Not everyone likes labels though.

Everyone is different and can be at a different part of each spectrum in the FBI Model. This can also change at different times of people's lives. Check out Nicky's example on the next page!

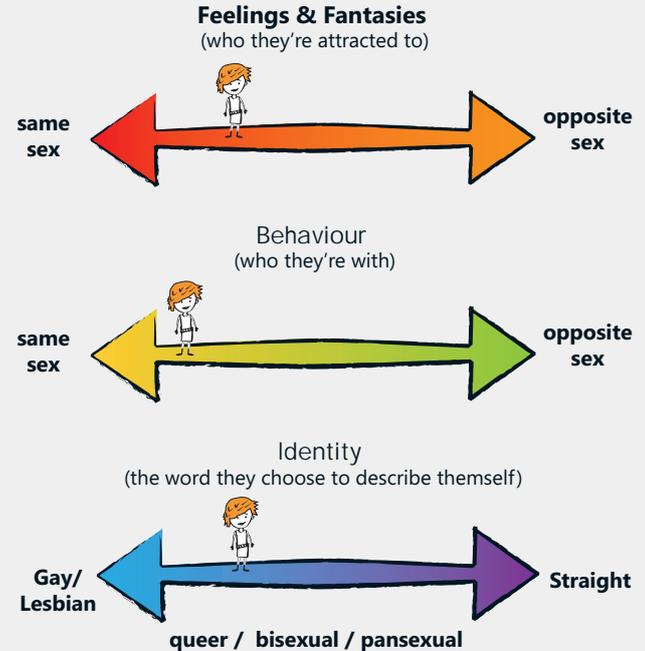


## Sexual Diversity & the 'FBI' model

Nicky has a boyfriend who she's been with for 6 months. She loves him but has started to become attracted more to girls. She's been fantasising about both her boyfriend and some of the girls she's been attracted to. Nicky has started to identify as bisexual but doesn't want to break up with her boyfriend.



Five years later Nicky has had a couple more boyfriends and two girlfriends and is now with Jacquie. They have been together for a year and are about to move in together. She still fantasises about guys and girls that she's attracted to and now prefers to call herself queer.



Not everyone's positions on the spectrums change in their life and many people are at similar sides or parts of all three spectrums, but many people change and are different too.

# Sex & Gender Diversity

We're taught that gender is black and white, but really it's a whole spectrum of colours! Sex and gender can be broken down to understand it all better; biological sex, gender expression and gender identity are all on a spectrum – not only two options!

## Sex and gender diversity includes:

**Intersex people** have sex characteristics (reproductive organs, hormone levels, chromosomes etc.) that are somewhere between the simplified 'male' and 'female' categories we're given.

**Transsexual, and some transgender people**, have a body sex that doesn't match their sense of their sex and/or gender identity, so some physically transition with hormones and/or sex affirmation surgeries.

**Genderqueer**, and other gender diverse people have a gender identity that isn't simply 'man' or 'woman'.

**Gender identity** is how you identify your gender. Some more sex and gender identities are androgyne, trans man, trans woman, FTM/F2M/M2M, MTF/M2F/F2F, sistergirl, brotherboy, boi, bi-gendered, genderscrewed, and many others. It's up to you as to what feels right.

It takes time to know who you are and being trans\* has some huge implications for your everyday life, but being honest with yourself and true to who you are makes the challenges worthwhile. It's a good idea to link in to support networks for your journey to make it as easy as possible.

*There is no wrong or right way to be trans\*. It isn't a competition. I was told so many times that I 'wasn't trans\* enough' because I didn't bind my chest everyday or go out of my way to tell people I'm FTM. You can transition at your own pace. You're just as trans\* as anybody else. It's okay.*

- William, 19

## Pronouns & transitioning

Asking people to use your preferred name and pronouns (he/she/they) can be an important part of coming out and affirming your gender. You might not feel comfortable with male or female pronouns and asking for neutral pronouns like ze/zir/zirs or they/them/theirs. Most people won't have thought hard about how they use pronouns, so it might take some time or friendly reminders to adjust and get your pronouns correct. It can hurt when people use the wrong pronouns, but just as it takes time for us to get accustomed to our identities, it often takes others some time too.

Many people who are trans\* want to change their body to match how they feel inside. Physically transitioning is a big deal and shouldn't be done without taking the time to do what's right for you and for the right reasons.

## Where to get info and support?

For more info about sex and gender diversity, transitioning, or if you need support check out the info and links on the Freedom Centre website. You can also come and get some peer support at GenderQ or other FC drop-in sessions, and/or link in to FC through our forums online at [www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au) and [fyeah.tumblr.com](https://www.tumblr.com/fcyeah)



# Learn how to be a trans ally

- ★ Use people's preferred pronouns. You can't always tell what someone's sex or gender are just by looking at them, so don't assume, and if you're ever unsure, just ask respectfully. If you get their pronouns wrong, apologise, correct yourself and make an effort to remember for next time.
- ★ Don't 'out' someone without their permission, even if they've spoken openly to you about it.
- ★ Don't assume a trans\* person is straight or bi. Trans\* and intersex people have the same range of sexual diversity as everyone else.
- ★ Never use the words 'it', hermaphrodite, or 'tranny' to refer to someone who is trans\* or intersex.
- ★ Never ask a trans\* person how they have sex or what their genitals look like. Would you like it if someone asked you that?
- ★ Don't ask someone about their surgery – when, what etc. Not all trans\* people want or can have surgery, and it's quite personal.



# Famous LGBTQ Peers

Here's a list of some of the many 1000's of famous people with a diverse sexuality, sex and/or gender...

**Neil Patrick Harris**, actor

**Jane Lynch**, actor

**Chris Colfer**, actor

**Stephen Fry**, actor, author & screenwriter

**J.D Samson**, musician

**Ani DiFranco**, singer & songwriter

**Alan Cumming**, actor & comedian

**Narelda Jacobs**, news presenter

**Cynthia Nixon**, actor

**Wanda Sykes**, comedian & actor

**Hannah Gadsby**, comedian

**Matt Lucas**, comedian & actor

**Penny Wong**, ALP Senator

**John Waters**, filmmaker

**Alexis Arquette**, actor

**Missy Higgins**, singer & musician

**Caster Semenya**, athlete

**Jessie J**, musician

**Cary Grant**, actor

**Ruby Rose**, DJ and TV presenter

**Josh Thomas**, Comedian

**Matthew Mitcham**, Australian Olympian

**Sir Ian McKellen**, actor

**Patrick Wolf**, singer & songwriter

**Graham Norton**, comedian & TV presenter

**Antony Hegarty**, musician

**Chaz Bono**, Cher's son

**Sia Furler**, musician

**John Hyde**, Perth MLC

**Louise Pratt**, ALP Senator

**Liberace**, pianist & entertainer

**Sappho**, ancient poet

**Marlene Dietrich**, actor

**Frank Ocean**, singer & songwriter

**Mika**, singer

**Del La Grace Volcano**, photographer & performance artist

**Rupert Everett**, actor

**Marc Jacobs**, fashion designer

**Anderson Cooper**, reporter

## Bands (with LGBTQ members)

Tegan and Sara, LeTigre, The Gossip, Scissor Sisters, Antony & the Johnsons, Uh Huh Her, Against Me!, Yo Majesty, MEN, Dresden Dolls

# Coming Out

This can mean something different to everyone: coming out to yourself has to do with developing an awareness that you are LGBTIQ. Coming out to others involves disclosing your LGBTIQ identity.

## Things to consider before coming out

### How sure are you about your sexual attractions, and sexuality?

"Are you sure?" is a common question. It's OK if you aren't sure, but whether the answer is yes, no or maybe, you need to be able to answer with confidence.

### How comfortable are you with your sexuality and/or gender identity?

If you are having feelings of guilt or depression, seek some help in understanding those feelings before coming out to loved ones. Check out the links and services on page 35 or at [www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au)

### Do you have support?

If your family or friends' reactions don't make you feel good, you need to find someone, or a group, that you can turn to for emotional support.

### Are you knowledgeable about issues relating to LGBTIQ people?

Reading up on the subject will mean you can more confidently respond to any questions your family or friends may have.

### Are you financially dependent on the people you want to tell?

If you suspect they are capable of withdrawing any financial support or forcing you out of where you live, you may choose to wait until they do not have this pressure to hold over you. You need to think about the advantages and disadvantages.

### Is it your decision to tell someone?

Yes it is! Try not to feel pressured by people who think everyone must come out or by snooping people who ask unwelcome questions.

Don't know what to say?  
Nervous about coming out?  
Try these tips!



- ★ Start by telling your loved one that you have something you want to talk to them about that's important to you.
- ★ Write out what you want to say. Read it a few times so you're clear about what you want to include, or read it out to them if that might work best for you.
- ★ Choose a time to come out that has its own place and setting, free from distractions.
- ★ Consider questions that might come up. Also be prepared to answer other questions, even if they don't directly relate to you.
- ★ Try role-playing the occasion with supportive friends/family.
- ★ Have this booklet or FC's 'Someone You Love' booklet available for extra info for the person you are coming out to.

For more tips about coming out check out the info section of [www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au)

## Info and support for Parents Family and Friends

PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) groups offer info and someone to talk to. Find out more at [www.pflagwa.org.au](http://www.pflagwa.org.au) or [www.pflagaustralia.org.au](http://www.pflagaustralia.org.au)



"My mum has always loved me, but it took her a long time to accept my sexuality. When she asked me if it would just be a phase that hurt the most, but now she's nothing but proud and even marched in the Pride Parade last year!"

- Alex, 20

## How will people react when I come out?

The following may help you understand and respond to people's reactions.

Just as you are unique, so are the people around you, and they may all react differently. Some people will have no problem with your sexuality and/or gender identity and be happy for you, some may have already suspected and were just waiting for you to tell them, while for others it will challenge their feelings towards you.

They may feel angry, responsible or worried. Allow them time and space. Shock, denial and feelings of guilt are often experienced by people when they are told that someone close to them is gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans\*.

They may have experienced the same environment as you but possibly with very different feelings. You have probably given your sexuality or gender a lot of thought, but it may be all new to them. The feelings they may work through are similar to those you've dealt with, but the difference is that you're ahead of them in the process.

You may want them to understand and grasp this important part of your life right away and give you support. However, you may need to allow people time to express their own feelings. Be patient. You may also need to explain things a few times. Just because you've said something once does not mean they fully heard it. Later they may be ready to ask questions, listen to answers and acknowledge their feelings.

## Handling Rejection

Some young people are rejected by the people they tell. This is a difficult situation to be in. Remember you are sharing an important part of yourself. If people choose to ignore this they are missing out on knowing all of who you are. Hold onto the fact that you are special. Reach out for support.

★ If your family do ask you to leave home please contact one of the services at the back of this book.

★ **Don't hang around if their response is abusive.** Leave as soon as possible and seek support with a supportive friend or family member, or phone the GLCS counselling line (08 9420 7201, 7-10pm weeknights) and talk it over. *See the back of this book for services in your state.*

★ If someone threatens you or is violent, get somewhere safe and **call the Police on 131 444 or 000.**

## Remember you're not alone!

Don't imagine if things go badly at first that it will be like that forever... things generally get better with time. Support is out there!

*I've often thought about what has transpired since then; I've looked upon it as an unplanned journey. It was thrust upon us; we'd hardly have signed up for it if given the option of choosing something else. Unplanned, however, does not mean unwelcomed. Today we can say "We're glad we know." We've been able to support our son on his journey. We hope that he can say, "Unplanned, but not unwelcome."*

- John, a dad

## Acceptance

Self acceptance and acceptance of others is something everyone would like. It can take time to accept news about someone we love. There are lots of reasons why people might be upset when we first come out – concerns about safety and how people will treat you and realising they didn't know everything about you can be tough. Many more reach the point where they can also celebrate everyone's uniqueness.

# Healthy Relationships

We all have the right to healthy, safe and fulfilling relationships with partners, friends and family!

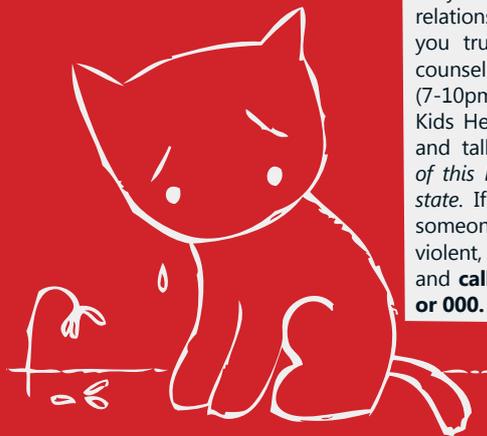
Here's some things that make a relationship healthy:

- ★ Clear and open communication
- ★ Fun and humour
- ★ **RESPECT**
- ★ Patience
- ★ Trust
- ★ Honesty
- ★ Realistic expectations
- ★ Supporting each other
- ★ Enjoying time together
- ★ Everything is consensual
- ★ Where you're able to be yourself



Some warning signs that a relationship isn't healthy might be when someone close to you:

- ★ Makes you feel pressured or expected to do things you don't want to do
- ★ Criticises you, belittles you or makes fun of you
- ★ Threatens or manipulates you
- ★ Stops or discourages you from seeing friends or family or doing things you enjoy
- ★ Is aggressive, abusive or ignores your needs or feelings
- ★ Controls finances and any other decisions about your life, including things like being out or not, or how you express yourself
- ★ Acts jealous or possessive, such as having to know everything you do or everyone you talk to



If you are worried about a relationship talk to someone you trust, or phone the GLCS counselling line on 08 9420 7201 (7-10pm weeknights) or the Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800) and talk it over. *See the back of this book for services in your state.* If you are feeling unsafe, someone threatens you or is violent, get somewhere safe and **call the Police on 131 444 or 000.**

# Mental Health

Mental Health is a term that broadly describes our mental wellbeing. It's about our state of mind, and also our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. It's also about our relationship with the outside world, with other people, and with society. It's about how we think about and relate to ourselves, and participate in society.

Research has shown that young people who are sexuality, sex or gender diverse are more likely to experience mental health issues. This is not because we are bad or mad, but because we experience marginalisation, discrimination and stigmatisation more than most, which can make it harder for us to cope with everything in our lives. It's important to remember a few things:

- ★ Being gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans\*, intersex, queer or being confused about your sexuality or gender doesn't mean you have a mental illness.
- ★ Feeling attracted to the same sex is as natural as being attracted to the opposite sex. Questioning your gender or feeling like your inside doesn't match your outside is OK too.
- ★ You are not alone; there are plenty of others who feel similar feelings to what you're feeling. It can take time to know who you are and being confused is a normal part of figuring it all out.
- ★ Everyone deserves to be treated with RESPECT by others. It is not okay for people to call you names, or tease you, or make you feel unsafe.
- ★ It's OK to be yourself – whoever that is. Trust your feelings and talk to someone you trust about them. Being different can be hard, but it can be more interesting and fun too! Support is out there.



*I struggled with depression for years. I never felt good enough. I got help and made the hard decision to make my life worth living. I came out and I was finally happy and free to be myself. My mental health improved dramatically as a result."*

– Blade, 20

## Needing support right now?

### Try some of the following 24 hour services

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14 or  
[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

**Kids Helpline:** 1800 551 800

**ReachOut-** online support and info at [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

## Looking for a mental health service?

### Find a Headspace Centre near you.

Headspace is Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation  
[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

Find other Mental Health services suitable to you by contacting **BeyondBlue on 1300 22 46 36**

*"It can be really hard to admit that you might have a mental illness, but I felt a thousand times better when I finally told my GP about my anxiety. Just knowing you've taken a step towards treatment (and telling someone else) can feel AWESOME.*

– Alex, 20

## Tips for staying happy and healthy!

There's heaps we can do to keep ourselves happy and healthy! Everyone is different so try things out to see what works best for you, but here's some tips from us at FC:

- ★ Sleep well
- ★ Ask for a hug if you want one
- ★ Listen to music you enjoy
- ★ Drink water
- ★ Exercise regularly
- ★ Have a long, relaxing shower or bath
- ★ Keep a journal, blog or tumblr
- ★ Get a pet
- ★ Try not to be afraid of how you feel
- ★ Talk to people you trust about things, don't keep it all bottled up
- ★ Find exercise you enjoy
- ★ Smile and laugh
- ★ Sing and dance (in the shower, car and sun)
- ★ Get active and get out of the house
- ★ Don't place expectations on yourself – simply do your best – you will always succeed if you focus on experiences not outcomes
- ★ Think about the good times when things are bad
- ★ Don't isolate yourself – remember you're not alone
- ★ Watch some comedy
- ★ Do something you love
- ★ Try something new or challenge yourself



## How can I deal with people who hassle me because I am LGBTIQ?

Some people in society can sometimes discriminate and even be violent towards people who are seen to be different. However, attitudes about sexuality and gender have been, over time, changing for the better and are more positive in many places. There are also many groups working to make things better for everyone.

No matter the reason, whether you are at school, work, TAFE, Uni, online, shopping or just hanging out, harassment and abuse should not be tolerated! But this doesn't mean you have to take it on by yourself. There are people and services who can help.



## Some suggestions for dealing with being hassled include:

- ★ Tell someone you trust
- ★ Report threats or violence to the Police 131 444. If you're unhappy with how the report was handled you can call the W.A. Police Diversity Unit on (08) 9222 1510
- ★ Call the WA Gay and Lesbian Community Services on (08) 9420 7201 or go to [www.glcs.org.au](http://www.glcs.org.au)
- ★ Report discrimination to the Equal Opportunity Commission (*see page 29*)

Everyone needs to think about their safety. Sometimes that means walking away from confrontations, but always remember, you have a right to feel and be safe. Nobody deserves violence or harassment, and you are not responsible for other people's attitudes.

**In an emergency call the Police on 000**

## Equal Opportunity and what to do about discrimination

Sexual orientation and Gender History are grounds for protection under the Equal Opportunity Act. This means that you cannot be discriminated against for being gay, lesbian or bisexual within WA.

Currently people who are trans\* aren't protected from discrimination until they have obtained a Gender Reassignment Certificate, but you can get support at Freedom Centre and give feedback or make complaints about discrimination you've experienced to the Equal Opportunity Commission of WA.

**The following places can provide you with more info:**

### Equal Opportunity Commission of WA

(08) 9216 3900 / 1800 198 149  
[www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au](http://www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au)

### Equality Rules

Info on the law relating to LGBTI people in WA since the 2003 law reforms, check out: [www.equalityrules.info](http://www.equalityrules.info)

### WA Gender Project

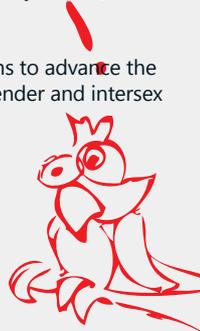
A lobby and advocacy group which aims to advance the human rights of all transsexual, transgender and intersex people. [www.wagenderproject.org](http://www.wagenderproject.org)

### Youth Legal Service

08 9202 1688 /1800 199 006  
[www.youthlegalserviceinc.com.au](http://www.youthlegalserviceinc.com.au)

### Gay & Lesbian Equality

[www.galewa.asn.au](http://www.galewa.asn.au)



## What About The Law?

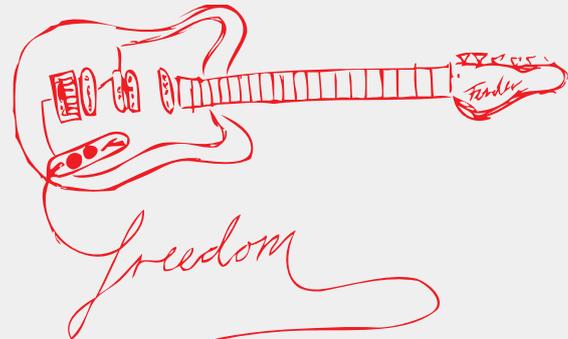
As the law stands now in WA the age of consent is 16 years for any person engaging in sexual activity, regardless of their gender or sexuality. It varies in different states, so it is important to check out what the laws are in your area at [www.equalityrules.info](http://www.equalityrules.info).

In 2008 the Rudd Government implemented changes to 85 Federal Laws that removed discrimination against LGBTI couples and their families. Find out more at **Wear it With Pride** [www.wearitwithpride.com.au](http://www.wearitwithpride.com.au).



## Want to know more about your rights or the law?

Contact the Equal Opportunity Commission in your state or check out the **Australian Human Rights Commission** [www.hreoc.gov.au/human\\_rights/lgbti](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human_rights/lgbti)



# What about?

## Cultural Diversity?

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans\*, intersex and queer people also come from many different cultures.

We all experience life and culture in different ways. Our family or society's culture can influence what is expected of us and who we are. This means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may have extra pressure and expectations around their sexuality and gender.

This can make it harder to realise or come out about our diverse sexuality, sex and gender. What's important to remember is that LGBTIQ people are in every culture, country and part of society – past and present!

### ATSI Qspace @ Freedom Centre

A monthly drop in session for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who are same sex attracted, sex and/or gender diverse including sistagirls and brotherboys. Find out more at [www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au)

### Fact:

The term 'Sistagirl' is used to describe a transgender person in Tiwi Island and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Traditionally, the term was 'Yimpininni' in the Tiwi Islands. The very existence of the word shows the inclusive attitudes that once existed about Aboriginal sexual minorities. Colonisation had an impact on Aboriginal culture and understanding of sexual and gender expression. Yimpininni were once held in high regard as the nurturers within the family unit and tribe.

### Fact:

Same Sex sexual activity was legalised in the Netherlands in 1811, in Peru in 1830, and in Japan 'homosexual acts' were seen positively until they were made illegal in 1873, however they were legalised again in 1880. Australia legalised same sex sexual activity in 1994.

### Fact:

Homosexuality was accepted in the first 200 years of the church. In fact, in 7th Century Spain, 6 national church councils refused to outlaw homosexuality.

## What about Religion?

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans\* and intersex people have a wide range of spiritual and religious beliefs. No one can tell you what you believe.

Some religious institutions are coming to accept the idea that people of diverse sexuality, sex and gender are a part of their congregation and therefore should be allowed to worship. There are also a number of faith communities who welcome gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans\* and intersex people.



## Where to get info and support?

If religion or your culture is an important issue to you or your family, contact your local Gay and Lesbian Community Service or LGBTIQ youth service. They can listen and help you connect to with people who know where you're coming from.

# Useful Terms

**Androgynous:** Can mean having both masculine and feminine characteristics, or having neither specifically masculine nor feminine characteristics. Some people who are androgynous may identify as genderqueer, trans\* or androgyne.

**Asexual:** Someone whose sexual identity is asexual may lack interest in or desire for sex. They may or may not engage in sexual activity and they may not experience sexual arousal at all.

**Biphobia:** An individual's or society's misunderstanding, fear, ignorance of, or prejudice against, bisexual and/or pansexual people.

**Cisgender:** Where a person's gender agrees with their assigned sex. Used to label those whose gender is not trans\*.

**Crossdresser:** Someone who crossdresses (also known as a transvestite) is a person who gets personal satisfaction and peace of mind by wearing the clothing of the opposite sex. This usually refers to men dressing in women's clothing. Crossdressing is not directly related

to sexual orientation, in fact most crossdressers are heterosexual men.

**Diverse Sexuality, Sex and/or Gender (DSG):** This term is inclusive of all people with diverse sexuality, sex and/or gender who may or may not identify as LGBTIQ.

**Drag Queen/King:** persons who dress and wear makeup, wigs etc. to impersonate the opposite gender for the purposes of entertainment. The men who 'do drag' do not want to 'be' a woman, they are performing an exaggerated feminine persona.

**Gender:** The sociological construction of one's masculinity or femininity: how a person thinks, acts, dresses and speaks which distinguishes them as masculine or feminine. One's gender can be masculine, feminine and/or androgynous.

**Heterosexual & Straight:** People whose sexual and romantic feelings are primarily for the opposite sex and who identify primarily with those feelings.

**Heterosexism:** The attitude or belief that heterosexuality is more 'normal' or superior to other kinds of sexualities. It is heterosexist to assume that people are straight unless otherwise specified, or that you can 'tell' if someone is gay.

**Homophobia:** An individual's or society's misunderstanding, fear, ignorance of, or prejudice against gay, lesbian and/or bisexual people.

**LGBTIQQ / GLBTIQQ:** Stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, intersex, queer and questioning. Also, LGBTIQ, LGBT, GLBT, GLB or LGB are used.

**Sexuality:** The term 'sexuality' encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is often, but not always, experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships.

**Trans\*:** An umbrella term including transsexual and transgender.

**Transsexual:** A person who identifies as the sex opposite to the one assigned at birth and who may choose to undergo sex affirmation surgeries.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term used to describe a broad range of non-traditional gender identities and/or behaviours. Usually includes all trans\* people, but some Transsexuals and members of the sex and gender diverse community prefer not to use this term.

**Transition(ing):** For individuals in the trans\* community, transitioning is the process of changing their body and presentation, from the sex they were assigned at birth, to match their own sense of gender and sex. This can be a social transition, and can involve hormone therapy and may also involve undergoing surgery, name change, voice training, and other sex affirmation therapies for a physical transition.

**Transphobia:** An individual's or society's misunderstanding, fear, ignorance of, or prejudice against people who experience transsexualism or identify as trans\*.

## More Useful Terms

For a full list of useful terms check out the Glossary page on the Freedom Centre's website [www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au) and also see pages 9-14 of this booklet.

# Services and more info

Check out these services to get support, info and connect with your community!

## Western Australia

### Freedom Centre

[www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au)  
[www.fcyeah.tumblr.com](http://www.fcyeah.tumblr.com)  
[info@freedom.org.au](mailto:info@freedom.org.au)  
08 9228 0354

### Gay & Lesbian Community Services

[www.glcs.org.au](http://www.glcs.org.au)  
08 9420 7201 / 1800 184 527

### WA AIDS Council

[www.waaidcs.com](http://www.waaidcs.com)  
08 9482 0000

### True Colours - UnitingCare West

[truecolours@unitingcarewest.org.au](mailto:truecolours@unitingcarewest.org.au)  
1300 663 298

## National

### Gay & Lesbian Counselling and Community Services of Australia

[www.glccs.org.au](http://www.glccs.org.au)  
1800 184 527 / 1800 18 GLCS

### LifeLine

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)  
13 11 14 / 1300 13 11 14

## South Australia

### Inside Out and Evolve (Second Story Youth Service)

08 8232 0233

### Gay & Lesbian Counselling Services

[www.glcssa.org.au](http://www.glcssa.org.au)  
08 8193 0800 / 1800 184 527

## Queensland

### Open Doors

[www.opendoors.net.au](http://www.opendoors.net.au)  
07 3257 7660

### Gay and Lesbian Welfare Association

[www.glwa.org.au](http://www.glwa.org.au)  
07 3017 1717 / 1800 184 527

### Healthy Communities (QAHC)

[www.qahc.org.au](http://www.qahc.org.au)  
07 3017 1777 / 1800 177 434

### National LGBTI Health Alliance

[www.lgbtihealth.org.au](http://www.lgbtihealth.org.au)  
02 8568 1120

### OII (Intersex) Australia

[www.oii australia.com](http://www.oii australia.com)

## New South Wales

### Twenty10

[www.twenty10.org.au](http://www.twenty10.org.au)  
02 8594 9550

### Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW (ACT too)

[www.glcsnsw.org.au](http://www.glcsnsw.org.au)  
02 8594 9596 / 1800 184 527

### The Gender Centre of NSW

[www.gendercentre.org.au](http://www.gendercentre.org.au)  
02 9569 2366

## Australian Capital Territory

### Gender Agenda

[www.genderrights.org.au](http://www.genderrights.org.au)

### AIDS Action Council of the ACT

[www.aidsaction.org.au](http://www.aidsaction.org.au)  
02 6257 2855

## Tasmania

### Working It Out

[www.workingitout.org.au](http://www.workingitout.org.au)  
03 6231 1200

### Tasmanian Council on AIDS Hepatitis And Related Diseases

[www.tascahrd.org.au](http://www.tascahrd.org.au)  
03 6234 1242 / 1800 005 900

## Victoria

### Rainbow Network

[www.rainbownetwork.net.au](http://www.rainbownetwork.net.au)  
03 9285 5367

### Gay & Lesbian SwitchBoard (TAS too)

[www.switchboard.org.au](http://www.switchboard.org.au)  
03 9663 2939

### Zoe Belle Gender Centre

[www.gendercentre.com](http://www.gendercentre.com)  
03 8398 4134

## Northern Territory

### Northern Territory AIDS & Hepatitis Council

[www.ntahc.org.au](http://www.ntahc.org.au)  
02 8944 7777

**For more services, websites and info:** check out the 'Links' section of [www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au)



# BE FREE!



## What is the Freedom Centre?

FC provides a safe drop in centre and online space for sexuality, sex and/or gender diverse young people (under 26) to hang out, get peer support, information, and referral.

### Freespace Weekly Drop In Sessions

Wednesdays 5-8pm & Fridays 4-8pm

### Monthly sessions include;

- ★ **GenderQ:** for all young people who are trans\*, sex and/or gender diverse or questioning.
- ★ **ATSI Qspace:** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who are same sex attracted, sex and/or gender diverse.
- ★ **Plus more!** Go to our website.

## Contact Us

Visit us online or drop in at:  
93 Brisbane St. Perth, 6000

**p:** 9228 0354

**e:** [info@freedom.org.au](mailto:info@freedom.org.au)

**w:** [freedom.org.au](http://freedom.org.au)

## Find Freedom Online

Info, discussions, news, events and community.

Follow us [fcyeah.tumblr.com](http://fcyeah.tumblr.com) Join our forums at [fcf.org.au](http://fcf.org.au)

[www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au)

**Freedom**  
centre