

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ MENTEES

1

Standardize asking and using current name and pronouns

Standardizing asking and sharing pronouns (e.g., she/her, he/him, they/them, etc.) when meeting all mentees can prevent singling out only those who appear gender-diverse and show every mentee that you respect their gender identity and pronouns. The more consistently mentors use correct names and pronouns, the more trust and rapport that will be built with the mentee. Additionally, provide regular opportunities for mentees to share if they are going by a new name or pronoun.

Examples of how to ask about names and pronouns:

- "What are your pronouns?"
- "How do you pronounce your name and what pronouns do you use?"
- Introduce with your name and pronouns first.

2

Explore your own biases (conscious and unconscious)

"Bias is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another usually in a way that's considered to be unfair."
- UCSF Office of Diversity and Outreach.

Mentors may have conscious bias, meaning that they are aware of the attitude or belief, or they may have unconscious bias, meaning that they are not actively aware of the biased attitude or belief. Unconscious bias influence action more than conscious bias, which is why it is important for mentors to identify their biases and work to consciously unlearn biased attitudes and beliefs about LGBTQ+ people.

Learn more about your biases. Take the Implicit Association Test:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>

Take a course on unconscious bias:

<https://diversity.ucsf.edu/programs-resources/training/unconscious-bias-training>

3 **Become a trauma-informed, intersectional mentor**

LGBTQ+ people report high prevalence of trauma such as family rejection, discrimination, and sexual and physical violence. Further, LGBTQ+ people who hold multiple marginalized identities may experience trauma related to their LGBTQ+ identity in addition to trauma related to the other identities they hold. Trauma-informed mentorship takes into consideration how past experiences of trauma may impact the mentor-mentee relationship and works to provide empathetic non-judgemental support that meets the mentee where they are at. A strengths-based approach shifts from identifying mentee deficiencies to re-emphasizing the mentee's ability to self-correct and build resilience off of the strengths they already have.

Learn the difference between sympathy & empathy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZBTYViDPIQ>

Principles of strengths-based mentoring:

<https://fraservalley.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/223/2017/12/Strength-Based-Mentoring.pdf>

4 **Link to LGBTQ+ inclusive resources**

As part of the support structure for the mentee, the mentor often helps connect mentees to resources to help with growth, healing, and success. LGBTQ+ communities, especially Transgender and Non-Binary communities, report that services that are not affirming of their gender or sexual identity can increase experiences of traumatization and victimization. To mitigate this, mentors can learn about and link LGBTQ+ mentees to resources that are affirming. Resources should be vetted to evaluate if they are gender and sexuality-affirming and willing to provide services to LGBTQ+ people.

Download a resource guide here:

<https://cpac.arizona.edu/diversity>

5

Learn more about the cultural significance of substance use in the LGBTQ+ community

Part of supporting mentees who are in recovery is learning more about and recognizing the cultural significance that substance use has in the LGBTQ+ community. Substance use provides an escape from discrimination experienced in a society where LGBTQ+ people are constantly othered, can reduce negative self-talk, and can help alleviate the distress associated with gender dysphoria. Historically, LGBTQ+ people have found safe havens in spaces where substance use is prevalent (such as bars and nightclubs) and therefore the building of community often includes substance use. Therefore, mentees may be struggling with navigating recovery, loss of support structures and community, and stress and distress from living in a heterosexist and transphobic environment simultaneously.

On queerness and drugs:

<https://volteface.me/lgbt=drug-use>

A brief history of queer experience with addiction and recovery:

<https://sfonline.barnard.edu/a-brief-history-of-queer-experience-with-addiction-and-recovery/>

Additional Sources

1. UCSF Office of Diversity and Outreach. (n.d.). Unconscious Bias Training. Retrieved from <https://diversity.ucsf.edu/programs-resources/training/unconscious-bias-training>.
2. Mentor. (2019). Recommendations for LGBTQQ mentoring: Supplement to the elements of effective practice for mentoring. Retrieved from https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/LGBTQQ-supplement-to-EEP_checklist.pdf
3. Denver Prevention Training Center. (2023). 5 ways to create gender-affirming health environments. Retrieved from <https://denverptc.org/resource.php?id=512>