

Supporting Resilience in LGBTQ+  
Youth  
with an Emphasis on Transgender,  
Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC)  
& Nonbinary Youth

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June 15, 2021

2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth  
Mental Health



The Trevor Project  
survey findings:

# The Trevor Project 2021 findings

- 35,000 LGBTQ youth surveyed (ages 13-24) across the USA.
- 42% of respondents seriously considered suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth.
- A majority of youth reported recent symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder or major depressive disorder; almost half reported wanting mental health services but were not able to access the services.
- 94% reported that recent politics negatively impacted their mental health, 70% qualified their mental health as "poor" most of the time or always during COVID – 19.
- Half of LGBTQ youth of color reported discrimination based on their race/ethnicity in the past year, including 67% of Black youth and 60% of Asian/Pacific Islander LGBTQ youth.

# Minority Stress Models

Stephanie Brill and Lisa Kenney, inform that this model seeks to clarify the relationship between the status of being a minority and the stress and distress experienced.





# Gender Minority Stress Model

Brill and Kenny quote the work of Rylan Testa to address this model.



# Brill and Kenney on the Ryan Testa - Gender Minority Stress Model

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- “Recent studies demonstrate that when a transgender or non-binary person lives in an environment filled with gender-based external stressors such as violence, family discord, bullying, harassment, family rejection, lack of gender affirmation, social isolation, and lack of respectful, appropriate medical care, they are at risk for increased levels of psychological distress” (p.190).
- It describes how “specific external stressors related to one’s minority status directly lead to specific internal stressors, and how that combination in turn leads to feelings of low self worth” (p. 191.).
- “For transgender and non-binary youth, there is a direct link between the levels of minority stress and attempted suicide rates” (p. 190).

# Brill and Kenney on the Gender Minority Stress Model (continued)

*External stressors, which have the greatest negative impact:*

- Gender-based victimization
- Gender-based rejection\*
- Gender-based discrimination and
- Gender identity non-affirmation\*

# Brill and Kenney on the Gender Minority Stress Model (continued):

External stressors lead to three types of internal stressors:

- Negative expectations for future events\*
- Internalized transphobia/stigma\*
- Concealment (nondisclosure of one's gender identity or gender history) (p. 191) .

\* Indicates specific stressors associated with higher suicidality.



The Building Blocks Toward  
Cultivating Resilience

# APA definition of resilience:

The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. As much as resilience involves “bouncing back” from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.

While these adverse events, are certainly painful and difficult, they don't have to determine the outcome of your life. There are many aspects of your life you can control, modify, and grow with. That's the role of resilience. Becoming more resilient not only helps you get through difficult circumstances, it also empowers you to grow and even improve your life along the way.

## Resilience:

- Like building a muscle, increasing your resilience takes time and intentionality. Focusing on four core components—connection, wellness, healthy thinking, and meaning—can empower you to withstand and learn from difficult and traumatic experiences.



## Prioritize Relationships:

- Isolation versus connecting with empathetic and understanding people who support and validate your experience and feelings.
- Interact with a group.
- Meet challenges toward creatively engaging in social milestones, interpersonal interactions, and social activities. Better if in-person than online. Balance social media and online activities with interactions in person.



# Fostering Wellness:

- Self care with the basics: mind/body positive lifestyle including healthy eating and proper nutrition, adequate and restorative sleep, hydration, exercise (if possible outdoor exercise) helps with adaptation to stress, anxiety and depression.
- Mindfulness practices such as: meditation, mindful journaling, prayer, chanting, gratitude practices; mindful and cultural mind/body practices such as tai chi, yoga, qi gong, hula, Danza.

## Find Purpose:

- Move toward your goals.
- Involvement in opportunities for self discovery.
- Help others.

## Positive Thinking:

- Embrace healthy thoughts.
- Accept change.
- Keep things in perspective.
- Keep a hopeful outlook.
- Use past experiences to learn about sources of strength.

# Anneliese Singh on Resilience for LGBTQ Youth:

Defining your LGBTQ+ identity

Understanding and valuing your whole self

Awareness of negative messaging

Self worth

Affirming and enjoying your body – Body positivity, managing dysphoria

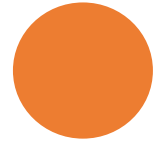
Relationship building, creating community

Reaching out for support and knowing of resources

Building hope as an essential resilience resource

Making change and giving back – e.g., Pride, advocacy, organizing

Growing and thriving – practicing self growth



# Anneliese Singh on Resilience for LGBTQ youth (continued)

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- Parents, caretakers and families can benefit by centering a focus on their own resilience as they support their TGNC and nonbinary youth.
- This writer suggests that health care providers and allies can also benefit by centering a focus on their own resilience as they support TGNC and nonbinary youth.

# School and Community





# School

Determine the level of support needed: School or District level

GSA on high school campuses

Student Clubs

Is advocacy needed by parents/youth?

Anti-bullying laws

Accessing the school counselor

Gender Spectrum or GLSEN as a resource for school administrators, teachers, parents & youth

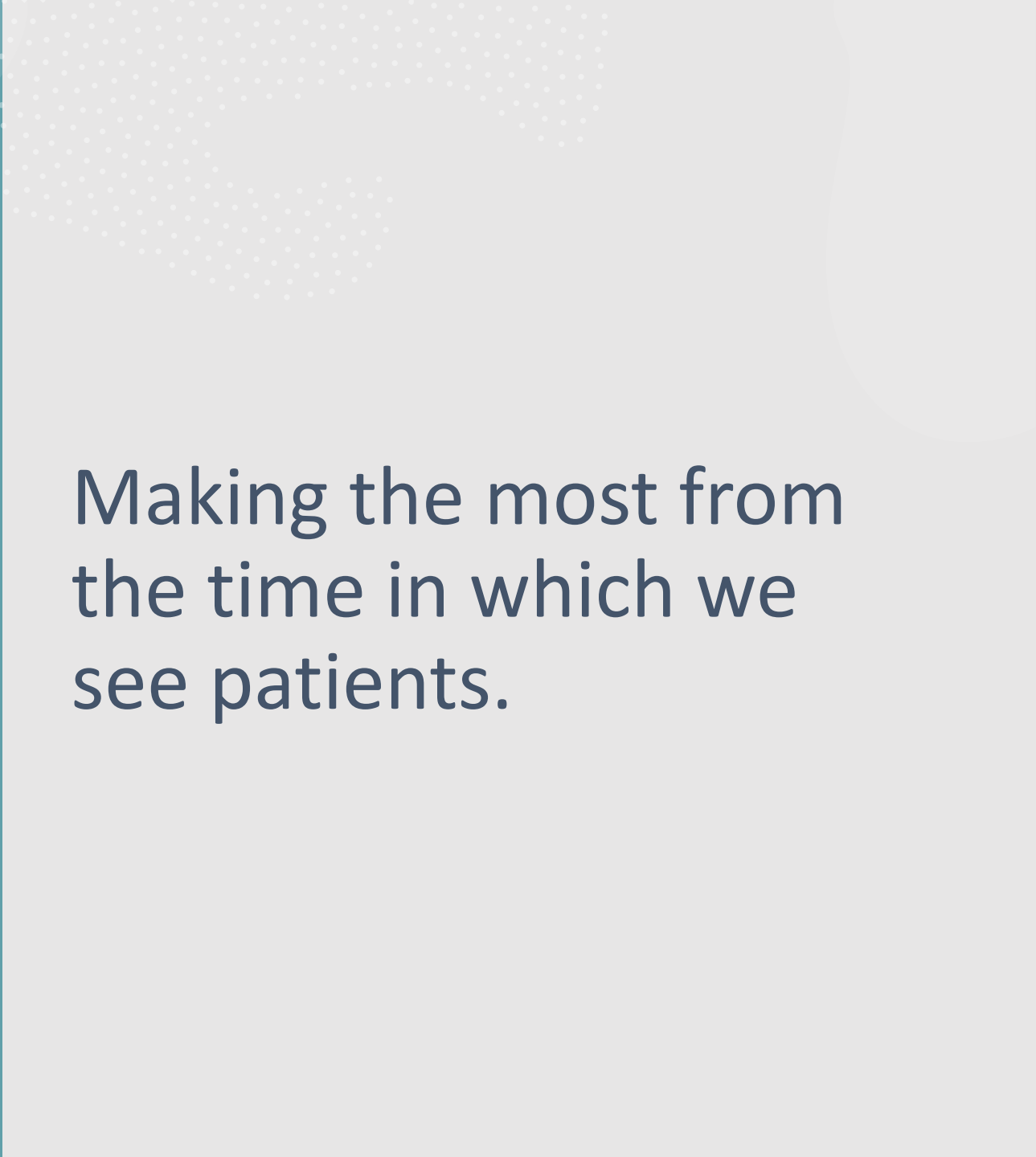
# Community

- Local, state and national resources
- Theatre and the Arts
- Youth online communities: Discord servers, video gaming, anime, fanfic, cosplay, social media apps, online support groups, PFLAG, Gender Spectrum
- If no resources are available, is teen motivated to initiate? Are parents or caretakers motivated to initiate?





# Interface with Health Care Professionals



Making the most from  
the time in which we  
see patients.

# In a nutshell, things to consider:

- Use your pronouns for introductions.
- Include symbols of the LGBTQ community in your waiting or office areas.
- Affirm youth's identity, e.g., "I am a girl." [Trans Female?]; "I am Mahu, Wahine." [Trans, Nonbinary, Femme?]; "I am like [The] Rogers." [Trans Masculine Samoan?]; "I think I am genderqueer." [Nonbinary umbrella].  
"I am not sure." [Affirming gender questioning].
- Acknowledge, support by providing affirmation and encouragement.
- Provide links to resources. Include gender-affirming therapy if teen is at risk and/or seeking therapeutic supports.
- Convey the message: I SEE YOU.
- Engage in continuing education, and familiarize yourself with the resources for LGBTQ youth.

# References

- American Psychological Association (2012). Building your resilience.
- Brill, S. & Kenney L. (2016). Transgender teen: a handbook for parents and professionals supporting transgender and non-binary teens. Jersey City: Cleis Press.
- Singh, A. A. (2018). The queer and transgender resilience workbook: skills for navigating sexual orientation & gender expression. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- Krieger, I. (2018). Helping your transgender teen: a guide for parents. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Press.



Gender Spectrum

[www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)

GLSEN Hawai'i

[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

PFLAG

[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

The Trevor Project

[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

Family Acceptance Project

[www.familyproject.sfsu.edu](http://www.familyproject.sfsu.edu)



Online  
Resources