

# Online Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth and Mental Health

LGBTQ+ youth often face discrimination at school or in their communities. During their critical adolescent years, they feel isolated and misunderstood, lacking the resources they need to maintain their mental health. With quarantine safety measures in place across the country, LGBTQ+ youth are at an even greater risk of social isolation and depression. Online resources for LGBTQ+ youth, including supportive and educational resources, can help youth maintain their mental and emotional health. The internet makes this easy, and LGBTQ+ youth can access online resources with just a couple clicks. Having online access to counseling, education, and a community, helps youth cope with depression, and can prevent suicide.

## Mental health resources are important for LGBTQ+ youth

LGBTQ+ youth face some unique challenges that impact their mental health. As they begin to understand their identity and come out to family and friends, they may encounter [discrimination and bullying at school](#) or within their community. On average, LGBTQ+ youth have higher rates of depression and suicide than their peers. Suicide is the [third leading cause of death](#) among youth and young adults, and up to [33%](#) of LGBTQ+ youth report having attempted suicide. LGBTQ+ high school students are [two to seven](#) times more likely to commit suicide than their hetero-identifying peers.

It's important to remember that identifying as LGBTQ+ doesn't cause depression or mental health challenges. Youth who identify as LGBTQ+ encounter discrimination, family rejection, negative biases, bullying, and hostile microaggressions that can lead to suicide ideation. When LGBTQ+ youth aren't accepted for who they are, they have [higher rates](#) of stress, anxiety, depression, self-harm behaviors, and other disturbances to mental health.

Transgender individuals have higher rates of depression and suicide than the rest of the LGBTQ+ community. Between [30 to 50% of transgender youth](#) report attempting suicide at least once. They encounter even higher rates of discrimination and microaggressions, and more barriers when accessing mental health care.

During adolescence, teenagers go through a critical period of development as they

build a strong sense of self, develop intellectual and emotional maturity, and start to understand their sexual orientation and preferences. LGBTQ+ youth experience additional challenges during their teens. Along with all the pressures of growing into their own identities, they have [increased risks](#) of alcohol and drug use, bullying, peer pressure, depression, suicide attempts, and high-risk sexual activities. LGBTQ+ youth and young adults may be kicked out of their homes, and LGBTQ+ youth are [120% more likely](#) than non-LGBTQ youth to be homeless during their adolescence.

Not only do LGBTQ+ youth deal with discrimination and aggression in classrooms and at home, many are also confronted with online bullying. Teenagers spend almost [two hours per day on social media](#), including watching TV, listening to music, texting, and video chatting. It's a great way to connect with peers, but it comes with added risks. Cyberbullying has made the internet a dangerous place for LGBTQ youth, and approximately [48.7% of LGBTQ+ students](#) are victims of cyberbullying each year. This can be through private text messages, or public posts on social media. Cyberbullying leads to high rates of psychological and emotional distress for LGBTQ+ youth, as well as low self-esteem, social isolation, depression, and suicide ideation.

With all these risks for LGBTQ+ youth, Gianna DiGiovanni, Crisis Services Manager of Continuous Improvement at [The Trevor Project](#), emphasizes the importance of having 24 hour access to resources.

“LGBTQ young people deserve affirming and safe spaces to explore who they are, ask questions, and connect. Many LGBTQ young people may have limited access to support at home, at school, in their faith communities, and among friends. Reaching out for help takes courage regardless of circumstance, but for some LGBTQ young people doing so may compromise their safety or relationships. No young person should have to struggle with depression or thoughts of suicide alone. That is why we are here to provide non-judgmental, confidential, and LGBTQ affirming support 24/7.”

Being able to access help for depression or suicide ideation at any time of day or night is vital for LGBTQ+ youth and for their mental health. Many valuable resources can be found online, and the internet is a helpful tool in finding help. A [great phone plan](#) will help youth access mental health services and resources wherever they are.

## **Finding online resources for LGBTQ+ youth**

Below are some of the most helpful online resources for LGBTQ+ youth, including counseling services, educational resources, and online communities.

### **Online counseling**

LGBTQ+ youth may have a hard time accessing in-person counseling, but online counseling provides flexible support. Whether on the phone, in a chat, or via text messaging, online counseling is convenient and inexpensive. Talking to a mental health professional online can be beneficial for LGBTQ+ teens. Online therapy is comfortable and accessible, and can be very effective in helping LGBTQ+ youth work through their mental health concerns. Many services allow youth to send messages 24 hours a day, and they're able to get help when they need it.

- **Talk Space:** This platform features thousands of licensed therapists who will provide guidance and support, and you can contact your therapist using a laptop or smartphone. The conversation will be synced across devices, so you can access help wherever you are. On [Talk Space](#), messages can be sent 24 hours a day, and the therapist will respond one or two times per day.
- **Pride Counseling:** Focused on providing counseling for the LGBTQ+ community, [Pride Counseling](#) will match youth with a licensed therapist. They provide support for identity and mental health issues in a safe space. It's possible to message a counselor 24 hours a day, as well as schedule counseling sessions.
- **Better Help:** [Better Help](#) provides a large network of licensed counselors, and you can reach a counselor through messaging, chat, phone, or video. For LGBTQ+ youth seeking online counseling, Better Help have affordable and convenient counseling services.
- **Amwell:** Providing LGBTQ counseling, [Amwell](#) offers face-to-face online therapy either on your computer or using a mobile app. Most sessions last around 45 minutes and must be scheduled in advance.

## **Educational resources**

It's important for LGBTQ+ youth to understand that they're not alone. Educational resources can provide more information on discrimination and bullying, how to effectively deal with this harassment, and where to find help.

- **The Trevor Project:** Offering a wealth of information to LGBTQ+ youth and allies, the [Trevor Support Center](#) answers frequently asked questions on topics such as gender identity and sexual orientation. You'll also find the [coming out handbook](#) and [resources for trans youth](#).
- **The Gay Straight Alliance:** From training youth leaders, supporting LGBTQ+ youth organizers, and supporting LGBTQ+ youth development, the [Gay Straight Alliance Network](#) unites teenagers across the country.
- **It Gets Better Project:** For inspiring stories from LGBTQ+ youth, the [It Gets Better Project](#) provides uplifting video stories created by LGBTQ+ youth around the world.

## **A sense of community**

Connecting with a community helps LGBTQ+ young adults feel a sense of belonging. Communities provide additional resources, encourage youth share their stories, and have platforms where youth make friends with people who can

understand their journey.

- Trevor Space: This international community is the world's largest social networking site for LGBTQ+ youth. On [Trevor Space](#) you can create a custom profile, join a discussion forum, and connect with people who are going through similar experiences.
- Gender Spectrum: [Gender Spectrum](#) provides an inclusive space for all LGBTQ+ youth. From resources and online consulting to online groups for teens and family members, they provide a community rooted in understanding and inclusion.
- Empty Closets: This online community offers a forum where you can join a chat, start a discussion, and find additional resources. [Empty Closets](#) will provide support to youth as they explore their sexual orientation.
- AVEN: The AVEN community promotes thoughtful and honest conversations about asexuality, and welcomes members who identify as sexual or asexual. [AVEN](#) allows you to connect with other youth through forums.

## Find a community near you

## Mobile apps

Bullying, discrimination, and harassment are major concerns for LGBTQ+ youth. Mobile apps are a great way to connect with others in your community or get mental health support. Apps can also provide further education, and help you identify risks to your mental and physical health. Look for inclusive forums, chat rooms that offer a safe space, and anti-bullying resources.

- Speak Up! ([iOS](#), [Android](#)): This app allows students and teachers to report bullying and harassment in schools, giving school administrators the information they need to investigate and prevent discrimination in classrooms and online.
- Refuge Restrooms ([iOS](#), [Android](#)): Download this app to find safe and gender inclusive restrooms in your area, see restrooms on a map, and even get navigation instructions.
- LGBTQ+ Animo Community and Chat ([iOS](#), [Android](#)): Download this app to meet LGBTQ+ youth and allies. Connect with new friends in a safe space on the forum or chat platform, discuss issues, ask for advice, and share resources.
- KnowBullying ([iOS](#), [Android](#)): Providing information about bullying, this app has online resources for parents and teens, and tips on how to safely use social media.
- ReThink ([iOS](#), [Android](#)): This innovative app was designed to stop cyberbullying. The app will detect hurtful or offensive comments before they're posted, and prompt the writer to rethink the comment before posting.

## Staying safe online

[Cyberbullying](#) is a major issue for LGBTQ+ youth online. Be aware of the risks when using social media, and learn what to do if you are bullied online. Follow these cyberbullying safety tips to stay safe when you're online.

- Don't respond: If you've been targeted by an online bully, your gut reaction might be to respond. However, responding to a bully gives them more power, and shows them that they've hurt you. Avoid responding or retaliating to a cyberbully, and leave messages unanswered.
- Save messages: You don't want to reread hurtful comments, but saving messages is the best way to put an end to cyberbullying. Show these messages to a trusted family member or counselor who can help. Even minor comments can escalate into something major, so save these messages.
- Block the bully: If you've been receiving private messages, you can block the bully, preventing them from sending you any more messages. If you're in a chat together, leave the chat.
- Talk to someone: When you experience cyberbullying, talk to a trusted parent, school counselor, or online counselor for support. They'll help you find out if you can report the incident anonymously as school, as well as help you process your emotions.

## Four ways that parents can help LGBTQ+ youth

If you're the parent of an LGBTQ+ youth, support your teenager and help them maintain their mental health. These are just four ways you can help your teenager, and you easily find supplemental resources on the internet that provide information to families of LGBTQ+ youth.

1. Find and use online resources: Take the time to educate yourself about LGBTQ issues, and the challenges your teenager may encounter. Kickstart your research by finding out if you're an [askable parent](#), then learn more about the LGBTQ community.
2. Share online help resources with your teenager: Gather a list of online resources that provide help and support to LGBTQ+ youth. Make sure your child can access online counseling, educational resources, mobile apps, and an online community. They'll feel supported as they explore their identity.
3. Connect your child with role models: LGBTQ+ youth often struggle to find their place within the community. Help your teenager by connecting them with a role model in the community.
4. Advocate for your child: If your teenager has been harassed, bullied, or discriminated against, become their strongest advocate. Meet with teachers and school administration to report and correct inappropriate and harmful behavior. Be their advocate among family members as well, and make sure your child is never harassed at home.

## Hotlines

Have you been having suicidal thoughts? LGBTQ+ youth can reach out to the

following hotlines in case of emergency, or suicidal thoughts.

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call the [Lifeline](#) for confidential 24 hour support.
  - 1-800-273-8255
  - For help in Spanish call: Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio: 1-888-628-9454
  - For help for the deaf & hard of hearing community: 1-800-799-4889
- The TrevorLifeline: Reach out to the [TrevorLifeline](#) 24 hours a day by phone.
  - 1-866-488-7386
  - TrevorChat connects you with a counselor from a computer.
  - TrevorText is a phone service. Text "START" to 678678.
- The LGBT National Youth Talkline: Access [peer support](#) for LGBTQ+ youth aged 25 or younger.
  - Monday to Friday: 1pm to 9pm
  - Saturday: 9am to 2pm
  - 1-800-246-7743