

# LGBTQ+ Identity Development and Euphoria Curriculum for Groupwork

## within a High School Setting

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### MODEL

This group follows a curriculum for eight weeks.  
The group meets weekly for 50 minutes.  
Closed group, limited to between 4 and 7 participants.  
Ideally run by an LGBTQ+ staff member.

### Proposed Group Sessions

#### Session 1: Introduction to Identity

Because queer identity can look unique for each individual, the first session of the group is focused on gaining an understanding of how queer identity operates for each member of the group, and how that identity can look different for different members. This activity would utilize figures such as the Genderbread Person or Gender Unicorn pictured above. The exercise also gives the facilitator a greater understanding of how questions throughout the group can be tailored to group experience, such as an emphasis on asexual identity, trans expression, or helping the group understand the difference between sexual and romantic attraction.

#### Sessions 2-3: Being Queer at School

With the knowledge that being at school can often be stressful for LGBTQ+ students, these sessions focus on experiences that group members may have experienced, as well as resources available at the school for support. The sessions would begin with more structured presentations of resources available to the students and then proceed into open discussion and processing of group member's experiences. Goals for these sessions include understanding desires to skip class as a result of potential negative experiences, learning to highlight positive aspects of being queer at school, and building solidarity and connection between group members.

#### Sessions 4-6: Coping Skills and Strengths-Based Responses to Trauma

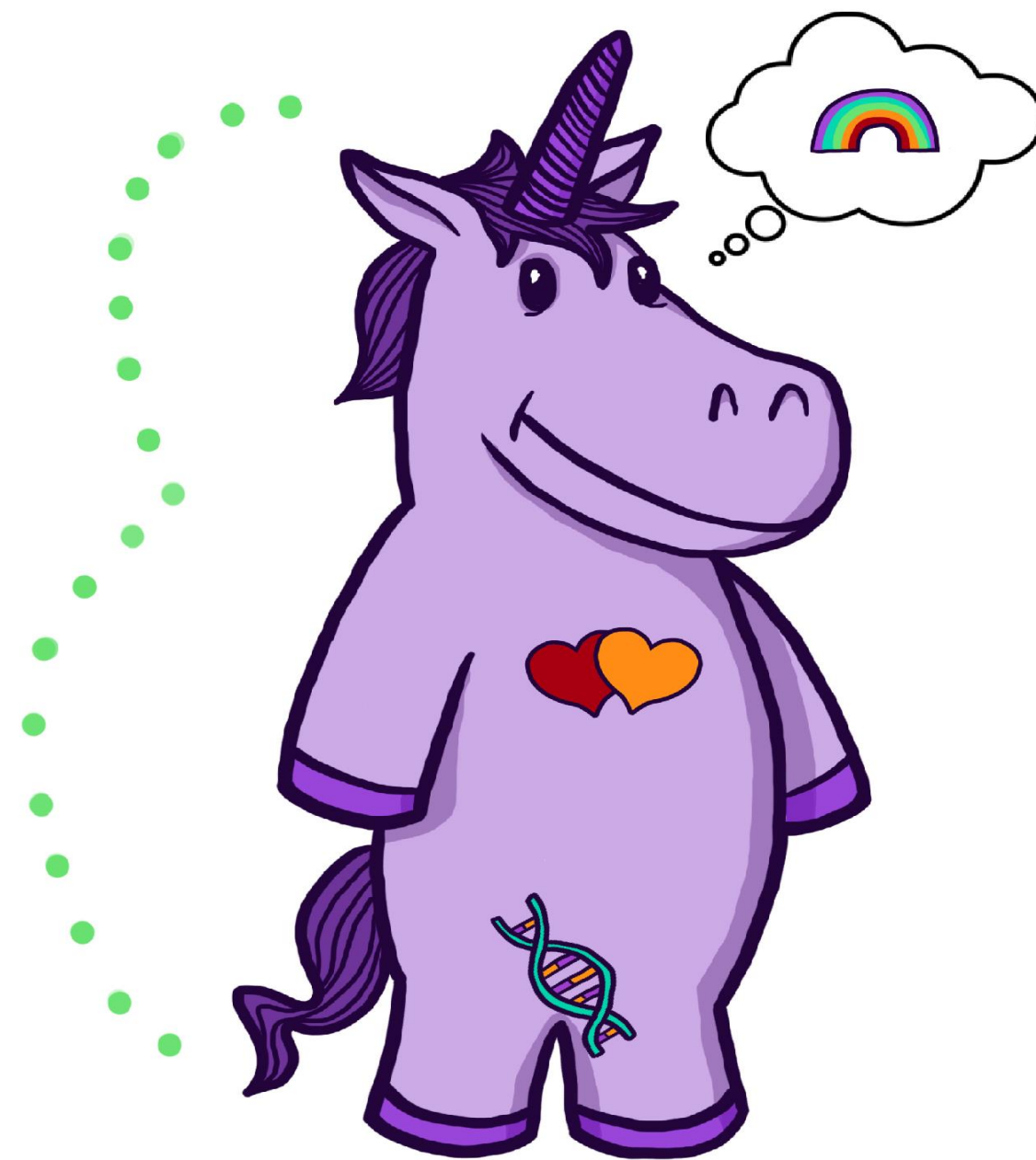
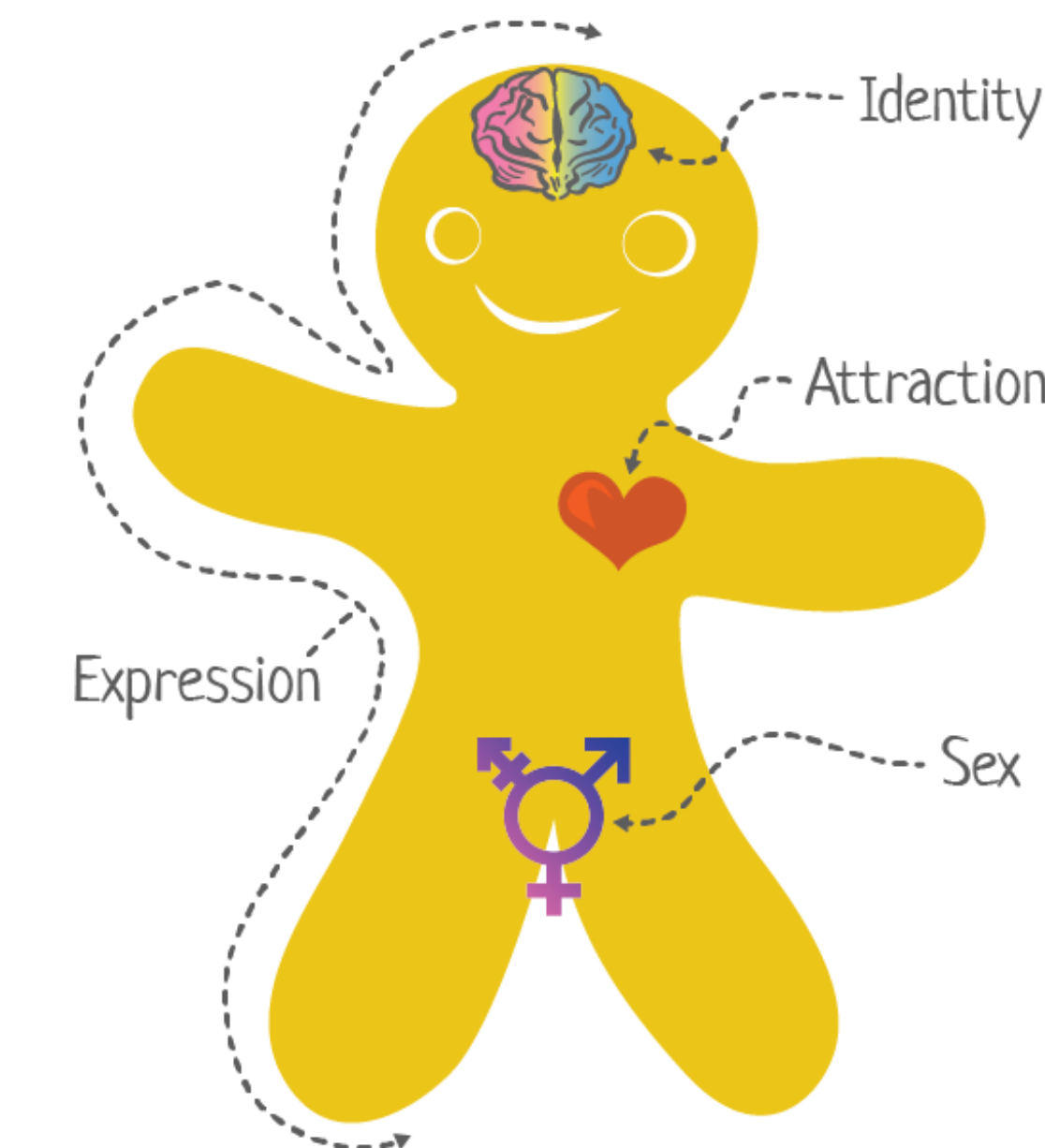
The bulk of the group sessions will be focused on building resiliency. The focus will not be on the increased possibility of trauma that queer students face, but on ways that the members have successfully coped with stressors in the past, and how those responses can be applied to future stressors. Members will be asked to identify a current stressor in their life and list supports and resources they have to help them manage it in the 4<sup>th</sup> session. The following sessions will be used to check in about the stressor, as well as discuss different modes of coping, such as grounding, community support, self-soothing, and forming a crisis plan.

#### Session 7: Identity Acceptance and Pride

As the group draws to a close, the focus shifts toward identity acceptance and pride as a means of combatting the negative effects that stress around LGBTQ+ identity can have. Using art as a mode of expression, group members will create a collage of images relating to their ideal relationship with their personal identity, and discussions will be had around how that ideal aligns or does not align with their current experience of their identity. The collage will provide members with a tangible representation of queer joy that they will be encouraged to keep somewhere they can keep it where it will serve as a helpful reminder of the group.

#### Session 8: Queer Joy and Group Closure

In the final session, members will be provided with school and local resources for LGBTQ+ community, such as the GSA alliance and online spaces. Then, a closing activity will be done to celebrate the learning and collaboration that occurred throughout the past eight weeks. Using either a whiteboard or a word cloud if the group was conducted virtually, members will be asked to reflect on questions such as their relationship towards their, if they feel more prepared to face specific stressors that may come their way, and general feelings they've developed towards the group.



### CONCLUSIONS

While unforeseen circumstances prevented a pilot session of the group from being conducted, there were still many insights gained from the research and development of the group curriculum. Knowing the many unique stressors that LGBTQ+ youth face and their elevated risk of experiencing mental health crises demonstrates the need for preventative community building and coping skill development that is specifically targeted towards LGBTQ+ issues. By creating a group setting for LGBTQ+ youth to process their experiences in, members gain the benefit of an affirmative space and companionship while learning about their own capacity for resilience. By helping form connections between LGBTQ+ youth as well as informing them of skills and resources they can take advantage of, the curriculum developed has great potential for helping LGBTQ+ students develop not only better schooling habits, but also greater pride in their own identity.

### SELECT REFERENCES

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For further reading, see handout

### ABSTRACT

With an increase in LGBTQ+ individuals within younger populations, and the fact that members of Generation Z already identify with the community during their adolescence, there is a great need for support around queer identity formation in adolescents' lives. However, despite the growing need for LGBTQ+ support, curricula around how to develop groups for these populations is lacking. This poster presents a summary of curriculum development and implementation for groups tailored to LGBTQ+ high school adolescents.

### BACKGROUND

- Nearly 16% of members of Generation Z self-identify as LGBT
- Around 60% of LGBTQ+ youth feel unsafe in their schools due to harassment based in identity
  - LGBTQ+ youth are at elevated risk of homelessness and familial stress due to parental disapproval of identity
- 30% of LGBTQ+ adolescents experience mental health disorders, which is higher than the general rate of mental illness reported in youth
  - Queer youth who have experienced discrimination in school are 3x more likely to miss class and have lower GPAs than their counterparts who do not experience discrimination

### IMAGE SOURCES

- Killermann, S. (2017). Genderbread Person v4.0. <https://www.genderbread.org/resource/genderbread-person-v4-0>
- Pan, L., & Moore, A. (2015). The Gender Unicorn. [www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)