

Lincoln Bishop
University



LGBTQ+ WELLBEING

AT UNIVERSITY

What does LGBTQ+ mean?

LGBTQ+ is an acronym used to describe an individual's sexuality and/or gender identity standing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and the '+' representing the limitless other sexual orientations and genders which can be found [here](#).

Some people may define themselves as part of the community, others not. You may be very familiar with many of these terms, but it's okay if you don't! Whether you are LGBTQ+ or not, these resources can help benefit yourself or someone you know.

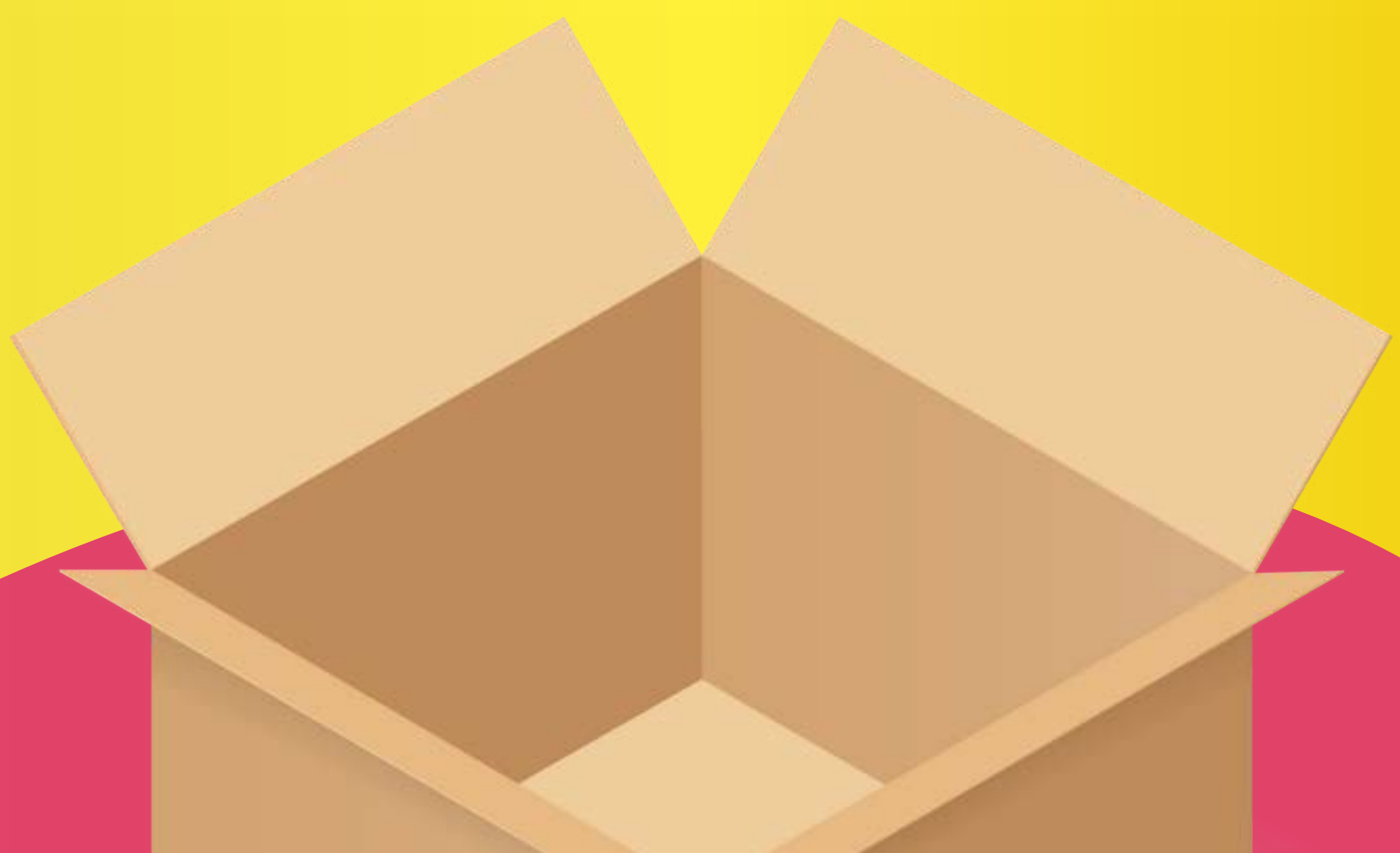




COMING OUT!

Coming out is when you are open with people about your sexuality or gender - this could be coming out to a few people, or everyone! To help you with this process, here is a quick question exercise to get you thinking!

What are the reasons you want to come out?



Who are the people you want to come out to?

When and where are you going to have this conversation? - for example whilst doing a relaxing activity, allocating plenty of time to talk.

How will you communicate that you are coming out?

How do you think they will react?

How will you deal with the reaction?

Name your support system and how you can utilise it during this time.

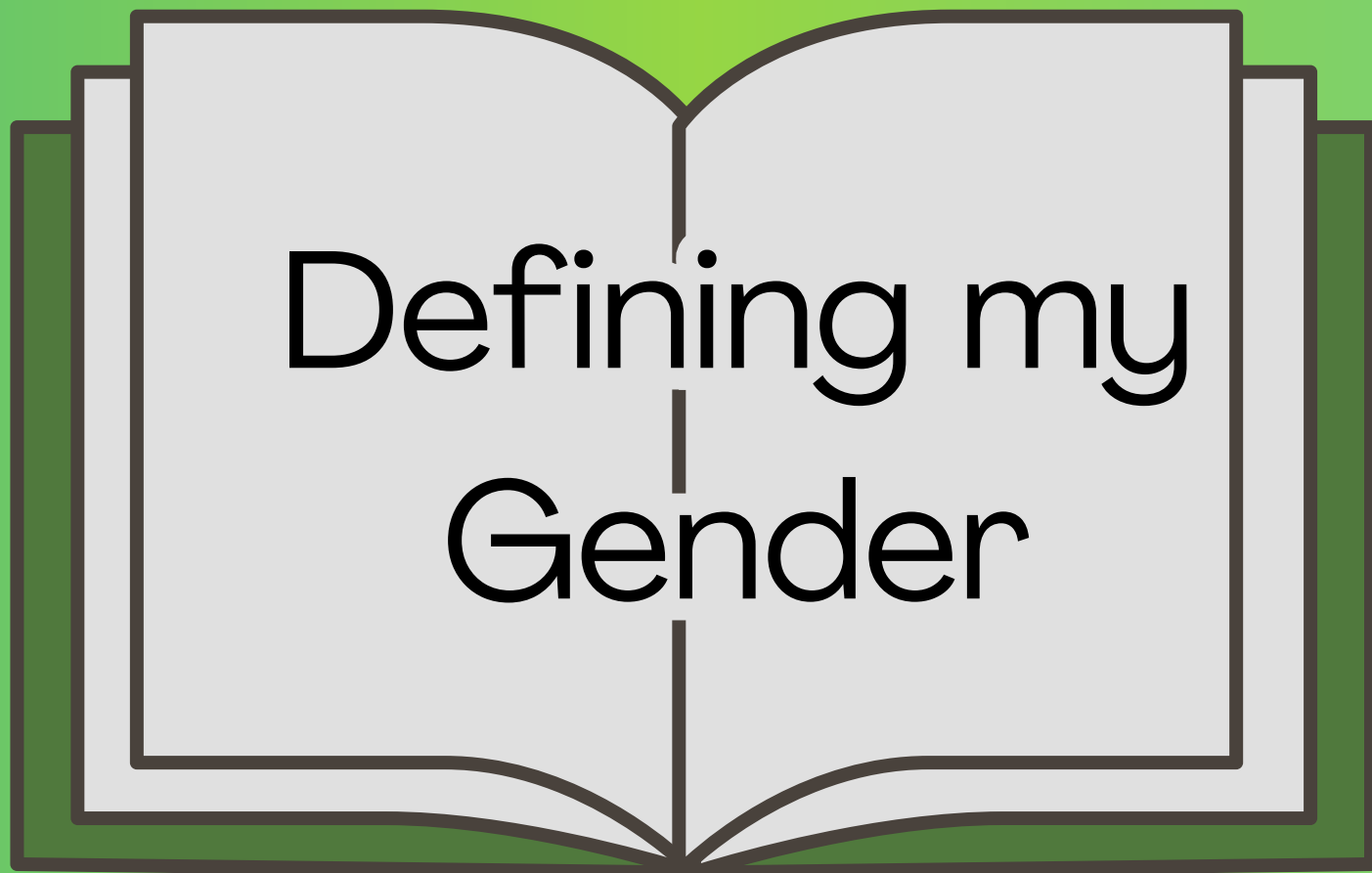
Do you trust these people and on a scale of 1 to 10, how safe is it to come out to them?

If you came out, what was your experience? How well did you predict the reaction? What have you learnt from this?

Do you plan on coming out to anybody else in the future, what does this look like?

What makes coming out easier for next time? (if applicable)

What will life look like once you are fully out?



If your gender identity doesn't align with the one you were assigned with at birth, or you're having thoughts around this, answering these questions are a good way to reflect on these thoughts and feelings!

How would you define your gender? What is the level of satisfaction you experience with your assigned gender?

Write your feelings, and thoughts related to your assigned gender. It can be positive or negative, satisfaction or discomfort. Write them down honestly.

If there is any crisis or identified problem with gender, since when do you start feeling this way about your gender? How does it affect your life?

What are the possible steps that you can take to overcome this problem? Who could be the people to help you in this?

How would you cope with any difficulties that you may face in this process of your gender identity? (Self-care, counselling, support groups, mental health advisers)

The Genderbread Person



The Genderbread Person is a great resource for those trying to understand their gender identity and figure out who they are! You can access it by clicking [here](#).



Positive Affirmations

Sometimes as someone part of the LGBTQ+ community, you may struggle with your sense of self-identity! This is perfectly okay! You may be discovering who you truly are for the first time and embracing that can be challenging!

Positive affirmations are small, but effective sentences that you can say to yourself replacing negative self-talk. Over time, these positive affirmations can change your thinking and behaviours more positively!

Try this task to create some positive affirmations below! You can search online for inspiration too! Don't forget to write them down and look at them every day!

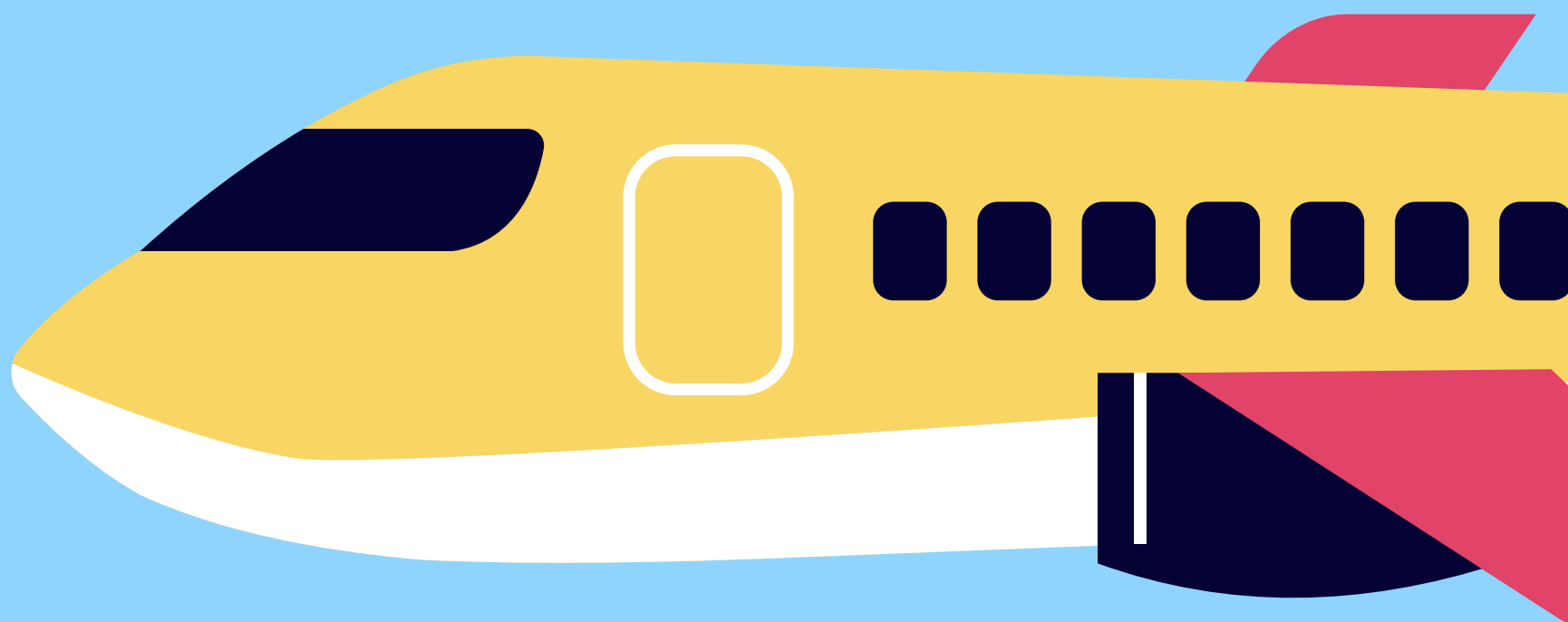
Handy Tips!

- Phrase your affirmation with an 'I' statement e.g. 'I am', and avoid using the word 'not'.
- Keep it concise.
- Be precise as possible and make it goal orientated if you can!
- Use 'ing' such as 'improving' to show you're making progress with this.
- Make them personal to you!

Write out your affirmations here or on some cards!

Adaptive Thoughts

Linking to negative self-talk, adaptive thoughts are a type of thought that you can use to process negative thoughts and triggers differently. With this activity, we can try to 'rewire' our behaviour by recognising the trigger and changing the response!



Working through the table from left to right, list some of your common triggers, write your automatic negative thought (ANT) and then include an adaptive thought. An example is shown in the first row.

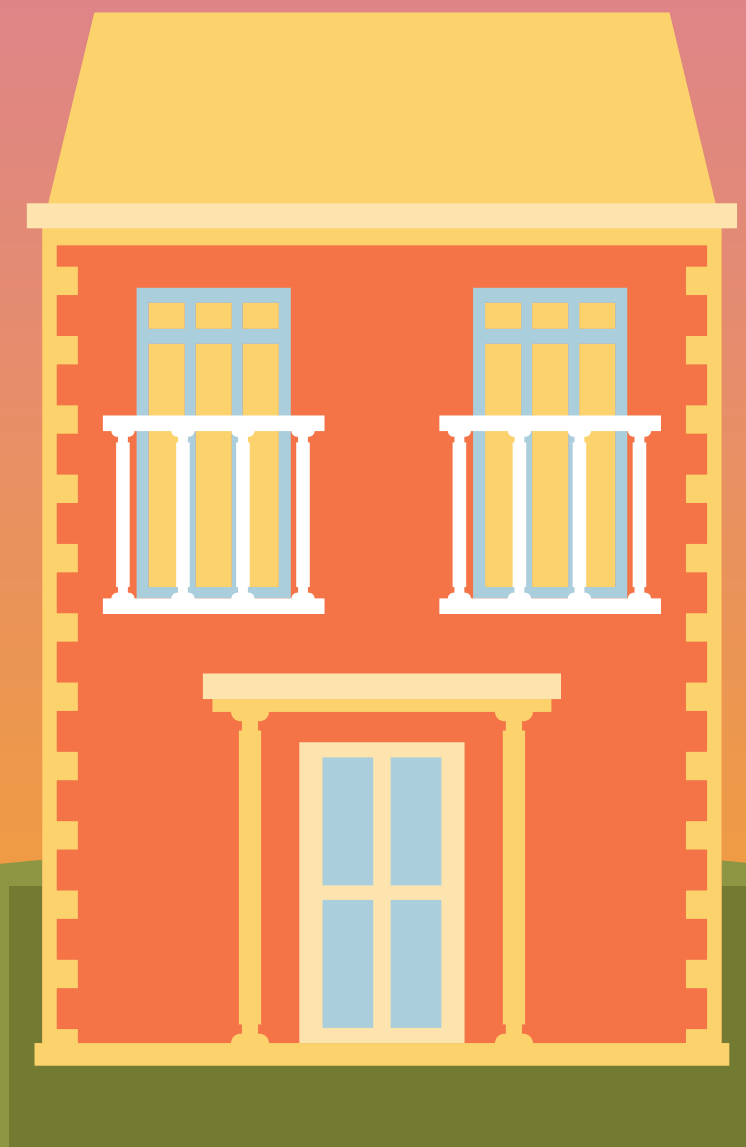
Trigger	ANT	Adaptive Thought
E.g. I looked in the mirror	"I'm ugly, I'm not happy with the way I look, I wish I was more masculine"	"I looked in the mirror when I was already quite on edge, I recognise I'm early in my transition, but a lot of people see me how I want to be seen, and everybody is making progress at different rates"

Quick Tips to Reframe Your Thoughts!

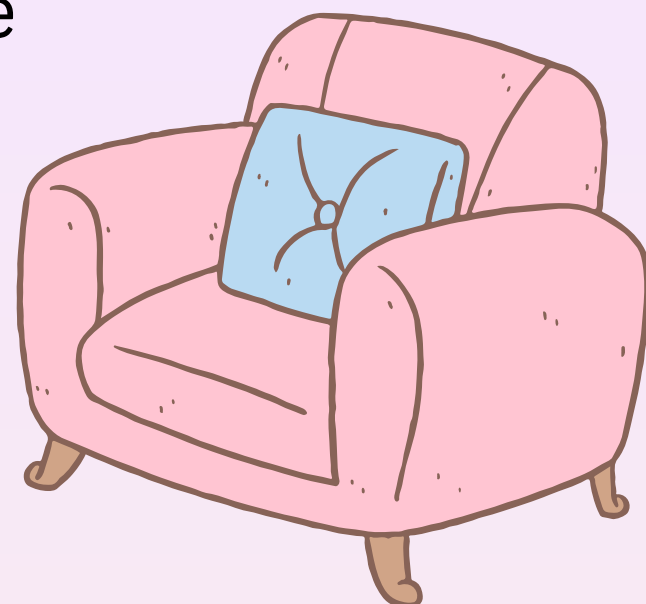
- 1. What facts support this thought? What existing evidence contradicts it?**
- 2. What would the worst possible outcome be, if this thought were true?**
- 3. Am I using a past experience to overgeneralize?**
- 4. Is there any way I might view this in a positive way?**
- 5. Will this matter one day from now? What about in one week, or month? How?**
- 6. What are some ways I've dealt with this scenario before?**
- 7. What advice would my counselor or therapist give about this situation?**
- 8. What am I ready to accept about this event or person?**
- 9. Are my thoughts helping me deal with this scenario? Or are they aggravating the situation?**
- 10. Can I genuinely control this?**
- 11. Besides myself, what else might be affecting this situation?**
- 12. Am I using "I must," "I have to," or "I should" thinking here? Is it truly necessary?**
- 13. What advice would I give a friend in this scenario?**

Finding Your Safe Space

Unfortunately at times, you may find yourself overwhelmed in the world, especially if you've just come out, or struggling with your sense of identity. Creating a space where you can manage stress, promote self-care, and foster personal growth is a good first step to recharge!

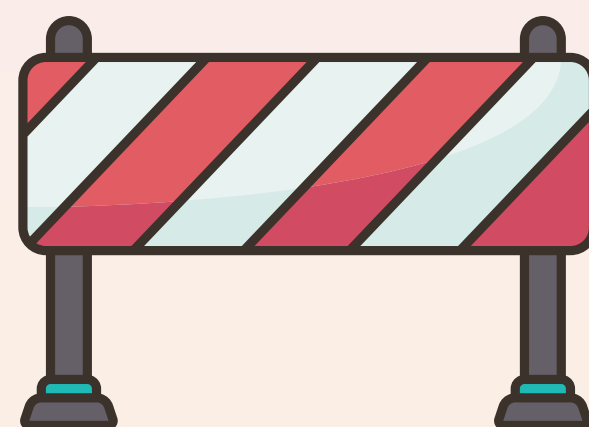


1) Find your safe space - this should be somewhere that offers privacy and minimises interruptions. Make it comfortable by adding cushions and blankets, as well as decorating it with photos of loved ones, favourite objects, or pretty artwork!



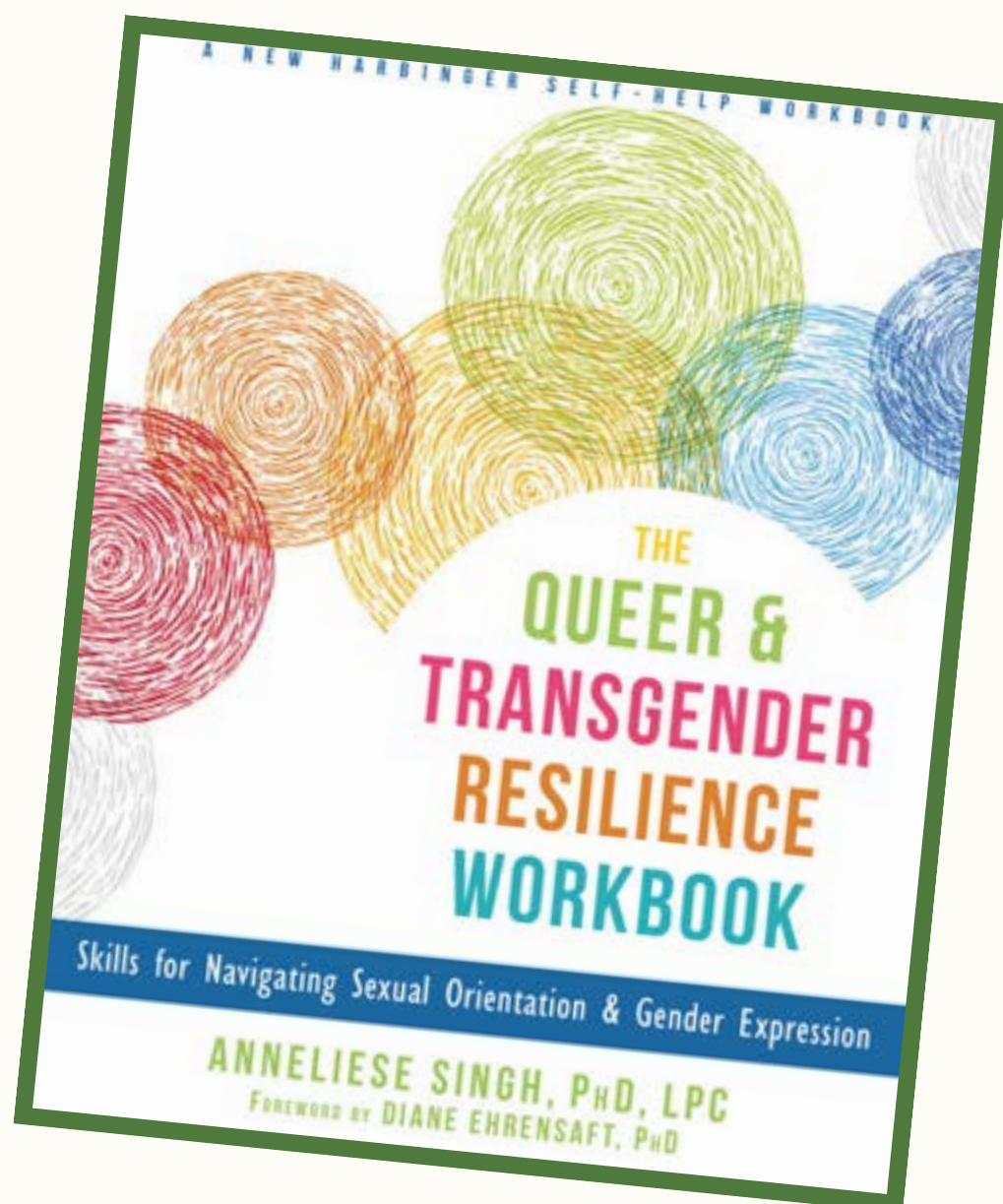
2) Create a peaceful atmosphere by changing the lighting, lighting incense, using a diffuser, or spraying a nice scent! You could even put on relaxing music!

3) Set boundaries - communicate to others your need for time in your safe space, and set aside time yourself mentally to switch-off and fully engage with self-care.



4) Disconnect from technology - this allows you to immerse yourself in the present moment and avoid distractions. You are the most important person to talk to right now!

Building RESILIENCE



Resilience is really important for LGBTQ+ individuals as it can help them ‘bounce back’ from challenging situations which may arise in their journey. Having resilience can help turn a negative into a positive! The best part is, everybody can develop it!

Check out this amazing workbook by Anneliese Singh for some activities around resilience for LGBTQ+ people!

Workbook

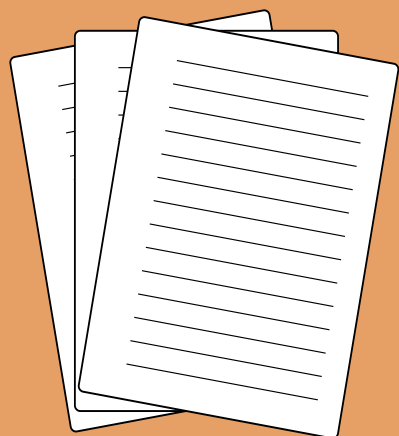
Accepting Yourself

Whether you're exploring your sexuality and gender for the first time, or have known for many years, people can often struggle to accept themselves for who they truly are within the LGBTQ+ community. This could be for a variety of different reasons, including but limited to views of family, discrimination from others, or own internal stereotyping.

How do we accept ourselves and move on and live a happy life as the beautiful person we are? Let's explore some approaches on the next page!



1) Seek safety - surround yourself with others that accept who you are, join a LGBTQ+ group, go to pride, be around your close friends. You can then practice being vulnerable and opening up to these people, and eventually expanding out further.



2) Reflect - write down how your life has been before and after you knew you were LGBTQ+. What will happen if you keep yourself hidden? Will you have any regrets? What do I want to show people? Who am I truly - am I being true to myself?

3) Realise you're not actually changing - sexuality and gender are important, but at the same time they aren't. What this means is that you can come out, but really what is going to change about you? You're not going to have different interests, you will still love the people you always have done, you will continue wanting the same job or studying at university. You are ultimately the same person, but embracing a part of you that is your true self!



4) Use apps such as VODA and Evolve which have specific LGBTQ+ meditations, journal prompts, reflections, and more to help you accept yourself as part of the LGBTQ+ community! You can find these on the app store of your phone!

STRENGTHS OF BEING LGBTQ+



LGBTQ+ people can often face challenges, but let's not forget the strengths they have! Reflect on some of these and write down where you've used these skills/traits over the past few months!

Social intelligence - you are likely to be able to read people really well in group settings, and recognise who is safe and accepting amongst them. This can lead to better communication and listening skills with others, and the ability to form good friendships and communities.

Empathy for others - you have lived your own experience of difficulties with coming out with your sexuality or gender so likely can relate and empathise with others. You can build support networks and care for other people.

Creativity - you can explore identity, emotions, and experiences in creative ways leading to improved self-esteem, greater self-awareness, and be able to story tell.

Authenticity - you are embracing your true self despite rejection and challenges. You can advocate for others and develop a sense of trust amongst others.

Resilience - you can thrive in difficult situations that most people wouldn't have experienced, can deal with high pressure, and adapt to change.

BREAKING NEWS!

The LGBTQ+ community can sometimes be caught up in complex and negative news stories! Although news can be informative and keep you updated on a variety of different topics, often media outlets are not reliable sources of information, and what you see is not always factual. This is because news tries to be engaging and catch your attention, and sometimes it can actually have a negative affect on us!

Think about your influences when it comes to the news - try taking a break from media and seeing what affect it has on your mental wellbeing!





University is full of new and wonderful people, and many people think that university is good for exploring their sexuality. Remember - not everybody is the same and you don't have to be pressured into doing things you don't want to do, and the same goes for others! Here are some tips!

- Start with curiosity - don't rush into situations, but instead reflect. Ask questions about yourself and your sexuality, what you like, or don't like, and how I want to explore it.
- Communicate - communicate with others, whether this be other partners, be clear if you're interested in something or not, and don't label others if they are exploring too, and don't expect a certain outcome when exploring with others.
- Set boundaries - know what you are comfortable with and what the other people are.
- Be safe - this links to boundaries, as you should ensure you are on the same page with partners about getting tested and being on top of your sexual health. Support and guidance on safe sex can be found [here](#).

PEER SUPPORT

Feeling connected and feeling like you belong is one of the biggest needs of the LGBTQ+ community whilst at university. You're in a new environment, and having people around you that understand you or have similar experiences can be great for your mental wellbeing!

Get involved in groups and activities where you can! You don't necessarily have to talk about your experiences, but doing an activity together can also be fun, whether that be sports, crafts, or anything else - it's nice to have that support group with you! Check out the next page to see what you could get involved with!





BGSU has a range of societies to get involved in where you meet a diverse range of people, as well as the PRIDE society which can give you access to a group of people with similar experiences.

Proud Connections offer a Live Chat feature as well as one to one support and mentoring for LGBTQ+ folk!



The Lincoln LGBTQIA+ Network is home to lots of people across Lincoln, and there are also plenty of events to get involved in!



Advocating for others

Whether you are LGBTQ+ yourself or not, it's important to show respect for your peers and support them as much as possible. So what can you do?

Don't make assumptions - everyone is on their own ongoing journey, try and understand their experiences and ask them what is appropriate to talk about at the moment.

Validate their emotions - normalise how they are feeling and allow them to think freely, exploring themselves at their pace, and going in whichever direction they want to.

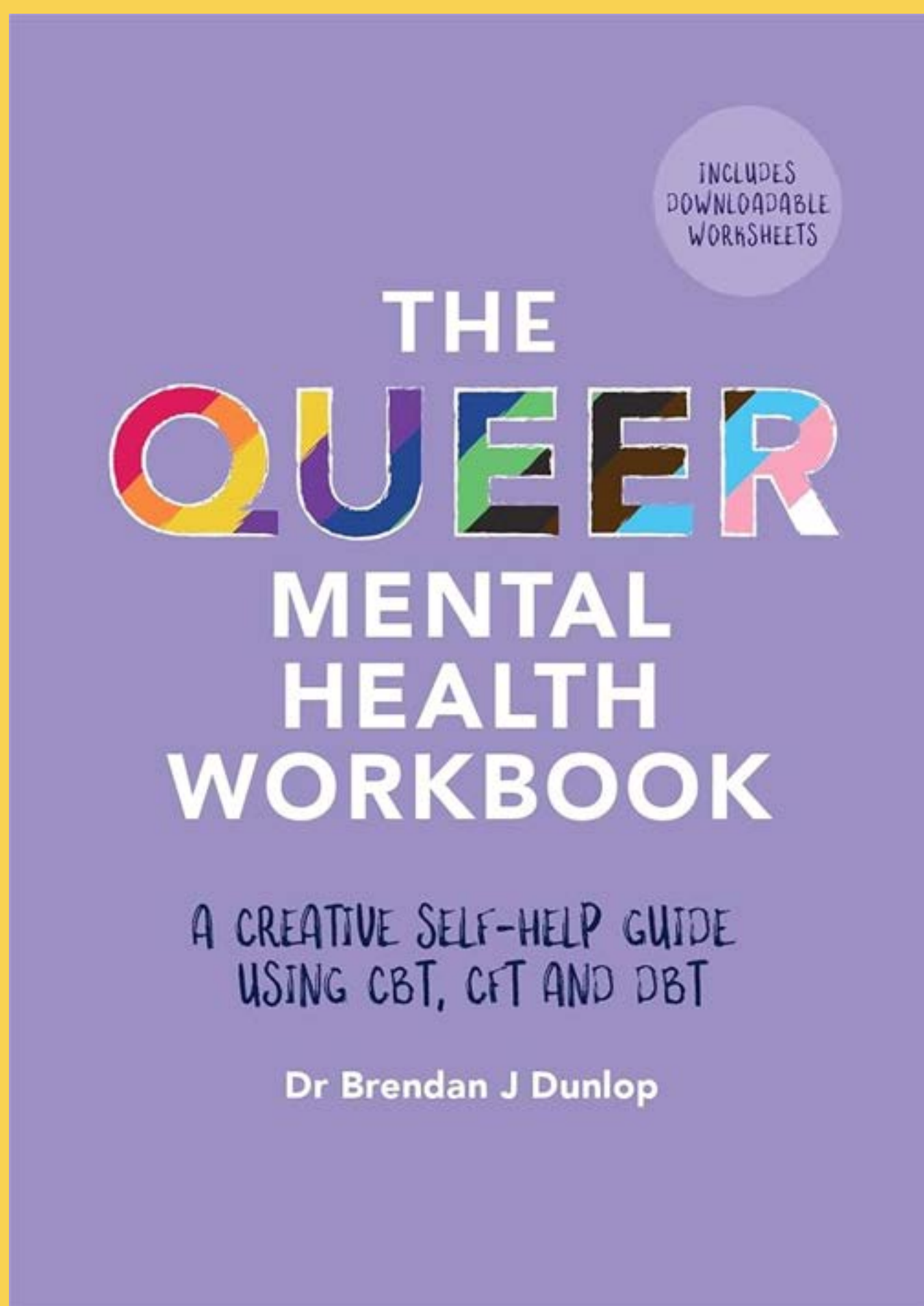


Educate yourself - read journal articles, people's experiences, and surround yourself with others. Challenge any biases you hold by questioning your thinking, behaviour, and choices

Be aware of language and pronouns, learn the history, challenges,

Share on social media - it is easy to share and promote support resources on social media platforms to reach more LGBTQ+ individuals. This information could help make somebody feel safe, or educate somebody new!

The Queer Mental Health Workbook is a highly recommended book by LGBTQ+ individuals. It offers a range of resources based on CBT, CFT, and DBT. It is written by Dr Brendan J Dunlop and is available [here](#).



Where can I get support?

Galop - helplines for LGBT+ hate crime and abuse.

Mindline Trans+ - Emotional and mental health support helpline for anybody identifying as trans, non-binary, gender variant, and their relatives.

Stonewall - Charity supporting LGBT individuals.

Mermaids - charity supporting trans and gender diverse young people under 20.

Gendered Intelligence - support for transgender individuals.

Student Minds - supports students with overall mental health.

Switchboard - LGBT+ Helpline

TransActual - have a range of resources for trans people, including health and wellbeing.

GP - you can reach out to your GP for support with your sexuality and gender and they can recommend the appropriate support you need.

MindOut - this site includes guidance and signposting to workshops, support, and groups for LGBTQ+ people.

Report and Support Tool - You can use the report and support tool to report discrimination, sexual misconduct, hate crime, assault, bullying, and harassment.

Remember you can also reach out to Student Advice for support, or talk to one of the Mental Health Advisers by booking an appointment