

What Queer Folks Want Trauma Therapists to Know:

An Evidence-Based Workshop

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Trauma Talks

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Hi, We're Leah & Jenna

Agenda

Time	What We Are Going To Do
1:20 – 1:25	Icebreaker
1:25 – 1:35	Talk about Language
1:35 – 1:55	Review the Research
1:55 – 2:00	Self-Reflect on Recommendation for Clinical Practice
2:00 – 2:20	Small Group Activity
2:20 – 2:30	Q & A

Icebreaker

Introduce yourself to 3 people:

Share:

- Your name
- Pronouns
- What drew you to this workshop

Language

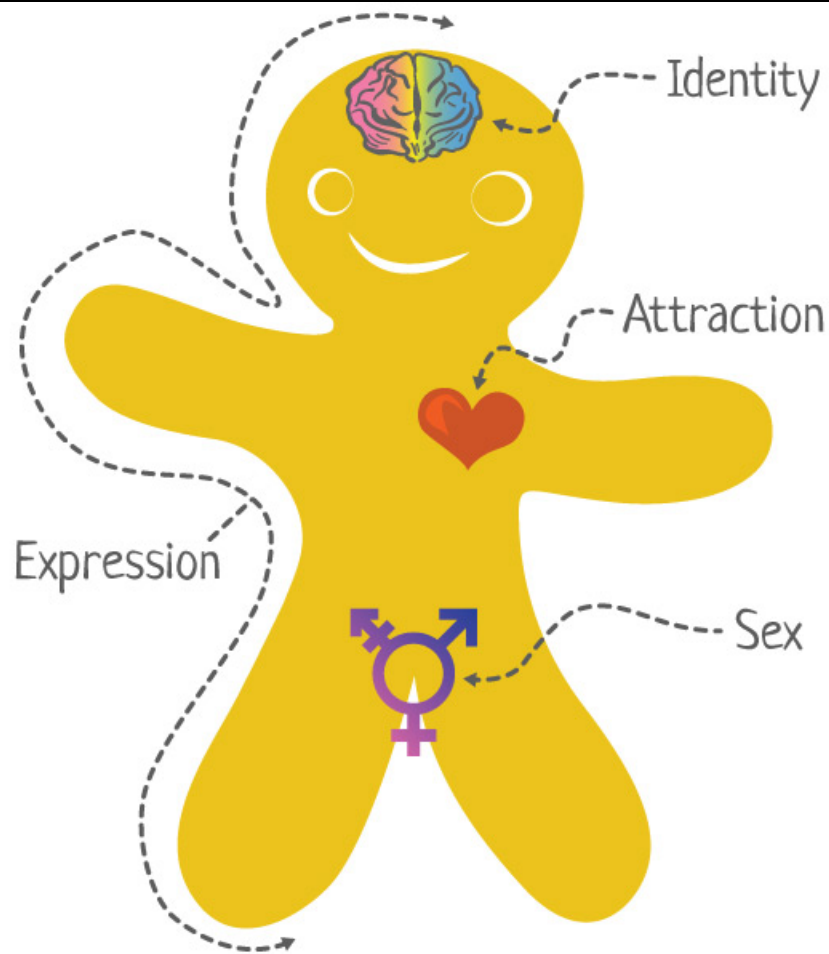
Getting on the Same Page

Gender

- There is a difference between sex and gender.
- There is a difference between gender identity and gender expression.
- *Trans* may be used as an umbrella term to describe diverse genders.
- In North America we are taught to think about gender as essential, rooted in biological sex, and binary (i.e., boys/girls, men/women), but this belief is a social construction.
- Individuals who do not conform to the norm often experience discrimination (e.g., cissexism, transphobia).

Sexuality

- Sexual behaviour, sexual identity, and sexual attraction are all different aspects of our sexuality.
- We are conditioned to think of:
 - sexuality as monosexual
 - heterosexuality and monogamy as the norm.
- Individuals that do not conform to the norm often experience discrimination (e.g., homophobia, heterosexism, biphobia).
- People under the bi umbrella experience discrimination from both straight and gay/lesbian communities (i.e., monosexism).



♥ Sexually Attracted to



♥ Romantically Attracted to

Insidious Trauma

- *Insidious trauma*: continuous traumatic influence of living with oppression (Root, 1992)
- *Cultural victimization*: traumatic influence of living in a heterosexist culture (Balsam, 2002; Neisen, 1993)
- Insidious Trauma or Microaggressions:
 - Can be invisible
 - May be unintentionally perpetrated in our work with clients and within the systems we work within

Trauma in the LGBTQ+ Community

Trauma in the LGB Community

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people report elevated rates of trauma exposure (e.g., Anderson et al., 2013; Robert et al., 2010)

LGB individuals have higher rates of adverse childhood events (Anderson & Blosnich, 2013; Balsam et al., 2005; Lehavot & Simpson, 2014; Roberts et al., 2010)

Trauma in the LGB Community

LGB youth have reported high rates of:

Verbal victimization or abuse (72%-78%)

Verbal threats of physical violence (30%)

Being threatened with disclosure of their sexual orientation (29%) (D'Augelli et al., 2006; Dragowski et al., 2011)

Among adults, LGB individuals:

Have higher rates of physical and psychological intimate partner abuse

Are more likely to be sexually assaulted as an adult (Balsam et al., 2005; Hughes, Johnson, & Wilsnack, 2001)

Trauma in the Trans Community

In a study of transgender women, nearly all participants had experienced multiple traumatic events (Shipherd et al., 2011)

47% of trans respondents had been assaulted (Wilchins et al., 1997)

43% had encountered violence (Xavier, 2000)

56.3% had experienced violence at home

51.3% had been physically abused

53.8% had been sexually assaulted (Kenagy, 2005)

Trauma in the Trans Community

37% of trans respondents reported workplace discrimination including firing, demotions, and unjust disciplinary actions
(Lombardi et al., 2001)

50% of trans sex workers indicated previous homelessness
(Valera et al., 2001)

Trans adolescents are overrepresented among homeless youth
(Dean et al., 2000; de Vries et al., 2006)

Employment problems and financial strain can interfere with recovery from trauma and increase vulnerability to further violence (Mizock & Lewis, 2008)

Mental Health Care for Queer Folks

LGBT clients have reported:

- A lack of access to competent, LGBTQ affirming therapy

- Therapist bias

- Discrimination

- Stigma

- Microaggressions

(Ross et al., 2016; Shelton & Delgado-Romero, 2011; Shipherd, 2010)

What are the
barriers to
LGBTQ+ people
accessing
trauma therapy?

Cost
&
Experienced or Perceived
Discrimination

I have considerable debt right now, from school and from trying to support myself while I was going to school – and it's followed me around for about ten years, so it's accumulated a lot of interest...I'm making good enough pay, but I can't seem to pay it down. So I pay my rent, I pay my food. And then a couple of bills, and then I'm like 'Well, where is any money left to go get counseling and stuff?'

- Jason, 28, bisexual, White, cisgender man

I have a few people in my life that have mental health issues and are women of colour, so they are just patronized and treated like nuisances, or sometimes treated really harshly... they've got all these files about them and all the assumptions about them because of whatever they have been diagnosed with. And I really would very much like to avoid all of that.

- Rachel, 28, fluid/heteroflexible, white, cisgender woman

She [the counselor] basically said that I should stop dating women. That men are the only choice, and that I should try out religion, because that would probably solve my problems and make me no longer want to date women. And she said that my anxiety would go away if I stopped, if I stopped making myself – forcing myself to be different, by liking women.

- Jordana, 29, bisexual, Metis, cisgender woman

The second [therapist] said that bisexuality didn't exist. And that I was confused and I should just become celibate and not date anybody for the next few years, and just you know 'see what happens' ... We really didn't understand each other at all.

- Jason, 28, bisexual, White, cisgender man

I have heard things like “that is just a phase” And like “once you get out of the fog.” The gender fog.

- Felipe, 31, queer, Latin American, genderqueer,
trans man

It was next to impossible to find any support for that [trans identity]. I went back to [LGBT-focused mental health service] and saw somebody who [they] told me had a really good understanding of trans identity and it was the most traumatic experience I've ever had. She looked at me horrified when I came out to her as trans, had no idea what that meant and said 'We don't know how to help you,' ... I stayed out of counseling for awhile after that.

- Rory, 27, pansexual/queer, white, trans man

**What do LGBTQ+ folks
think a trauma
therapists could do to
make their practice
more welcoming/
friendly to LGBTQ+
individuals?**

I really only want to see people who are already accepting of my lifestyle, in terms of the queer and the poly and the kinky. All of those things. And I don't want to teach anybody. And I'm not paying my \$70 an hour to explain [my identity and lifestyle] to you.

- Anna, 35, bisexual/queer, White, cisgender woman

I had done this research on queer friendly counselors, and I wanted that specifically because I didn't want to have to go into a situation where I had to battle someone on what is poly, and that I'm bi and um, go back into past and 'Was there a reason that you're now made this way? Or was there some sort of trauma that's caused you to be unable to commit,' and all the misconceptions that come up with being bi and poly.

- Henry, 33, bisexual/queer/pansexual, White, trans man

Given this,
what can we do?

Self-Reflection Activity: Queering Trauma Therapy – Self-Reflection Checklist for Service Providers

- Complete checklist individually (5 minutes)
- In groups of 2-3 (10 minutes):
 - Which items resonate with you?
 - Do any (non-identified) clients come to mind?
 - Is there anything that you could do differently?
 - Are there things you are already doing?
 - Are there changes that you feel hesitant about making?
- Discussion with the wider group (10 minutes)

Take-Home Messages

- LGBTQ+ people often feel invalidated in therapy due to:
 - Inappropriate language
 - Assumptions
 - Lack of understanding
- As therapists we can:
 - Educate ourselves
 - Be open and non-judgemental
 - Be self-reflective and aware of own biases and areas for growth
 - Affirm different gender identities, sexualities, and relationship structures

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 - PFLAG Canada
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 - Psychology Department
 - Psychology Clinic
 - Centre for Feminist Research
 - Undergraduate Research Participant Pool

Thank You!

To contact us or download resources
please visit

QueeringTraumaTherapy.ca

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