

Social support: gender affirming care outside the clinic

Presentation by Ezra Stone, MSW, LCSW

Who am I?

LCSW in private practice

Licensed in Florida and Minnesota

Trained in DBT, LGBT-specific CBT

Facilitator of community group called Rainbow Resilience

Acknowledging my teachers: Jacoby Ballard, Al Clifton, Neathery Falchuk, Jen Evans

Purpose of the presentation (the CE version)

1. To understand the impact of minority stress on trans/nonbinary people's mental and physical health
2. Identify 3 community/peer support resources to share with trans/nonbinary patients
3. Better support patients in accessing culturally competent and gender-affirming social support

Purpose of the presentation (the candid version)

- To show the ways that queer and trans people are working together in our community to meet one another's social/emotional needs
- To provide some suggestions of where your clients can go to make friends and build community
- Mutual aid and collective survival

Minority stress/trans mental health

TGNC individuals report significantly higher levels of anxiety (26 - 38% vs. 28.8% in the general population) and depression (48 - 62% vs. 16.6% in the general population)

TGNC individuals who experience discrimination, violence, or interpersonal rejection are at risk for developing symptoms of depression

Minority stress/trans mental health (cont)

Loneliness was significantly higher among trans people than cis people (56.4% for trans women, 62.6% for trans men, 63.9% for GNC, compared to 32.1% of cis people)

likewise lack of social/emotional support (44.8% trans women, 34.4% trans men, 41/1% GNC, compared to 23.8% cis people)

data reinforces that loneliness and lack of social/emotional support are associated with depression and stress

Data in support of social support

Social support catalyzes the use of healthy coping mechanisms (e.g., humor, hobbies, spirituality, gender-affirming psychotherapy), reduces psychological distress related to transphobia and discrimination, and predicts positive mental and physical health outcomes

Family and peer networks that embrace nonbinary gender identities allow TGNC individuals to develop greater self-acceptance and congruence with their internal sense of gender.

Social support and internalized transphobia

- Study of emerging adults (18-29) showed correlation between internalized transphobia and psychological distress
- Social support and level of 'outness' were negatively correlated with internalized transphobia
- Social support and gender identity disclosure indirectly affected the association between internalized transphobia and distress

Highlights the importance of interventions and programs that address internalized stigma, increase social support, and encourage visibility

Trauma-informed lens (Hall 2021)

- trans/nonbinary people have increased risk of post traumatic stress and higher amounts of trauma exposure
- we live in a dehumanizing society
- Study gathered qualitative data on how trans and gender expansive people feel about both mental health care and community support, and what they feel would improve these things.

“Think about the communities to which you belong. What qualities would make these communities more supportive of you in the future?”

- Responses overlapped significantly with themes of trauma-informed care
 - Trust and emotional safety
 - Preferences for working with other members of the LGBTQ+ community
 - Mindfulness around in-ground gender policing
 - Acceptance and validation especially important for those healing from trauma
 - Physically safe and accessible spaces
 - Bathrooms
 - Other access needs (disability, sobriety, language needs)
 - Choice and collaboration
 - Empowerment
 - Attention to gender/cultural issues
 - Community education, decreasing discrimination, promoting inclusivity

So....what are we doing HERE to meet those needs?

The good news is that we have a robust ecosystem of support in our community!

Pride Community Center

TranQuility

Unspoken Treasure Society

Multiple LGBT-affirming religious/spiritual communities

....now I will highlight a few other programs/opportunities for support

Rainbow Resilience

Monthly social/educational discussion group for queer/trans folks

Special guests who are also part of the LGBTQ+ community

2025 topics included: queerness and spirituality

Tech security

Meditation

Somatics and mindful movement

DBT and IFS self-help skills

Arts and crafts

Who else's voice will you hear?

1 | Jasmine Angelini-Knoll

(disclosure: my spouse)

Co-organizer of Queer Sports GNV

2 | Avin Posen

Hair stylist and inclusion educator

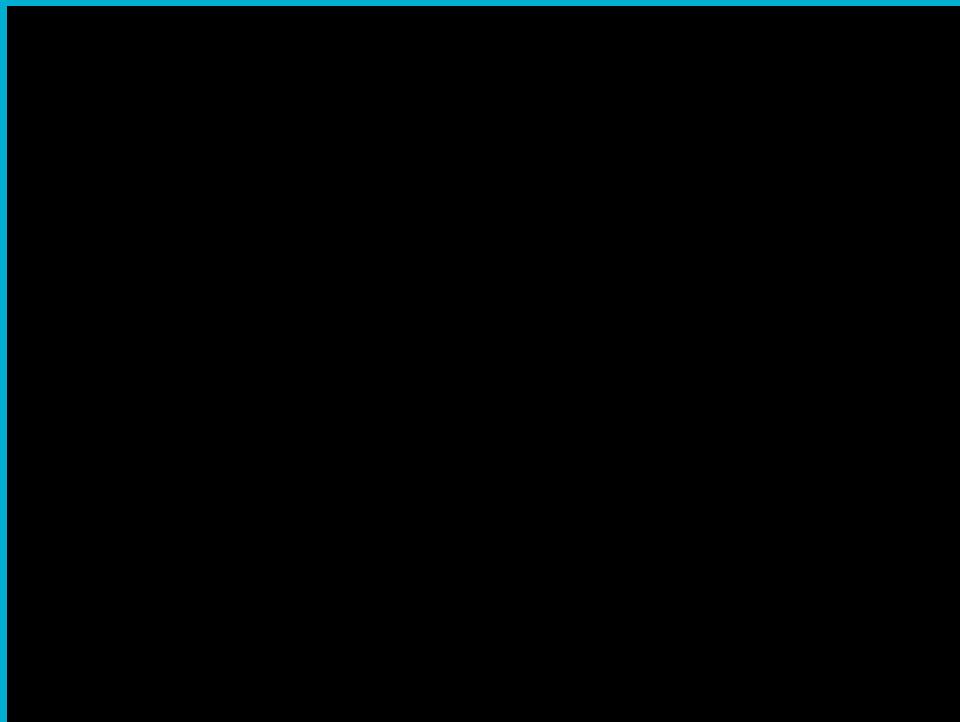
3 | Izy Rhinevault

Rainbow Dharma, local biweekly LGBTQ+ meditation group

Data in support of sports

- Lack of inclusive/comfortable environments are the primary barrier to trans people participating in sports
- Trans adults are less likely to engage in physical activity in their free time, largely due to peer victimization in gyms/community sports
- Higher perceived social support predicts greater activity levels and lower depressive sx
- Participants who play sports or have regular gym routines report better coping skills and lower internalized stigma
- Avoiding sports due to anticipated discrimination is connected to higher levels of depression
- Social support and self perception are mediators of physical activity

Queer Sports GNV



In support of gender affirming hairstyles

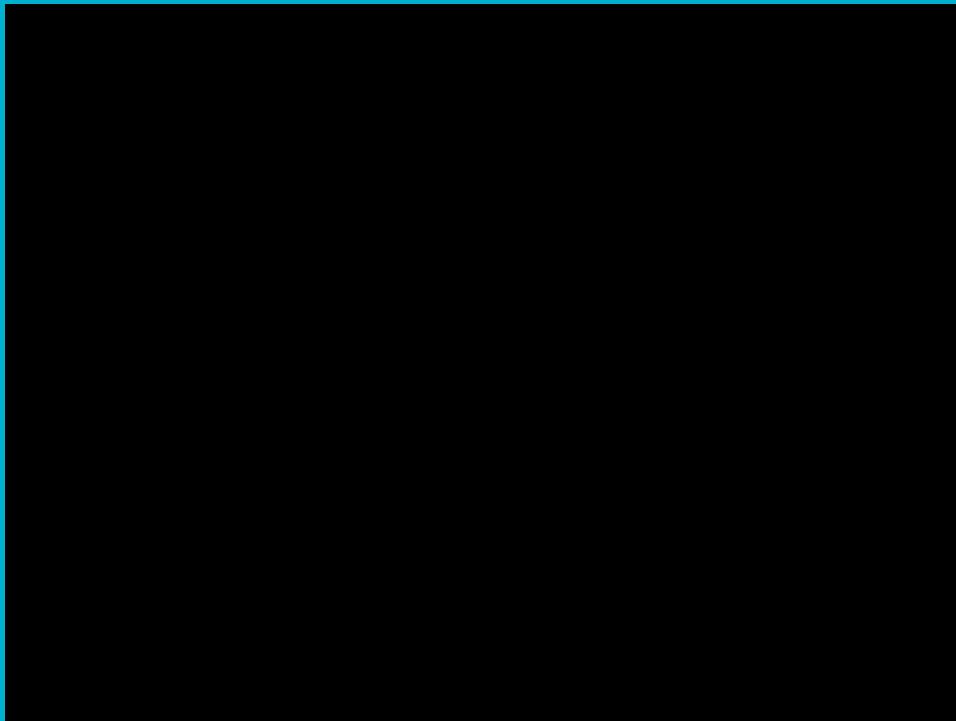
Social transition and gender affirmation often looks like changing our hair or clothes

Research shows that social transition markedly improves mental health.

Experimenting with or changing clothing/hair styles is often a first step for folks exploring their gender identity

Environments that signal safety, collaboration, and awareness of cultural differences are both trauma-informed and aligned with the preferences trans folks have highlighted in the research we've looked at so far

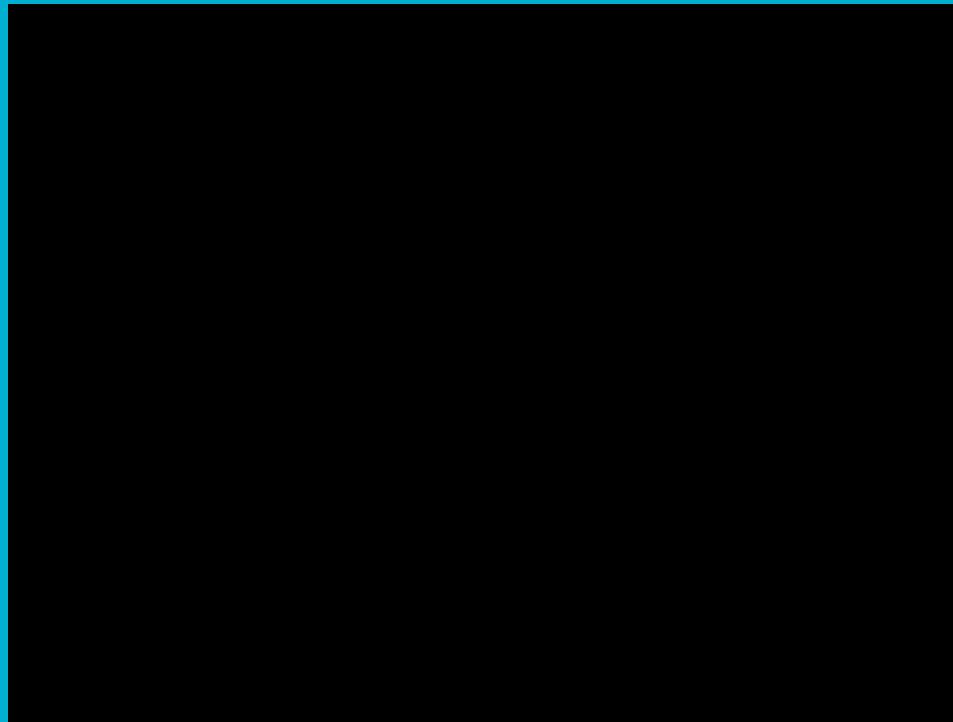
Avin Posen, gender affirming hair stylist



Group meditation

- Current studies suggest that mindfulness-based group interventions are an effective tool for LGBTQ+ individuals to increase emotional regulation skills, decrease internalized stigma, increase sense of community
- Example: Tuned In! A mindfulness intervention for young adults(ages 16-29)
 - Participant report developing useful coping skills, a sense of community, and the opportunity to learn from peers through dialogue

Rainbow Dharma



Conclusions

Trans people are at higher risk of mental health challenges due to minority stress and the hostile political environment

Trauma-informed, gender affirming social support is important for trans people!

Social support and affirmation can increase other healthy behaviors (physical activity, use of coping skills)

Social support can come in many different forms, and can include recreational activities, peer/educational groups, spiritual community, as well as supportive interactions, such as with an affirming stylist or healthcare provider

Supportive providers and environments can make accessing gender affirming care and social support more accessible

Citations

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