



Webinar Series

Romantic Relationships and LGBTQ Youth:

Tips and Strategies for Parents and Educators

In December 2020, Alexa Martin-Storey, Canada Research Chair on Stigma and Psychosocial Development: Université de Sherbrooke, presented a webinar on romantic relationships and LGBTQ youth. [Click here to watch the webinar](#) and [click here to download the slides](#).

Positive and consensual romantic relationships are important for many youth, and can be a source of safety and support for LGBTQ adolescents in particular. LGBTQ adolescents experience unique challenges in their romantic relationships compared to their heterosexual or cisgender peers.

Dating Violence: Physical, verbal, psychological, or sexual violence occurring within a romantic or dating relationship.

Sexual Violence : Any violence that is carried out by sexual means or by targeting sexuality like sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender or sexuality-based discrimination.

LGBTQ: LGBTQ can describe people with sexual identities (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer or questioning identities) or gender identities (i.e., transgender, genderqueer identities) that are minoritized. Sexual and gender identities are different. Sexual identities describe types of people who you are attracted to (or not, like for some asexual adolescents), while gender identities reflect the gender (or genders) a person identifies with. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** There are A LOT of identities outside of those listed here, and we use LGBTQ as an accessible short hand.

Dating and Sexual Violence

While all youth can experience dating and sexual violence, LGBTQ youth report higher levels of sexual and dating violence than heterosexual or cisgender youth, and face unique barriers for getting help.

Dating and sexual violence are not just a problem between two people. These experiences are shaped by relationships with families, peers, schools and communities. Protecting LGBTQ adolescents from dating and sexual violence starts with supporting positive relationships for these youth and creating safe spaces for these adolescents in their schools and their communities.



Things for Educators and Parents to Know

1. Romantic relationships are important for many youth, and can be an essential source of support. LGBTQ youth are no exception, and their feelings about their relationships should be approached respectfully. Even if you have legitimate concerns about a relationship, referring to the relationship as “a phase” or “puppy love” shuts down communication.
2. Anybody can experience sexual or dating violence. Avoid gender- or identity- based stereotypes around who is victimized and who perpetrates sexual or dating violence.
3. LGBTQ adolescents can experience different types of sexual and dating violence than other youth. For instance, being threatened about being outed by a partner, or having a partner who demeans or ignores their identities are forms of dating violence for LGBTQ adolescents.

Things for Educators and Parents to Say

1. Be open about your level of knowledge about LGBTQ issues
2. Let adolescents clarify their identities, and use the pronouns they prefer. They are the expert on their own identities
3. Don't make assumptions about who adolescents are in relationships with, or what those relationships mean about their identities. Just because a boy is in a relationship with a girl, it doesn't mean that either of them are heterosexual.

Things for Educators and Parents to Do

1. Choose materials and programming addressing sexual and dating violence that include LGBTQ youth, or modify programming to be inclusive of different genders and sexual identities
2. Use visible symbols (i.e., pride flags) to indicate that your space is inclusive for LGBTQ youth
3. Include examples of LGBTQ adolescents when discussing issues such as consent and dating violence as part of the school curriculum

