



EMPOWERED

IMPROVING LGBTQ+ MENTAL HEALTH

July is Disability Pride Month

By Tracie Hardwick

With the end of June comes the end of most LGBTQ+ Pride celebrations across the country. These celebrations allow LGBTQ+ individuals to find and show joy and pride in themselves and in their community. The following month of July also sees a show of joy and pride for folks with Disability Pride Month. Starting in 1990 with the signing of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and the first ever Disability Pride Parade held in Boston, "this month is a chance to honor each person's uniqueness as a natural and beautiful part of human diversity." (America's Disability Community)

There are an estimated 61 million adults with disabilities, or around 1 in 4 adults, and around 3 million children with disabilities living in the United States. The ADA bill prohibits discrimination based on disability and requires public and private spaces to be accessible to people with disabilities. This landmark bill has improved the lives of millions of Americans since being signed into law, but it does nothing to reduce the stigma that is associated with having a disability. It can especially be hard for those folks who have invisible disabilities, such as a chronic illness or a mental illness, or have other intersecting identities such as also identifying as a person

of color or as LGBTQ+.

Currently, it is estimated that 3 to 5 million LGBTQ+ adults have a disability in the United States. Individuals who have both a disability and identify as LGBTQ+ have been at the forefront of the activist movements for decades. Notable activists include Marsha P. Johnson for co-founding the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) in the 1970s, Morty

Manford co-founding PFLAG (Parents, Friends and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) with his mother Jeanne Manford in 1973, and former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan's work as a Civil Rights leader in the 1970s. All three of these individuals and many more have fought for the right to be acknowledged, treated equally, and to live beautiful joyous lives. Throughout the

month of July, take some time to educate yourself further about [current disability rights issues](#). Consider volunteering with programs for people with [disabilities](#), and remember that we all deserve to live the beautiful joyous lives that others before us have fought for.



ENVISION:YOU IN THE NEWS

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT **youflourish**

You:Flourish, the LGBTQ+ wellness app being created by Envision:You, recently launched its website, you-flourish.com. "The community overwhelmingly told us that there is a lack of opportunities to find meaningful connections," said Envision:You CEO Steven Haden. "What currently exists is insufficient, and You:Flourish will be important to bring people together."

You:Flourish has three main pillars:

- A wellness hub where users can access wellness content made for and by LGBTQ+ people.
- A resource directory of expert-vetted professionals that will provide the community safety and confidence when seeking care.
- A peer support community that will allow users to share resources and encourage one another to stay on track with their wellness goals.

Set up as a Public Benefit Corporation in 2021, You:Flourish is now a stand-alone company. The app is currently slated to launch in March 2023, with a prototype on pace to be ready for community feedback and testing this summer. If you would like to stay updated on upcoming beta testing opportunities, [subscribe to You:Flourish's newsletter](#). You can also reach out to info@you-flourish.com.

FIVE HEALTHY TIPS

...for coming out to your kids.

- 1 It's never too early (or too late) to come out to your child.** They understand love and honesty better than deception.
- 2 Ask and listen to your child about what they already know about the LGBTQ+ community.**
- 3 Children's responses are going to vary** - honor their process.
- 4 Think of this as beginning the conversation,** which will likely be lifelong. Make sure they know you love them and are there to talk.
- 5 Connect them with other children and mentors who have LGBTQ+ parents/caregivers,** either locally, nationally, or virtually.

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ADVOCATE

This month, we are featuring Zak Hyde (he/him). Zak joined Envision:You in April 2020 as an AmeriCorps VISTA, and was hired on as a program manager following his year of service. He has managed the How to Have the Talk Campaign, State of the State Survey, public policy efforts, social media, and technology and innovation initiative. Zak is also the senior project manager for You:Flourish, and has spearheaded the app's community driven design and development process. He is a huge advocate for community-based public health interventions and utilizing technology to provide individuals more control over their health and wellness. Reach out to Zak if you have any thoughts on how technology can best support your well-being!



FRESH PRESS

According to The Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, 42% of LGBTQ+ youth—and 52% of trans youth—said they seriously considered suicide in 2021. Attempted suicide rates also are higher for Black and Indigenous students. Students said the proliferation of anti-LGBTQ+ bills, like the "Don't Say Gay" law in Florida, are intensifying their mental health issues. However, there are ways for trusted adults to help: LGBTQ+ students need supportive adults who use affirming words. They need access to safe spaces and events. And they need to see themselves, positively, in school curricula.

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Learn more about Envision:You's latest program designed to give supportive adults the tools needed to create supportive spaces for LGBTQ+ youth.