



EMPOWERED

IMPROVING LGBTQ+ MENTAL HEALTH

Benefits of Intergenerational Connection

By Envision:You Program Manager, Megan Cliff (she/her)

It is with deep gratitude that I am able to name my aunt as one of my closest support systems. Despite our difference in age and generation, growing up she offered opportunities for transparent communication and shared learning. If either of us made mistakes, restoration was made. As a young person, seeing adults exhibit openness and a desire for mutual respect is essential. This can build trust as well as a sense of reliability.

That being said, carving out intergenerational connection within biological family systems is not always possible, and not always safe. **The Trevor Project** found that fewer than 40% of LGBTQ young people considered their home LGBTQ-affirming. They also found that LGBTQ+ youth who have run away from home indicate **mistreatment or fear of mistreatment** due to their identity as a root cause. This is where the strength of **chosen family** comes in; and while chosen family doesn't need to be intergenerational in nature, there are numerous benefits to seeking connection with folks across generations.

Intergenerational relationships are **mutually beneficial**; for example, older adults can help young people develop their talents and knowledge. Simultaneously, these relationships create a sense of fulfillment and purpose within themselves. In the **U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory** on the epidemic of isolation and loneliness, connection with those outside of our typical circles was attributed to benefitting community health overall. This is seen through reducing feelings of isolation, contributing to information sharing, building trust, and increasing empathy. Such connections can occur interpersonally through intergenerational friendships, a workplace mentorship, 12-step programs sponsorships, etc.

The LGBTQ+ community spans generations. For queer youth, intergenerational connection may look

like intentionally seeking out information about LGBTQ+ history. This includes learning about older LGBTQ+ adults who have fought for change and progress for our community. This contributes not only to developing understanding across differences but also contributes to positive identity development among young people. Learning from older generations can provide a sense of empowerment to LGBTQ+ young people, as well as validate their individual experiences while connecting them to the past.

Love and belonging can be perceived as intergenerational connectors, and seeking out meaningful connection comes down to a human desire for belonging. Finding our people, feeling seen, and trusting that affirmation and support is available.

How can you meaningfully connect with folks from a different generation?

- 1. Seek out stories.** Engage with books, documentaries, current events, or ask folks in your circles about their experiences and perspectives.
- 2. Put on your curiosity cap.** What common ground might you share? What can you learn from one another?
- 3. Challenge biases you may hold.** We all hold biases, consciously or unconsciously. Reflect on any assumptions you may hold about different generations, such as their interests, values, or abilities.
- 4. Seek out opportunities to engage in community.** Maybe this is volunteering at or attending events in support of organizations that support intergenerational relationship-building or particular age groups. Need an example, **check out West of 50 at The Center on Colfax.**

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Envision:You Garden Party June 1, 2024

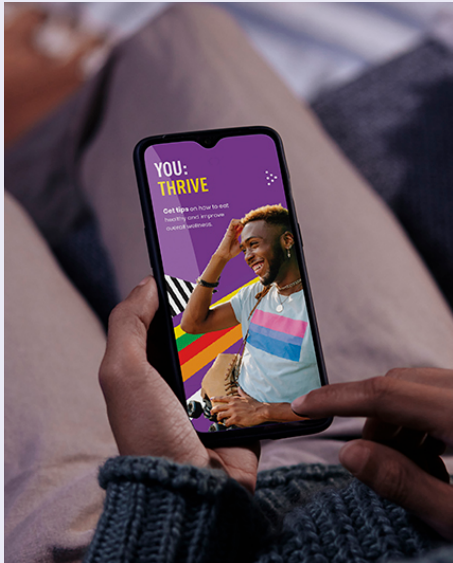
Mark your calendars for the Envision:You Annual Garden Party on June 1 from 4–7 p.m. at the Denver Botanic Gardens. Early-bird tickets for \$50 are on sale now. Prices will increase to \$75 on May 1. We look forward to celebrating with you amidst the splendor of the Gardens. Go to envision-you.org/events to purchase tickets.



Launching THIS MONTH: You:Flourish

Looking for a nurturing digital haven that cherishes your well-being and honors your identity? Welcome to You:Flourish! Our vibrant online hub links you with a supportive LGBTQ+ community, fueling your journey to success. Dive into our diverse resource library, customized just for you, with insights on wellness, cultural enrichment, financial savvy, and holistic healthcare. Discover affirming professionals committed to championing your health and happiness.

Get ready to embark on a journey of self-discovery this month. Let's thrive together! For further information, visit you-flourish.com.



ENVISION:YOU LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program

Program Highlight

LGBTQ+ individuals experience higher rates of mental health disparities. They often experience troubling encounters when mental health providers don't fully understand or appreciate the concerns that stem from being a part of a marginalized community. To address these needs, Envision:You developed a multi-level training program that is designed to help behavioral health professionals provide culturally relevant and identity-affirming care. For more information, visit the [Behavioral Health Provider Training program page](#).