

Women's League Personal Conversations

When Someone Close to You Comes Out as LGBTQ, will you be knowledgeable and open-hearted?

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**Framing the discussion:
Selected Jewish values behind
supporting LGBTQ+ Individuals**

Pikuach Nefesh- Saving a life

Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

"It was for this reason that man was first created as one person [Adam], to teach you that anyone who destroys a life is considered by Scripture to have destroyed an entire world; and anyone who saves a life is as if he saved an entire world."

Why pikuach nefesh?

This is literally a matter of life and death:

- LGB youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times the rate of heterosexual youth.
- LGB youth are almost five times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth.
- Each episode of LGBT victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment or abuse, increases the likelihood of self-harming behavior by 2.5 times on average
- **LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGB peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.**

Sources (found on thetrevorproject.org):

1. CDC. (2016). *Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
2. IMPACT. (2010). *Mental health disorders, psychological distress, and suicidality in a diverse sample of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths*. *American Journal of Public Health*. 100(12), 2426-32.
3. *Family Acceptance Project™*. (2009). *Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults*. *Pediatrics*. 123(1), 346-52.

Same, if not more so for trans youth

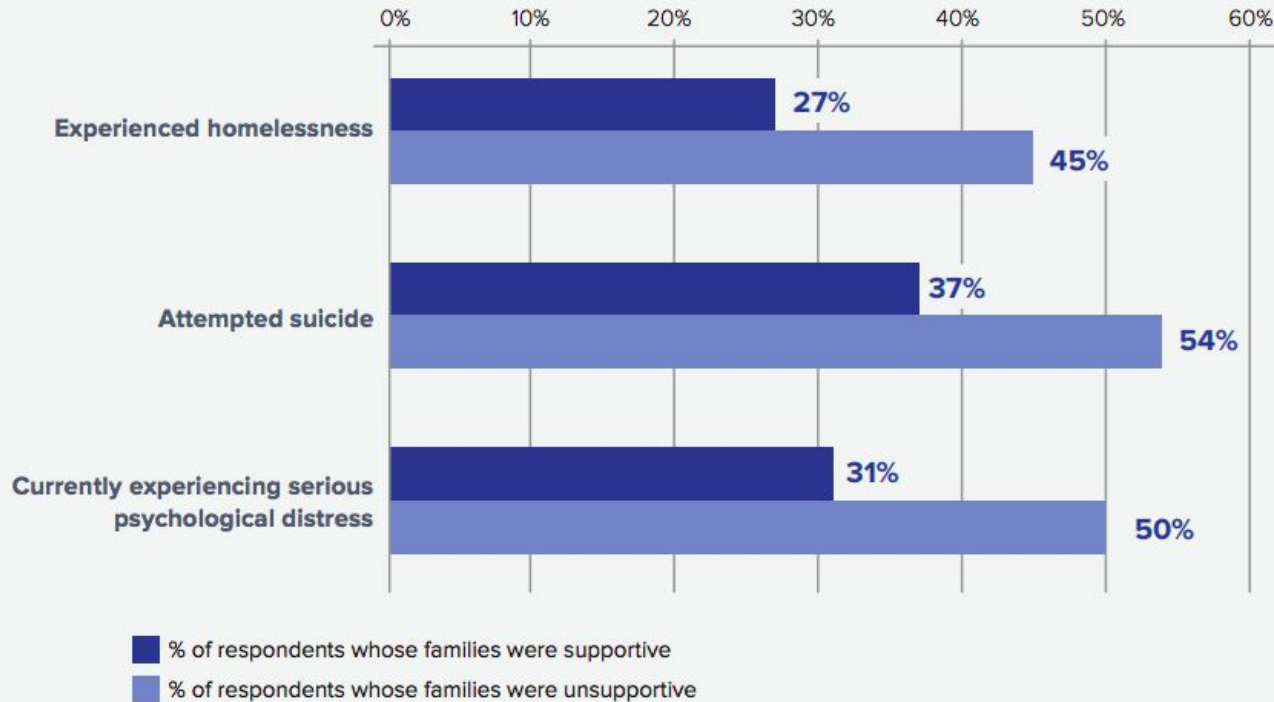
In a national survey (2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*)

- 39% of respondents experienced serious psychological distress in the month prior to completing the survey, compared with only 5% of the U.S. population.
- **40% of respondents have attempted suicide in their lifetime—nearly nine times the attempted suicide rate in the U.S. population (4.6%).**
- Being accepted by family members changes likelihood of unfavorable outcomes (see next slide)

**James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.*



Negative experiences among those with supportive and unsupportive families



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B'tselem Elohim - In God's image

Genesis 1:27

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֱת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֱתֹו זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָרָא אֹתָם:

God created man in God's own image, **in God's image** God created human; male and female God created them.

K'vod habriyot- Human Dignity

ברכות י"ט ב:ט'

ת"ש גדול כבוד הבריות שדוחה [את] לא תעשה שבתורה

Berakhot 19b

Come and learn: So great is **human dignity** that it supersedes a negative commandment of the Torah

Megillah 3b:10

Shall I say that the reading of the Megillah takes precedence in order to publicize the miracle, or does perhaps [the burying of] the unclaimed dead body take precedence because of the respect due to human beings? After he asked the question, he himself answered it saying, [Burying] the unclaimed body takes precedence, as the Master said said: Great is the [obligation to pay due] respect to human beings, since it overrides a negative precept of the Torah.

Chesed- kindness

Sotah 14a:6

Rabbi Samlai taught: With regard to the Torah, its beginning is an act of kindness and its end is an act of kindness. Its beginning is an act of kindness, as it is written: “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). And its end is an act of kindness, as it is written: “And he was buried in the valley in the land of Moab” (Deuteronomy 34:6).

(ב)

שְׁמֵעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מְשִׁיבֵי כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֵשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת הַסְּדִים:

Pirkei Avot 1:2

(2) Shimon the Righteous was from the remnants of the Great Assembly. He would say, "On three things the world stands: on the Torah, on the service and on acts of lovingkindness."

Bein Hashemashot- Lessons from Time

Genesis 1:5

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְיָמֵם יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ לַיְלָה וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד

God called the light Day and the darkness God called Night. And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day.

Pirkei Avot 5:6

ו

אָז בְּעֶרֶב שַׁבָּת בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן, פִּי הָאָרֶץ, וּפִי הַבְּאֵר, וּפִי הָאֵתוֹן, וְהַקֶּשֶׁת, וְהַמָּן, וְהַמַּטָּה, וְהַשְּׁמִיר, וְהַכֶּתֵב, וְהַמִּכְתָּב, וְהַלְוִיחֹתֶשֶׁת

Ten things were created on the eve of the [first] Shabbat at twilight. And they are: The mouth of the earth [that swallowed Korach and his followers]; and the mouth of the well [that gave the Israelites water in the wilderness]; and the mouth of the donkey [that spoke to Bilaam]; and the rainbow [after the Flood], the manna [that fed the Israelites in the wilderness], the staff [of Moses], the shamir [worm], the letters, the writing, and the tablets [all of the Ten Commandments].

Resources

Keshet- Keshetonline.org *Keshet is a national organization that works for full LGBTQ equality and inclusion in Jewish life.*

PFLAG- PFLAG.ORG *for support groups, advocacy, and more.*

Books:

Wrestling with God and Men by Rabbi Steve Greenberg

Soul of a Stranger by Joy Ladin

Becoming Eve by Abby Stein

Podcasts:

Thank you for Coming Out