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We all appreciate the positive feeling that often comes from people “having our back.”

The emotions we experience from receiving social support and feeling loved for who we are can be very powerful. This encouragement and acceptance from others is especially important for those in marginalized groups like the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and others) community.

LGBTQ+ youth continue to experience more bullying, micro-aggressions and discrimination compared to non-LGBTQ+-identified youth. Research shows that support from friends and family can help protect against these negative experiences and other emotional concerns like depression and anxiety. Being an ally to this community can literally save lives.

Becoming an ally doesn't mean you have to be LGBTQ+ yourself, but it does mean that you stand for equality, respect individual differences and speak out against discrimination.

We invite you to take action this month and learn more about supporting LGBTQ+ youth.

How can you help?

Creating a supportive environment for LGBTQ+ youth is important. Showing children early on that you are accepting of LGBTQ+ people through your actions and words is the foundation for their own futures as allies. Modeling your acceptance and care for others' physical and mental health also allows children to feel more comfortable when they need to have important conversations with you.

Ways to be an ally



Stay informed. Becoming more familiar with LGBTQ+ topics and understanding terminology is important when having conversations and teaching what words mean.



Read inclusive stories together. Mix some books about LGBTQ+ individuals into your regular story rotation. This will show your children that there are lots of different types of families and expressions of gender.



Honor pronouns. Be respectful of someone's pronouns and share your own. If you don't know whether a person uses she/her, he/him or they/them, just ask! If you accidentally misgender a person, don't panic or make a big deal out of it: just correct yourself and keep talking.



Advocate. Children need to see that the adults in their lives will truly protect them, and standing up for those who aren't being treated respectfully is a great way to do this. Challenging mean comments can be scary for children and adults alike, but remember that staying silent sends a message of agreement.



Be available. If a young person decides they want to open up to you, whether it's to **come out as LGBTQ+** or simply to share feelings or ask questions, make sure you give them your full attention. Think carefully about your responses before speaking, and make sure to tell them you appreciate them sharing their feelings with you.

Looking for more ways to create an accepting environment and become an ally?



Five Tips for Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth

1. Learn About Language.

- **Sex assigned at birth:** The sex an infant is given at birth based on their chromosomes and/or genital anatomy. This could be male, female, or intersex.
- **Sexual orientation:** A person's physical or emotional attraction to a person based on that person's gender(s). This includes heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, and pansexual.
- **Gender identity:** An internal sense of one's gender that may or may not be the same as the sex someone is assigned at birth. Some examples of different gender identities include:
 - **Cisgender:** A person whose identity and gender corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.
 - **Transgender:** A person whose internal sense of personal identity does not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.
 - **Nonbinary:** a person who doesn't identify with any gender or identifies as a blend of male and female elements.
- **Gender dysphoria:** Feelings of discomfort or distress experienced when one's sex assigned at birth and gender identity do not align.

2. Use Name and Pronouns

You can support the children in your life by using their preferred name and pronouns. Learning a new name and pronouns can take time, so if you make a mistake, quickly correct yourself and move on. Encourage others to be accepting and validating by using your child's name and pronouns as well and gently correct them if they forget.

3. Avoid Binary Language

Using gender-neutral language such as:

- Partner or spouse (instead of boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife)
- Guests, students or friends (instead of ladies and gentlemen or boys and girls)

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ON OUR SLEEVES
The Movement for Children's Mental Health



Download Five Tips for Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth (available in **English** and **Spanish**) to help you become the very best ally you can be. Share which tips you plan to try on social media, using **#OnOurSleevesJax** and **#OnOurSleeves**

Don't forget to share how you're using *On Our Sleeves* resources! Hit the **reply button** to tell us your *On Our Sleeves* story.

Sincerely,
Wolfson Children's Hospital

The mission of *On Our Sleeves* is to provide every community in America access to free, evidence-informed educational resources necessary for breaking stigmas about child mental health and educating families and advocates. **For more information, visit OnOurSleeves.org.**

To access educational resources and revisit the mission of *On Our Sleeves*®, visit **wolfsonchildrens.com/onoursleeves**.

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