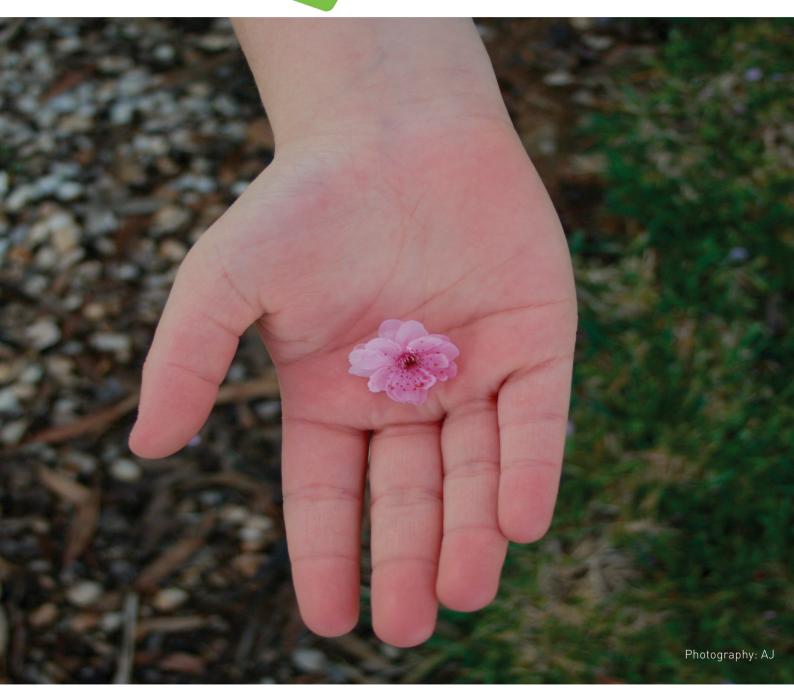




QUEER PEERS

Version 1.0 / 2021



headspace Mildura would like to acknowledge all the Traditional Owners throughout the Murray- Mallee region as the First Peoples of this Nation on whose land we work and live. We also pay respect to all their Elders past and present and honour their culture.



This booklet is brought to you by Alphabet Soup, headspace Mildura's LGBTQIA+ youth social support group.

This forms the first of a two part series published across 2020-2021 both digitally and in print. The booklet is written by Alphabet Soup group members with the first component focussing on the personal journey/perspectives of LGBTQIA+ young people and with the second component focussing on LGBTQIA+ resources/supports and pathways for local queer people.

headspace Mildura are proud to have been able to support Alphabet Soup in delivering this booklet in the hope that it will help raise awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the local Mildura queer community, as well as help connect LGBTQIA+ youth to reduce feelings of isolation and promote a sense of belonging and support.

A special thank you to Transgender Victoria who have sponsored this issue through their SPARK project grant.

Coming out to friends & family + Struggling to come out **WORDS:** AJ

Coming out to friends and family, from my experience, is a difficult decision to make, but once you've made the decision, how do you do it? Here are a few things to think about while coming out to friends and family, and some things that can help the people around you understand and give their support.

Make sure you are safe

Don't come out if it could put yours or other people's life in danger, slowly introduce the idea to your parents or guardian.

If someone asks you whether you're a part of the LGBTQIA+ community and you don't feel comfortable, it's ok to say no. You're not stuck with the one label for the rest of your life. It's ok to try different labels or pronouns with people you trust.

For those around you

If you don't understand someone's label or pronoun, ask politely.

Introduce your friends and family to the idea through any form of appropriate media.

Encourage your friends or family to listen to songs, watch programs or read books by LGBTQIA+ people.

Take time out of your day to explain to them why you feel the way you do.

Things that can happen

In the worst case if they flat out deny your identity, this is not because you are bad, broken or disgusting, there is only so much you can tell some people before they try to shut you down, and that's ok.

Not everyone will accept you and you don't need their approval to keep living your life your way.

If doing something makes you happy i.e. changing your hair, buying new clothes, or altering your pronouns, don't let family or friends bring you down. Understand that they might not be doing it consciously.

Them not accepting you the first few times could be because they don't know what's going on in your head and that they may just need more time.

Resources

Switch Board 1800 184 527 – this is an emergency contact number

Minus 18 - great for LGBTQIA+ resources and events

Microaggressions & Misconceptions **WORDS:** Anonymous

A Microaggression can be verbal, nonverbal, behavioural, or environmental actions that convey a hostile, derogatory, or negative connotation about a particular person or identity. Sexual or Gender Microaggression is defined as a subtle negative attitude that infers that someone's sexual or gender identity is less valuable or "normal'. Microaggressions are a death by 100 cuts, often building and building for people until they snap at a "little comment" or "joke" and seem to overreact at nothing when really they are reacting to the stress of constant "little comments" or "jokes" made at their expense. [Reference: www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life]

Assuming pronouns

It is hard to tell someone halfway through a conversation they are getting my pronouns wrong, you know what is easy? Introduce yourself with your pronouns, it gives a chance for other person to do the same! Example: "Hi I'm Bob and I use he/ him pronouns"; be like Bob, he's a bloody legend.

Assuming peeps are straight

Don't ask me about my girlfriend or my wife or when I'm going to make a family - that life is fine but it's awkward when I say it's not my scene.

That's so gay and no homo

When I say, "that's gay" I mean "that's awesome", when you say, "no homo" I hear "don't come near me". It's not funny, it just makes you look like you hate LGBTQIA+ people.

Man up, or boys don't cry, or don't throw like a girl

1) Everyone has emotions not just females. 2) What's wrong with being female? Do you really want to make one of the biggest population groups of the world angry? and 3) Crying is good for you.

Stereotyping "you're not like other gay people"

What's wrong with other gay people? And yeah every LGBTQIA+ person is different and unique, kind of like every other group of people on earth.

"It's fine behind closed doors, I don't care what people do in their own bedrooms just don't flaunt it";

Umm no, I'm not going to hide a part of myself for your comfort. I'm not "flaunting" my gender or sexuality, I'm living my life.

Why isn't there a straight pride?

You didn't have to riot to be accepted or have your identity debated by politicians asking if "it's ok to be Queer"; every day is straight pride day.

Don't ask that!

I can't count how many times I've been asked about my genitals or surgeries by complete strangers!

Don't ask me that!! Jeez you can google some stuff but I don't want to be asked "how do you have sex?" while I'm buying orange juice!

Demanding education

I don't mind answering a couple questions here and there, but I can only talk about my life, not every other gay or trans person's life. I'm not your teacher, google it.

"People like you" or "your people"

Do you know how bad this sounds? Mate they are people, you have LGBTQIA+ people in your life and in your family, they are "our" people.

Policing people's gender presentation

I like makeup and skirts, this does not make me a female (not that there is anything wrong with females).
I just happen to like makeup and skirts. Don't tell people how to dress or act, it's really creepy, why do you care what I wear?

Watch your language

If someone tells you that something you say is offensive, then chances are, they are right. Like dude I have a little more experience on what's offensive to LGBTQIA+ people being Queer myself, why would I lie? Just apologise and learn from it, no biggie.

Some jokes are only funny coming from us

I love gay jokes; I think they are hilarious. But when I make them I am making a joke based on my experience as a gay person, when straight people make gay jokes it seems like they are just making fun of LGBTQIA+ folks.

Demanding "proof" of someone's sexuality or gender

Sorry I left my diploma of being hella queer and awesome at home, but why would you need proof? If someone says they had eggs for breakfast do you demand proof of that too? It sounds like you have trust issues dude.

Ignoring people when they misgender or deadname people

I'm not talking about outing someone, but if you see someone using the wrong name or pronouns for someone when they should know better pull them up! It's exhausting for Queer people to do it all day every day, lend a hand and be a pal.

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LGBTQIA+ BOOKLET 3

Instead of	Do this
Asking about a dead name	Use their chosen one! It always feels good to hear it
"She goes by they/them pronouns"	"Their pronouns ARE they/them"
Asking about their dating history to prove their sexuality	Take their word for it and understand history does not = orientation
Asking who the boy/girl in a same-sex relationship is	Consider how stupid that sounds and decide not to ask anything at all
"You don't SEEM gay"	Understand sexuality does not present in a particular way
Outing somebody without their permission	DON'T out them at all!
Asking a trans person about their body	Realise how invasive that is; how would YOU like to be asked such a question?
Using a slur	Don't. Period. If you're confused what you can and can't say, assume you can't
Using the term "homosexual"	Don't use this one either, fam
Asking somebody if they're gay/trans based on a "hunch"	Understand the gaydar is a myth, and you don't have the right to that information unless volunteered
Calling somebody your "gay best friend"	Don't define them as an outdated stereotype
"I've never met an LGBTQIA+ person before"	Think for a moment. Have you really? Have you really not met a single person on the spectrum?
"My friend is gay! You two should date!"	Would you say "My friend is straight! You two should date!" to a heterosexual person? No? Is it because there's more to a relationship than batting for the same team?
Pressuring somebody to out themselves before they're ready	Be supportive and patient, and ready to be accepting when they DO



If you're having a less than great time at school what can you do? What can the school do: A Teacher's Perspective WORDS: Anonymous

School can be hard; it's a mixing pot of people and personalities that can be great sometimes and sometimes less so. Sometimes it feels like you don't have a lot of LGBTQIA+ activities and depending on the school that may be true, while other schools run events and have some LGBTQIA+ information in health class. No matter what it's like at your school, there are a few things you can have in place if you are having a not so great time.

What can the teachers or school staff do for you?

If a teacher witnesses something, (whether this is physical or verbal) it is their responsibility to call it out and make it known that these behaviours are not okay. Unfortunately, not everyone recognises microaggressions, so it may become necessary to report incidents that happen to your teacher, even if they or another teacher did see it happen. Each school has its own procedure for dealing with these behaviours and a process for how it will be dealt with through school leadership (year level coordinators, sub-school leaders, vice principal and principal). The level of management depends on the severity of the action and repeated behaviours during the process. It generally starts with the classroom/yard duty teachers addressing these behaviours and will move up to year level coordinators or further if these unwelcome behaviours continue after having been dealt with at each level.

"The hard thing is, as teachers, we cannot do anything unless we know about it. If we know, we can ask the students directly and discuss why it is not okay." Quote from anonymous secondary teacher

What are your options in school?

Most schools have wellbeing areas where you or a teacher can organise a time for you to see a counsellor or chaplain who can provide mental health and wellbeing support as well as potentially connect you with other helpful services in the area. Here you can talk through things and have a safe space to go during the school day! Be sure to check out your school's bullying policies which should be available on the school's website. For the most part, these should be similar no matter which school you attend. It may seem like a lot of complicated information, but the general idea is that bullying is not okay, and this is how it will be dealt with at the school level.

Unfortunately, harassment and bullying can often go unreported as people fear the situation escalating, however, it is important to remember it is your school's responsibility to ensure all students feel safe and supported!! Every school will have a policy to stop the situation from escalating and there are a number of possible options available to make sure students feel safe not only in the classroom, but out in the yard as well. These arrangements can be made on an individual basis to ensure the best outcomes for the students. Some of these arrangements may involve:

- Providing students with a safe space to go to during the day
- Making sure students are separated during break times (recess and lunch)

Don't feel comfortable talking with someone, but want to let someone know about the harassment?

A number of schools use the program Bully Stoppers which provides support and advice to the whole school community in how to prevent and respond to bullying and may also allow you to anonymously report bullying through either the school website or their intranet! The more you do this, the bigger the record of unwanted behaviours becomes, especially if it is the same person or group. This evidence may help the school put things in place to make sure you and others are safe.

At the end of the day, teachers are there to help support you and are ultimately on your side. They want the best for you and will do what they can to ensure this happens. Even if you don't want to talk with all your teachers, find one you do feel comfortable talking about this stuff to (it doesn't have to be your form teacher, or even one of your classroom teachers, it can be any teacher in the school) and don't be afraid to have these conversations with them.

Together we can make school a safe and inclusive place for everyone.



Identity & Exploration - A Personal Experience

WORDS: Kai

Finding where you identify along the LGBTQIA+ can be hard! Especially if you don't have a lot of queer people around you. When I first realised that I have an attraction to both boys and girls I was a little scared having been raised in a family where mostly everyone was straight. I was so worried about their reactions that I didn't tell my family for 6 months; I'm so glad that they accepted me even though it took some time for them to accept the

I'm so glad that they accepted me even though it took some time for them to accept the change. Many people can struggle with exploring their identity and deny the fact that they are attracted to a certain gender or identify as a different gender to what they were assigned at birth. People deny their gender/ sexuality for different reasons such as: homophobic parents/ family members, judgement from others, and the fear of not being accepted, to name a few. There also seems to be this idea that someone only comes out once, and for some people that is what it's like (which is really cool), however, for some people it's a longer journey of self discovery and sexuality and gender can grow and change with time. There is no shame whatsoever in being unsure on how you identify or changing how you identify across time as you find lables and identities that you feel suit you better.

Remember, no one knows your experiences and emotions like you do, so you get to choose how you identify (or not identify); there is no wrong way to identify yourself!

I realised that I was transgender after I came out as pansexual; being pansexual didn't affect about how I felt about being transgender.

A lot of people don't really fully understand what it means to be part of the LGBTQIA+ community and I am happy to have the opportunity to tell my story and hopefully help people become more understanding and accepting.

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Advice for families with an LGBTQIA+ young person: how to support them and why is it important. WORDS: Anonymous Parent

If you have an LGBTQIA+ young person in your life, congratulations! Parents, this is your time to shine. Beyond Blue tells us that around 10% of young Australian's experience same sex attraction and approximately 1% of the population is trans. LGBTQIA+ people are a normal part of human diversity, but it can still be a confronting or confusing time for families when young people first share their sexuality or gender. The narrative in a lot of the mainstream media often portrays some over-the-top "coming out" scene with all the drama. That wasn't our experience. It was more a series of small moments testing the waters and some interesting conversations (and yet I still missed the hints and was clueless). I'm lucky my child was so patient. What I now know is that coming out, or inviting in, is a process based on trust and a sense of personal safety. If your young person choses to share information about their sexuality or gender with you, chances are they already have a pretty solid idea of who they are and they feel safe enough to invite you to get to know them better. The best thing you can do is just believe them, love them and support them.

As parents we all want the best for our kids. We want them to be happy and healthy and to teach them the tools to make their own way in the world. Sexuality and gender identity is only one small part of who they are. Learning that your young person is LGBTQIA+ doesn't fundamentally change their personality. There are some disturbing statistics around LGBTQIA+ youth around mental health, sexual health, drug and alcohol use, discrimination, violence and so on. While it is important to be aware of these statistics, it is often easy to let fear of these negative outcomes become the focus. However, the latest Australian research shows that strong parental acceptance and family support makes a huge difference to the lives of LGBTQIA+ youth and leads to better health and well-being across the board.

I always thought that the role of a parent is to guide and teach our children. What I've come to realise is that my children teach me more about myself and the world than I could ever hope to teach them. Watching your LGBTQIA+ young person become the best version of themselves, and being a part of that process, is more joyful than words can express.

What can families do:

- Respect your young person's privacy.
- Listen and ask how you can be supportive and let your child guide.
- Do your own learning from good quality information and resources.
- Seek peer support from other parents and families.
- Find a supportive and affirming GP and well-informed professionals.
- Show open support and celebrate your LGBTQIA+ young person.
- Advocate with the school or in the community if necessary.
- Be kind to yourself and practice self-care

Quotes from the creators

What do you like about being LGBTQIA+?

Dressing my dog up in a rainbow flag
I get to be different
I get to have a community
I met my girlfriend through the community
I have made a lot of friends
We are all a family
When I see another rainbow flag my vibing intensifies
Join the gay say, we have all the cookies

What do you like about headspace Mildura's Alphabet Soup?

It's a safe place Allows me to escape from negative things I make more besties Fun to vibe The programs and events

When I realized I was LGBTQIA+...

I started my journey of self improvement
Explored my identity
Bought a flag to show my pride
I felt brave, I am brave!
Cleared up my confusion
I was very happy because I am closer to being I

In the future I want...

For there to be more worldwide acceptance of the gay community



MENTAL HEALTH STUFF

WORDS: Anonymous

It's really important that if you are feeling like you need support that you reach out!

It may or may not surprise you that compared to their cis-hetero peers LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to experience and be diagnosed with a mental health of young people have been giving a complex puzzle of finding where we fit in the world, it's enough to cause any person an amount of stress and anxiety. But for LGBTQIA+ young people the rates of mental the general population with both social and medical constructs playing an important role in how people feel about their own bodies and their sexuality. The link between gueer people and mental health has to do with how we are treated and not who we are. It's important that all people know what they can do to create good mental health habits and when to seek help. There are tons of great places to seek help, you can come to headspace or talk to your GP. Rainbow Door is also a free service Victoria wide that is LGBTQIA+ focused and available by phone, text and email.

Everyone has ups and downs in life, but there are things we can do in our day to day life that will help keep our mental health in good shape! Try headspace 7 tips for a healthy headspace:

- **Get enough sleep.** Sleep helps you to repair and restore your body and mind and can give you more energy, improve concentration, and help you better deal with stress
- Eat well. Eating well gives you more energy, helps you sleep better, and improves your concentration.

- Stay active. Being physically active can improve your sleep, give you more energy, and help manage stress.
- Create connections. Spending time with people close to you can help you feel connected and boost your energy.
- Learn how to handle tough times. Developing your own positive ways to handle tough times can make you more resilient, develop your self-awareness, and build your confidence.
- **Get into life.** Setting and achieving small goals and doing things you enjoy can boost your confidence, help you feel good about yourself, give you a sense of purpose, and lift your mood.
- Cut back on alcohol and other drugs. Limiting alcohol and other drugs can help clear your mind, improve your energy, and boost your motivation.

Sometimes, despite our best effort, we might feel a bit down or overwhelmed or just plain tired.

However, if you notice a considerable change or you are experiencing any of the following for an extended period of time it may be helpful to reach out for support:

- feeling anxious or worried
- feeling down or unhappy
- loss of energy and motivation
- feeling guilty or worthless
- inability to find enjoyment and pleasure in things
- disrupted sleep
- loss/increase appetite or weight
- poor concentration and memory
- racing thoughts, racing speech
- increased drinking or use of drugs





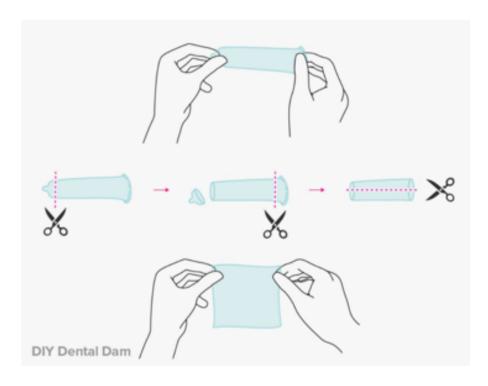




Safe sex stuff

Gender and sexuality are not related at all; you can be a gay trans guy, or a straight trans woman, or an asexual non binary person, or any other combination of gender or sexual identities. You may also identify strongly in one identity but more vague in another area. Whatever your gender or sexuality, safe sex is important!

Condoms are great, condoms are wonderful for all kinds of sex; use as traditionally designed, whack them on your sex toys which is not only more hygienic but makes clean up easier, or make them into dental dams which is great for safe partnered sex as well.



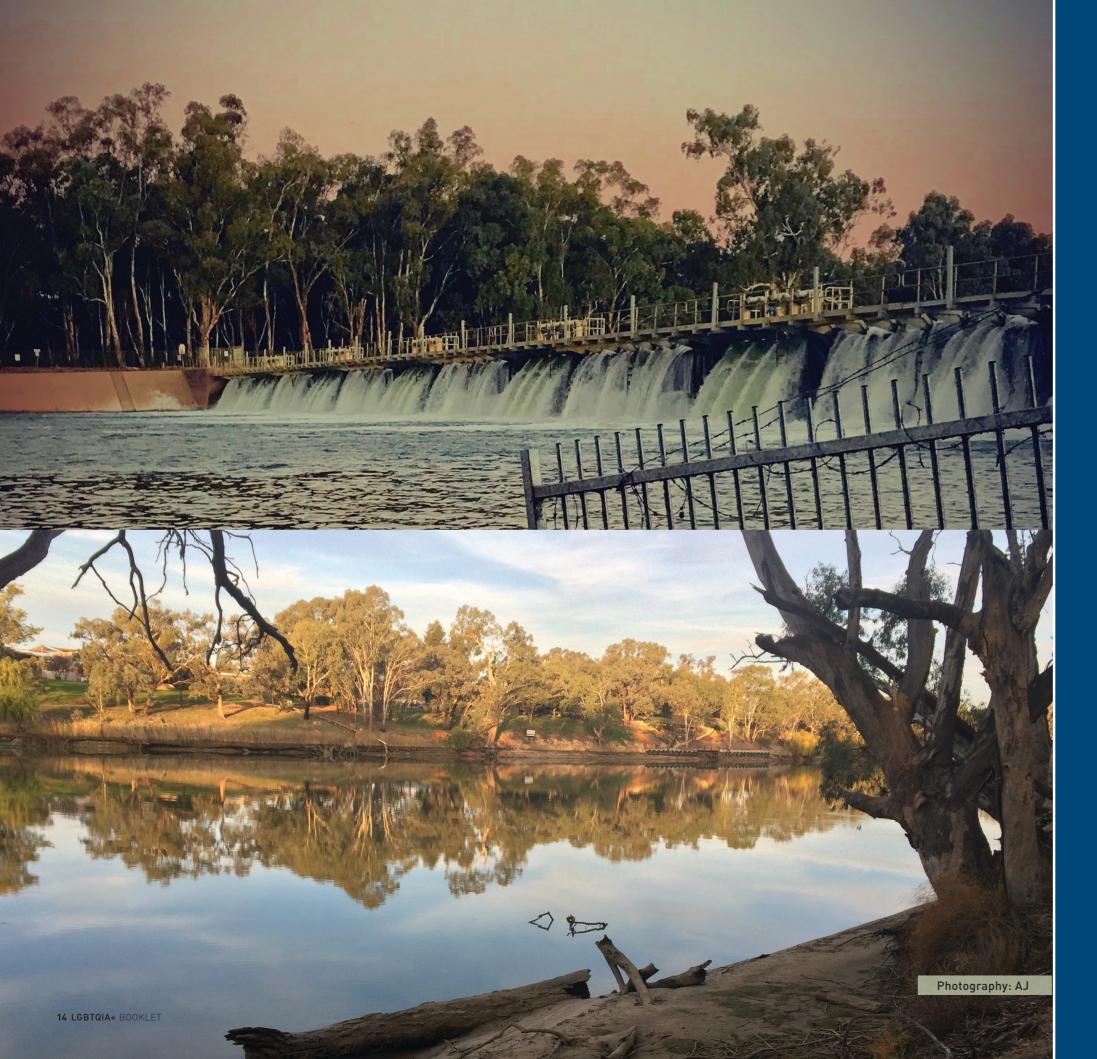
Speaking of dental dams, if you're going down on anyone (or anyone is going down on you) use a dental dam, great for anal or vaginal. Find a flavour condom you like and some good lube, cover the area you want to stimulate with your new dental dam and have some safe fun.

If you and your partner are doing any fingering be sure to maintain hygiene and wash your hands thoroughly first. If you're hooking up, use some latex gloves and lube to keep everyone safe.

Have you heard of asexual folks? These are people with low or no desire for sex and that is completely okay! Some asexual people will enjoy and engage in sex just without a craving and some asexual people are completely sex adverse. There is absolutely nothing wrong with not wanting or liking sex.

No matter what kind of sex you are having, it is best to get an STI check every 3 months. Yeah, people practicing non-penetrative sex such as vagina to vagina sex need to get STI checks every 3 months too.

Here in Mildura if you have any questions of how to have safer more inclusive sex you can go to Sunraysia Community Health Service or headspace Mildura and see the sexual health nurse!



Heteronormative Society WORDS: Kevin

Here's a neat question, have you been in a conversation with someone and they've asked if you have a partner of the opposite sex? Then it's a whole panic attack on whether or not you should come out to a complete stranger? Or you have been misgendered and you have to explain your gender to them?

That my friend is the concept of heteronormativity; the assumption that everyone is straight and cisqender.

But here's a surprise. That's not true.

It is incredibly hard to talk about things like heteronormative society to someone who hasn't experienced it; how do you even start to explain how people around you will assume you're straight or cis just because that is considered the default.

Even though everything about me screams that I am not attracted to the opposite sex, there's still assumptions and sometimes I just want to gesture to myself and ask "what do I need to do??"

It seems harmless at first, but when you go to correct people "oh no, I'm gay" or "oh, I use these pronouns" you open yourself to a lot of questions; a lot of them well-meaning, but also exhausting. I can't count how many times I wanted to tell people to "just google it" rather than them pulling me aside for a heart to heart on how I live my life.

It shouldn't be up to us to come out to every person we make small talk to and need to correct their default assumptions of heteronormativity.

It's a constant battle between being out and proud and just wanting to live my life without having to explain myself. Am I being less honest if I let people assume I'm cis and straight when I don't have the energy and time to explain myself? It can feel like you are letting down the queer community for not educating every person you talk to. But let me tell you a secret, I've learnt that it's not your job to tell people how you identify. Don't get me wrong, if you want to go out all rainbows and glitter that's awesome but it's also important to know when you are not feeling it and it's ok if you're never feeling up to sharing your life with strangers.

The best thing you can do to represent the LGBTQIA+ community is be fabulously queer and happy, trust me other queer people will see you being happy and get strength from that. I know I always love seeing other LGBTQIA+ just rocking day to day life.

And fortunately, people are becoming more open minded every day.

Asexual / Ace: Someone who has little or no sexual attraction to other people. Some asexual people may still engage in sexual relationships and enjoy sex but not have the same desire to have sex, some asexual people are sex adverse.

Aromantic / Aro: Someone who has little or no romantic attraction to other people. Some aromantic people will enter romantic relationships, and this doesn't change their identity as aromantic.

Biphobia: Is the specific discrimination against people attracted to more than one gender; this can be a variety of prejudice such as people insisting that bi people are "attention seeking" or that bi people in relationships have "chosen a side."

Bisexual: Someone who is bi is attracted to both someone of the same gender and other genders. Obviously, everyone's experience is different, but bi people may be attracted to two or more genders.

Brotherboy and Sistergirl: Terms used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to describe trans people. Brotherboy can be used to refer to people who identify with a masculine spirit and Sistergirl can refer to people who identify with a feminine spirit. It is best to ask people what language they like to use to describe their identity!

Cisgender: A term used to describe someone who is not trans or gender diverse, but rather who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth. Sometimes shortened to 'cis', this is not an insult to non-trans people just a word to describe people who do not identify as trans or gender diverse.

Gay: Is commonly used to describe someone who is attracted to someone of the same identified gender. Some people use it as an umbrella term like "queer."

Gender Diverse: Is a description for people who feel that their gender identity does not neatly fit into the binary categories such as male or female. Gender diverse people may identify and express their gender in ways that don't fit the stereotype of male or female.

Gender Identity: Your gender identity is defined by your own sense of self; it is not defined by your genitals or your sexuality.

Heteronormativity & Cissexism: Is the assumption that everyone is straight and cisgender. While this may not be meant in a bad way it can make things hard on queer people who may have to explain their identity and their needs to many people.

Homophobia: Describes a whole range of negative stereotypes or behaviours towards people who are same sex attracted. Homophobia can lead to a range of discrimination including everything from using the phrase "that's so gay" or more severe discrimination such as abuse and harassment.

Homosexual: This is an older term meaning attracted to the same gender. Nowadays, it can be used as a bit of an insult so, a general rule of thumb is, don't use it for someone unless they use it to describe themselves first.

Intersectionality: The overlap of social factors such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, often creating a susceptibility to discrimination and disadvantage.

Intersex: All people are born with unique bodies. People who are intersex are born with natural variations in their body that differ from what we might expect to be 'typically' male/female. This can include (but is not limited to) variations in hormones, chromosomes, and sexual organs. There are many ways that you can be intersex, it's as common as red hair!

Non-Binary: An umbrella term people use to describe gender that doesn't fit into male or female binary. They may feel their gender is a mix of male and female, fluid, or something else entirely.

Pansexual: Someone who is pan has sexual or romantic attraction towards people regardless of their sex or gender identity. Pan people may still have preferences and types, but sex or gender identity are not major factors.

PoC: Is an acronym and stands for "Person of Colour". Queer people of colour often use the acronym QTIPoC

Pronouns: Often used to refer to an individual such as He/Him, She/Her and They/Them. It is important to be respectful of people's pronouns and if you're not sure what pronouns someone uses find a guiet moment to politely ask!

QTIPoC: Describes a Queer, Trans, Intersex Person of Colour!

Queer: Is a common umbrella term used to mean anyone who identifies within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. The term Queer used to be an insult but has been reclaimed by younger LGBTQIA+ people

Questioning/Unsure: Many people will question their sexual or gender identity at some point through their life. It can be confusing, but it's also really normal.

Sexuality: Your sexuality describes who you are attracted to, both physically and romantically. Some people know their sexuality from a young age, some people do not know until later in life and some people's sexuality changes over time and that is perfectly normal!

Trans: Short for transgender, refers to gender diverse people who feel that their gender doesn't match he sex they were assigned at birth. Some trans people change their name, their clothes, or even make thange to their bodies, while others do not - there is no wrong way to be trans!

Transphobia: Describes a whole range of negative behaviours specific towards trans people or people suspected to be trans. Transphobia can lead to a range of discrimination including everything from purposely misgendering someone, outing someone as transgender or more dangerous discrimination such as violence and harassment.

LGBTQIA + Resources & Support

headspace Mildura - 5021 2400

Switchboard - 1800 184 527

QLife - 1800 184 527

Lifeline - 13 11 14

Kids Helpline (6-25) - 1800 551 800

Parentline - 13 11 26

eheadspace - https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace

Minus18 - https://minus18.org.au

Rainbow Network - https://rainbownetwork.com.au

This booklet is brought to you by Alphabet Soup, headspace Mildura's LGBTQIA+ youth social suppor group. Watch out for part 2, which will be coming later in 2021!







ALPHABET SOUP MILDURA

Want to hang out with LGBTQIA+ young people and make friends?

Looking for a safe space with acceptance and support for your sexuality or gender identity?



Meet online with Alphabet Soup!



Tuesday fortnight 5.30pm to 6.30pm

Sign up today!

For more information call headspace Mildura on 5021 2400