



Love Others As Yourself

וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ

A Jewish Guide to LGBTQ Affirming Sex Education

Ellie Goldstein, MPH / Rabbi Micah Buck-Yael

Keshet
קֶשֶׁת

For LGBTQ
equality in
Jewish life

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Introduction

רַק הַשְּׂמֶרֶת לָךְ וּשְׂמֶרֶת נַפְשְׁךָ מְאֹד

Take utmost care, and protect yourself exceedingly.¹

Throughout centuries of Jewish thought, Jews interpret this verse to mean that we must prioritize safety², as well as health and wellbeing, make health decisions that follow the best available medical knowledge, and seek out the information we need to make healthy decisions.³

As educators in Jewish schools, we can live this obligation by ensuring that our students have the information and support that they need to make safe and healthy decisions in all areas of their lives. We have the potential to be the trusted adults who share critical information, act as a resource, and express our respect for young people. This role is particularly important as students make decisions about relationships, intimacy, and sexuality.

We want every student to have the accurate and relevant information they need to make empowered, healthy, and safe decisions. High quality, comprehensive, and LGBTQ inclusive sex education provides students with the opportunity to learn the relevant facts – without being shamed or erased. We want every young person to learn that sex and sexuality can and should be joyful, safe, and healthy.

Consider the following vision:

When Gavi was in middle school, they participated in sex education classes that incorporated information on a wide range of identities and types of relationships; defined “sex” as a wide variety of activities that includes, but is not limited to, penis-in-vagina sex; used inclusive language when referring to body parts and biological processes; and openly talked about the importance of consent in all situations, including those apart from sexual activity. In high school, Gavi continued to receive inclusive, sex positive sex education that was developmentally appropriate for a high school student.

Gavi, now a college student, has a robust knowledge of the reproductive systems, gets tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) regularly, and

¹ Devarim 4:9. [View on Sefaria](#)

² Rambam, Mishneh Torah Murder and the Preservation of Life 11:4. [View on Sefaria](#)

³ Rambam, Mishneh Torah Human Dispositions 4:1 and following. [View on Sefaria](#)

can identify unhealthy or abusive relationships. Gavi uses safer sex practices (such as correctly putting on an external condom) when they're engaging in sexual activity, practices consent in all their relationships, and has a healthy relationship with their gender and sexuality. Because Gavi received the foundations of this information in middle school, they have had years to develop self-awareness and confident, empowered decision-making skills.

Unfortunately, Gavi is unlikely to have this experience. This educational model is not the current reality in the United States. The content that young people receive varies, sometimes drastically, between individual US states. This impacts the information that all students receive, and especially affects LGBTQ students.



According to the Guttmacher Institute⁴, a leading research and policy organization committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights worldwide, only 11 states require sex education materials to include information about sexual orientation, and worse, five states require only negative information to be provided on same-gender relationships.

LGBTQ erasure and discrimination directly affects mental health. When LGBTQ identities are erased or stigmatized, LGBTQ youth are often left feeling that there is something wrong with them, feeling isolated and unsupported, and are often bullied and harassed. Erasure, discrimination, and harassment can lead queer youth to internalize messages that who they are is unspeakable, embarrassing, and deviant. LGBTQ youth consistently report higher rates of depression and anxiety than their cisgender and straight peers.⁵

On top of educational discrimination and withholding of information, a number of other societal factors and pressures make it more difficult for LGBTQ youth to access information needed for their health and wellbeing. When queer sexuality and transgender and intersex bodies are not discussed in sex education settings, LGBTQ young people are left to guess about the risks of various sexual activities, and do not have information about how safer sex practices might be relevant to them. And when these topics are left out, all students are implicitly taught the homophobic bias that

⁴ “As of January 1, 2022; State Laws And Policies: Sex and HIV Education.” Guttmacher Institute, <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/sex-and-hiv-education>

⁵ “Surviving the Streets of New York Experiences of LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YSWW Engaged in Survival Sex.” Urban Institute, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/42186/2000119-Surviving-the-Streets-of-New-York.pdf>

queer identities and sexualities are “disgusting,” “shocking,” or more “adult” or “mature” than heterosexual identity and behavior. This places all students, but particularly LGBTQ students, at increased risk.

Erasure and stigma of queer relationships and transgender and intersex bodies puts LGBTQ youth are at higher risk for unsafe or abusive relationships and sexual violence, and makes them less able to safely escape risky situations. Additionally, LGBTQ young people often experience family rejection and homelessness that can ultimately force them to turn towards alternative, and often unsafe, ways to make ends meet.

In 2021, 42% of LGB young people and over half of transgender and non-binary young people considered attempting suicide.

All these factors have serious effects on LGBTQ young people. For example, they experience higher rates of teen pregnancy, often from non-consensual sex,⁶ compared to heterosexual young people and are more likely to engage in sexual risk behaviors⁷, such as having multiple partners and using substances before engaging in sexual activity. Additionally, rates of certain sexually transmitted infections, such as gonorrhea, HPV, and HIV, are higher among LGBTQ young people. In 2021, 42% of LGB young people and over half of transgender and non-binary young people considered attempting suicide, according to the Trevor Project.⁸

Ultimately, both the physical and mental health risks of erasing LGBTQ youth can be life-or-death. LGBTQ young people deserve better.

A key step in helping our young people develop healthy selves and sexuality is to provide LGBTQ young people with sex education⁹ that is relevant to their identity and experiences and gives them the tools to engage in safe, consensual, and pleasurable sex and relationships – and to provide all young people with LGBTQ positive and inclusive messages and information. Sex education can be a place where we practice un-learning biases and taboos in order to develop the skills for setting clear boundaries and communicating openly as well as engaging in respectful and healthy

⁶ “Implementing an LGBTQ Training for Teen Pregnancy Prevention Facilitators.” Georgia Educational Researcher, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1194631.pdf>

⁷ “Implementing an LGBTQ Training for Teen Pregnancy Prevention Facilitators.” Georgia Educational Researcher, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1194631.pdf>

⁸ “National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021.” The Trevor Project, <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021/>

⁹ “A Call to Action: LGBTQ Youth Need Inclusive Sex Education.” Human Rights Campaign, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/a-call-to-action-lgbtq-youth-need-inclusive-sex-education>

relationships. This guide gives you the tools to take this step with your existing sex education curricula.

From a Jewish Perspective

Core Jewish values point to the importance of LGBTQ inclusive sex education. For example, tradition teaches that all people are created in the Divine image, *b'tzelem Elohim*¹⁰, and therefore people of all genders and sexual orientations deserve full respect and dignity. Judaism also teaches that each of us is responsible for each other, *kol yisrael arevim zeh bazeh*¹¹, and therefore we have a responsibility to all members of our community in this area. Finally, Jewish tradition and culture teach us to create loving and pleasurable relationships when we are ready and to be caring partners. We owe it to young people to offer them a joyful and loving vision of sexuality, not merely the facts of pregnancy and STI prevention.

Each of the following sections includes an offering of Jewish texts and values that relate to each specific topic area. You may want to incorporate these texts in your teaching!

About this Resource

This guide is intended for teachers and educators in schools that have a sex education curriculum in place and are committed to making that existing curriculum more LGBTQ inclusive. It can also be used along with other existing resources to guide the design and implementation of a new sex education curriculum. The ultimate goal is to equip educators of all genders and sexual orientations to teach sex education in ways that are respectful, relevant, and empowering for all youth, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

This guide has five sections that provide a comprehensive overview of LGBTQ inclusion in sex education. The first section focuses on **core directions**, a set of overall practices and principles that can apply to stand-alone sessions or an entire course. The second section provides guidelines for **creating inclusive spaces** for this learning, including rethinking how students are grouped for sex education sessions, building group agreements at the beginning of the course, and intentionally building trust, respect, and safety in the classroom. The third section provides information on how to use **language that is accurate and inclusive** of students' identities and bodies. The fourth **section outlines tools for countering opposition to sex education**

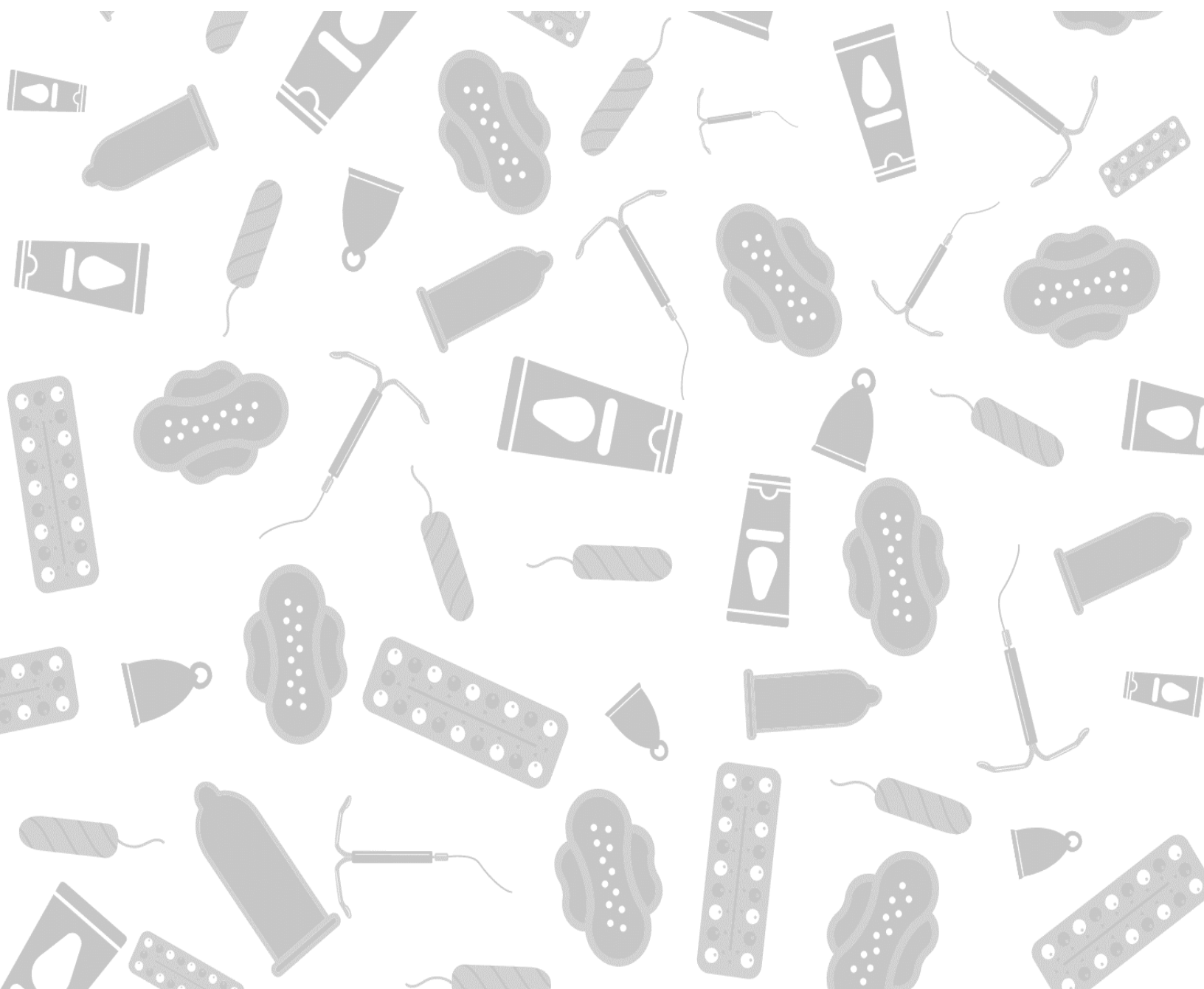
¹⁰ *Bereshit* 1:27. [View on Sefaria](#)

¹¹ Babylonian Talmud, Shavuot 39a. [View on Sefaria](#)

generally and to LGBTQ inclusive sex education. The fifth section offers **additional resources** including complete curricula, glossary sheets, tutorials, and relevant readings and websites.

We owe it to all our young people to provide them with relevant and accurate information that empowers them to make safe and healthy decisions. Adopting these practices is important for LGBTQ students, for students from LGBTQ families, and for creating a community of belonging and equality for LGBTQ faculty and staff. Thank you for your commitment to ensuring that LGBTQ young people see themselves represented in sex education curricula.

We at Keshet are eager to hear your feedback on this guide, and to support your school or community with additional LGBTQ-inclusive resources and education. Please reach out to education@keshetonline.org.



Start Here

Core directions for LGBTQ-inclusive Sex Education

The following sections of this guide offer many specific ideas and practices for creating LGBTQ inclusive sex education lessons. Before engaging with the specifics, start with these core directions to ensure that sex education curricula are inclusive of participants of all genders and sexual orientations.

▲ **Avoid making assumptions about students' identities.**

As a society, we tend to assume that someone is heterosexual until we learn otherwise. However, this thinking reinforces **heterosexism**^o and all the ways that being straight is seen as normal and natural while being LGBTQ is seen as deviant or lesser. Heterosexism is also a system of power that confers advantage on heterosexual people and their relationships and families. Heterosexism harms LGBTQ people by erasing, minimizing, tokenizing, sidelining, and denigrating their experiences, concerns, and lives. Therefore, it's important to never assume anything about students' identities, including by creating lessons and spaces that include a wide range of gender identities, sexual orientations, and bodies.

Turn to page 42 for a glossary including all words with this symbol^o

▲ **Individualize, don't universalize.**

Each person holds a unique constellation of identities and lived experiences, and even people who may share identities experience the world differently. When talking to your students – and when reading this guide – please avoid universalizing or generalizing groups. For example, it would be accurate – and important – to say that “for some **lesbian**^o, **gay**^o, **bisexual**^o, and **queer**^o youth, navigating romantic relationships also involves navigating consent about when and in what settings to be ‘out,’” while it would be a problematic generalization to say that “LGBTQ people are anxious about coming out at school.” Universalizing particular narratives can leave many students feeling invisible or erased, reinforces stereotypes, and disempowers young people from sharing their own lived experiences.

▲ **Empower LGBTQ students without tokenizing them.**

Finding this balance can be tricky. The key is to give LGBTQ students opportunities to learn and also educate their peers **on their own terms**. Some LGBTQ students will be eager to lead a discussion on topics of gender and sexuality or to share their own perspectives and experiences. However, other

LGBTQ students don't want to be visible, to be made into an example, or have their identities highlighted. Facilitators should act with discernment and support when encouraging LGBTQ students to participate or share on topics related to identity. Never force an LGBTQ student to respond to a question or educate the group if they aren't volunteering to do so.

▲ **Honor voluntary participation.**

The topics covered in sex education can be sensitive for students for any number of reasons. It's important to let students determine how they participate. There may be some lessons where few students are speaking up. Instead of calling on individual students, shift the activities to elicit student participation or allow for more private or small-group learning. For example, if most of the activities are being done as a large group, try having students first journal or work in small groups and then share with the large group. It's important to prioritize **student safety** over **student participation**.

▲ **When you're giving examples, default to they/them pronouns and other expansive language.**

Oftentimes, people use "he or she" in an effort to be inclusive. However, this language reinforces the **gender binary**^o and excludes anyone who identifies outside of that binary. By using "they," we practice using expansive language and we avoid making assumptions about real or hypothetical others.

▲ **Commit to ongoing education for yourself and other facilitators and teachers in your school.**

Make sure you are reading, talking, and learning about gender and sexuality and that you are in professional and community conversations! Use Keshet's resources and trainings or the resources listed throughout this guide and challenge yourself to expand and refine your knowledge.

▲ **Sex education is an ongoing conversation, not just a "talk" that you get once chance to get right.**

Every lesson won't go perfectly. There will be information that you forgot to include or that you could have phrased better. It's never too late to try again in another session! It's more important that students get the correct information **at some point**, not that it was **perfect the first time around**.



Inclusive Spaces

In order to learn, all students need to feel safe and respected. Given that sex education is often perceived as taboo or embarrassing, we must create spaces that promote respectful, stigma-free, and supportive conversations. Most teachers and facilitators put significant thought into how to create a positive learning environment where questions and engagement are welcomed. Let's go beyond that and strive for classrooms of belonging and trust!

Integrate Genders, Don't Segregate

Often times, students are separated into groups of "girls" and "boys" for sex education. This is typically an attempt to make students feel more comfortable engaging in already-sensitive topics, given the societal taboos around discussing sex with people of other genders. We should instead create all-gender sex education classes rather than divide students. Students learn from educators, but they also learn from each other: we should create opportunities for students to learn from the identities and experiences of their peers.

First, when we segregate students by perceived or assigned gender, we create a merely superficial sense of privacy and togetherness, and then deny them equal and comprehensive access to information. While it is critical to attend to the comfort of students, in many settings this practice also results in providing different information or focus to the separated groups. For example, teaching "boys" about menstruation only superficially, or emphasizing pregnancy prevention only to "girls." Teaching young people limited information can have negative impacts in several ways. For transgender and non-binary students, they may miss out on information relevant to their own bodies that was de-emphasized or glossed over, and the gender-segregated space may make it more difficult or risky to ask for clarification. It also results in cisgender students receiving less information about bodies different from their own, which perpetuates the idea that other peoples' bodies are mysterious or weird and makes it more difficult for them to build healthy and respectful relationships.

Even when segregated groups of students learn the same curriculum, the practice of dividing the groups reinforces the **gender binary**, sends a message that these topics are not to be discussed with people of the "opposite gender," and implicitly suggests that other bodies are inherently different, mysterious, gross, or awkward. Moreover, the way the information is taught often changes in single-gender spaces, often reinforcing gender stereotypes around masculinity and femininity. For example, "girls" classes often focus (both explicitly and implicitly) on the dangers

associated with engaging in sexual activity, particularly unintended pregnancy. This emphasis puts the responsibility for practicing safer sex solely on the person with a uterus, and ignores any type of sex that cannot result in pregnancy. When we divide students into “girls” and “boys,” we inherently change the content and context of the information that we are teaching.

Second, a purpose of sex education is to give young people a foundation for healthy sexuality by deconstructing societal taboos around sex and sexuality. Adults and young people struggle to acknowledge that it is appropriate for young people to think about sexuality, to be curious, to experiment with sexual activity, and to grapple with how sexuality (or **asexuality**, which is often also unmentioned or considered taboo) fits in with their lives, values, and sense of self. Many people of all ages find it hard to talk about pleasure and communicate clearly about their desires and boundaries related to sex and sexuality. These taboos make it more difficult for people to understand and protect their own boundaries, make safe and healthy decisions, and communicate with (potential) partners. Dividing students is one way we reinforce those taboos. Instead, we should actively engage in open and honest conversations that start to eliminate that discomfort.

Third, dividing students by assigned or perceived gender is especially exclusionary and potentially harmful for transgender and non-binary students, in at least two ways. When these classes are divided by gender, we force transgender students to choose between a group of people that (roughly) shares their identity and a group of people that (roughly) shares their biology. They may lose out on the most thorough and accurate information about their bodies. And they are often invalidated or seen as strange and out of place in whatever group they are forced into. Further, many non-binary and genderqueer students are neither “boys” nor “girls.” In a gender-segregated model, there is no space for these students to learn without being explicitly misgendered or marginalized. Consider the following example.

*Ariel is a non-binary 9th grader. Because their school teaches sex education in single-gender spaces, and because Ariel was assigned female at birth, they are placed with the “girls” class on the assumption that the information presented in that class will be most relevant to them. Ariel spends the entire class time anxious and uncomfortable. They worry that being placed in this group implicitly instructs their peers to see them as “really a girl” despite their being non-binary. Their sense of **gender dysphoria**^o is aggravated every time the teacher addresses the group as “girls” or “ladies.” They do not feel comfortable asking questions. Rather than being a place for learning, this class has added discomfort and anxiety to Ariel’s time at school.*

Rather than assuming that gender-divided classes will provide clarity, comfort, and dignity for participants, we encourage educators to create robust group agreements

and proactively set an inclusive class climate, to increase access to relevant information and promote the dignity of participants of all genders.

Jewish Values and Text

Caring for Others: *Pirkei Avot 1:15*¹²

If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And being only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

אם אין אני לי, מי לי. וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני. ואם לא עכשיו, אימתי

Communal Responsibility: *Babylonian Talmud, Shavuot 39a:22*¹³

All of Israel are responsible for one another.

שכל ישראל ערבים זה בזה

Community: *Pirkei Avot 2:4*¹⁴

Do not separate yourself from the community

משפט אחד יהיה לכם כגור כאזרח יהיה פי אני יהנה אלהיכם:

Inclusion: *Leviticus 24:22*¹⁵

You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike

אני כי יהיה כאזרח כגור לכם יהיה אחד משפט אלהיכם: יהיה

Resources

Why We Shouldn't Be Separating Boys and Girls for Sex Ed – Bonnie J. Rough¹⁶

More on the indirect harms of separating students by assigned or perceived gender for sex education

¹² [View on Sefaria](#)

¹³ [View on Sefaria](#)

¹⁴ [View on Sefaria](#)

¹⁵ [View on Sefaria](#)

¹⁶ “Why we shouldn't be separating boys and girls for sex ed.” The Washington Post,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2018/10/19/why-we-shouldnt-be-separating-boys-girls-sex-ed/>

Group Agreements

One powerful tool is to establish an inclusive, trusting classroom space is to develop **group agreements** that all students contribute and agree to. Group agreements are ground rules that everyone follows to build trust, safety, and support. Taking the time to intentionally set inclusive and identity-aware group agreements sets the groundwork for prioritizing the safety of students and respecting their identities and experiences.

All too often, LGBTQ identities are often treated as taboo or hypersexual compared to straight and cisgender identities. The very assumption that LGBTQ people are expected to “come out” while cisgender and straight people are assumed to be the default reflects this dynamic. Also, both young people and adults commonly think of LGBTQ identities and queer sexual activity as inherently “more sexual” or “more mature” than cisgender or straight identities or heterosexual sexual activity. LGBTQ people and sexuality are often implicitly or explicitly the punchlines of jokes. And many straight and cis people feel free to question the validity of LGBTQ identities, or to assume that LGBTQ young people are “too young” to know their identities, whereas no one questions young people who know they are cis or straight at an early age. This backdrop can make it feel risky for LGBTQ students (or educators) to participate openly in sex and health education.

Teachers should facilitate group agreements at the start of the first session, before any content has been introduced, and then refer to those agreements as necessary throughout the sessions. As the group agreements are created, the facilitator should remind the participants that it is a living document that can be modified and added to as the sessions progress. After the group agreements are agreed upon, the facilitator should post them in an easily visible spot.

The facilitator should prioritize creating the group agreements **with** the participants as opposed to for the participants. This ensures that participants buy into the group agreements and contribute agreements that are important to them, making them more likely to follow them throughout the sessions.

How to create group agreements

There are different ways to create group agreements that depend on the size of the group and the learning modality. Any of the options below can be modified or combined to meet the specific needs of the group. Before the lesson, think about a few group agreements that you as the facilitator want to be sure are included. If students do not mention them, make sure to add them to the final list.

Examples of group agreements that can foster LGBTQ belonging in the classroom:

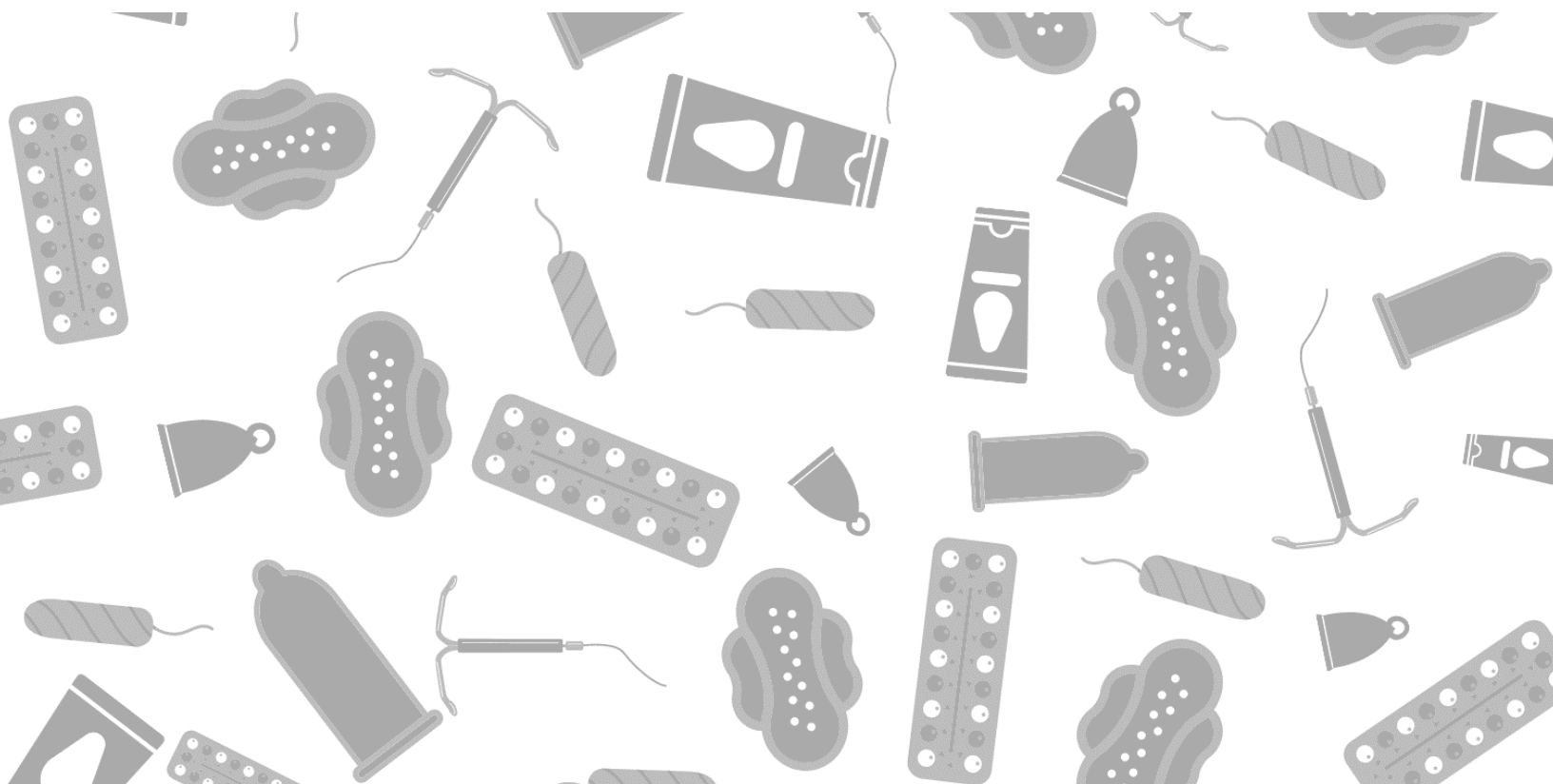
- What's said here stays here, what's learned here leaves here.
- Speak from your own experiences instead of the experiences of others.
- Don't yuck someone's yum. Don't yum someone's yuck.
- All questions are good questions.
- Everyone has the right to pass.
- Laughing with, not laughing at.
- Use inclusive language that respects diverse bodies and identities.
- For more information, see the **Inclusive Language** section on page 24.

Option A: Large Group, In-Person

- ▲ First, frame the exercise for students by explaining what group agreements are and how they are important for classroom support and safety.
- ▲ Then, have students brainstorm the group agreements in small groups for 3 to 5 minutes.
- ▲ Ask each group to share their group agreements, either on a poster board or whiteboard, or you can take notes on a poster board or the whiteboard.
- ▲ After each group has shared, allow time for students to add anything that was missed.
- ▲ Make sure to add anything that you noted before the lesson.
- ▲ Lastly, have the students sign the group agreements with the understanding that they can be modified in future sessions.

Option B: Large Group, Online

- ▲ If a large group is meeting online, follow the same format as above using “breakout rooms” and a Google Jamboard.
- ▲ Given that “breakout rooms” often take extra time, have students type their group agreements directly on the Jamboard and then present them to the class.
- ▲ Allow time for students to add anything that was missed.
- ▲ Make sure to add anything that you noted before the lesson.
- ▲ Students can sign the group agreements by typing their name on the Jamboard or in the chat.



Option C: Small Group, In-Person

- ▲ First, frame the group agreements exercise for students by explaining what group agreements are and how they are an important component of classroom support and safety.
- ▲ If the group is too small to brainstorm in small groups, have the students use sticky notes to anonymously create the group agreements.
- ▲ After each student has written a group agreement, have them post them on a poster board or the whiteboard.
- ▲ Read each post-it note aloud and allow time for students to add anything that was missed.
- ▲ Make sure to add anything that you noted before the lesson.
- ▲ Lastly, have the students sign the group agreements with the understanding that they can be modified in future sessions.

Option D: Small Group, Online

- ▲ If a small group is meeting online, follow the same format as above using a Google Jamboard.
- ▲ After each student has contributed to the Jamboard, read through the responses and allow time for students to add anything that was missed.
- ▲ Make sure to add anything that you noted before the lesson.
- ▲ Students can sign the group agreements by typing their name on the Google Jamboard or in the chat.

If these options require too much time, the facilitator can present pre-determined group agreements and ask students to add anything that is missing. However, this gives the students less agency and potentially less commitment to following the agreements.

Images of sample Group Agreements created using "Option D."

Group Agreements

Participate!

Take class seriously. You will learn a lot of life lessons in this class.

Be respectful

ask questions if your confused

don't make jokes about peoples points of veiw

Always be respectful of other people's opinions, even if they don't match your own

Be open minded

Don't judge people questions and maybe confusion.

If someone asks a question that might be personal, don't tell it to other people

Don't make jokes after class ends

Keep the chat relevant and appropriate.

don't judge other peoples questions

Be courageous and ask questions.

be nice to eachother

agree to disagree

Group Agreements

Respect others.

Don't laugh about HSR

respect the teacher

Don't ignore people

Think before you say something

treat others the way you want t0o be treated

be fair

Be Kind to others

pay attention to the person thats talking

respect pronouns and gender

be kind

Respect each other

Be kind.- Leon

follow rules

Treat other the way you wanna be treated.

don't be afraid to share

no rude coments

One Mic- Leon

be careful of what you say 'cause you might hurt others

Don't talk while other people are talking

treat others the way you want t0o be treated

Think before you speak.

Treat others the waay you eant tp be treated

The previous two sections cover tactics for **climate setting** – establishing a friendly, collaborative environment and group dynamic before you introduce core content. It is important to prioritize co-creating an inclusive, collaborative classroom to ease discomfort and embarrassment and increase communication by starting with and returning to lighter topics while diving into the potentially uncomfortable material.

Below are more ideas for making your classroom inclusive and collaborative.

Ice Breakers

These are especially important in the first session and should also be used **throughout the curricula** to start off each session. The icebreakers can be a formal game or activity or just a simple question that gets students talking and helps students connect over shared experiences and identities. Please consider the access needs of your students when selecting an activity, and modify these exercises as needed to ensure that all students can participate.¹⁷ And as always, give students choices about how, and how much, to participate.

- ▲ **10 Things in Common.** Divide students into groups and have them identify 10 things they have in common.
- ▲ **Photo Stories.** Divide students into groups and give each group 4-5 pictures. Have them write a story that uses all the pictures.
- ▲ **Motion Mania.** For this game, students need to be in a circle where everyone can see each other. The first person will say their name while doing some sort of motion. The next person will say their name, do a motion, and repeat the name and movement of the person before them. This continues around the circle, so the last person must remember the names and movements of everyone else in the circle. After the game has

¹⁷ A full list of all the ways to consider access in your sex education classroom is beyond the scope of this resource, but we encourage you to read more on an intersectional and anti-oppression framework. Think about access for people with physical or perceptual disabilities, people with mental health issues or disabilities, people with learning disabilities and/or who are neurodiverse, people of a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, people who are new to your school or even learning your classroom language, people who are fat, and any other groups or individuals who frequently face barriers to learning environments.

For more information:

“Comprehensive Sex Education for Youth with Disabilities: A Call to Action.” SIECUS, <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SIECUS-2021-Youth-with-Disabilities-CTA-1.pdf>

“Sex ed is a vehicle for racial justice.” SIECUS, <https://siecus.org/sex-ed-is-a-vehicle-for-racial-justice/>

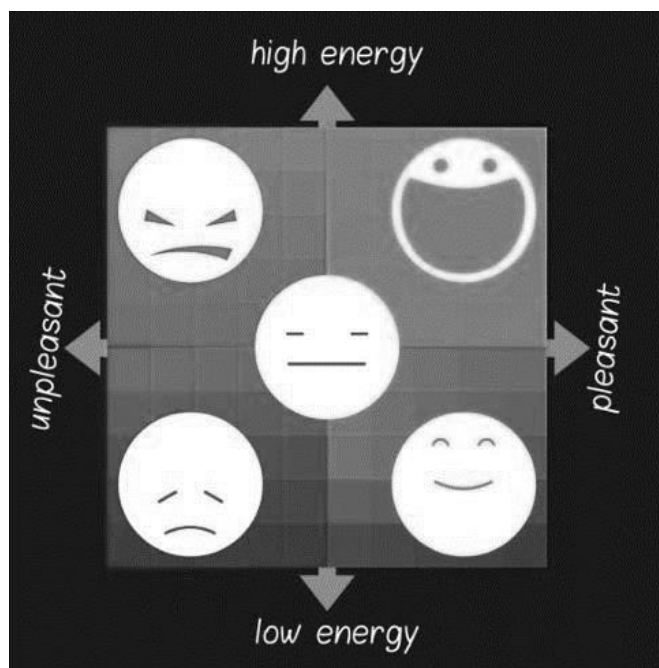
“Body Liberation, Anti-Fatness and Sex Ed.” Mad Hatter Wellness, <https://madhatterwellness.com/body-liberation-anti-fatness-and-sex-ed/>

ended, give other students the opportunity to repeat the names and movements of the whole group.

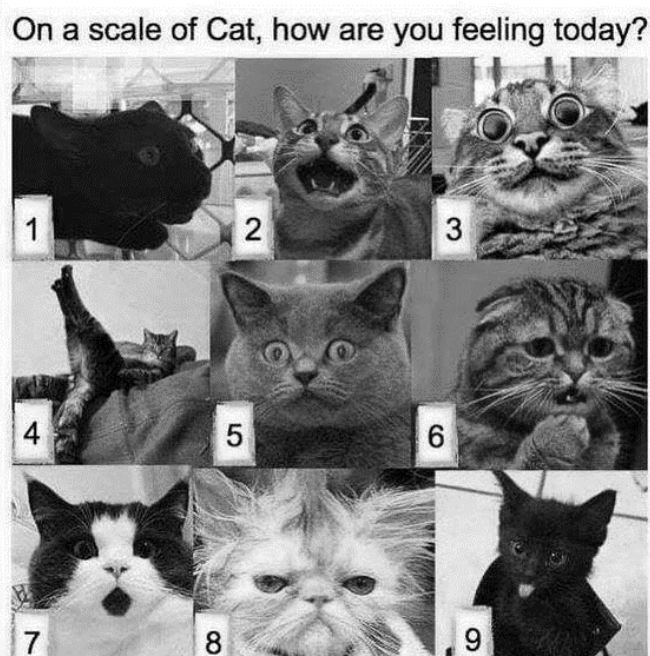
▲ **Fun Questions. Choose your own or ask students to come up with more!**

- What is your favorite shape of pasta?
- What is your most used emoji?
- What is your favorite time of day? Why?

▲ **Mood Board.** Which of these colors or feelings represent your mood? Which cat represents your mood?



Source: [Heart-Mind Online](#)



Source: [Pinterest](#)

Develop Shared Purpose

For this activity, have students brainstorm the purpose of sex education in small groups, for example, answering the question “why are you here?” Have the groups share highlights from their discussion with the large group. If the group is relatively small, consider doing the brainstorm together.

This activity serves two purposes. First, it gets students thinking about why sex education is important and how it benefits them. Second, it gives the facilitator information on any expectations they can try to meet, and importantly, can reveal any misconceptions that students have about sex education and any topics that are of interest or not of interest to them. The facilitator can then use this information to refine the curricula. For example, if students think that the only purpose of sex

education is to prevent unintended pregnancy and STIs, then maybe the facilitator will include more content on consent, healthy relationships, and identity development.

Distribute an Anonymous Survey

This gives students a chance to share more information and ask questions about themselves. The questions should be a mix between fun icebreaker type questions and questions that explore students' needs and interests.

After you have collected the responses, use them to inform your planning. For example, if multiple students write that they really love Kahoot (an online platform for educational, user-created games), then incorporate more Kahoots into your lessons. If students are not excited about the Healthy Relationships lesson, ask them in the following session how you can adjust that topic or if there is another topic that they would rather learn about. This gives the students agency in their own education and increases their interest and engagement in your time together.

Question Box

In every session, give each student a notecard to write any anonymous questions that come up during the lesson. Make sure all the notecards are the same size and color. Either have students put the questions in a physical box or collect all the notecards at the end of the session. If you choose the former, ask each student to submit a card (even if they don't have a question or comment) to keep the activity entirely anonymous.

Depending on time, respond to questions at the end of the lesson or email your responses to students after the lesson. Emailing the answers later gives you more time to craft your response and to get ideas from colleagues if you aren't sure how to respond. If students are hesitant to write anything because their peers can potentially see their notecards, consider creating a virtual option, like a Google Form, that they can fill out when they're not in class.

Possible questions:

- What's something you like to do in your free time?
- What is your favorite meal of the day?
- How comfortable are you talking to your parent/guardian about relationships and sexuality?
- Here are some topics that we will be learning about in sex education this year. What are you most excited to learn about?
 - Healthy Relationships
 - Puberty
 - Reproduction and Pregnancy
 - Safer Sex
 - Consent
- What would you like to learn in sex education this year?
- If you ever feel uncomfortable this year during sex education, what is something that I can do to make the class more comfortable for you?
- What are some of your favorite and least favorite ways to learn?

Jewish Values and Texts

Caring for Others: *Pirkei Avot 1:15*¹⁸

If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And being only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

אם אין אני לי, מי לי. וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני. ואם לא עכשיו, אימתי

Confidentiality: *Proverbs 11:13*¹⁹

A base fellow gives away secrets, but a trustworthy soul keeps a confidence.

הזלך רכיל מגלה-סוד ונאמן-רוח מכסה דבר:

Mutual Kindness: *Vayikra 19:18*²⁰

Love your neighbor as yourself

אהבת לרעה כמוך אני יהוה

Safety and Responsibility: *Deuteronomy 22:8*²¹

Make a fence around your roof, so that you won't bring bloodshed upon your house if someone falls.

כי תבנה בית חדש ועשית מעקה לגגך ולא-תשים דמים בביתך כי-יפל הנפל ממנו:

Privacy and Dignity: *Leviticus 19:16*²²

Do not go tale-bearing/gossiping among your people.

לא-תלה רכיל בעמיה לא תעמד על-דם רעה אני יהוה:

Resources

Ground Rules – Teaching Sexual Health²³

¹⁸ [View on Sefaria](#)

¹⁹ [View on Sefaria](#)

²⁰ [View on Sefaria](#)

²¹ [View on Sefaria](#)

²² [View on Sefaria](#)

²³ “Ground Rules.” Teaching Sexual Health, <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/teachers/sexual-health-education/understanding-your-role/get-prepared/ground-rules/>

Additional information on group agreements, plus examples that can be used in sex education classes.

History of Sex Education – SIECUS²⁴

Additional information on the history of gender-segregated sex education classes.

Using an Anonymous Question Box in Sex Ed – Melissa Pintor Carnagey, Sex Positive Families²⁵

More on the importance of a question box and how to use one effectively in sex education lessons.



²⁴ “History of Sex Education.” SIECUS, https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-SIECUS-History-of-Sex-Ed_Final.pdf

²⁵ “Using an Anonymous Question Box in Sex Ed.” Sex Positive Families, <https://sexpositivefamilies.com/using-an-anonymous-question-box-in-sex-ed/>

Inclusive Language

The language that facilitators use in sex education matters. Oftentimes, the language used is **cis- or heteronormative**^o, meaning that it assumes and reinforces an unspoken belief that cisgender and heterosexual identities are the norm or default. For example, when someone says, “during puberty, girls develop breasts and start to menstruate,” they exclude people who experience these physical changes but don’t identify as girls, and transgender girls, and girls with a variety of intersex conditions that result in their not developing breasts or menstruating.

Language that conflates gender with body parts reinforces the idea that being cisgender is “normal” and that trans, non-binary, or other gender identities are nonexistent, deviant, or less-than. Not surprisingly, this can have adverse effects on transgender and non-binary participants²⁶, including making needed information less clear and accessible, increasing stress and **dysphoria**^o, and creating barriers to transgender and non-binary students participating and learning actively in the class. Many transgender and non-binary people have attested to the importance of clear and gender-affirming language, which not only helps ensure the dignity and comfort of participants, but also removes ambiguity and increases clarity in the lesson. And using inclusive language is a key way to help cis/hetero students practice seeing and thinking beyond the gender binary rather than reinforcing that binary as normal or natural.

In many settings, language that assumes heterosexual relationships as the norm has become ingrained in our educational materials and approach. When our language contains these implicit assumptions, students who are LGBQ and/or asexual are erased. If our curricula – or our casual turns of phrase – focus only or mainly on heterosexual identities and relationships, critical information relevant to LGBTQ students is not conveyed and the classroom as a whole is less engaging and safe for their questions and participation.²⁷

It’s relatively simple to shift our language to be inclusive of our students’ identities, bodies, and sexual experiences. This section gives tangible examples of inclusive language to use in sex education classes.

²⁶ “Talk about Bodies’: Recommendations for Using Transgender-Inclusive Language in Sex Education Curricula.” Diana M. Tordoff, Samantha G. Haley, Alic Shook, Alena Kantor, Julia M. Crouch, Kym Ahrens, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341887113_Talk_about_Bodies_Recommendations_for_Using_Transgender-Inclusive_Language_in_Sex_Education_Curricula

²⁷ For more on all these terms, see the glossary on page XX, or Keshet’s LGBTQ terminology online at keshetonline.org/resources/lgbtq-terminology/

Examples

Below are some samples of **affirming and respectful language**, along with potentially **exclusive language**. It can be helpful to name for students new to this language that it might not feel natural to them at first but that the class is practicing a new skill together.

Most of these examples focus on using medical names for body parts rather than conflating body parts with gender. This is an excellent overall practice and is highly encouraged when teaching content. At the same time, there is a long history of medical providers stigmatizing, pathologizing, or erasing LGBTQ people. Be aware that many, but not all, transgender people refer to their own body parts by non-medical names. This is often a way that people navigate an anti-trans world and find or create affirming language for their own bodies, and these terms should be respected. Medically accurate terms should be taught and modeled in class, and individual language preferences should be respected rather than corrected.

Anatomy

- ▲ Use **people with [insert body part]** instead of **men and women**. For example, if you're labeling the parts of the penis, **use people with penises, or say many people with vulvas experience... rather than women experience...**
- ▲ Refer to the diagrams as the **penis diagram, vulva diagram, and uterus diagram** instead of the **male and female reproductive systems**.
- ▲ When giving general examples, default to language that does not assume that body parts are inherently gendered, i.e., saying **their penis** rather than **his penis**.

Puberty

- ▲ When talking about the changes that happen during puberty, name the body parts that the changes happen to. For example, you might say “for **people with uteruses**, menstruation typically begins between 9-14.” As another example, you could say “**people with penises** may experience wet dreams, which are when someone ejaculates while they sleep.” This avoids equating body parts with specific gender identities.

Healthy Relationships

- ▲ Include scenarios that are representative of different types of relationships and gender identities. Use a wide range of **gendered and gender-neutral names and pronouns** to normalize the diversity in identities and relationships. The following examples can be used in a middle school consent lesson and represent three different relationships.

Gender-neutral names and pronouns:

Jordan and **Ari** are one of the first couples in 7th grade. Jordan loves that everyone knows they're a couple, and always holds Ari's hand in the hallway or puts **their** arm around Ari. Ari really likes Jordan but has never been a physical person and doesn't like the public touching. The next time Jordan sees Ari at school, they wrap their arm around Ari's waist, gives a gentle squeeze and says, "Hi!" Ari, embarrassed, says, "You don't have to do that every time we see each other." Jordan pulls back immediately, says "fine" and walks away.

How do you think Ari handled this? What could Ari have done differently? How do you think Jordan handled this? What could Jordan have done differently?

A mix of names and pronouns:

Maya and **Jesse** are one of the first couples in 7th grade. **Maya** loves that everyone knows they're a couple, and always holds Jesse's hand in the hallway or puts **her** arm around Jesse. Jesse really likes Maya but has never been a physical person and doesn't like the public touching. The next time Maya sees Jesse at school, she wraps her arm around Jesse's waist, gives a gentle squeeze and says, "Hi!" Jesse, embarrassed, says, "You don't have to do that every time we see each other." Maya pulls back immediately, says "fine" and walks away.

How do you think Maya handled this? What could Maya have done differently? How do you think Jesse handled this? What could Jesse have done differently?

Gendered names and pronouns:

Maya and **Sarah** are one of the few same-gender couples in their school. Maya loves that everyone knows they're a couple, and always holds Sarah's hand in the hallway or puts **her** arm around Sarah. Sarah really likes Maya but has never been a physical person and doesn't like the public touching. In particular, she feels nervous about how others will react to her being with Maya, and is worried that they will get bullied or harassed. The next time Maya sees Sarah at school, she wraps her arm around Sarah's waist, gives a gentle squeeze and says, "Hi!" Sarah, embarrassed, says, "You don't have to do that every time we see each other." Maya pulls back immediately, says "fine" and walks away.

How do you think Maya handled this? What could Maya have done differently? How do you think Sarah handled this? What could Sarah have done differently?

These scenarios might include gendered expectations and pressures. Make room for conversation about those pressures. Also make sure to include scenarios that are specifically relevant to same-gender couples, the unique biases that bisexual people face (i.e., bisexual people are "going through a phase" and are actually gay or straight; bisexual people are promiscuous; etc.), and the unique biases that asexual

people face (i.e., asexuality is synonymous with abstinent, asexual people haven't found the right partner, etc.)

Also include specific characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships that are unique to LGBTQ relationships. For example, you could name that it is harmful and abusive to use the incorrect pronouns and/or name for a partner, or to threaten to out a partner. See the resources from *Stop the Hurt* and the *OneLove Foundation*, listed at the end of this section, for more information.

Reproduction and Pregnancy

- ▲ Use **pregnant people, people who can become pregnant, or people with uteruses**, instead of **women**.
- ▲ When talking about sexual activity that can result in a pregnancy, refer to it as **penis-vagina sex** instead of just "**sex**." Sex looks different for different people, so it's important to be explicit when naming sexual behaviors. This avoids reinforcing a hierarchy in which only penis-vagina sex counts as "sex." It also combats the misconception that only penis-vagina sex carries risk and reinforces the need to make informed and healthy decisions when engaging in other kinds of sexual activity.

Methods of Contraception

- ▲ People of many genders and with many kinds of bodies use contraception. When talking about who uses contraception and when, be specific about the types of bodies and types of sexual interaction for which people should use contraception to prevent pregnancy.
- ▲ For example, when talking about who uses what kinds of contraception, say **people with uteruses** instead of **women**, and say **penis-vagina sex** instead of **intercourse or regular sex or vaginal penetration**.
- ▲ Scan your curricular materials for language that explicitly or implicitly describes penis-vagina sex as "real sex" and other sexual activities as "less than" or "more than" penis-vagina sex. For example, oral sex is often thought of as "not real sex" while anal sex is thought of as "beyond" penis-vagina sex. These messages make it more difficult for people of all genders and orientations to make informed decisions and reinforce stigma specifically against LGBTQ people and sexuality.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

- ▲ Make sure to include information on **all sexual behaviors** that put someone at risk for an STI. This includes anal sex, oral sex, and skin-to-skin contact, as well as penis-vagina sex.
- ▲ When talking about condoms, **use external and internal**, instead of **male and female**.
- ▲ Include information on **internal condoms and dental dams** for people engaging in sexual activity that does not include a penis.

Avoid Sex-Negative and Sexist Stereotypes

- ▲ Scan your curricular materials for implicit sexist messages tied to the gender binary. For example, instead of statements such as ‘boys just want sex’ or ‘girls don’t feel as much desire,’ talk about how different people have different, personal relationships with intimacy and desire.
- ▲ Acknowledge the existence and importance of pleasure rather than focusing primarily on preventing pregnancy or STIs. For example, be honest that people often engage in sexual activity because it feels good. In an anatomy lesson, directly mention the function of the clitoris (sexual pleasure) and define an orgasm.



Sample Activity: Choosing Contraception

The following scenario is used as a way for students to learn about contraceptive methods and think through how to choose one.

Note that the scenario uses a gender-neutral name (Tal and gender-neutral pronouns (they/them)). If students use she/her or he/him pronouns for Tal, take the opportunity to remind them that Tal has a uterus and uses they/them pronouns. It is important for students to recognize that people of many different genders use contraception. After each group has picked a contraceptive method for Tal, have them share with the large group and correct any misconceptions or false information.

Tal is having penis-vagina sex, has a uterus and ovaries, and does not want to get pregnant. In groups, use the Bedsider* website to look up different contraceptive methods and decide which one might be best for Tal. You may choose more than one option. Here are some key factors to consider:

- ▲ Tal has a good relationship with their family and is comfortable talking to them about sex. Tal would not be embarrassed if their family found any evidence that they were on birth control.
- ▲ Tal is 100% sure that they do not want kids in the near future, so they would like a method that is highly effective at preventing pregnancy.
- ▲ Tal is very good about maintaining a routine. Every morning when they wake up, they immediately take their vitamins, brush their teeth, and get dressed for school.
- ▲ Tal is okay with getting procedures done at the doctor but finds the idea of having a small device inside of their body to be a little strange.

*“Birth Control.” Bedsider,

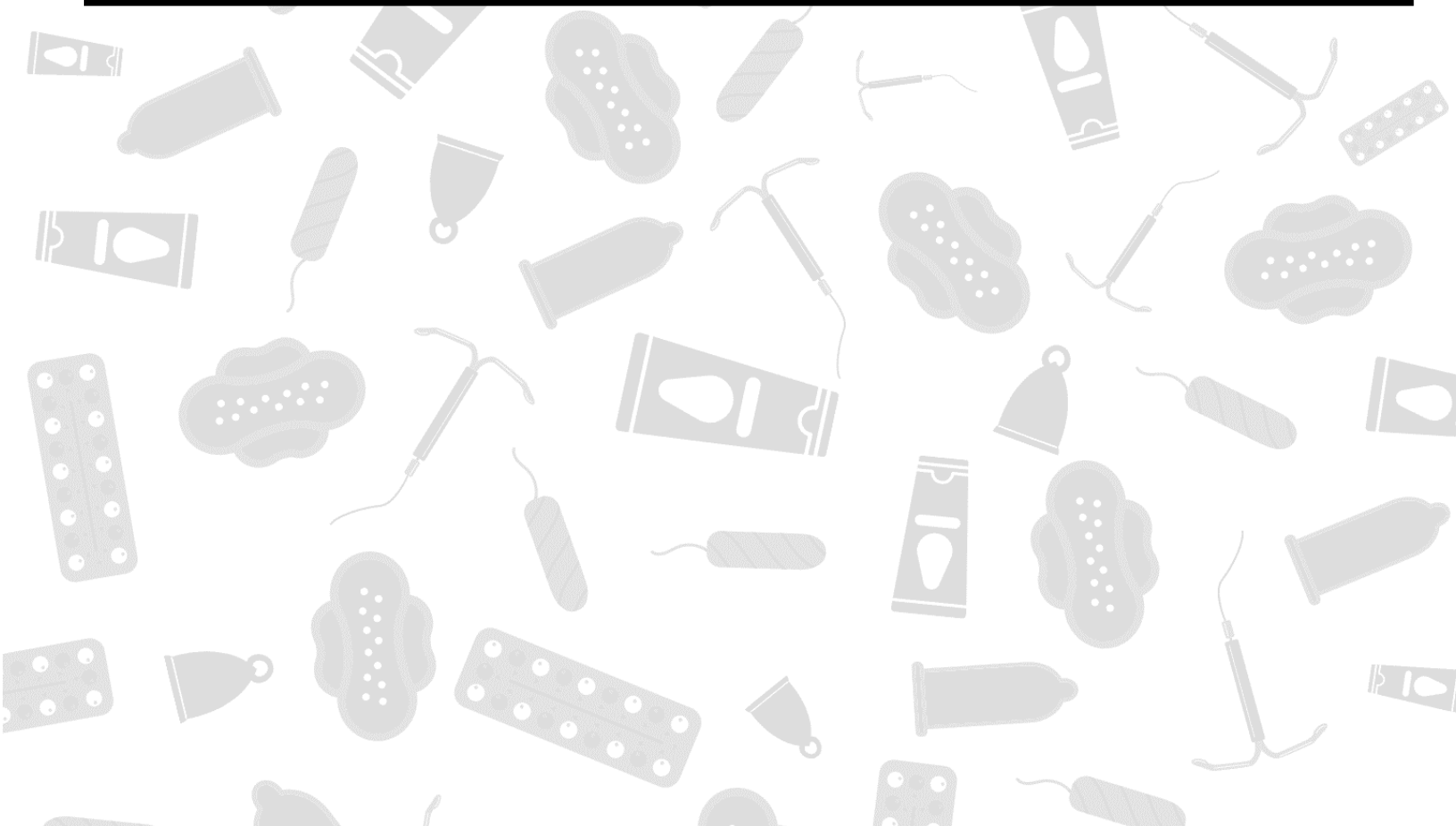
Sample Activity: When Words Hurt

To frame the importance of inclusive language for students, use the following activity in an early session.

Start by explaining that we all deserve to be spoken to and about with courtesy. Ask students to take a few minutes to reflect on a time when someone used hurtful language towards them or made false assumptions about them. As they write about that experience, ask them to think about how that experience made them feel and what they wish the person/people had said instead.

When students have finished writing, ask for volunteers to share about their experience and how it made them feel. After students are finished sharing, explain that we never want students to feel that way in our space. Ask students to brainstorm ways to make the space inclusive of all students and write their answers on a piece of poster board that can be visible in future sessions.

Don't worry if students give examples that are similar to the Group Agreements. It never hurts to have this information in more than one place. If students don't mention using inclusive language, add it to the list and give a few examples of what that looks like. If reductive or limiting language is used in future sessions, refer to the poster board as a reminder of this class discussion.



Jewish Values and Texts

Shmirat HaLashon: Proverbs 18:21²⁸

Death and life are in the power of the tongue;

מוֹת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד-לָשׁוֹן וְאֶהְבִּיָּהּ יֹאכַל פְּרִיהָ:

Mutual Kindness: Leviticus 19:18²⁹

Love others as yourself.

אֶת-תְּקוּמָתְךָ וְלֹא-תִטֵּר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאֶהְבֵּת לְרַעֲךָ
כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

Inclusivity: Leviticus 24:22³⁰

You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike

מִשְׁפַּט אֶחָד יְהִי לְכֶם כְּגֵר כְּאֶזְרָח יְהִי כִּי אֲנִי
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

Resources

Inclusive Sex Ed Checklist – ACCM and SextEd³¹

A checklist to determine if the language in your curriculum is exclusive, and how to shift to inclusive language.

LGBTQ Relationships – Stop the Hurt³²

How to differentiate between healthy and abusive LGBTQ relationships.

What Unhealthy

Relationships Can Look Like Through an LGBTQ+ Lens – One Love Foundation³³

Examples of unhealthy relationship characteristics and how those present in LGBTQ relationships.

²⁸ [View on Sefaria](#)

²⁹ [View on Sefaria](#)

³⁰ [View on Sefaria](#)

³¹ "Inclusive Sex Ed Checklist." ACCM and SextEd, <https://www.shorecentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/Adapting-Sex-Ed-Language-Guelph-Checklist.compressed.pdf>

³² "LGBTQ Relationships." Stop the Hurt, <https://stopthehurt.org/lgbtq-relationships/>

³³ "What Unhealthy Relationships Can Look Like Through an LGBTQ+ Lens." One Love Foundation, <https://www.joinonelove.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/10-Signs-of-a-Healthy-and-Unhealthy-Relationship-LGBTQ-Edition.pdf>

Facing Opposition

Despite strong public support for sex education³⁴, the people who oppose classroom sex education are often vocal and persistent. As a result, it's important for facilitators to develop strategies for responding to common counter-arguments from parents and community members – and also for school administrations to commit to standing up for their students and teachers if conflict arises between parents and teachers. This section provides data to support sex education generally and LGBTQ-inclusive sex education in particular. It also provides examples of best practices when responding to opponents.

The Importance of Sex Education

There are two main sex education models in the United States: abstinence-only and comprehensive sex education. The abstinence-only model underscores abstaining from sexual activity as the only effective method for preventing unintended pregnancy and STIs. This model withholds information about contraception and STI prevention from young people and is often not medically or anatomically accurate. This model also often implicitly and explicitly prioritizes a specific set of religious and cultural values. Abstinence-only sex education teaches that sexual activity is unacceptable, inappropriate, and dangerous outside of heterosexual marriage. It especially labels girls and women as damaged or less worthy if they are ever sexually active outside heterosexual marriage, and it typically erases LGBTQ people entirely or defines their identities and sexual activity as dangerous and disgusting. These programs have not been proven³⁵ to delay initiation of sexual activity. In addition, research shows that these programs actually put young people at a greater risk for unintended pregnancy and STIs.

Comprehensive sex education (CSE) should include the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of sexuality, including topics such as STI and HIV prevention, contraceptive methods, consent and positive relationship dynamics, and gender identity and sexual orientation. CSE has been proven³⁶ to delay initiation of sexual

³⁴ “On Our Side: Public Support for Sex Education.” SIECUS, <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/On-Our-Side-Public-Support-for-Sex-Ed-2018-Final.pdf>

³⁵ “American Adolescents’ Sources of Sexual Health Information.” Guttmacher Institute, <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/facts-american-teens-sources-information-about-sex>

³⁶ “Abstinence Education Programs: Definition, Funding, and Impact on Teen Sexual Behavior.” Kaiser Family Foundation, <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/fact-sheet/abstinence-education-programs-definition-funding-and-impact-on-teen-sexual-behavior/>

activity, increase rates of condom use, and decrease risk for unintended pregnancy and STI transmission.

All young people should have the opportunity to learn about sexuality in ways that allow them to develop at their own pace, begin sexual activity when they choose to, and prevent STIs and pregnancy. For LGBTQ youth to have access to the information they need and to feel they are being supported to learn, CSE must be inclusive of LGBTQ identities³⁷. LGBTQ young people learn best when they see themselves represented in the curriculum.

Comprehensive sex education has been proven to delay initiation of sexual activity, increase rates of condom use, and decrease risk for unintended pregnancy and STI transmission.

Below is a list of common arguments against both general sex education and LGBTQ inclusive sex education, as well as strategies for responding to these arguments.

▲ **“Sex education encourages young people to have sex.”**

There are two different ways to respond to this argument. Firstly, and most bluntly, there is ample data that shows that comprehensive sex education is correlated with reduced rates and later initiation of sexual activity. And secondly, sex education includes so much more than just information on sexual activity. For example, students learn about healthy relationships and consent, which are applicable outside of sexual or romantic situations. Other topics might include body image, gender identity, or decision-making. Moreover, thoughtful and comprehensive sex education should not direct students on how or whether to engage in sexual activity. The purpose of sex education is to provide students with the information they need to make **informed and empowered** decisions.

▲ **“We have our values in our household/school. I don’t want something counter to that to be taught in the classroom.”**

The purpose of sex education is to start conversations on sexual health topics and to provide young people with the facts and information they need to make empowered, safe decisions. We want our students to make decisions in line with their values. You may want to talk more about your school’s particular Jewish values and/or pluralism and respect for the individual values of your families here. However, no one can make values-based and well-founded decisions without accurate information.

³⁷ “A Call to Action: LGBTQ+ Youth Need Inclusive Sex Education.” SIECUS, <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Call-to-Action-LGBTQ-Sex-Ed-Report.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=c18440fc-2b21-4556-9f8d-5625a3770146>

Further, students who are comfortable talking about sexual health topics are more likely to seek guidance from parents or other trustworthy adults.

In responding to this counter argument, it's important to validate that teaching values is a parent or guardian's job and to clarify what sex education covers. It may be helpful to include concrete information, such as reassurance that you will not specify a "right age" to start engaging in sexual activity or offer your opinion on watching pornography. Instead, skilled facilitators might handle these topics by introducing students to questions that young people might want to ask themselves before engaging in sexual activity or outlining ways in which pornography differs from reality and noting the age restrictions for viewing. Ultimately, providing information in a safe and non-stigmatizing way helps students make values-based decisions about sexual health and relationships.

▲ **"Sex education teaches young people to be gay."**

First, there is nothing wrong with being gay (or bisexual, trans, etc.), and all people deserve to be treated with respect.

Second, sex education provides information on gender and sexuality but does not teach students how to identify. People should be able to choose how they label or describe their own gender and sexual orientation. LGBTQ identities are not unusual or "more sexual" than cis/straight identities, and LGBTQ-inclusive sex education is not instructing or pushing any identities or desires on young people. It may be the case that sex education helps LGBTQ young people understand themselves better – including giving them language and space to process – and that's a good thing. Many people, including those who are LGBTQ as well as straight and cis, have a strong sense that they were born the way they are; others have more fluid or flexible identities that may change over time. The key point is that all people's identities are valid and legitimate. Identities cannot be changed by providing or withholding information. Withholding information can only increase the stress experienced by LGBTQ youth or by anyone growing into their sense of identity.

▲ **"None of our students are LGBTQ, so our curriculum doesn't need to change."**

Even if the school's administration, teachers, or parents are not aware of any LGBTQ students, it's very likely that someone in the school identifies as LGBTQ. Avoid making any assumptions about students' gender identity or sexual orientation and instead provide inclusive information on a range of gender identities and sexual orientations. And even if by chance any particular group of students is all cisgender and heterosexual, those students still live in a world and community with many LGBTQ people. Every student needs to learn about identities that are different from their own.

Jewish Values and Texts

Justice: Deuteronomy 16:20³⁸

Justice, justice, you shall pursue.

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדוּךָ

Dignity: Pirkei Avot, 2:10³⁹

Rabbi Eliezer said, Other people's dignity should be as precious to you as your own.

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אָמַר, יְהִי כְבוֹד חֵבְרָךְ חֵבִיב עֲלֶיךָ
כְּשִׁלְךָ, וְאַל תְּהִי נוֹחַ לְכַעַס

Resources

Gender, Sexuality, and Inclusive Sex Education – Healthy Teen Network⁴⁰

General information on the importance of LGBTQ sex education that can help you respond to counter arguments.

Lack of Comprehensive Sex Education Putting LGBTQ Youth at Risk– GLSEN⁴¹

A additional data on the risks associated with sex education programs that are not inclusive of LGBTQ students.

Let's Talk About (Queer) Sex – David Oliver⁴²

General information on the importance of LGBTQ inclusive sex education that can be referenced in counter arguments.



³⁸ [View on Sefaria](#)

³⁹ [View on Sefaria](#)

⁴⁰ "Gender, Sexuality, & Inclusive Sex Education." _ Healthy Teen Network, <https://www.healthyteennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Gender-Sexuality-Inclusive-Sex-Ed.pdf>

⁴¹ "Lack of Comprehensive Sex Education Putting LGBTQ Youth at Risk: National Organizations Issue Call to Action to Improve Programs and Policies." GLSEN, <https://www.glsen.org/news/lack-of-sex-education-putting-lgbtq-youth-risk>

⁴² "Let's talk about (queer) sex: The importance of LGBTQ-inclusive sex education in schools." David Oliver, USA Today, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/health-wellness/2021/08/05/sex-education-importance-lgbtq-inclusivity-schools/8046137002/>

More Resources

LGBTQ+ Sex Education Resources

Creating Authentic Spaces – the 519

Toolkit of resources on pronouns, bathrooms and changing rooms, being an effective transgender ally, and creating a welcoming environment.

Full Spectrum – Vermont Agency of Education

A list of practices that are inclusive (and exclusive) of LGBTQ students in sex education.

Gender Triangle Education Guide – GLSEN

A model for understanding the different components that are part of our gender identity.

Pronoun Guide – GLSEN

Guidance on the importance of pronouns and how to use them correctly.

Queer Kid Stuff – Lindsay ‘Lindz’ Amer

A web series, newsletter, book club, and podcast for LGBTQ young people.

General Sex Education Resources

Curricula

Rights, Respect, Responsibility – Advocates for Youth

A free, downloadable K-12 sex education curriculum as well as a Teacher’s Guide and additional resources on creating inclusive classrooms.

Our Whole Lives (OWL) – Unitarian Universalist Association

OWL offers holistic, step-by-step sex education lesson plans for students in grades K-12. While the curriculum was created by the Unitarian Universalist Association, it is not Christian-centric.

Websites

Amaze – Advocates for Youth – amaze.org

Animated videos on sex education topics that offer an alternative way to facilitate discussion that is often less awkward for students.

Every Body Curious – Nadine Thornhill and Eva Bloom – everybodycurious.com

A web series that provides young people with inclusive sex education in a digital format.

okayso – Elise Schuster and Francisco Ramirez – okayso.co

An app that young people can use to chat with trusted experts about sexual health and relationships.

Scarleteen – Heather Corinna – scarleteen.com

Informative articles on a variety of sexual health topics, plus a message board and live chat services for young people to speak with a trusted volunteer about sexual health and relationships.

Sex, Etc. – Answer – sexetc.org

Sexual health stories, sex education videos, a glossary of terms, and FAQs for educators and young people.

Ask Roo – Planned Parenthood – plannedparenthood.org/learn/roo-sexual-health-chatbot

Planned Parenthood's free, private sexual health chatbot.

**Still need help with bringing comprehensive,
LGBTQ-inclusive sex education to your institution?
Reach out to our education team:
education@keshetonline.org**

Glossary

The following terms are presented in three categories: **sex**, **gender identity**, and **sexual orientation**. These three categories describe distinct areas of identity, and each functions independently of the other two.

This glossary⁴³ provides an excellent starting point for those seeking to understand terms related to gender and sexual orientation. It is not meant to be a definitive, complete, or authoritative list of all identities. Each person is the only expert in their own identity, and has the right to choose which terms to use to describe themselves. Individuals may use these terms in nuanced ways or in ways that differ slightly from the definitions presented here. **Please defer to the person using a given term as the only authority on what that term means to them.**

These are some of the most common English terms used in the local and national LGBTQ communities. There are many others, and more are created every day. It is always best to ask individuals and communities what terms they use, and what those terms mean to them.

SEX or SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH (n): A person's assignment at birth, based upon a medical provider's perception of one's bodily characteristics (genitalia, chromosomes, hormones, etc.) as male, female, or intersex.

- ▲ INTERSEX (adj): A general term used to refer to people whose bodies defy a common understanding of sex as a simple male/female binary. Intersex continues to be widely accepted as an umbrella term referring to biological diversity affecting sexual and reproductive anatomy.
- ▲ FEMALE(adj./n): A label conferred by medical professionals at or before birth which is often associated with XX chromosomes and the production of certain hormones and sex characteristics. Not all people who are assigned female at birth display said characteristics.
- ▲ MALE (adj./n): A label conferred by medical professionals at or before birth which is often associated with XY chromosomes and the production of certain hormones and sex characteristics. Not all people who are assigned male at birth display said characteristics.

⁴³ Find an online version at keshetonline.org/resources/lgbtq-terminology/.

GENDER IDENTITY (n): A person's inner understanding of the gender(s) with which they identify. This is each person's unique knowing or feeling and is separate from a person's physical body or appearance (although often related).

- ▲ TRANSGENDER or TRANS (adj): An umbrella term for anyone who knows themselves to be a gender that is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Some trans people may have a gender identity that is neither man nor woman, and for some people their gender identity may vary at different points in their lives. Transgender has its origin in the Latin-derived prefix trans, meaning “across” or “beyond.” Transgender is generally preferred over the antiquated “transsexual” to shift focus from body parts to internal sense of self. Some (often older) people self-identify as transsexual.
- ▲ CISGENDER (adj): A term describing anyone who knows themselves to be the gender they were assigned at birth. Antonym of transgender. Cisgender has its origin in the Latin-derived prefix cis, meaning “on the same side.”
- ▲ CIS-NORMATIVE (adj): Describes the social, cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that intentionally or unintentionally assume that cisgender experiences and identities are normative or universal.
- ▲ GENDER ATTRIBUTION (n): The situation in which an observer decides and assigns what they believe a person's gender is based on that person's gender expression. Gender attribution is always a guess unless someone has explicitly shared their gender identity.
- ▲ GENDER EXPRESSION (n): The manner in which one outwardly expresses, signals, or performs their gender. Can encompass appearance (clothing, haircut, makeup, etc.), behavior, mannerisms, etc.
- ▲ GENDER BINARY (n): A system of thinking in which there are only two genders (man and woman). The gender binary posits these two genders as opposites and mutually exclusive and forces all people in one of these two options. The gender binary is not universal and is not upheld by many cultures today and historically, including Talmudic Judaism. Western colonists have a history of forcibly imposing the gender binary on Indigenous and racialized people.
- ▲ GENDER NON-CONFORMING (adj): Used to describe people whose gender expression does not align with societal expectations based on their perceived gender. Gender non-conforming is not the same as trans.
- ▲ GENDERQUEER (adj): Describes a gender identity that is queer (see below) or that deliberately rejects societal gender norms. Someone whose gender identity is neither man nor woman, is between or beyond gender, rejects binary gender, is some combination of genders. Can sometimes be used interchangeably with nonbinary.
- ▲ NONBINARY (adj): A gender identity that specifically rejects the notion of binary gender. Can sometimes be used interchangeably with genderqueer.
- ▲ GENDER TRANSITION (n/v): The process through which a trans person changes aspects of themselves to be more aligned with their gender. There is not one way to transition. Transition may include some, none, or all of the following: cultural, legal, and medical adjustments; telling one's family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal

documents; electrolysis or laser hair removal; hormone therapy; different forms of surgery, including but not limited to chest and genital surgery. Gender transition is not a linear process, and is often influenced by one's access to information, community, and financial resources.

- ▲ GENDER DYSPHORIA (n): A term that describes a sense of discomfort, distress, or sense of incongruence between one's gender identity and one's gender/sex assigned at birth. This term is most commonly used in mental health settings, and is also used some of the time by some transgender or nonbinary people to describe this experience. It is important to proceed with caution with any term that has roots in the clinical / mental health setting – such terms can be empowering for some people when they provide language to describe experiences that are often erased, but they can also feel stigmatizing or overly clinical to other people. As with all cases, it is important to follow the lead of the individuals who are describing their own experiences and avoid imposing terms or identities on any person.
- ▲ PRONOUNS (n): The part of speech used to refer to someone in the third person. Examples include she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, ze/hir/hirs, he/him/his. Pronouns are chosen by each individual and can only be known when shared. Sharing pronouns during introductions, in email signatures, and on nametags is now common practice in order to ensure all people are referred to respectfully. "Pronoun" is more accurate than the outdated phrase "preferred pronoun."
- ▲ MISGENDER (v): The act of incorrectly classifying another person's gender. Can refer to using the incorrect pronoun for someone, or using other incorrect gendered language (i.e. "sir" or "ma'am.")
- ▲ DEADNAME (n, v): The name given to a trans person when they were born which they no longer use. Also known as birth name. Deadnaming is the act of calling a trans person by their deadname.
- ▲ TRANSPHOBIA (n): Irrational fear or hatred of people who break or blur gender roles and sex characteristics, which exists in both the heterosexual and LGBTQ communities. Expressed as negative feelings, erasure, attitudes, actions, and institutional discrimination against those perceived as transgender or gender non-conforming, or the fear of being perceived as transgender or gender non-conforming.
- ▲ FLUID(ITY) (adj/n): Describes an identity that changes over time within or between available options. Often combined another identity, such as "genderfluid" or "sexually fluid."

SEXUAL ORIENTATION (n): A pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions. A sense of one's personal and social identity based on attractions. Describes whether and to whom one is attracted sexually, physically, romantically, etc.

- ▲ LESBIAN (n/adj): Often describes a woman who is emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted primarily to women. Some nonbinary people also identify as lesbians if they feel connected to womanhood and are primarily attracted to women.

- ▲ **GAY** (adj): Describes a person who is emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted primarily to members of the same gender. (Often used by people who identify as men, though others in the LGBTQ+ community may also identify as gay.)
- ▲ **BISEXUAL** (adj): Describes an individual who is emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted to more than one gender. Can sometimes be used interchangeably with Pansexual.
- ▲ **PANSEXUAL** (adj): Describes a person who is emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted toward persons of all gender identities. Can sometimes be used interchangeably with Bisexual.
- ▲ **QUEER** (adj/v): 1) A term used to describe a sexual orientation that is not straight, without indicating the genders of the queer person or the people they are attracted to. Some people identify as queer because it doesn't reference gender, and some people prefer queer because it can expansively include attraction to people of a range of genders (used similarly to "pansexual" and "bisexual"). 2) An umbrella term used by some to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. 3) Historically and currently used by some as a slur targeting those perceived to transgress "norms" of sexual orientation and/or gender expression, but for others, a word that has been reclaimed as a positive and affirmative part of their identity.
- ▲ **STRAIGHT** (adj): A person who is primarily emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted toward persons of a different gender. This is another term for heterosexual.
- ▲ **HETERONORMATIVE** (adj): Describes the social, cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that intentionally or unintentionally assume that heterosexual experiences and identities are normative or universal.
- ▲ **HOMOSEXUAL** (adj/n): A person who is primarily emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted toward persons of the same gender. Some LGBTQ elders self-identify with this term. However, based on a pathologizing and oppressive history, it is widely considered outdated and is not widely used.
- ▲ **ASEXUAL** (adj): An umbrella category describing those who experiences little or no sexual attraction. Identifying as asexual does not preclude any behavior, including dating and sex. Often abbreviated as Ace, asexual can also refer to the Asexuality Spectrum, which describes the range of experiences related to attraction. Demisexual (describing a person who feels sexual attraction only to someone with whom they have an emotional bond) and aromantic, (someone who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others) fall under the umbrella category of asexual.
- ▲ **HOMOPHOBIA** (n): The irrational fear of love, affection, or sexual behavior between people of the same gender. Expressed as negative feelings, erasure, attitudes, actions, and institutional discrimination against those perceived as non-heterosexuals, or the fear of being perceived as non-heterosexual.
- ▲ **BIPHOBIA** (n): The irrational fear of love, affection, or sexual behavior of people who identify as bisexual. Expressed as negative feelings, erasure, attitudes, actions, and institutional discrimination against those perceived as bi-sexual, or the fear of being perceived as bisexual.

About the Authors

Ellie Goldstein, MPH works at JCFS Chicago Response for Teens as a Community Educator and as a sex education consultant. Ellie earned her Master of Public Health from the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health in the Population and Family Health Department with a certificate in Sexuality, Sexual and Reproductive Health.

Rabbi Micah Buck-Yael serves as Keshet's Director of Education and Training. Before Keshet, Micah had the position of Coordinator of Community Chaplaincy with the Jewish Family & Children's Service of St. Louis. He has a BA in Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Studies from Washington University in St. Louis, and an MA in Talmud and Rabbinic Literature and Rabbinic Ordination from The Jewish Theological Seminary. Throughout their career, Micah has advocated and educated for LGBTQ justice, leading trainings and consultations within his local community and the broader Jewish community nationwide. He is the founder of the Builders Beit Midrash, a traditional learning community in St Louis that centers the voices of LGBTQ learners. He has been a SVARA Transformative Talmud Teaching Fellow (2018-2019) and continues to enjoy learning and teaching at every opportunity.

