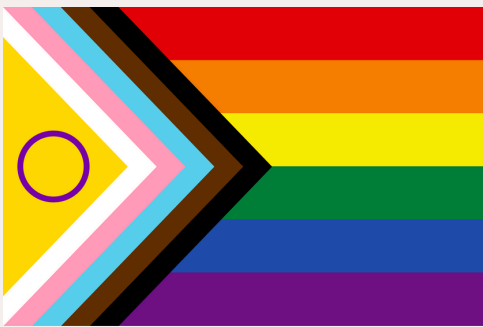




BANKSIA BULLETIN

JUNE 2024

Let's talk about LGBTQIA+ inclusivity



The LGBTQIA+ community encompasses a vibrant spectrum of identities, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and others who challenge the traditional notions of gender and sexuality. Gender diversity goes beyond the binary concept of male and female, while sexuality refers to whom one is attracted to. Embracing and respecting these differences is essential for nurturing the mental health and well-being of our LGBTQIA+ friends, family, and community members.

There have been many iterations and more than 20 versions of Pride flags. Everyone has their personal story and reason for using a pride flag. For some it gives a feeling of belonging, for others it might be a way of coming out, and for others it is a way to show their support for the LGBTQIA+ community. The Progress Pride Flag featured above is a layering of queer flags and graphics that elevates additional, intersectional identities. The white, pink, and blue stripes represent those who identify as transgender, gender non-conforming and/or undefined; the brown and black are to honour queer and transgender people of colour and also represent those living with HIV/AIDS, those the community has lost to the virus, and the enduring stigma that remains today. The yellow triangle and purple circle is to represent those who are intersex, whilst the full-circle also symbolises wholeness and expresses the need for autonomy and integrity.

Implicit Bias in Healthcare

Implicit bias towards specific groups can hinder our capacity to connect with them. Bias is a natural mechanism our brains employ to connect past experiences and cultural norms, aiding in quick decision-making. Nevertheless, when biases shape judgments about unfamiliar individuals using unconfirmed assumptions, it can pose challenges and potentially exacerbate health inequalities. Implicit biases operate even when we have good intentions. Despite a provider's sincere advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights, deeply ingrained cultural prejudices may still influence their interactions, potentially resulting in differential treatment of these patients. By example, certain providers employ plural pronouns like "we," "ours," or "us" when addressing patients, using language such as, "We're going to take our medicine, right?" This verbiage can be explained by social psychology theories concerning power dynamics and social dominance, where individuals in positions of authority use such language to assert control over those having less power - an indication of implicit bias being at play. Promising strategies include using inclusive language, seeing patients/clients as individuals rather than as a stereotyped member of a group and prioritising connection and acceptance in every interaction - for individual's from minority groups this creates a sense of being 'on the same team' as their provider.



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Mental Health and Suicide Risk in the LGBTQIA+ Community

LGBTQIA+ individuals often face stigma, systemic inequalities, discrimination and bullying across their lifespan, as well as family rejection, and barriers to accessing gender affirming care. This often leads to higher rates of mental health challenges and a heightened risk of suicide for people who identify. In regional, rural and remote communities, transgender folk are up to 11 times more likely to attempt suicide than non-LGBTQIA+ people. Rural queer folk face significant barriers to receiving healthcare and suicide prevention support due to limited specialised and inclusive services, isolation from metro-LGBTQIA+ communities, lack of visible queer role models in rural areas, and the inclination to hide one's identity to avoid victimisation. However, connection and acceptance are powerful antidotes. When LGBTQIA+ individuals feel seen, heard, and valued, their mental health improves, and the risk of suicide significantly decreases.

The Power of Connection and Acceptance

Connection and acceptance are more than just words—they are lifelines. A simple act of kindness, a genuine conversation, or a safe space can make an enormous difference. By creating environments where LGBTQIA+ individuals feel cherished and accepted, we can help alleviate their struggles. Every gesture of support, every affirmation of identity, and every safe space offered can be a beacon of hope.

Creating an Inclusive Space and Practice

Creating an inclusive space is about opening our hearts and minds. Here's how we can do it:

1. Educate Yourself and Your Team: Learn about LGBTQIA+ issues to better understand and support the community.
2. Use Inclusive Language and Respect Pronouns: This simple act of respect can make someone feel seen and valued. Avoid heteronormative assumptions about their gender, sexuality and relationships which can be alienating - adapt organisational processes, forms and documents to be inclusive.
3. Provide Visible Signs of Support: Rainbow flags, inclusive posters, and other symbols can show that we are allies.
4. Offer Resources and Support: Ensure that LGBTQIA+ individuals have access to the help they need.
5. Foster a Non-Judgmental and Supportive Atmosphere: Create a space where everyone feels safe to be themselves.



What's On:

ECHO Empowering Services

11 - 15 Eacham Street, Malanda

Youth Pride Group - Every Monday, 3:15pm - 5:00pm

Adult Pride Group - Third Thursday of the month, 9:30am - 10:30am

Contact: [07 4096 6634](tel:0740966634) or reception@echomalanda.org.au

echomalanda.org.au

VPG

5 Comet Avenue, Atherton

Young & Proud (Y&P): for 13 - 18 y/o

Registration essential: [07 4091 6411](tel:0740916411) or sarah@vpginc.com.au



Words from our founder: At Banksia Mental Health Care, we strive to make everyone feel welcome and supported. We believe that through education, compassion, and proactive efforts, we can create a truly inclusive environment. We are more than just a mental health practice; we are a community committed to embracing and uplifting every individual. We know that connection and acceptance are not just protective factors—they are life-saving. Together, let's build a world where everyone, regardless of their identity, feels valued, accepted, and loved -

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