



2022



Holiday Wellness Guide



MAZZONI CENTER
LGBTQ HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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Introduction

Welcome to Mazzoni Center’s Wellness Guide. During the holidays, many people experience unique challenges, including several other social and economic crises. We understand that this is especially true for the LGBTQ+ community. We also know that the LGBTQ+ community is not new to direct action and calls for justice. With this in mind, Mazzoni Center wanted to provide resources for general wellness through our annual Holiday guide. We understand that the LGBTQ+ community may be uniquely impacted by the current state of the world, and we hope this guide will assist in identifying supports and ways to preserve physical, mental, and emotional wellness.

This guide’s resources focus on engaging with your mental health in these challenging times, but we want to remind you that Mazzoni Center offers quality care year-round in the following areas:

- **Healthcare**
- **Counseling and Recovery**
- **Education**
- **Prevention and Care**
- **Legal Services**

Mazzoni Center Mission Statement: To provide quality comprehensive health and wellness services in an LGBTQ-focused environment, while preserving the dignity and improving the quality of life of the individuals we serve.

Thank you for coming to us, in whatever way feels supportive, and we hope that this guide will provide something to you this season.

All the best,

Mazzoni Center’s Behavioral Health Team

Support for Queer and Trans People of Color

Beyond the grief and loss associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, many Black LGBTQ+ individuals continue to face grief and loss related to violence against Black Americans. QTPOC face multiple forms of oppression and discrimination - which often compound upon one another. Amongst navigating this grief, there is a rising need of supports for these experiences and spaces that help facilitate collective joy.

QTBIPOC Mental Health:

Supporting Black LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health Guide: The Trevor Project has compiled a list of common feelings and supports for Black LGBTQ+ youth. The Trevor Project talks through ways to navigate and cope with increased levels of anxiety and stress.

Rest For Resistance: Rest for Resistance strives to uplift marginalized communities, those who rarely get access to adequate health care or social support. This includes Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Pacific Islander, Asian, Middle Eastern, and multiracial persons. This platform prioritizes and amplifies writers who are QTBIPOC and their perspective on how rest is an act of revolution.

Lazarus Letcher: Laz is a writer that highlights explorations on transgender and Two-Spirit migration, intersectional approaches to addiction and recovery, Black and Indigenous solidarity in liberation movements, and transgender connection/kinship through folklore. You can tune in to their discussions on sobriety, addiction, and recovery through an intersectional lens

Collective Support:

Within navigation of collective grief, there is also collective joy. Restoration within community and connection can lead to reparative work. bell hooks is an African American author known for contemplations on love and community. She once reflected, *“healing is an act of communion...”* amplifying the importance of love and connection being solidified through the efforts of community care. Below, we have highlighted local Philadelphia organizations that mirror this act.

Bantu Safe Haven: “Bantu Safe Haven is a Black and Trans led non-profit organization founded in June of 2019 as a proactive approach to the safety of Black transgender people. We believe that Black trans people deserve safety and a life free of violence. Our mission is to foster safety, community, and self-determination for Black trans people. Our goal is to keep Black trans folks safe by providing the tools as well as supporting their physical, spiritual, and material needs”

GALAEI: Galaei is a Queer and Trans, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (QTBIPOC) radical social justice organization. Continuing to serve the Latinx community, while widening our embrace, Galaei provides and facilitates Queer educational services, community wellness,

and is committed to healing historical harm. Galaei is dedicated to creating access, opportunities, sexual empowerment, and economic development for all QTBIPOC individuals while fighting systemic oppression, structural racism, discrimination, and white supremacy.

QTBIPOC Podcasts:

- **The Read:** Join bloggers Kid Fury and Crissle for their weekly podcast covering hip-hop and pop culture's most trying stars. Throwing shade and spilling tea with a flippant and humorous attitude, no star is safe from Fury and Crissle unless their name is Beyoncé.
- **The Friend Zone:** Listen along every Wednesday as Dustin Ross, HeyFranHey & Assante explore mental health, mental wealth, and mental hygiene.
- **Sibling Rivalry:** Monét X Change and Bob the Drag Queen, are not actually siblings but they are the intensely hilarious comedy duo with infectious chemistry behind the hit podcast Sibling Rivalry
- **Black Girls Heal:** Black Girls Heal helps women break out of cycles of unhealthy relationships with unavailable partners and feeling not enough by combining coaching, therapeutic support, and practical tools.

COVID-19 & The LGBTQ+ Community

Though the current pandemic impacts all communities, it is important to understand the ways in which the LGBTQ+ community is uniquely affected. The LGBTQ+ community is facing COVID-19 with less resources and greater risk.

Human Rights Campaign Foundation outlines the ways in which the LGBTQ+ community's lives and livelihoods are impacted by the pandemic in their brief "The Lives and Livelihoods of Many in the LGBTQ+ Community are at Risk Amidst COVID-19 Crisis".

- More than **5 million LGBTQ+ individuals** work in jobs that are more likely to be impacted by COVID-19.
- **37% of LGBTQ+ adults** smoke every day (compared to 27% of non-LGBTQ+ people).
- **21% of LGBTQ+ adults** have asthma (compared to 14% of non-LGBTQ+ people).
- **LGBTQ+ individuals** are at higher risk for COVID-19 complications if chronic illnesses such as diabetes or HIV are present.
- **1 in 5 LGBTQ+ adults** have not seen a doctor when necessary because they could not afford the medical bills.

Being aware of the unique impact that COVID-19 has on the LGBTQ+ community is important when making choices surrounding COVID-19 safety. For more information about the LGBTQ+ community and Coronavirus, visit:

[Human Rights Campaign Foundation's briefing on LGBTQ+ Community's Risk Amidst the COVID-19 Crisis](#)

[The National Center for Transgender Equality's COVID-19 Guide](#)

COVID-19 Testing, Vaccines & Boosters

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) outlines the importance of testing for COVID-19 if you are experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19, if you have recently been exposed to COVID-19, as well as if you are travelling internationally. It may also be beneficial to get tested for COVID-19 prior to holiday gatherings, seeing friends and family, and being around others who may be at higher risk for infection.

The following link lists all COVID-19 testing sites in the Philadelphia area, including walk-up, drive through, and rapid testing: <https://www.phila.gov/covid-testing-sites/>

For more information about when to get tested for COVID-19, visit the CDC's guide: [COVID-19 Testing: What You Need to Know](#)

Finding a COVID-19 Vaccine:

The CDC recommends that individuals 12 years of age and up should get a COVID-19 vaccine to protect against COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccinations are free regardless of insurance or immigration status. DC recommends everyone stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines for their age group, including children and teens ages 6 months–17 years, and adults ages 18 years and older

- Getting a COVID-19 vaccine after you recover from COVID-19 infection provides added protection against COVID-19.
- If you recently had COVID-19, you may consider delaying your next vaccine dose (primary dose or booster) by 3 months from when your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, when you first received a positive test.
- People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised have different recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines.
- COVID-19 vaccine and booster recommendations may be updated as CDC continues to monitor the latest COVID-19 data.

To find a COVID-19 vaccination site near you, visit <https://www.vaccines.gov> or visit the [City of Philadelphia's website](#)

Finding a COVID-19 Booster:

The CDC recommends that the following individuals consider getting a booster shot of the COVID-19 vaccine:

Pfizer & Moderna:

- Anyone who received their second dose six months ago or longer
- Anyone age 65+
- Anyone age 50-64 with underlying medical conditions
- Anyone age 18-64 who works as a healthcare worker, teacher, or in a higher-risk occupational setting
- Anyone age 18-49 with underlying medical conditions

Johnson & Johnson:

- Everyone who received J&J is eligible to receive a booster two months after their first dose

Updated (Bivalent) Boosters

The updated (bivalent) boosters are called “bivalent” because they protect against both the original virus that causes COVID-19 and the Omicron variant BA.4 and BA.5. Previous boosters are called “monovalent” because they were designed to protect against the original virus that causes COVID-19. They also provide some protection against Omicron, but not as much as the updated (bivalent) boosters.

The bivalent boosters became available on:

- **September 2, 2022**, for people 12 years of age and older
- **October 12, 2022**, for people aged 5–11

*The virus that causes COVID-19 has changed over time. The different versions of the virus that have developed over time are called variants. Pfizer and Moderna, have developed updated (bivalent) COVID-19 boosters.

CDC recommends that people ages 5 years and older receive one updated (bivalent) booster if it has been at least 2 months since their last COVID-19 vaccine dose, whether that was:

- Their final primary series dose, or
- An original (monovalent) booster

People who have gotten more than one original (monovalent) booster are also recommended to get an updated (bivalent) booster.

For more information visit: <https://www.phila.gov/2021-09-24-covid-vaccine-booster-doses-are-now-approved/>

Caring for Others Experiencing Post-COVID Conditions

The CDC provides some suggestions as to how to deal with challenges when caring for other who continue to experience post-COVID conditions, including:

- **Listening with compassion**
 - Try to listen to your loved ones, acknowledge their words, and validate what they are experiencing
- **Beginning conversations to gain more understanding**
 - Directly ask what they need or what you can do to help
 - Try to ask more open-ended questions and then narrow it down to close-ended questions
- **Determine way in which you can or cannot help**
 - Some people may want someone to listen to their experiences, while others may need more physical support. This can be anything from help with household chores to running errands etc.
 - There will be times where you may not be able to support your loved ones exactly as they need, and it's ok to acknowledge that. Try to be direct in saying what you can and can't do.

For more information about post-COVID conditions and caring for those affected, check out this page from the CDC: [Caring for People with Post-Covid Conditions](#)

Setting Work Boundaries and How to Maintain a Work-Life Balance Post-COVID

Between socializing, parenting, running errands, and working, the pandemic has significantly altered the way we live our lives. For many people, it has changed how we work, and many of us have shifted our employment to long-term working in remote environments.

While there are certainly benefits to working from home (WFH), the transition can be difficult and finding balance within your life can become more complicated. If WFH has left you feeling burnt out, overworked, and stressed, here are some ways you can manage your work-from-home environment to create a better work-life balance.

Manage your expectations and start saying “No”

Although some might interpret the remote work setting as a chance to use free time for maximum productivity, others might feel overwhelmed by the amount of work they are expected to complete. When it comes to creating balance, managing your expectations, and living yourself understanding and forgiveness are one of the most important parts to tackling a remote work life. You may want to take on as much work as you can, but there’s only so much you can complete in a day.

- Know your limitations, set boundaries based on your schedule and workload, and don’t extend yourself beyond them.
- Be assertive yet courteous
- Keep your calendar up to date and set a very clear and comprehensive schedule (don’t forget to add in your lunch breaks!)

Approaching your new working environment and your ability to be productive with a little extra grace and patience will help you navigate the transition more smoothly.

Create a dedicated workspace environment!

At work, you have a dedicated workspace, whether that’s a cubicle, an office, or a coworking area. You know where your tools are and you have all the equipment and devices needed to complete your daily tasks. Therefore, when working from home, it is important to have a designated area, where all your tools, devices, or equipment are present. This will help you be more organized and it can also help you physically and mentally separate work life from home life.

Wherever you decide to set up your work area, make sure other people living with you know this is your “office” so you can create healthy boundaries.

Schedule your breaks and move around

When you're working from home it can be more difficult to create break times, especially if you're feeling extra pressure to perform and "show your worth" to your employers.

Be sure to schedule regular breaks throughout your day and hold yourself accountable to those rest times by putting them in your calendar. Eating lunch with a family member or going on a walk are great ways to spend some mental time away from work. Focusing on joyful movement (whatever movement feels good for you) like bike riding, stretching or yoga, are all ways to incorporate movement in your day. Exercising 20 to 30 minutes daily can significantly lower anxiety levels. You'll also boost endorphins and serotonin to flood your brain with happiness. By regularly removing yourself from the work environment for 10 or 15 minutes, you'll feel refreshed and ready to be productive when you get back to the computer instead of exhausted and unable to focus.

Establish transition times

When you physically go to work, you tend to have a routine that you follow that has many visual and physical cues. For example, when you wake up, you probably get ready for the day by getting dressed, eating breakfast, and gathering your things to begin your commute. At the end of the day, you might clear out your email inbox, say goodbye to coworkers, and settle into the commute back home. For people that are working remotely, these transition times are lost, which means it can be easy to have your work seep into your home life

Create cues for yourself to know when it's time to begin working and when it's time to stop working. For some people, mimicking a commute might be helpful. If you're used to driving to work, consider taking a brief walk around the block each morning to help you set your intentions for the workday and another walk in the evening to help you clear your mind. You can also get dressed for the day like you are going to commute and go to work in-person. Additionally, turning off your computer can be an easy way to create boundaries between your work time and your home time since you'll be less likely to send just one more email.

Set work boundaries and establish a routine

When working from home, be sure that you are working reasonable hours. It can be tempting to work more while you have your work at home, however it can also be taxing on your health and well-being, so stick to a schedule with healthy boundaries. This is why routines and schedules help us feel a sense of control in our lives.

When our work routines are significantly altered, we can feel like we don't know where to begin or how to be productive during the workday. Creating a new schedule can be beneficial to regain that sense of control, but you should approach the schedule with some flexibility. Whether you're living with roommates, alone, or taking care of children at home, establishing a routine

that works best for your situation will be key. Just remember that not every day will go according to plan and that's completely normal.

Communicate your needs

One of the best ways to weather a rough transition is to be open and honest about your needs. Communication is essential. Your boss will not be able to tell if you are having a hard time managing tasks, and your family may not know you are working on an important project if you communicate that with them.

Be upfront with your family members by telling them what you have going on and being respectful of their responsibilities. This applies to your professional relationships as well. If you feel overwhelmed by your workload or you're struggling to make connections in a remote setting, talk to your manager and look for solutions together. Proactive communication can help prevent messy situations and frustration down the road.

Leave the house

Our home office may slowly become cumbersome, and a monotonous way of doing our work. Going out and interacting with other people may seem like a bad idea to do your work, however it might be a change of pace and be a refreshing start to your day. These changes may combat feelings of isolation and loneliness. Ambient noise may boost your creative thinking and people may be able to hold you accountable to taking breaks or provide you with some ideas while you are working. Here are some examples to consider:

- **Coworking spaces** have become popular, and many people are utilizing them to create a separation from your work to home life. You can work with like-minded people in a modern space for a small price.
- **Schedule work dates.** Do you know other people who work from home in your circle? Meet up at your local coffee shop, library, or brewery and work alongside each other.

Self-care! Be kind to yourself and seek support

Recognizing and acknowledging the complexity of the situation is a key element in creating a work-life balance. Carving out time for yourself as a way to prevent burnout is key. Consistency and keeping commitments to yourself will help in maintaining your mental health. If you find yourself often avoiding self-care or putting moments of pause on the back burner, ask others to hold you accountable.

If you find that you're still having difficulties making adjustments or your mood has dropped significantly, monitoring your emotions and physical responses throughout the day can be a good way to determine when you might need professional help. Using a simple tracking system where you rank each day on a scale of one through ten can help you notice if the rankings for each day

are dropping. If that does start to occur, you should consider speaking to a therapist, doctor, or counselor.

For more information, visit:

- [How to Maintain a Work-Life Balance During Coronavirus- jcmh.org](#)
- [Work placement Health](#)
- [Managing stress and emotions when working remotely](#)
- [7 simple tip to tackle working from home](#)

Coping with the COVID-19 & Monkeypox (MPV) Outbreaks, during the Holidays

The holidays can be a particularly stressful time of year, however, experiencing the holiday season post-pandemic and during the monkeypox outbreaks brings even more potential challenges. Our lives have substantially changed post COVID-19 and give the newness of it all, it is important to finding ways to cope with challenging emotions and situations. These coping skills can help provide us with emotional stability and reduce suffering in our everyday lives but especially during the holiday season. In this section, we provide an overview of some of the strategies that are available and can provide tools to help you cope with challenging emotions and situations. Many resources (listed below) discuss various ways in which we can cope with anxiety, post-COVID.

Here are some tips that may help you with coping through this difficult time:

- Acknowledge your fears and worries and try to understand why you have them
- Try to pinpoint what you are worried will happen; revisit those initial worries and check the facts — did that feared outcome happen and if it did, was it as bad as expected?
- If you continue to experience anxiety and find yourself experiencing difficulty completing tasks, we recommend speaking with a mental health professional
- Try to utilize deep breathing and muscle relaxation exercises
- Build a very thorough sleeping and eating routine. Try to sleep between 8-9 hours a day, and if possible, eating at least 2 meals a day with snacks in between
- Prioritize your self-care days. Think about activities that can bring you joy, relaxation, or de-stress. Many people exercise, draw, journal, dance etc.
- Seek support from your community and loved ones
- Try to shift your focus to the present – make plans but try not to dwell on "what ifs" or what was "supposed" to happen.

The resources below offer further information about coping with COVID-related anxiety:

- [Struggling with Social Anxiety as We Prepare for Re-entry Post-COVID - Penn Medicine](#)
- [Navigating Anxiety post-COVID - American Medical Association.](#)
- [11 Tips to Cope with Anxiety About Getting "Back to Normal" - NHS](#)

How to Celebrate the Holidays Safely

We recognize that this holiday season may be the first holiday that will look similar to the ones pre-pandemic. However, while there are still some worries around COVID-19 and the Monkey Pox, it may likely add a new layer of stress to whatever holidays you choose to celebrate. For many in the LGBTQ+ community, the holiday season can be a time to spend with chosen family and those who are supportive, but large gatherings and events could put your health at risk. However, there are many ways to safely celebrate the holiday season with your chosen family or family of origin. Connections with loved ones is very important and can offer an outlet to reduce stress and recharge. Below are two resources that outline safe CDC-guideline compliant holiday practices. They include safety tips, important things to consider when planning holiday celebrations, and various scenarios related to COVID-19, the Flu, and Monkeypox.

Don't Skip Out on Both Your COVID Booster Shot and Your Flu Shot...

A flu shot will not protect you from COVID-19. Vice versa, a COVID-19 vaccine will not protect you from the flu. These are two entirely separate vaccines that are designed to protect against two different viruses. If you haven't gotten your COVID-19 vaccine yet, The CDC announced that you can [get the flu vaccine and COVID-19 at the same time](#). The same rule goes for anyone needing a booster shot for COVID-19. You can get both. The current booster shot for COVID is now updated and will protect you from the previous variants. Click [here](#) to find COVID-19 and Flu vaccines at a pharmacy near you.

More resources you can utilize for your safety:

- [Strategies for a Healthy & Safe Holiday Season - CDC.gov](#)
- [How to Protect Yourself and Others \(COVID-19 Prevention Actions\) - CDC.gov](#)
- [Innovative Holiday and Winter Gatherings in the Time of COVID-19 - jhsph.edu](#)

Monkeypox Virus (MPV)

There has been an outbreak of Monkeypox virus (MPV) in the U.S. and across the world in recent months, according to the CDC. Although Monkeypox is found in many countries across Africa, the recent rise in infections has raised concerns for the well-being of our friends and families

As we've learned to take hygiene more seriously because of COVID, the same principles apply when avoiding Monkeypox. For instance, wearing a mask, washing your hands, isolating if you do get Monkeypox, and getting vaccinated, can all help reduce the risk of exposure and transmission.

Travelling

The CDC has issued a Level 2 warning for monkeypox, which means travelers should “practice enhanced precautions.” If you could be infected by monkeypox, the CDC advises to delay travel by public transportation until you have been cleared by a health-care professional. This is in addition to avoiding contact with infected people and wild animals (dead or alive).

Keep in mind that travelers who plan to attend gatherings that may place them in close, skin-to-skin contact with someone who has monkeypox may be at higher risk of getting infected.

People who care for someone who has monkeypox without wearing gloves and a well-fitting mask are also more likely to get infected. Travelers such as veterinarians and wildlife professionals may be at risk if they work with infected animals.

Travelers can protect themselves against infection by taking the following steps:

- Avoid close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox.
 - Do not touch the rash or scabs of a person with monkeypox.
 - Do not kiss, hug, cuddle or have sex with someone with monkeypox.
- Avoid contact with objects and materials that a person with monkeypox has used.
 - Do not share eating utensils or cups with a person with monkeypox.
 - Do not handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of a person with monkeypox.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially before eating or touching your face and after you use the bathroom.
- Get vaccinated! Click [here](#) for more information about MPV vaccines.

- If travelling to Central and West Africa specifically, avoid contact with animals that can spread monkeypox virus, usually rodents and primates. Also, avoid sick or dead animals, as well as bedding or other materials they have touched.

What should you do if you develop monkeypox symptoms?

- If you have symptoms of monkeypox or had close contact with someone who has monkeypox, talk to your healthcare provider.
- Cover your rash and wear a well-fitting mask.
- If you have symptoms, do not travel until you confirm you do not have monkeypox.
- Isolate at home or in another location until your symptoms are gone and your rash has healed; this means all scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed.
- If you have monkeypox and must travel:
- Make sure that you do not have fever or respiratory symptoms such as sore throat, nasal congestion, or cough.

HIV & STI Testing Sites

Physical wellness is an integral part of overall well-being, and it is important to know the resources available for testing related to HIV and STIs. [Mazzoni Center](#) offers many ways you can get tested during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Free in-person HIV testing at Mazzoni Center's Bainbridge location

Washington West, located at 1201 Locust Street, will be **closed** for renovations. All services normally delivered at Washington West will be relocating to our Bainbridge Street facility at [1348 Bainbridge Street](#). To make an appointment call the Washington West appointment line: 215-985-9206.

We are currently offering in person testing Monday-Saturday. Advanced Scheduled Appointments are strongly encouraged- call 215-985-9206 to schedule.

Our Bainbridge location will be closed November 24th and 25th; December 26th; and January 2nd

Free at home HIV testing kits

Mazzoni Center is supplying FREE at home HIV test kits to Philadelphia residents. Kits can be delivered to your home or are available for pick-up at the Bainbridge location Monday through Friday between 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Call 215-985-9206 for more information.

Free in-person syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia screening at Mazzoni Center

To ensure you will be seen, it is recommended that you call to schedule an appointment before you arrive. Walk-in appointments may be accepted depending on availability. To speed up your intake process, go to Mazzoni Center's Patient Portal and create an account before you call and/or arrive. Call 215-985-9206 for more information.

Other HIV/STI testing sites in Philadelphia

If you are not able to visit Mazzoni Center's testing site, STI testing is free in the city of Philadelphia, and there are multiple sites available offering modified services during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Please note that while appointments are not necessary, you MUST call (215)-685-6575 or (215)-685-6571 prior to visiting the center.** For information about these testing site locations and hours of operation, visit [Phila.Gov services for walk-in testing and treatment for STIs](#).

Emergency Resources and Contacts

Domestic Violence Counseling

[Philadelphia Domestic Violence Hotline](#)

1-866-723-3014

[Women in Transition](#)

Lifeline (*counseling support, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm*): 215-751-111

General Inquiries: 215-564-5301

[Hall Mercer Crisis Response Center](#)

24 Hour Phone Number: 215-829-5433

245 S. 8th Street, Philadelphia

Sexual Assault Hotlines

[WOAR: Women Organized Against Rape](#)

Support, information, referral guidance, and the coordination of therapy services for all people (women, men, & the LGBTQ+ community).

24-Hour Hotline: 215-985-3333

See WOAR's website for resources on what to do in an emergency, coping skills, and the reporting process.

[Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network \(RAINN\)](#)

Crisis support Hotline: 1-800-656-4673

[Online chat hotline](#)

[Spanish online chat hotline](#)

Office of Supportive Housing

[Emergency Housing Intake Process](#)

215-686-7150, or 215-686-7153

[Office of Homeless Services on Phila.gov](#)

[Appletree Family Intake Center](#)

Emergency Housing for Single Women & Families

215-686-7150

1430 Cherry Street

M-F; 7am-5pm

[Salvation Army Red Shield Family Residence](#)

After Hours Emergency Housing for Families
215-787-2887
715 N. Broad Street
After 5pm, weekends and holidays

Station House

After Hours Reception for Single Men
215-225-9235
2601 N. Broad Street
After 5pm, Weekends & Holidays

Gaudenzia House of Passage

After Hours Center for Women & Families
215-471-2017
111 N. 48th Street
After 5pm, Weekends & Holidays

Roosevelt Darby Center

Emergency Housing Intake & Assessment for Single Men
215-685-3700
802 N. Broad Street
M-F; 7am-5pm

Project Home

They offer permanent, subsidized housing for individuals and families who had been homeless: 215-232-7272
1515 Fairmount Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19130
M-F; 8am-4pm

Adult Protective Services

Information and Referral Hotline: 215-686-5671 or 215-686-5672

Cold Weather Hotlines

Homeless Individuals & Families: 215-232-1984
Stray Animals: 267-385-3800

Suicide & Crisis Hotlines

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988)

Call or text 988 to be connected with a crisis counselor.

[Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health & Intellectual Disability Services](#)

Suicide and Crisis Intervention Line: 215-686-4420

Mental Health Delegate: 215-685-6440

Non-emergency CBH Services: 888-545-2600

LGBTQ+ Specific Supports:

[The William Way Community Center:](#)

General contact: 215-732-2220

1315 Spruce St. Philadelphia, PA 19107

[Peer Counseling Service:](#) Free short-term goal-oriented counseling, resources, and information. Offered 6-9PM, by phone (Monday-Friday) and in-person (Monday-Thursday)

Phone: 267-416-0451

E-mail: peercounseling@waygay.org

[Trans Lifeline:](#)

Call 877-565-8860 to be connected with a trans peer operator for community support and resources. There is also a Family & Friends Line for those who need help supporting a trans loved one; access this by calling the main hotline and requesting the Family & Friends line.

[The Trevor Project:](#)

LGBTQ+ Young Adult Crisis Line

Confidential support when you are in crisis, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Trevor Lifeline - Call 866-488-7386 to be connected with a counselor.

[TrevorText](#) - Text the word “Trevor” to 678-678 (standard text messaging rates apply)

[TrevorChat](#) - Online instant messaging with a crisis counselor.

Your Local Hospital’s Emergency Room:

Fill in the address and phone number here:

Phone #:

Address:

Recovery Meetings & Resources

The holiday season can be a difficult time, both for members of LGBTQ+ communities and those in recovery. This is especially true for LGBTQ+ folx in recovery. We also recognize that there are unique challenges to maintaining recovery during these particularly stressful and isolative times. COVID-19 continues to impact daily life, and some meetings are not being held in person. However, there are many options for attending virtual meetings and some meetings have resumed in person. In addition to the following resources, information about both virtual and in-person recovery meetings can be found on phone applications like “Pink Cloud,” “NA Meeting Search,” and “Meeting Guide,” which are downloadable from the app store on smartphones.

12 Step Recovery Support:

*Note: Most groups meet every day of the year, regardless of whether or not it falls on a holiday. However, it is a good idea to check before attending.

*Many in-person groups require that a mask or face covering is worn while in attendance.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

Southeastern PA Intergroup Association of AA (Philadelphia & surrounding counties)

Phone: 215-923-7900

Email: info@aasepia.org

Meeting Directory: www.aasepia.org

Local Events: <https://www.aasepia.org/news/event-flyers/>

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Directory

Website: <https://www.aa.org/find-aa/world?cc=US>

If you are travelling, you can use this website to find information about meetings in other areas.

Online Intergroup of AA (worldwide online meetings)

Meeting Directory: <https://aa-intergroup.org/meetings/>

Contact Form: <https://aa-intergroup.org/contact/>

Al-Anon

PA Al-Anon

Contact Form: <https://pa-al-anon.org/contact-us/>

Meeting Directory: www.al-anon.org/find-a-meeting

Al-Anon Information Services of the Delaware Valley

Phone: (215) 222-5244

Meeting Directory: <http://www.aisdv.org/meetings.html>

Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA)

24-hour CMA Helpline: (855) 638-4373

Philly CMA Contact Form: <https://www.phillycma.org/contact-us>

Philly CMA Meeting Directory: <https://www.phillycma.org/meeting-times>

CMA Meeting Directory (worldwide & online meetings):

<https://www.crystalmeth.org/meetings/>

Gamblers Anonymous (GA)

Delaware Valley Intergroup Hotline: (855) 222-5542

In Person Meeting Directory: <https://gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations>

Virtual Meeting Directory: <https://gamblersanonymous.org/ga/virtual-meetings>

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

Greater Philadelphia Region of Narcotics Anonymous

Hotline: 215-629-6757

Meeting Information (call or text your zip code): 215-999-4670

Meeting Directory: https://naworks.org/all_meetings/

NA World Services

Meeting Search: <https://www.na.org/meetingsearch/>

Overeaters Anonymous (OA)

Philadelphia Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

Phone: (215) 385-3076

Meeting Directory: www.oa-phila.org

Overeaters Anonymous (Main)

Contact form: <https://oa.org/contact/>

Meeting Search: <https://oa.org/find-a-meeting/?type=0>

LGBTQ+ Philadelphia 12-Step Recovery Meetings

For information about LGBTQ+ 12-Step Recovery Meetings in Philadelphia, visit www.gayandsober.org/meeting-finder-pennsylvania

Note: Meeting information may be out of date. It is always a good idea to confirm a group is still meeting by checking the fellowship's directory. See fellowship contacts above.

Non-12-Step Recovery Meetings:

SMART Recovery (Self-Management & Recovery Training)

About: <https://www.smartrecovery.org/about-us/>

Meeting Search: <https://meetings.smartrecovery.org/meetings/location/>

Contact Form: <https://www.smartrecovery.org/contact-us/>

Online Meetings & Community (requires registration):

<https://community.smartrecovery.org/community/forum.php>

LGBTQ+ Information: <https://www.smartrecovery.org/lgbtq/> \

SMART Recovery Family & Friends

Family & Friends Information: <https://www.smartrecovery.org/family/>

Meeting Search (select “family & friends” as program type under filters:

<https://meetings.smartrecovery.org/meetings/location/>

Contact Form: <https://www.smartrecovery.org/contact-us/>

Online Meetings & Community (requires registration):

<https://community.smartrecovery.org/community/forum.php>

Lifering Recovery

About: <https://lifering.org/lifering-recovery-menu/>

Online Meeting Schedule (Look under “Focus Meeting Breakout” for LGBTQ+ and other identity-specific meetings): <https://lifering.org/online-meetings/>

Contact Form: <https://lifering.org/contact-form/>

Email Groups: <https://lifering.org/email-groups/>

Refuge Recovery

About: <https://www.refugerecovery.org/about>

Email: admin@refugerecovery.org

Meeting Search: <https://refugerecoverymeetings.org/meetings?tsml-day=any>

Recovery Dharma

About: <https://recoverydharma.org/about/>

Contact Form: <https://recoverydharma.org/contact/>

Email: info@recoverydharma.org

Meeting Lists: <https://recoverydharma.org/find-a-meeting/>

*Note: LGBTQ+ specific meetings can be found by selecting the “Affinity Online Meetings” option.

Mental Health Support Groups:

Live Well Foundation Depression Support Groups

Email: contact@livewell-foundation.org

Phone: (267) 530-3739

Website: <https://www.livewell-foundation.org/supportgroups>

Pink and Blues LGBTQ+ Mental Health Support Group

Email: pinkandbluespeer@gmail.com

Phone: (267) 968-9822

Website: <https://www.pink-blues.com/>

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)

About: <https://www.dbsalliance.org/about/>

Find Local Support Groups: <https://www.dbsalliance.org/support/chapters-and-support-groups/find-a-support-group/>

Online Support Groups (requires registration): <https://www.dbsalliance.org/support/chapters-and-support-groups/online-support-groups/>

DBSA Philly

Email: dbsaphilly@gmail.com

DBSA Delco Chapter

Email: joe@dbsadelco.org

Phone: 484-442-0086

Navigating Relationships & Boundaries

It can be difficult to stay connected and maintain relationships while following CDC and stay-at-home guidelines. Whether living and working in the same space as partners, friends, or family, or feeling disconnected from loved ones and friends, many relationships have had to adjust. It can also be difficult to form new relationships or pursue romantic connections under the current conditions. Healthy connections are vital to overall wellness and understanding how to establish boundaries is important for both new and existing relationships.

Boundaries Around COVID-19

Boundaries and communication are essential for both new and existing relationships, especially when it comes to making decisions regarding personal health and safety. The pandemic makes understanding and communicating your personal boundaries and comfort level especially necessary. As the holidays approach, it is important to understand your personal boundaries related to COVID-19 in order to protect your health. This may include having difficult conversations with friends, partners, family, coworkers, and supervisors.

Here, experts outline tips for navigating these challenging conversations around COVID-19 and personal health: [Talking to friends, family, kids, and coworkers about COVID-19 safety - Johns Hopkins University](#)

These conversations are especially important when considering forming new relationships, particularly romantic relationships, with others. Forming connections with new people can be uniquely challenging right now! However, many are still pursuing new relationships to maintain social and sexual connection.

Here Fenway Health explores questions related to sex and dating during the pandemic: [COVID-19 and Your Sexual Health - Fenway Health](#)

Conflict Resolution Skills: “Fair Fighting”

This year has been especially stressful and tense, and conflict has been a consistent part of daily life for many. Ahead of the holiday season, it can help to be mindful of conflict resolution strategies in order to reduce interpersonal stress and improve communication. Understanding effective communication strategies in conflict can help to empower you in challenging situations and reduce negative consequences of conflict. Below are some “Fair Fighting” rules to improve conflict resolution and break ineffective communication/conflict patterns.

Before you begin, ask yourself why you feel upset.

Are you angry because your partner left the mustard on the counter? Or are you angry because you feel like you’re doing an uneven share of the housework, and this is just one more piece of evidence? Take time to think about your own feelings before starting an argument.

Discuss one topic at a time.

Don’t let “You left dishes in the sink” turn into “You watch too much TV.” Discussions that get off-topic are more likely to get heated, and less likely to solve the original problem. Choose one topic and stick to it.

No degrading language.

Discuss the issue, not the person. No put-downs, swearing, or name-calling. Degrading language is an attempt to express negative feelings while making sure your partner feels just as bad. Doing so leads to more character attacks while the original issue is forgotten.

Express your feelings with words.

“I feel hurt when you ignore my phone calls.” “I feel scared when you yell.” Structure your sentences as “I” statements (“I feel *emotion* when *event*”) to express how you feel while taking responsibility for your emotions. However, starting with “I” does not give a license to ignore the other fair fighting rules.

Take turns speaking.

Give your full attention while your partner speaks. Avoid making corrections or thinking about what you want to say. Your only job is to understand their point of view, even if you disagree. If you find it difficult to not interrupt, try setting a timer allowing 1-2 minutes for each person to speak without interruption.

No stonewalling.

Sometimes, the easiest way to respond to an argument is to retreat into your shell and refuse to speak. This is called stonewalling. You might feel better temporarily but the original issue will remain unresolved, and your partner will feel more upset. If you absolutely cannot go on, tell your partner you need to take a time-out. Agree to resume the discussion later.

No yelling.

Yelling does not help anyone see your point of view. Instead, it sends the message that only your words matter. Even if yelling intimidates your partner into giving up, the underlying problem only grows worse.

Take a time-out if things get too heated.

In a perfect world, we would all follow these rules 100% of the time... but it just doesn't work like that. If an argument starts to become personal or heated, take a time-out. Agree on a time to come back and discuss the problem after everyone has cooled down.

Attempt to come to a compromise or an understanding.

There isn't always a perfect answer to an argument. Life is too messy for that. Do your best to come to a compromise (this means some give and take from both sides). If you can't come to a compromise, simply taking the time to understand your partner's perspective can help soothe negative feelings.

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Grief & Loss

It is crucial to find support as you experience grief and loss. As we face heightened levels of loss and social isolation amidst the pandemic, finding connection and support becomes both more challenging and more significant. Finding community amongst LGBTQ+ peers can help combat isolation and facilitate healing.

Grief and loss can be particularly painful during milestones such as birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays. The first year can be especially difficult as you experience things for the first time without your loved one(s). Regardless of how much time has passed, holidays can be painful reminders of the absence of loved ones. The cheer and celebrations may clash with your emotions. The loss may have altered traditions, and there may be holiday roles that now need to be filled by someone else.

The following tips may be helpful when coping with grief and loss over the holiday season

- **Set boundaries around holiday events:** It's okay to check in with yourself and choose your level of participation in holiday events and gatherings. Self-care is important, and it can be helpful to find the balance between engaging with loved ones and not pushing yourself too much.
- **Allow yourself to experience your emotions:** As tempting as it may be to avoid painful emotions, it can be more helpful to give yourself permission to experience all of your feelings. Grief and sadness can coexist with moments of joy and gratitude. Remember, your feelings aren't right or wrong. They simply exist.
- **Seek support:** Grief and loss can be heavy experiences. Seeking support can help lighten the load. Try to reach out to and spend time with supportive friends and family. You can also try attending a grief support group.
- **Honor traditions and memories:** It might be helpful to continue to practice some old traditions. If possible, keeping traditions going can be a way of honoring the memory of your loved one(s) and keeping it present.
- **Create new traditions:** It can also be helpful to create new traditions or rituals that honor those you've lost. For example, you could light a candle or display a specific decoration in their honor.
- **Plan ahead:** It can help you feel more prepared to plan ahead. Identify who you can turn to for support and what coping skills you can use. It can be helpful to plan who will fill now empty roles ahead of time, especially if this is the first holiday season after the loss. For example, if your loved one always used to carve the turkey, decide who will take over that responsibility. Making these plans ahead of time can help things go more smoothly and lessen unexpected spikes of grief.

Below are additional resources that can be helpful for coping with grief:

- [LGBT Grief & The Importance of Finding Support – Grief in Common](#)
- [How to Cope with Grief During the Holidays – The Psychology Group](#)
- [LGBTQIA+ Bereavement \(Virtual\) Support Groups – Fenway Health](#)
- [Bereavement Group \(Virtual\) led by Rev. Anne Huey – Bradbury Sullivan Center](#)

How to Cope Ahead: 5 Steps

The current state of our world and the upcoming holidays can create many challenging situations and emotions that are often difficult to cope with. Cope ahead plans are part of the Emotion Regulation skills of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, which focus on managing emotions and creating opportunities to experience positive ones. Cope ahead plans can be a useful tool in preparing for situations that lead to distressing emotions, and in planning ahead for potentially difficult situations. Below are the five steps to creating a cope ahead plan, taken from Bay Area DBT:

1. Describe the problem situation (and check the facts). Are you in your wise mind when you're looking at this situation? Are you keeping a neutral distance? Name the emotions and actions that you anticipate you will feel that interfere with you responding effectively. For example, will you feel angry if someone criticizes you at work, or panicked if a friend is late for dinner?

2. Decide what skills to use. Which skills do you want to use in the situation? Get specific. Does taking a timeout work if you're coping ahead with anger? Do you want to distract yourself with another activity when you feel like engaging in an addictive behavior? Or call a friend, or go for a run? Get creative about what exactly you will do to cope.

3. Imagine. Now that you know the situation and the skills, imagine the situation in your mind as vividly as possible. Be sure to picture yourself actually in the situation, not watching it. Imagine it happening in the present, not the past. Bring details to mind: Where are you? Who is around you? What are you thinking or feeling?

4. Rehearse coping in your mind. Once you're in the situation, practice coping effectively. Picture what you will do. What are your actions and thoughts? What will you say and how will you say it? If you anticipate a potential new problem arising, imagine coping with that as well. Rehearse coping with the things you are really scared of.

5. Practice relaxing after rehearsing. Finally, go easy on yourself after your rehearsal. Doing this kind of mental imagining of a hard situation is stressful on your psyche and body. Relax after you've run through all the steps! Stretch, take some deep breaths, or do whatever feels relaxing to you.

Taken from [Cope Ahead: The Power of Planning How to Cope in Advance](#)

For more information on DBT skills, click [here](#).

Staying Grounded

It is useful to have a selection of grounding exercises that you can draw upon to keep your mind and body connected and working together, particularly for those times when you are becoming overwhelmed with distressing memories, thoughts, and feelings.

Grounding exercises are a way for you to firmly anchor yourself in the present.

The following grounding exercises are about using our senses (see, hear, smell, taste, touch) to build our mind and body connection in the present. In working through the grounding exercises suggested here, you might find one or two that work for you – remembering only to use the exercises that you feel comfortable with.

- Remind yourself of who you are now. Say your name. Say your age now. Say where you are now. Say what you have done today. Say what you will do next.
- Take ten breaths, focus your attention on each breath on the way in and on the way out. Say the number of the breath to yourself as you exhale.
- Splash water on your face.
- Sip a cool drink of water.
- Hold a cold can or bottle of soft drink in your hands. Feel the coldness, and the wetness on the outside. Note the bubbles and taste as you drink.
- As you wake, during the night, remind yourself who you are, and where you are. Tell yourself who you are and where you are. What age are you now? Look around the room and notice familiar objects and name them. Feel the bed you are lying on, the warmth or coldness of the air, and notice any sounds you hear.
- Feel the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them.
- If you are with other people, and you feel comfortable with them, concentrate closely on what they are saying and doing, and remind yourself why you are with them.
- If you are sitting, feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down onto it.
- If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body, and your legs, as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.
- Stop and listen. Notice and name what you can hear nearby and in the distance.
- Hold a mug of tea in both hands and feel its warmth. Don't rush drinking it, take small sips and take your time tasting each mouthful.

- Look around you, notice what is in front of you and to each side, name first large objects and then smaller ones.
- Get up, walk around, take your time to notice each step as you take one then another.
- Stamp your feet, notice the sensation and sound as you connect with the ground.
- Clap and rub your hands together, hear the noise and feel the sensation in your hands and arms.
- Wear an elastic band on your wrist (not tight) and flick it gently, so that you feel it spring back on your wrist as it
- If you can, step outside, notice the temperature of the air and how much it is different or similar to where you have just come from.

See more at: [Grounding Exercises -livingwell.org.au](https://www.livingwell.org.au/grounding-exercises).

Identifying & Challenging Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive Distortions are patterns of thinking that can maintain negative psychological symptoms and thought processes. Though everyone can experience cognitive distortions from time to time, it is a useful and important skill to be able to identify the types of cognitive distortions and know strategies to challenge them when they happen for you. Below is an article that describes the different categories of cognitive distortions with examples, as well as useful strategies to challenge each category of distortion.

See more at: [Challenging Our Cognitive Distortions and Creating Positive Outlooks - psychcentral.com](https://www.psychcentral.com/challenging-our-cognitive-distortions-and-creating-positive-outlooks)

Self-Care

Self-care has become a popular buzzword and is often encouraged but seldom truly explained. Although self-care certainly includes the physical aspects of caring for your body, it also includes caring for your mind, emotions, relationships, and spirit. The more we practice self-care, the more we prove that we can show up for ourselves in various ways and find joy and meaning in everyday life. Self-care is not intended to be another addition to the to-do list, but rather as a restorative practice for emotional, physical, mental and spiritual energy. Below are some ideas for practicing self-care in various domains while highlighting the importance of community:

Physical

- Move your body as you are able to (dance, walk, run, exercise, yoga, etc.)
- Wear clothes that you like
- Hydrate your body
- Aim to develop a sleep routine
- Take time for a longer grooming/relaxation routine
- Tidy your work/living space

Mental

- Journal
- Attend counseling
- Read a book
- Watch/listen to a ted talk or podcast, we recommend
 - Brene Brown “Unlocking Us” Podcast
 - The Homecoming Podcast with Dr. Thema
 - The Happiness Lab
 - Not Another Anxiety Show with Kelli Walker
 - Recovery Unscripted
 - Where Should We Begin? With Esther Perel
 - Changeability
 - The One You Feed
- Engage your creativity (draw, paint, color, start a DIY project, etc.)
- Take breaks from screens

Emotional

- Practice Positive Affirmations & Self-Compassion
- Laugh (watch a funny movie, video, etc.)
- Allow yourself to cry
- Rewatch a favorite movie or show, or reread a favorite book
- Set boundaries
- Allow yourself to rest

Relationship

- Reach out to supportive friends/family
- Make time for quality connection without distractions
- Practice open communication
- Plan regular dates/meetings (virtually if necessary)

Spiritual

It is important to recognize that for many members of the LGBTQ+ community, religion and spirituality can be traumatizing. Spiritual self-care is about connecting to finding meaning in the world around you and does not need to include organized religion.

Spiritual self-care can include...

- Spending time in nature
- Meditation
- Volunteering in the community
- Singing or Dancing
- Practicing gratitude (through journaling etc.)
- Identify meaningful non-material aspects of life

If you would like to explore including religion in your spiritual self-care, below are some supportive and affirming congregations and clergy:

Swarthmore United Methodist Church: Rev. Lydia Muñoz of, and Rev. James F. McIntire

Fantastic congregation and clergy supporting and affirming queer and trans* folks!

For more information please visit www.swarthmoreumc.com or Facebook:

@RoyersfordUnitedMethodistChurch @Swarthmoreumc

Or you can email them directly at - Email: RoyersfordUMC@comcast.net / Officeswarthmore@gmail.com

Kol Tzedek, West Philadelphia Reconstructionist Synagogue:

“A multiracial, intergenerational Jewish community where people are invited to study Torah, ask unanswerable questions, sing on and off key, teach our children, pursue justice, engage actively with our neighborhood, and care for one another.”

For more information visit <https://www.kol-tzedek.org/> , or contact info@kol-tzedek.org or call 267-702-6187

Whosoever Metropolitan Community Church: Rev. Jeffrey H. Jordan

“an affirming Christ-centered worshipping community on a bold mission to offer hope, restoration and love to whosoever (especially victims of spiritual abuse) and to raise our voice in sacred defiance against religious exclusion and other injustices and those who promote it. We challenge each other to make our lives count, as we invite everyone to be transformed in mind, body and spirit.”. For more information, visit <https://whosoevermccp.com/> or contact whosoevermcc@aol.com or 215-873-5719

Haven The Inclusive Muslim Union of Philadelphia

Mission: To create an accessible and inclusive space for Muslims to connect socially, spiritually, and culturally.

Vision: A regular program where attendees are given space to comfortably express themselves and engage with each other on a community level.

Values: Equality and accessibility for all sectarian, sexual, and gender identities.

For more information visit: <https://www.facebook.com/havenimup/> or contact havenimup@gmail.com

OUTMuslim

OUTMuslim is a non-profit organization which aims to create wider visibility of queer-identifying Muslims, and supports local efforts to create safe spaces.

For more information visit: www.outmuslim.org or contact outmuslim@gmail.com

Address: 1315 Walnut St Suite 320, Philadelphia, PA 19107

More affirming churches, synagogues, temples, and other spiritual spaces can be found [here](#), on the LGBT Center of Pennsylvania’s website.

Community Support

This time of year can be a vulnerable period for those experiencing isolation or absence of community supports. Community helps us feel more connected within ourselves and can make us feel as if we are a part of something bigger. Community can be restorative, engaging, loving, and connective. It is important to be witnessed and loved in our authentic selves.

Here are some digital and in person spaces within Philadelphia that serve this purpose:

Evolutions: A drop-in group for anyone identifying along the transgender spectrum (or questioning their gender identity). This group provides a positive and supportive environment for people to explore their own evolution as well as offer their supports. Must be over 18. Go to [Evolutions \(18+\) | Mazzoni Center](#) to email for link.

The Attic Youth Center: assists LGBT youth in developing life skills and cultivating healthy development while creating opportunities to foster independence.
<https://atticyouthcenter.org/>

William Way LGBT Community Center: Curates empowerment through networking events, social groups, counseling services, and artistic endeavors: www.waygay.org

Trans Basking: The William Way Center in collaboration with the Oakland LGBT Center hosts a group for 30+ trans-masculine folks meeting every 1st and 3rd Mondays at 8:30 Eastern time. Email finnegansware@gmail.com to be connected.

Sisterly Love: This Group will empower the Trans, Gender Nonconforming, Non-binary (TGNCNB) FEM community through Peer support, ongoing training, skills-building amongst other opportunities at Mazzoni Center. Meetings are conducted every third Friday of the Month from 3:00pm – 5:00 pm

Our Space (drop-ins): OUR Space is a drop-in support space by OUR Way for everyone identifying along the transgender spectrum or questioning their gender. It is located at the Mazzoni Center. Hygiene kits are available upon request and septa passes and snacks are provided. The program initially focused on reducing the HIV Incidence within trans communities and has become a lightning rod for trans advocacy and engagement across the city. Meetings are on Wednesdays from 5:00pm – 8:00pm.

Volunteering & Community Involvement

Volunteering can be a great way to help worthy causes and people in need. It can also be immensely beneficial to the people that volunteer. Volunteering is a great way to get involved in your community and build connections. This can be particularly helpful when coping with isolation and loneliness. Giving back can also boost your mood and enhance your well-being. Volunteering can also provide a sense of purpose and provide opportunities to learn new skills. Plus, it looks great on a resume or job application.

Here are some organizations to volunteer with

[The Attic Youth Center](#): The Attic Youth Center provides a safe and supportive community to help LGBTQ+ youth develop into healthy, independent, civic-minded adults. *Note: volunteering with minors requires completing background checks and clearances to comply with PA law.

[Gay4Good Philadelphia Chapter](#): Volunteers promote diversity and strengthen ties to the larger Philadelphia community. Join their mailing list to be informed about welcoming, inclusive service projects related to a wide range of causes.

[Philly House](#): Help transform the lives of those experiencing homelessness by providing meals, becoming a donation ambassador, or joining the prayer team to help lift spirits.

[Philadelphia FIGHT](#) provides primary care, consumer education, research, and advocacy to those living with HIV/AIDS and those at high risk. Volunteers can help with everything from clerical tasks to community outreach.

[Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#): Help animals in need by volunteering with the Pennsylvania SPCA. There are multiple ways to get involved to help our furry friends.

[Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society \(PAWS\)](#): Another way to help our furry friends, PAWS has multiple opportunities to help serve Philly's homeless and at-risk pets.

[Coded By Kids](#) provides young people between the ages of 8 and 18, from underrepresented groups with software development, digital design, computer science, and tech startup-focused entrepreneurship education programs. They aim to help give kids access to careers in tech and are trying to have honest conversations about the results of unaddressed racial inequity and oppression.

[Movement Alliance Project](#) works to build a healthy movement ecosystem where organizations succeed in making transformational social change. We collaborate with organizations and alliances to develop strategy, collectivize the administrative capacity

emerging projects need, and convene groups to deepen the interconnection and solidarity within and across sectors of organizing.

[Soil Generation](#) is a Black & Brown agroecology coalition of women and non-binary farmers and organizers working to ensure people of color regain community control of land and food, share resources and prioritize community healing, grow food, and protect and commune with the land. We do this work through relationship building, honoring culture, community education, organizing, activism, and advocacy: A People's Agroecology

[Trash Academy](#) is a “collaboratory” between community members, artists, environmental activists, and young people from all across the city. Supported through Mural Arts' Environmental Justice Department, *Trash Academy* inspires a wellspring of actions, believing that those who are most impacted by environmental challenges are the ones who must be at the forefront of crafting solutions. Rooted in the practice of collaboration and inclusivity, we develop, test, and share fun, interactive points of entry like games and teach-ins that posit a depth of knowledge and complicate the issue of trash.

[One Art Community Center](#) aims to provide an inspirational space and programming which embraces and embodies positive values through the arts, education, cultural, and community engagement. Our programs facilitate holistic healing, foster environmental sustainability, cultivate collaborative partnerships, and promote collective growth and unity within the community.

[Food Moxie](#) is educates and inspires people to grow, prepare, and eat healthy food. They envision a world where all people have access to the skills and resources to grow, cook, and enjoy healthy food.

[The Overbrook Environmental Education Center \(OEEC\)](#) has a mission to remove barriers from the public's full appreciation of our region's technological and environmental resources. This center promotes public education, and participation in sustainable technological and environmental projects. The OEEC identifies creative and exciting ways to develop environmentally friendly behaviors that reduces pollution and contamination of our waterways, land and air.

[John Bartram Association](#) has a mission to create equitable relationships among people and nature through immersive, community-driven experiences that activate the Bartram legacy, Garden, and House, on land and on the Schuylkill River, in Southwest Philadelphia.

[galaei](#) fights for access, opportunity, sexual empowerment, and economic justice while fighting systemic oppression, structural racism, discrimination, and white supremacy.

[Williamway](#) seeks to engage and support the diverse LGBTQ+ communities in the greater Philadelphia area through arts & culture, empowerment, and community connections.

[The Colours Organization](#) has a mission is to impact, improve, and empower the lives of LGBTQ+ communities of color, especially those of the African diaspora, within the greater Philadelphia metropolitan area. With an intentional focus on holistic wellness and safety, intersectionality, and community mobilization, we strive to support and uplift the experiences of those too often left in the margins.

[Philly Black Pride](#)'s mission is to transform the living and social environments of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) people of color.

We aim to create opportunities that educate, inspire, improve and celebrate the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals.

[Philly Asian Queer \(PAQ\)](#) is a volunteer, social organization that strives to engage queer (LGBTQ+), Asian/Asian-American folks within the greater Philadelphia area. Through a range of advocacy, social, and supportive programming, we commit to building and uniting our collective voices as a queer, Asian/Asian-American community.

[Gloria Casarez Residence](#) provides 30 LGBTQ+ friendly affordable homes for young adults (ages 18-23 at entry) who are homeless, have experienced homelessness or are at risk of homelessness, including those aging out of foster care. This is the first permanent supportive housing of this kind in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and among the first in the nation, and honors Philadelphia activist Gloria Casarez.

[Philly AIDS Thrift](#) goals are to sell the lovely, useful, interesting, amusing, and sometimes mysterious items that generous people donate to our thrift store and then distribute the proceeds to local organizations involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Search for Volunteer Opportunities

You can also use the resources below to search for volunteer opportunities.

- [Mayor's Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteer Services](#): Create an account, search for, and sign up for volunteer activities in Philadelphia.
- [Volunteer Match](#): Search for volunteer opportunities by location, keyword, or type of cause.

Handling LGBTQ+ Specific Holiday Stress

The holidays can be a stressful time for LGBTQ+ people or families with LGBTQ+ members, but there are several strategies that you can use to help reduce stress and create a happy holiday this year (from [PFLAG.org](https://pflag.org)).

- **Don't assume** you know how somebody will react to news of your sexual orientation or gender identity — you may be surprised.
- **Realize** that your family's reaction to you may **not** be because you are LGBTQ+. The hectic holiday pace may cause family members to act differently than they would under less stressful conditions.
- **Remember** that “coming out” is a continuous process. You may have to “come out” many times.
- **Don't wait** for your family's attitude to change to have a special holiday. Recognize that your parents need time to acknowledge and accept that they have a LGBTQ+ child. It took you time to come to terms with who you are; now it is your family's turn.
- **Let your family's judgments** be theirs to work on, as long as they are kind to you.
- If it is too difficult to be with your family, **create your own holiday gathering** with friends and loved ones.
- Take the lead in **setting boundaries** if there are topics you believe will be upsetting like the political climate or current events.
- It can be easy to lose ourselves – stay connected to who you are.

Before the Visit

- **Make a decision** about being “out” to each family member before you visit.
- If you are partnered, **discuss in advance** how you will talk about your relationship, or show affection with one another, if you plan to make the visit together.
- If you bring your partner home, **don't wait until late** into the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements. Make plans in advance.
- **Have alternate plans** if the situation becomes difficult at home.
- **Find out** about local GLBT resources.
- **If you do plan to “come out”** to your family over the holidays, have support available, including [PFLAG publications](#) and the [number of a local PFLAG chapter](#).
- **Make a plan with friends** – set up phone dates or video-chat dates, ask if you can email them and determine whether you would need an immediate response, balance out your obligatory socializing and more rewarding and enjoyable time

- Find out which friends or family are open to emergency phone calls.
- Have friends write you supportive notes that you can read during hard moments

During the Visit

- **Focus** on common interests.
- **Reassure** family members that you are still the same person they have always known.
- If you are partnered, **be sensitive** to their needs as well as your own.
- **Be wary** of the possible desire to shock your family.
- **Remember to affirm yourself.**
- **Realize** that you don't need your family's approval.
- **Connect with someone else who is LGBTQ+** (by phone or in person) who understands what you are going through and will affirm you along the way.
- **Take some alone time** – go for a walk, read a book, journal meditate, listen to music, exercise

Have Boundaries!

Discuss with friends you trust and/or therapist possible boundaries to have with your family. What do you need to feel safe? What is realistic? What's the difference between unsafe and uncomfortable and what are you willing to deal with? Some boundaries we make and maintain for ourselves. Other boundaries have to do with other people's behavior – is it best to communicate these boundaries to the other person? What will you do if your boundaries are broken? Here are some examples:

- I will not tolerate it when my mother talks about my body in any way. If she does, I will ask her to stop. If she does not stop, I will walk away from her. I will communicate this boundary to her in an email before I arrive at her house.
- I will not allow my family to call my partner my “friend.” We have been together for years and they are aware of the nature of our relationship. I will correct them when they say it.
- I will not drink alcohol with my family or be around them when are drinking heavily. If they start drinking, I will excuse myself politely and go to my room to read, call a friend, or go for a walk. I will speak to my parents on the phone before I get there to tell them this boundary.

**If you have a friend or partner coming with you – have a conversation ahead of time about what each of you would like from the other in terms of support. How will you ask for it? What would that support look like? What if the other person isn't able to give that support? Remember this could be hard at moments for both of you – be compassionate.

What to Pack if You're Staying the Night

- Be sure to pack things that keep you connected to who you are – photos of friends, a favorite book, maybe even your pet.
- Pack things that comfort you – special pillow, scented candle, favorite bath products, food that makes you feel good.
- Pack coping tools – books, journals, favorite music, walking/running shoes, guided meditation.

After the Visit

- Connect with your regular support community on your way home or immediately when you get home.
- Plan a fun activity with your friends, circle of support back in your community, to decompress and enjoy some holiday cheer among your chosen family.
- Acknowledge and affirm yourself for utilizing your coping skills.

How to Respond If Your Family Misgenders You Over the Holidays

By Griffin Wynne

It may be called the most wonderful time of the year, but for many trans folx, going home for the holidays can feel scary and lonely. Visiting family can sometimes mean enduring comments about your clothes or hair, getting deadnamed, and being misgendered. [If your family misgenders you over the holidays](#) or otherwise invalidates your identity, it's easy to feel like there's no place for you at the table. These acts may be intentional or unintentional. They may be big or small. Regardless of the type or intention, they can impact you negatively.

For trans folx, being deadnamed and misgendered are acts of violence. Regardless of how long you've been out, being misgendered can feel awful. It erases your identity. It's invalidating and can be incredibly painful and difficult to handle. It's not easy being misgendered, but there's good news! Decking the halls with trans safety strategies can help you to feel strong and supported throughout the holiday season.

Establish your limits

Coming out as any flavor of transgender can sometimes mean being subjected to intrusive questions and inappropriate comments (even if well-intended). From inquiries about surgery or hormones to unsolicited opinions about your appearance, there's no shortage of inappropriate conversations you might have to endure.

Think about your boundaries before family time; maybe even create a list of topics or behaviors you can overlook and things you cannot tolerate. It is always okay to say "no" or disengage from a conversation that feels uncomfortable. Thinking about your boundaries ahead of time might help you be better prepared for challenging conversations. However, sometimes we don't know we have a boundary until it's crossed, which is okay too!

Knowing what you are and aren't willing to discuss can be helpful when heading into a family event. If a boundary gets crossed, leaving the table, or even the event, is okay if it means ensuring your safety and well-being. If it feels like all eyes are on you, and you don't want to "make a scene," it's okay to pull yourself away from the conversation and address the conflict later. If you know you have allies at the gathering, perhaps asking to grab an eggnog refill or take a lap around the house can serve as a well-deserved break.

Make a game plan

Getting misgendered is overwhelming no matter where you are, let alone at a family meal over the holidays. If you know that your family means to be supportive, it can help to reach out to them directly before the party starts.

Is there a family member you feel close to, or a person that seems to affirm your gender identity? Maybe think about reaching out to them before the family gathering. Sharing your nervousness with someone else at the family function may help you feel less isolated and can provide a go-to person if things start feeling hard. If you don't have a supportive family or don't expect to have anyone supportive physically nearby, reach out to supportive friends and let them know you might need to vent or talk to them. In addition to your existing social support system, there are [many queer and trans centers](#), as well as [online support groups](#), that are here for you. Retaining a relationship with your family after coming out can be a huge privilege, but it can still come with stress or feelings of isolation.

If it's difficult for you to be in the same space as family members who misgender you, remember that you don't have to stick around to be polite or pretend to make nice. If your family is not trying to use your correct pronouns or name, you don't have to stay anywhere that feels uncomfortable.

Of course, up and leaving a family gathering may be difficult, especially if you're feeling pressure not to make a scene or are more introverted. If you're sensing your safety and comfort may be violated at an event, consider reaching out to the hosts beforehand to say you don't plan to stay long or asking a friend to call you with a fake emergency, providing a quick way out.

Have something to look forward to

If you know the holidays will be a mess, it can help to think up a few backup plans and different ways to remove yourself from harmful situations.

Try to arrange an alternate plan if family time becomes too difficult. Take a break and do something grounding before re-entering the situation: take a walk, journal about it, text your support people, engage with online community, etc. Plan a special and affirming activity for yourself after the family gathering to celebrate making it through! Knowing that you have something to look forward to after a stressful event can help get you through the awkwardness or pain of the holidays. It can be as little as a cup of tea and a bubble bath or as big as taking a trip. The important thing is to find something that brings you comfort and joy.

Know who has your back

Going to a family event can be particularly tricky if only some people know you're trans. You may feel anxious about whether or not someone will out you by accident or unsure how to address different family members calling you by different names. It's perfectly natural to feel the pressure to be out to everyone or be apprehensive about correcting your family when they use the wrong pronouns.

You can talk to the people you've shared your gender identity with about your needs and comfort level with the family you aren't out to. You get to determine who you want to come out to and when. It's okay not to be ready to share with everyone.

If you're not out to your entire family, checking in with the family you *are* out to may help you feel more supported. Ask them to keep an eye on your rude uncle or be ready to go on a running-away-from-haters walk.

Additionally, if you're out to some family members, but not all, some may try to defend you by correcting others about your pronouns or name change. However, while they most likely have your best interest at heart, your well-meaning cousin telling your grandma that you now use "he/him" may actually be outing you before you're ready — explain this to them ahead of time. You don't need to be out as queer, trans, or anything else, before you're comfortable.

If you have the emotional energy, you could correct your family members by saying something like, "I'm actually using she/her now." If the misgendering continues, ask a supportive family member to speak up for you. If you don't feel like you can ask for this support from family, step out and call or text an affirming friend to vent. Think about who you'd like to be able to reach out to for support and affirmation during family time. Have a conversation with them ahead of time to make sure they are able to be your support person and share your needs with them. Be open about your feelings about family; you don't have to carry them alone.

Knowing who makes you feel validated and supported can be very helpful when heading into potentially uncomfortable areas, like a family dinner party. You have people who love and support you, and if others are making you feel ashamed or dismissing your identity, you don't have to put up with that. You don't have to be alone with your fear, pain, or anger.

There's no easy way to handle being misgendered, especially over the holidays. Having a game plan, restorative events to look forward to, and knowing who you can lean on are just a few things that can help you to make it through family events.

No matter what, all trans angels are strong and beautiful. You deserve to feel protected, celebrated, and given *lots* of presents every day of the year. At its best, the holiday season is a time to celebrate, eat, and be merry with loved ones, but when it comes to gender — the naughty and nice binary is the only one we need.

Staying Sober During the Holidays

By Adam Ouanes

Surviving the holidays is a difficult task for many LGBTQ+ people, but for sober community members, it can almost feel like an impossible feat. It seems like alcohol is woven into the fabric of the holiday season. Between family obligations, office parties, and your friend's annual ugly holiday sweater party, it can feel like liquor has an inescapable presence. Your family, friends, and acquaintances may also use other drugs. The stress of dealing with family members, loneliness and isolation, or financial pressures can all take a toll, making relaxing with a peppermint Schnapps hot chocolate all the more enticing.

Though every person has their own go-to strategies that allow them to pursue their sobriety, here are eight uncomplicated tips that can help you remain sober through the holiday season. Whether you're an individual in recovery or simply looking for ways to cut back your consumption of alcohol (or other drugs) this holiday season, adhering to a few simple strategies can help you successfully navigate this holiday season.

Set clear boundaries for yourself and others. If you've decided to begin the journey of sobriety, that is the number one priority. It is perfectly okay to say no to anything you feel may put your sobriety at risk. If you are afraid that being at a family event will be too stressful and triggering for you, then don't feel obligated to engage. "No." is a complete sentence. You are free to decline any invitation without owing an explanation.

What to say when someone offers you a drink? "No." is a complete sentence. If someone offers you a drink, it's okay to say no and leave it at that. Most people won't think twice about your response and will move on. You're not obligated to explain if someone pushes you to say more. However, it may help to come up with a brief response beforehand. That way, you won't be caught off guard. For example, "I'm just trying to be healthier" is a perfectly valid answer.

Keep a drink in hand. Nonalcoholic, of course. This is a way to avoid the dreaded "Would you like a drink?" question altogether. Many choose to nurse a club soda with lime, club soda with cranberry juice, or some other variation to blend in easily. After all, no one can spot the difference between a Lacroix in a glass or a gin and tonic.

Bring your own transportation. It can be helpful and comforting to know you can leave a situation whenever you need to. In case you get uncomfortable or conflict with family arises, it is helpful to be able to escape immediately. To that end, driving yourself or taking public transportation may be a good idea.

Know your limits. You are responsible for your sobriety, and it is okay to honor your limits. You will become acutely aware of the situations that trigger your desire to drink or use other substances. Early on in recovery, this might even look like setting time limits for yourself when you need to be at a party.

If you are at a family event and find yourself in a conflict with a family member, try to remove yourself from the situation. Fighting with family can be extremely triggering and it's best to ensure you are safe. Calmly walk away, and either go to a safe space to collect yourself or leave.

Social gatherings can be draining for many people. There is no shame in being tired out by socializing. It is perfectly acceptable to leave a gathering if your social energy gets depleted. Coping with triggers takes energy and gets more difficult if you are fatigued.

“Bookending.” If you are concerned about a particular get-together or family event, one good strategy is to bookend the event with something to do before and something to do or somewhere to go after. Bookending is a great way to ensure an easy escape if the event is too much to handle. Try grabbing coffee with a friend before the event and setting up a hangout session with another friend afterward. Or plan to go to a meeting before or after a stressful event.

Use this holiday season to make some new, alcohol-free traditions. There are a lot of fantastic holiday events you can engage in that don’t necessarily have to be centered around drinking. Try having a holiday cookie decorating party with your friends and watch some bad Hallmark Christmas movies. Gingerbread House contests can get pretty intense among friends too! LumiNature, Philadelphia’s Zoo light exhibit, is a fun way to get out of the house and in the holiday spirit if you don’t mind the cold. There are also plenty of events like the Gay Men’s Chorus holiday show, or you can check out what is going on at The Kimmel Center for more performances. Making an annual trek to KOP or the Christmas Village at JFK Plaza to get gifts for your loved ones can become a fun all-day affair.

All it takes is a little bit of reorganizing what the holidays mean to you. Creating new traditions and honoring your self-care choices can brighten up the season. You may find that new traditions help you not only survive but also thrive this holiday season.