

Resilience-based interventions could curb depression in LGBT youths

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Previous research has found lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youths are four times more likely to commit suicide compared to their straight peers. Members of this community usually are more stressed and depressed than the general population. Now, researchers at the University of Missouri School of Medicine are exploring the role resilience plays in off-setting stress and depression among LGBT adults and youths, and found that LGBT youths have a lower levels of resilience than LGBT adults. The researchers suggest caregivers, school counselors and health professionals use resilience-based programs and strategies to improve the mental health of LGBT youths earlier in their lives.

"Identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender often is associated with an unfriendly and hostile environment," said Jane A. McElroy, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine and lead author of the study. "Resilience is the ability to protect oneself against those stressors and rebound from adversity."

McElroy and her colleagues collected more than 5,000 surveys from LGBT individuals. They found that LGBT youths were less resilient and more depressed than LGBT adults. The researchers said their findings suggest that [resilience](#) is a characteristic that may increase with age, and creating programs for youths that strengthen their resilience could help improve their [mental health](#) sooner in life.

"The stigma, prejudice, micro-aggressions and discrimination

experienced by many in the LGBT community can be a trigger for stress and place those individuals at risk for depression," McElroy said.

"Resilience-based programs can help individuals cope with the negative stressors often associated with identifying as a member of the LGBT community. It also helps LGBT individuals enjoy the benefits of being a part of this community with increased social support and group solidarity."

In future research, McElroy plans to develop intervention strategies that can nurture resilience in LGBT young adults by teaching them how to better balance their emotional responses to difficult situations.

"Teaching youths how to navigate the process of being 'out' and explore challenges as opportunities to grow are possible intervention strategies," McElroy said. "Social media sites, college campuses and community resource centers are potential avenues that could lead resilience-based interventions."

The study, "The Association of Resilience, Perceived Stress and Predictors of Depressive Symptoms in Sexual and Gender Minority Youths and Adults," recently was published in *Psychology & Sexuality* and was funded by the Missouri Foundation for Health. The content of the article is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding agencies.

More information: Jane A. McElroy et al. The association of resilience, perceived stress and predictors of depressive symptoms in sexual and gender minority youths and adults, *Psychology & Sexuality* (2015). [DOI: 10.1080/19419899.2015.1076504](https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2015.1076504)

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