

Why it's important to help kids who identify as LGBTQ and may be struggling

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It's not uncommon for teens to experience mental health issues like anxiety. It's believed 1 in 5 young people experiences some type of mental health issue during their teen years. For LGBTQ youth, the

statistics are alarming. A recent national survey showed 45% expressed serious suicidal ideation.

If the teen in your life identifies as LGBTQ and decides to share that information, Dr. Billings asks parents to lend an ear as an important first step.

"When they decide that they want to talk about it, I think that that initial response is really setting the tone for further discussion and being able to reach out to others," says Dr. Billings. "So, if and when that teen opens up and reaches out, keeping that ear open, really listening, sitting down making time for their conversation and their concerns."

She says supporting our children is critical. "Even if it's something that you're not sure of what to do, just be that listening ear, extending your love and support," says Dr. Billings.

Don't worry about getting it perfect. And you don't have to do it alone.

"We have a lot of avenues into different resources, whether that be mental health care providers, medical providers, in terms of whatever the needs are for that population of kids," says Dr. Billings.

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