

COLOURS AMONG US

A queer sensitivity booklet

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INTRODUCTION

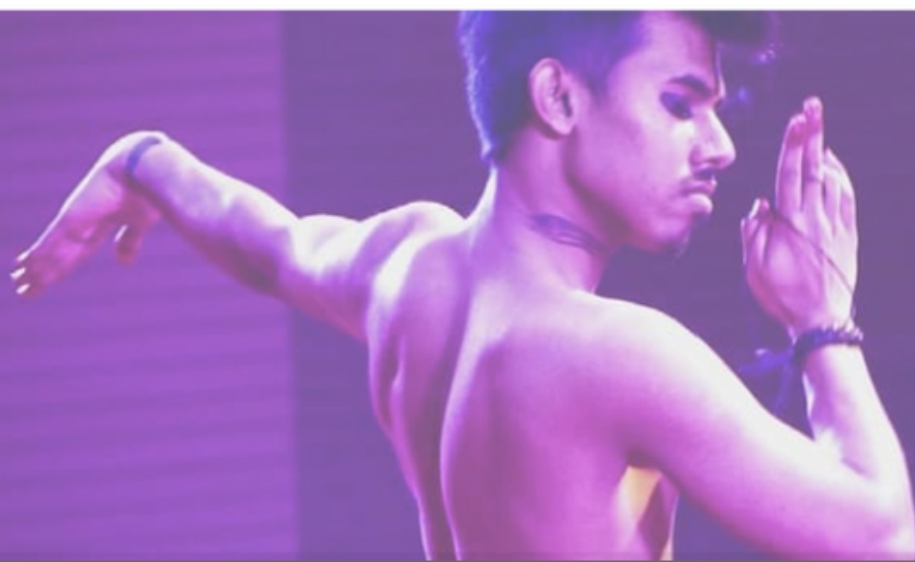
This booklet was developed as a starting point to help health professionals care for diverse patients with sensitivity and understanding. It can be used as an educational resource to advance effective communication and patient- and family-centered care for all patients.

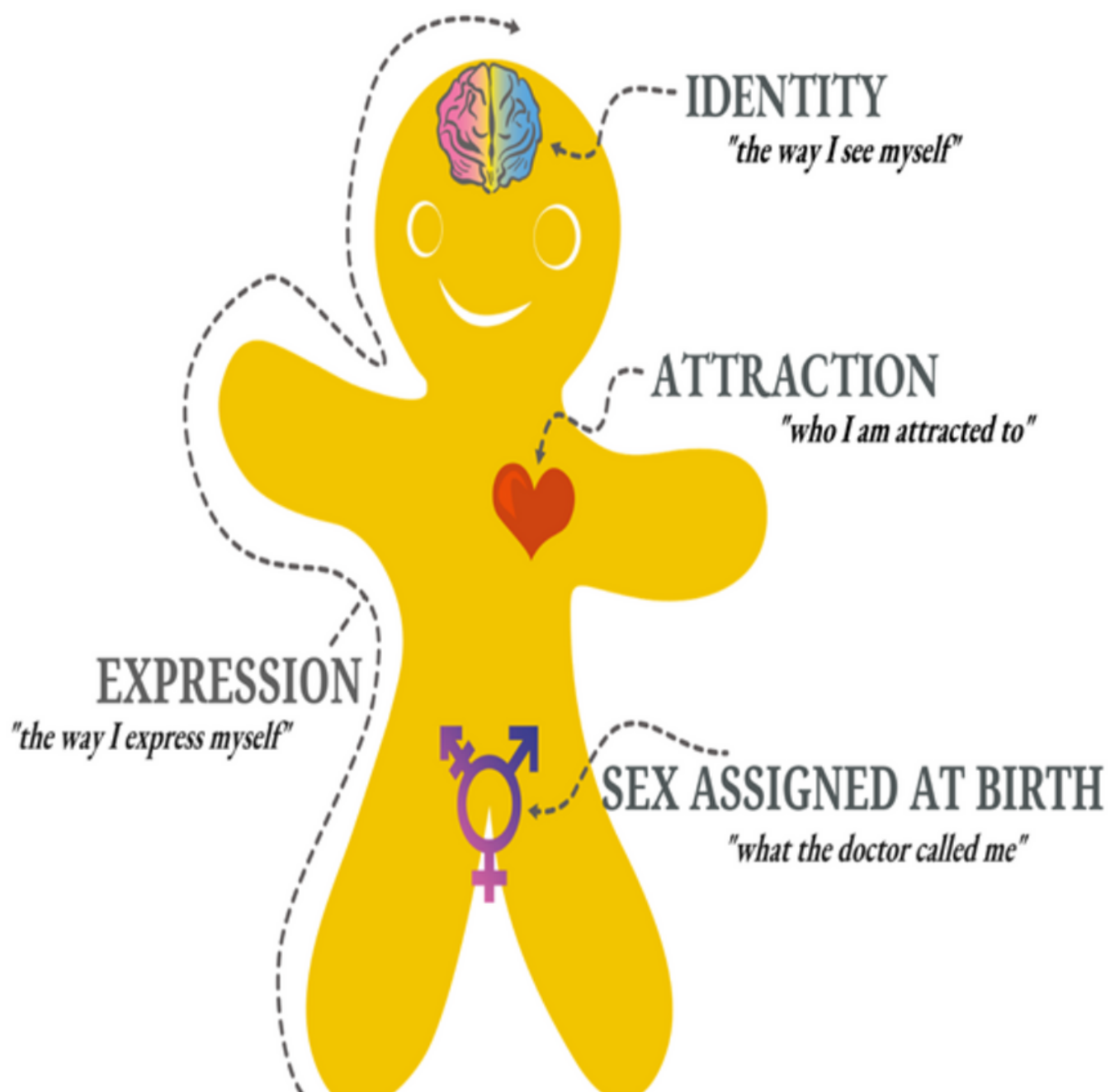
Why should I be a queer sensitive person?

A Queer individual goes through different forms of subtle and aggressive violence just for being themselves. Stigma, prejudice, and discrimination create a hostile and stressful social environment for them , which studies have categorized as *minority stress*. It can have a severe impact on their mental health and overall well-being.

All patients, regardless of their background, should be treated with dignity and respect in health care settings to ensure quality and equity in care. However, queer people often face multiple barriers to health care like:

- Limited access to quality and timely healthcare due to lack of family and social support, lack of or inconsistencies in the proof of identity, financial barriers like lack of insurance or unemployment
- Negative experiences in a health facility involve actual or perceived unfriendly hospital environment and procedures both as a patient and as an employee. eg: unwelcome staring, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, etc.
- Knowledge gaps in providers that can come across as insensitive, either deliberately or accidentally and can result in poor health outcomes.





The Genderbread Person

WHAT IS.....?

LGBTQIA+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and the plus is used to include individuals not covered by the letters in this acronym. It is an umbrella term used to refer to the community as a whole.

SOGIESC is another umbrella term that stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics.

Queer is a multi-faceted word often used to describe individuals who are considered outside cultural norms of gender and/or sexuality. Many, not all within the community have reclaimed the word 'queer' which was once considered as a derogatory term.

LGBTQIA+ people are also referred to as people of diverse SOGIESC or queer people

Sex Assigned at Birth

A label given to an individual at birth based on their anatomy. Sex doesn't just encompass reproductive functions but also phenotypical, hormonal, and other biological characteristics. It is often characterized as male, female, and intersex, where intersex is an umbrella term that refers to a group of people who have anatomy that falls outside the typical binary notions of male or female bodies (Amnesty International, 2018). So, sex is a spectrum in itself.

Gender

Gender refers to attitudes, feelings, and behaviours of individuals that are dependent on the culture and surroundings of that individual which is

socially constructed and it can have very real implications for people's identities, relationships, mental health, and safety/lived experiences. It is typically described in terms of being a woman or being a man.

Gender can be understood in terms of gender identity and gender expression

Gender Identity



It refers to how a person perceives themselves and what they call themselves. It is one's internal sense of being any gender like a , woman/female, man/male both, neither, or agender or any other.

Cisgender – A person whose gender identity is in line with the sex assigned at birth.

Transgender – Transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior does not conform to that typically

associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth.

Transgender identity is also a cultural and a social one. Like hijra, kinnar, kothi, jogapa, thirunangai, etc.

Gender Non-Binary -For some people, their identity belongs outside of the conventional gender binary of male and female and they may identify as both male and female, or neither, or their gender identity may change over time. Some use the terms genderqueer or gender fluid or agender or something else to identify themselves.

Gender Expression

It is how an individual shows their gender outwardly through different markers like pronouns, clothes, behaviour, etc. It is not necessary that an individual's gender identity should be the same as their expression.

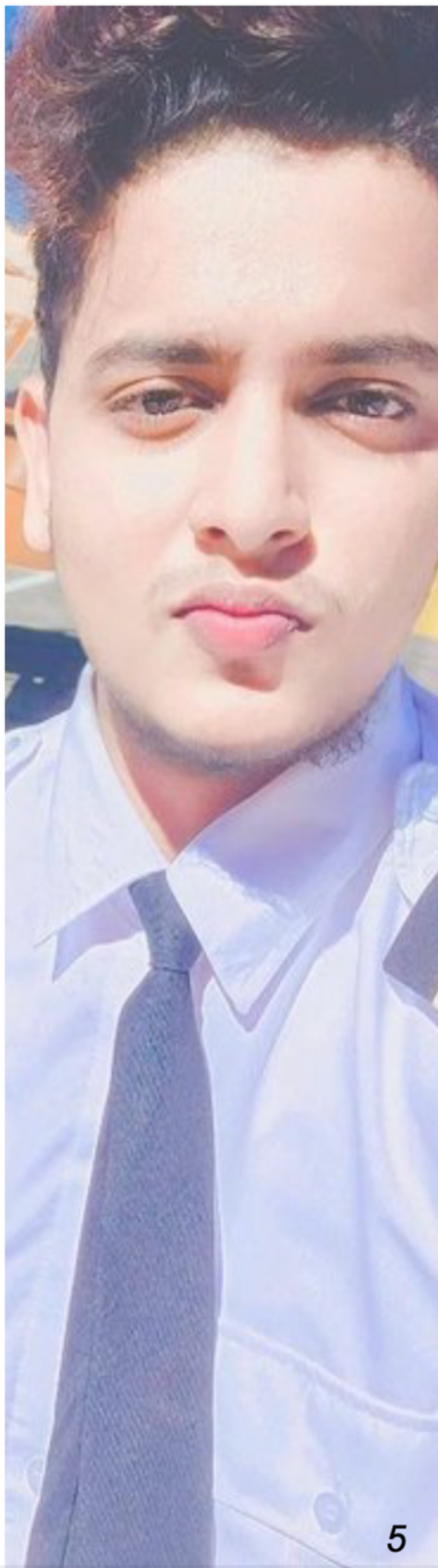
For example, an individual who is assigned male at birth can choose to wear skirts or makeup which have been conventionally considered feminine

Sexual Orientation:

Sexual orientation refers to one's sexual and/or emotional attraction towards others.

Common words to describe sexual orientation are:

- **Heterosexual**– To describe someone who is sexually attracted to people other than their own gender. Conventionally used to describe women who are attracted to men, and men who are attracted to women. The colloquial term is 'straight.'
- **Homosexual**
 - Gay – To describe a person who is sexually attracted to people of their own gender. It is more commonly used to describe men who are attracted to men.
 - Lesbian – To describe a woman who is sexually attracted to other women.
- **Bisexual** – To describe a person who is sexually attracted to people of their own gender and people of other genders
- **Pansexual** – To describe a person who is sexually attracted to others, regardless of their gender identity or assigned sex.
- **Asexual** – To describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction towards individuals of any gender. Individuals do experience romantic, platonic, sensual, or aesthetic attraction.



HOW CAN I BE AN ALLY?

"How many years does it take to see that we are all human beings in the same human race? We are all in this rat race together."

- Anonymous

An **ally** is someone who supports and advocates a community other than their own through actions.

The below list is just a starting point of seeking to be an ally.

LISTEN

- Listen to what people with diverse SOGIESC are saying.
- Recognise it's not about your opinions and feelings rather it's about hearing theirs

EDUCATE YOURSELF

- Take it upon yourself to learn from the tools available to you.
- Do your own research.
- Do not expect to be taught or shown.

SPEAK UP

- When a family member, colleague or a stranger says something derogatory or ignorant, speak up and call them out.

PASS THE MIC

- Your role is to support, amplify voices of the community
- Relay important stories and messages and don't center yourself in the conversation
- Make space for them, and let their voices be heard.

CONTRIBUTE

The queer community is one of the most vulnerable communities. You can contribute financially to the community through mutual aid and crowd funding initiatives, especially for gender-affirming surgeries. It can either be done through online fundraising platforms like Gofundme or Ketto or by reaching out to organisations working with queer people committed to social justice .

How can I help as a health provider?

Use the correct pronouns:

It's always a better practice to use names and ask for preferred pronouns. Sharing your pronouns by default during introductions makes the space around you safer and more inclusive. For example, you could say my name is Aqsa and my pronouns are she/her. Using the correct gender pronouns helps in reaffirming an individual's identity and fostering community.

Always ask for the preferred name:

As it is a complicated and lengthy process to change the names on records, sometimes the names on records do not match the patients' preferred names. You can ask for information in a respectful manner without embarrassing or 'outing' the patient.

Avoid using terms like “real name” or “real sex”

Be self-aware of biases: Remember that any patient can be queer, regardless of appearance, behaviour, age, socioeconomic status, religion, race, ethnicity, ability/disability, or culture, etc.



How can I help as a health provider?

Always ask, never assume when it comes to sexual orientation and gender identity. Be mindful to do so in a sensitive and non-judgmental manner if and when it's relevant to care.

Ensure your hospital/clinic/health facility is queer-friendly: Spaces within the hospitals such as queues, wards, and toilets are often exclusionary in a male-female binary excluding transgender persons. Providing a gender-neutral option will make the space inclusive.

Fill knowledge gaps: Current medical training does not equip health professionals to handle queer issues. You need to stay prepared and updated with information, guidance, screenings, and referrals affecting the queer community.

Avoid asking unnecessary questions: Ask yourself if you are asking a question out of curiosity or is it necessary for care? If it is done out of curiosity, it is not appropriate to ask. Queer individuals, like everyone else prefer to keep their personal lives private.

Apologize for mistakes: It is okay to make mistakes as everyone has a learning curve. But be sure to apologize when you realise, as it acknowledges the other person and validates them. Be ready to learn, unlearn and relearn.



RECENT LEGAL ADVANCES

Homosexuality is no longer considered a crime in India, since the Supreme Court decriminalized Section 377 (**Navtej Singh Johar v/s Union of India, 2018**). In addition, in 2018 the **Indian Psychiatric Society** categorically stated that homosexuality is not a disease but a normal variation of sexuality. In June 2021, after a **Madras HC judgment**, India became the second country in Asia, after Taiwan to ban conversion therapy, which is a pseudoscientific practice of attempting to change an individual's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. There is no reliable evidence that this is possible and it has been shown to have a negative long-term psychological impact on individuals.

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 mandates governments to take measures to “review medical curriculum and research for doctors to address their specific health issues” and “to facilitate access in hospitals and other healthcare institutions and centers”.

NMC issued a directive in October 2021 to remove all content in the curriculum, textbooks, and in teaching content that can be “perceived in any way derogatory/discriminatory/insulting to the LGBTQIA+ community.”



Sources :

National LGBT Health Education Center, Fenway Institute: Guide for health care staff for providing inclusive services and care for LGBT people

The Joint Commission: Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Community: A Field Guide. Oak Brook, IL, Oct. 2011.

National LGBT Health Education Center, Fenway Institute: Affirmative Care for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People

American Psychological Association. (2015b). Key terms and concepts in understanding gender diversity and sexual orientation among students.

<https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/key-terms.pdf>

LGBT Rights in India | Equaldex, 2021

Photographs with permission : Adam, Amala, Alan, Aldrich , Arun Karthik, Aqsa , Neethu, Praveen, Rajan, Vee

Resources for further reading :

Do Ask, Do Tell: A Toolkit for Collecting Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Clinical Settings: www.doaskdotell.org

Parents, Families, and Friends of LGBT People (PFLAG): www.pflag.org

CDC: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health:

www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth

Solidarity And Action Against The HIV Infection in India – SAATHII :

<http://www.saathii.org/>

Mariwala Health Initiative – MHI: Queer affirmative counseling practice:

<https://mhi.org.in/qacp/>

Jamie Utt, “So You Call Yourself an Ally: 10 Things All ‘Allies’ Need to Know”

Human Rights Campaign Foundation, “Being an LGBTQ Ally”

A little about us....

TransCare is a collaborative effort hosted at Sangath that brings together academics, researchers, activists, practitioners, and transgender community representatives to conduct participatory research, advocacy, and education at the intersection of transgender identities, health access, and mental health. If you'd like to know more about us or collaborate with us, please visit

<https://sangath.in/transcare/> or scan the QR code given



TransCare

Team

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"Because many people come to me they're like, are you this? Are you that? I'm like go Google. Don't minimize me to a person who I am not anymore."

– Trans medical student

"They don't see that you are much more than just a vagina or you know, a penis or genitals."

– Trans medical student

"I feel that the medical profession failed me, I feel like the education system failed me, I feel that the society around me failed me."

– Parent of a trans child

"But I do remember that when the first person walked into my outpatient department, I immediately felt the barrier come down, you know, I immediately became this other person that I wasn't very proud of."

– Physician (with respect to a trans patient)