



## **From At-Risk to Activist:**

**Re-imagining Resilience to Account for the Unique Values,  
Skills, and Creativity of LGBTQ+ Youth**

**Props to the CGP Youth Advisory Board!**

# Let's dig in.

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Introduce yourself: Name, pronoun,  
role.

Describe a resilient youth?

What behaviors or cues are you  
identifying as resilient?







# What lens are we using to identify resilient behaviors?

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Does this lens include minority cultures, genders, and sexual orientations?

What might we be missing by virtue of not having lived other people's lives?

# A Definition of Resilience

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Resilience is “*the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.*”

Children are considered resilient when they experience prosocial development despite adversity.

Resilience is a learned behavior that can become internalized.

Some level of resilience is attainable for everyone.



# Resilience in Community

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Resilience is individual and also communal.

Communities that have experienced adversity develop community-level adaptive behaviors, language, rituals, and values.





# Resilience in LGBTQ+ Youth

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In one study LGBTQ+ youth define their resilience as  
“showing up while still in pain.”

We can underestimate the resilience of LGBTQ+ youth because we have been taught to look for resilience based on behaviors found among dominant identities.

# What are some ways LGBTQ+ youth demonstrate individual or collective resilience?

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Finding LGBTQ+ youth friends

Seeking out trusted adults

Finding queer-friendly spaces (QSA/GSA, drama, anime clubs, online)

Self-identifying

Choosing to stay closeted

Continuing to explore their identity after coming out

Finding literature, music, movies, and celebrities show share the same or similar identity

Learning about LGBTQ+ history

Ending unsupportive friendships

Leaving unwelcoming faith communities

# Resistance in LGBTQ+ Youth

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Nearly 40% of incarcerated girls identify as LGB and 85-90% of incarcerated LGBTQ youth are youth of color.

In Washington schools 3.6% of gender X students are excluded in response to a behavioral violation, versus 3% overall.

We can punish or criminalize resilient behaviors of LGBTQ+ youth when we fail to appreciate their purpose.





# What are some ways LGBTQ+ youth demonstrate individual or collective resistance?

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- Correcting others when misgendered
- Defending LGBTQ+ friends when they are misgendered or bullied
- A gender expression that challenges binary notions of gender
- Challenging binary statements about sex and gender made by teachers or other adults
- Coming out in faith communities and/or finding affirming faith communities
- Organizing or participating in Pride events
- Developing or delivering peer-to-peer or youth-to-adult education pieces
- Wearing Pride themed clothing or pins
- Protesting anti-LGBTQ+ policies or culture in public or at school (ie. Day of Silence)
- Public displays of affection in queer relationships

Think of some examples of individuals and/or communities that have turned challenges or suffering into strength, wisdom, positive change.

# The Unique Values, Skills, and Resources of LGBTQ+ Youth

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## Key Values

Inclusion  
Consent  
Empathy  
Self-determination  
Self-expression

## Core Skills

Self-knowledge  
Reading others  
Creative self-expression  
Navigating unfriendly systems

## Key Resources

Queer community  
LGBTQ+ Pride images and events  
LGBTQ+ history





Cool. What now?



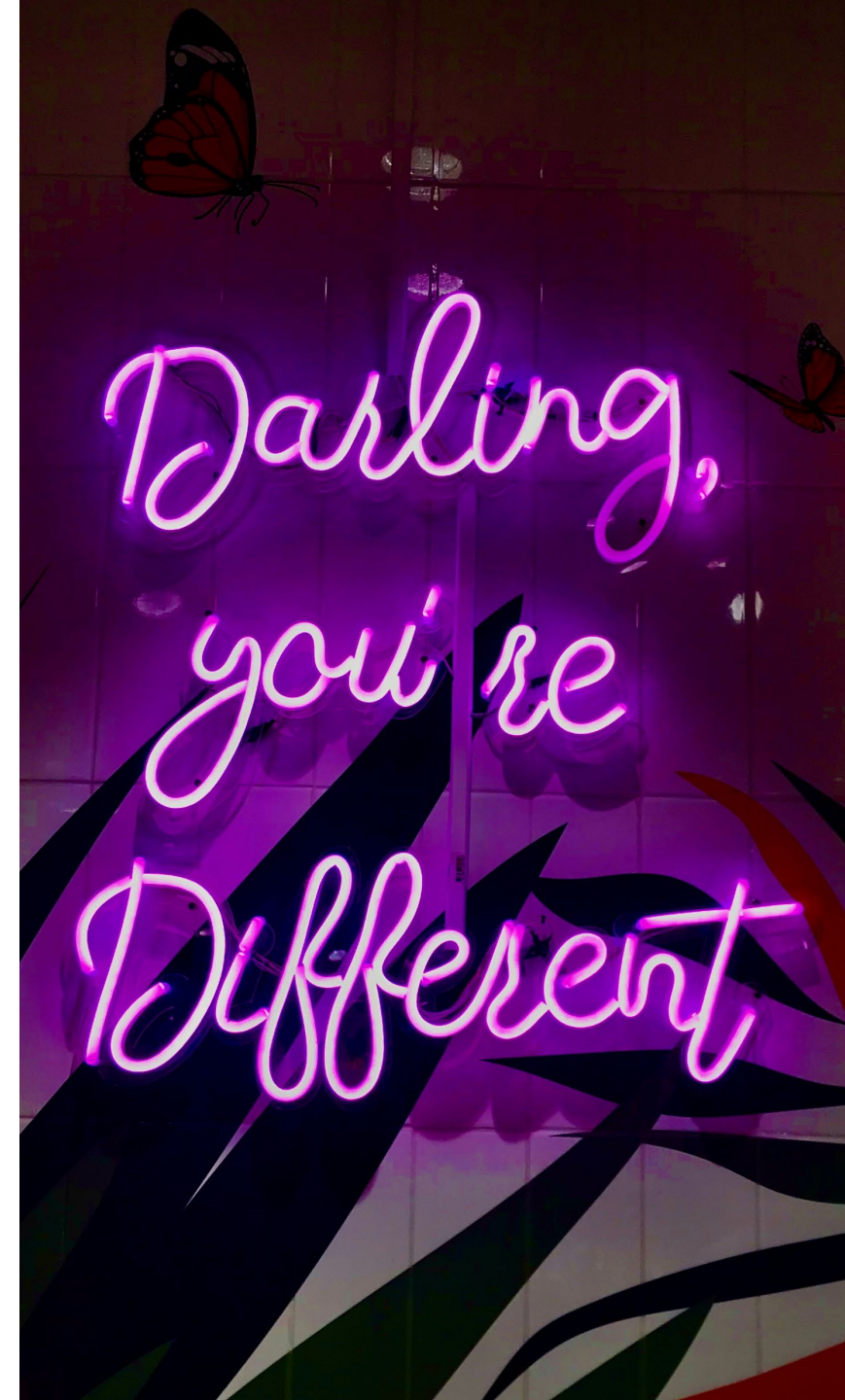
# Help Them Name It

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LGBTQ+ youth may need help seeing their behaviors, as values, strengths, skills and resources.

They exist in a context that largely continues to shame and reject their identity.

Naming their behavior, ideas, work, as strength, as serving the common good, as moral guidance, can be a transformative revelation for them.





# Foster and Celebrate

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**Build spaces and events where the unique values, skills, and strengths of LGBTQ+ youth can grow and be celebrated.**





# How this could look (better advice- ask them!)

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Clothing swaps

Fashion shows

Art shows

Art projects around  
name/identity/flags

LGBTQ+ YA book clubs

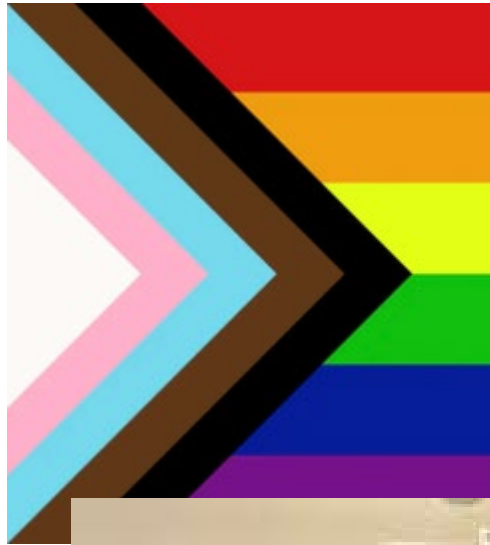
Peer-to-Peer education events

Train the teachers, student panels

Collaborate with other clubs to do a  
mental health promotion event

Open mic events

Youth Pride events- organize, attend





## Organization Changes (changing the context)

Work within your organization to change the way behaviors of LGBTQ+ youth are interpreted. Stop punishing identity.

Change policy, systems, training, hiring, and youth supports expand to include the unique values, skills, and strengths of LGBTQ+ youth?



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