

RESPONSE GUIDE

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In times of intense and pointed attacks on LGBTQ+ communities, it can be difficult to know where to start and what is possible. Making the decision to take action is one of the most important first steps you can take and we are grateful that you are interested in joining us in creating safe and affirming spaces where we can thrive. This guide is meant to serve as a starting point, supportive voice and a love note to LGBTQ+ communities and those who are in solidarity with us.

You can learn more about GLSEN and what we do by visiting us at www.glsen.org

Care & Connection

Our greatest hope is that you are able to care for yourself and your people. Urgency and social media have us trained to believe that things need quick public responses, “hot takes” and simple answers, but we know that navigating grief from this sort of violence is neither simple nor fast. Violence like this no matter how many times it happens is often a shock to our systems, our bodies, our communities, our understandings of the world. Shock shows up in a myriad of ways: anger, pain, numbness, anxiety, fear, activation, hypervigilance, defensiveness, distancing, avoidance, urgency to act, disassociation, and more. Often several of these at once, or in quick succession.

You do not have to have a quick “action” response, email, social media post or anything else. We ask that you prioritize care and connection first, with your friends and family, your colleagues, your students, your GSA or your Chapter. You and your people deserve connection and care. If you choose to share a public response or action, it can always come later. There is space and time, the impacts of this violence will continue to unfold and the need for our action and organizing will continue to be there.

Community care is a powerful form of action and organizing. Queer and trans ability to build community and care for each other in spite of a world that tells us we don't deserve those things is a power that we have cultivated across time. Sharing time, connection, and grace with yourself and your people helps us honor the complexity of our experiences, and help us move through them together. Building connection reminds us that we deserve to live and thrive, and it strengthens our connections.

Connection and care are the foundations on which we build a new world. Below are a few ideas and tools for prioritizing care and connection. Most of these suggestions could be used individually, with your closest people (family, friends, your pod), or with a larger community group like your GSA or GLSEN chapter and volunteers. You can adapt these ideas to use them in person or virtually, or even in a social media space. And while personal reflection is important, it is hard, if not impossible, to find healing and connection in isolation. We need each other.

NOURISH

Food and Drink

- Are you drinking water?
- Can you make yourself tea or share a cup of tea with someone else?
- What foods will give you comfort today or this week?
- Can you share a meal with those you love?

Breath and Move

- How are you breathing? Short and shallow? Long and deep? Erratically? Take some time for a focused breathing exercise that invites you to pay attention to your body and your feelings. Consider utilizing some of the practice outlined in these [25 breathing exercises to calm and focus your students](#).
- Moving can help nourish our bodies and our minds and help us feel and process emotions. Small and big movements can all be helpful:
 - Squeeze and release any part of your body like your feet, face, or hands.
 - Go for a walk, a run, a skip.
 - **Shake it out: Shaking Qi Gong** with @accountabilitymapping.
 - Play an outdoor game, at a park, shoot baskets, play catch.
 - Clean something.
 - Try an embodied meditation like a walking mediation or the one offered here by @evyan.whitney.
- Scream, cry, laugh, roar, make guttural noises at the back of your throat.
 - **6 Healing Sounds** from Qi Gong, shared by @accountabilitymapping.

OFFER TENDERNESS

- Give yourself and others extra time, space, and understanding. Set aside work. Change deadlines. Ask for extensions.
- Challenge the inner voice that says “this must get done” or “you must keep going.”
- Offer more hugs or other consenting touch.
- Start meetings with a check-in. Start with something unrelated (What’s your favorite holiday food?), do a second round to see what folks are feeling or thinking about.
- If you are in spaces that aren’t acknowledging the violence (and you have the energy), bring it up. Ask for a moment of silence or just a general acknowledgement that this is hard for many people.

GET CREATIVE

- Draw, paint, color, or collage. Do not worry about how it looks, focus on how it feels. Scribbling and coloring pages might be more effective than responding to a prompt. If working with a group, you might offer a prompt like draw/color how you feel or image a world where all our people are safe, what does it feel/look like?
- Create a playlist. Host a dance party. Solo or for a group. The playlist might focus on songs that help you grieve or your favorite dance songs, or something else entirely.
- Write. Journal. Write a letter. Write a list. Write [a litany](#), a prayer, a reflection, a mediation. Don’t worry about form, just let the words flow.
- Try an [embodied meditation](#) like the ones offered [here](#) by Prentis Hemphill, Director of the Embodiment Institute.

Community Conversations

One of the best ways to connect and engage with those who are also interested in creating safe and affirming environments for LGBTQ+ communities is by hosting a community based conversation. These are informal spaces that can take place in a living room, community center or coffee shop and are designed to build relationships, share resources and show solidarity. The following is a brief overview of how you can organize a community conversation in your city.

Form a Planning Committee

- Identify 3-5 individuals that would be willing to work together to plan your community conversation.
- Collectively identify what the planning committee will be responsible for and assign roles if necessary.

Host a Planning Committee Meeting

Find a time and date that works for everyone in the committee to come together for an initial planning meeting, you will likely need 2-3 planning meetings depending on the size of your community conversation.

Sample Planning Committee Meeting Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
 - Have each person present share their name, pronouns, connection to the LGBTQ+ community and what they are hoping to accomplish by hosting this community conversation.
- Set goals
 - It will be important to be clear about the why, what and how of your conversation. You will need to set some goals so you can know if your event was successful and to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Some important goals to establish will include:
 - What do you want people to get out of the conversation?
 - How many people do you want to attend?
 - Is there something we want/need to ask people attending to do?
- Decide on the Details
 - Deciding the scale of your community conversation will help ensure that all of the logistics are taken care of before the event takes place. A few examples of details you will need to make decisions on include:
 - Where will the conversation take place (virtual, in person etc).
 - Will there be food?
 - Will we need child care?
 - How will we invite people into the conversation?
 - How will we deal with any potentially difficult conversations or themes that arise?
 - Will this be one full group conversation or will we have people talk in small groups?
 - How are we going to pay for any expenses?
- Identify Roles & Next Steps
 - Once you have set your goals and decided on your details - it's time to get moving! At the end of your first planning meeting you should have a clear understanding of:
 - What next steps need to be taken
 - Who is responsible for what next step
 - When each next step needs to be completed
 - Be sure to schedule your next planning meeting before you leave!

Host Your Conversation!

When the time comes to hold your community conversation, and throughout the planning process be sure to consider things like:

- Accessibility — Is this conversation accessible for everyone? Things that can impact accessibility include:
 - Location
 - Time
 - Materials
 - Translation services
 - COVID safety protocols
 - Ensure that you have some kind of registration form for people to fill out before your community conversation and at the door (if in person) so you have a sense of who all is going to be present.

Sample Community Conversation Agenda (60-90 minutes)

- Welcome & Agenda Overview
 - Why you asked people to come together.
 - What you hope to accomplish.
 - How you will spend your time together.
- Land Acknowledgement
- Introductions/Ice Breaker
 - Share name, pronouns, connection to LGBTQ+ community & reason for attending.
- Group Agreements
 - Establish a list of agreements on how everyone will participate in the community conversation.
- What Are Activity (Large or Small Group Conversation)
 - What are people
 - Thinking
 - Feeling
 - Doing
 - Needing
- Identifying Resources
 - Share out safer spaces, resources, tools.
- Closing Activity
 - What did you appreciate about this space?
 - Something you learned?
 - Something you want to share?

RESOURCES

Some additional resources to support you in hosting your community conversation.

- **Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement** — Native Governance Center
- **At-A-Glance Organizer's Guide to Community Conversations** — National Education Association
- **Sample Group Agreements** — GSAFE

Safety Teams

A community created safety team is a group of individuals who are responsible for considering the safety and security of others during meetings or other gatherings. These individuals should have some basic knowledge of and training around things like de-escalation, and first aid. Please note that a community established safety team is not a proxy for other safety and security measures, but can be a useful way for LGBTQ+ communities and our allies to create safer environments.

Before your event/meeting, identify who will be a part of the safety team. This can be as simple as finding 3-5 people who are willing to keep an eye out for any potential danger.

Ensure that the safety team knows what to do and/or who to contact should there be a need for any type of intervention due to:

- Threats of violence
- Physical violence
- Emotional/mental health crisis

Make sure that everyone on the safety team is clear about their role, responsibilities and in alignment about how the team will respond to any potential threats.

Be sure to share any threats that have been made against your group/meeting with the safety team.

During your event/meeting, the safety and security team should be present, strategically stationed around the event/meeting and able to communicate with one another quickly should there be a need to intervene.

Ensure that the safety team is able to access/communicate with the event organizers at all times. It is important to note that safety should be the only role of an individual during a meeting/gathering.

At least 2 members of the safety team should be visible/accessible to participants.

After the event/meeting, it will be important to have a debrief that includes members of the safety team so that they can share what went well and what needs to be improved.

Consider if this safety team might be something to keep in place/formation for all future meetings/ events. If the decision is to continue, also consider what type of training the safety team might need.

RESOURCES

- [Pod Mapping](#) — BATJC
- [We Keep Us Safe](#) — Zach Norris

Advocacy & Action

Thankfully, there are an abundance of opportunities to take action to create change and to be an advocate for creating safe and affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ communities & students! The following are a few ways you can get involved or deepen your involvement in our movement towards liberation.

Advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusive policies in your school, workplace and local businesses.

You can find out more about what states have inclusive policies by using the [GLSEN Navigator](#) a tool designed to support you in identifying where to find information about things like:

- Local advocates
- Non-Discrimination Policies
- Research Snapshots
- And more!

Participate in a GLSEN campaign. Every year GLSEN works with thousands of community leaders, schools and GSA's across the country to advocate for LGBTQ+ students. You can find out more about our campaigns and days of action [HERE](#). You can also plan your own day of action utilizing our [School Calendar](#).

Sign Up to learn more about how to get involved in GLSEN campaigns [HERE](#).

Request an LGBTQ+ Inclusion training for your school, district, community organization or business. You can request a GLSEN Intentional Inclusion Training [HERE](#).

RESOURCES

- [LGBTQ+ Student Rights](#)
- [National Safe Learning Partnership](#)

Support LGBTQ+ Organizations

There are so many incredible organizations out there fighting for LGBTQ+ justice. Please consider locating your local chapter, donating your time or resources to supporting those who have dedicated their lives to supporting and advocating for the LGBTQ+ community.

- [GLSEN](#)
 - Find your Local [GLSEN Chapter](#)
- [GSA Network](#)
- [PFLAG](#)
- [SAGE](#)
- [Equality Federation](#)
- [Southerners On New Ground](#)

Being an Active Accomplice

If you consider yourself an ALLY, how is your allyship more than a feeling of “I support you — I wish you well and do not wish you any harm”? Becoming an accomplice means that you are ready and willing to not only support the LGBTQ+ community, but take action alongside LGBTQ+ advocates.

If you consider yourself an ally, what is your reaction when someone is unkind to someone who identifies as LGBTQ+, uses homophobic slurs to put someone down or even physically threatens them?

Things you can do to become an active accomplice:

Get Educated

- How diverse is your source of news? Research media bias and understand what can be substantiated and what cannot.
- Learn what organizations who serve LGBTQ+ communities actually do and how they help people.
- Find someone who is different than you and invite them to have a conversation about how they see the world differently and how they see things the same as you.
- If you are a person of faith, seek to find inclusive faith leaders and ask them how they came to be inclusive when many others are not.

Explore Your Own Biases

- Pay close attention to when you assume a person’s intent and why.
- How often do you assume someone’s gender or gender identity. Begin to identify that behavior as its happening in order to make intentional change.

Understand Intent vs Impact

- How often when things don’t go well do you think, “well, I never meant any harm?” or “I was trying to be helpful?” Challenge yourself to put understand the impact of even the best intentions and work to let that be your guide before deciding to “help.”

Role Model the Way

- Share reputable posts on social media that are affirming.
- Write letters or meet elected officials to share your concerns for harmful policies and laws. It’s important they know that allies also believe in doing what’s inclusive and affirming, even with nothing to gain or lose.
- Ask yourself — do your friends and co-workers truly know how you feel in your allyship? How can you make sure they know how important this is to you and how they could join you in some way if they wish to learn more.

Un-gender Spaces/Use Inclusive Language

- Even if you have no idea whether anyone in the room will notice, do the right thing and be intentionally inclusive. Someone will feel seen and appreciate it more than you know.
 - Examples:
 - Friends and Family instead of Ladies and Gentlemen.
 - Use general pronouns until you know the individual’s pronouns.
 - Split up groups alphabetically instead of by assumed gender.

Intervene When Necessary

- When you see something, say something — addressing harmful language or behavior is not always taken care of by people with titles of authority.
- When trying to help others, ask others what they need and be ready to LISTEN.

Use Your Access and Privilege to Uplift Marginalized Voices

- Take the opportunity when gathering in small groups of family or co-workers who have your respect to share your thoughts on how you believe it's important for allies to speak up and not expect all of the change/progress to be the responsibility of LGBTQ+ people.

Conversation Guide

Don't forget to take a look at our [conversation guide for educators](#) — designed to support educators, students, accomplices and friends/family in having conversations about this time.

Conclusion

We truly hope that this guide has been useful to you! If you have additional questions please don't hesitate to reach out to us:

- General: Info@glsen.org
- GLSEN Chapters: Chapters@glsen.org
- Educators: Educators@glsen.org
- Students: Students@glsen.org
- Training Requests: Training@glsen.org

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