

TIPS FOR AUTISTIC LGBTIQA+ YOUNG PEOPLE



These tips have been developed to give Autistic LGBTIQA+ youth better ideas and resources for accessing support. We have based the tips off surveys and consultations we have had with young people, Autistic LGBTIQA+ adults, service providers and families across Australia. To learn more about the services which I CAN Network Ltd provides, please check out our website, which also includes related tips/resources for service providers and for adults who support Autistic LGBTIQA+ young people. This resource was funded by the Victorian Government through the Healthy Equal Youth program and its grant to I CAN Network Ltd.

- You are not alone. There is a big overlap between the Autistic and the LGBTIQA+ communities, and there are plenty of Autistic young people out there who are working through similar feelings about gender and/or sexuality as you are.
- You are in control of your own identity. You can choose your own labels and how you express yourself (so long as it does not harm others). You can choose which support services you want to access. This is called autonomy and it is your right.
- Gender diversity and sexuality diversity are very real. Neither sexuality, nor gender are ‘binary’ concepts. This means that there are more than just two identity labels (e.g. male/female, straight/gay). This is part of the normal range of human diversity and is expected.
- ‘Neurodiversity’ is also very real. This means that everyone’s brains are different, and our communities are stronger when we embrace this difference. The world needs to learn to support all different types of brains, including Autistic brains. It can be difficult for many people who aren’t Autistic to understand what kind of support Autistic people need. This is why it’s so important to seek out and share resources created by Autistic people. This article here explains why Autistic people can be misunderstood by non-Autistic people.
- The Autistic brain processes the world differently. This includes the social world. Some Autistic people can find social constructs like gender or sexuality confusing or in some cases irrelevant for them. This is why these resources advocate for evolving the mainstream understanding of these ideas.
- Some cultures categorise gender into binary labels, while others can have 3, 4, 5 or more. It is okay if your culture’s expectations don’t feel right to you. You have a right to explore this further, and to seek support. Click here for some information on gender diversity across the world.



- It's okay to align yourself with multiple labels. It's okay to change your labels as much as you like. It's okay to use different labels depending on who you are with, and where you are. People's identities can be fluid, and will change whether you are with peers, family, or in your community. Some people will use different labels for their own safety.
- There are many things that will impact how you see yourself and your identity, like your age, the people around you, and the knowledge you have. It is okay to try out different labels or words to express your identity as you learn more.
- Gender and sexuality are only two aspects of identity. Other aspects of identity include culture, spirituality, age, family, class, nationality etc. Gender and/or sexuality might be very important parts of your identity or they might not. It is your decision how much importance you want to place on different parts of your identity.
- Your identity is not a destination, and your development is not a race. You and the world are constantly evolving. Listen to yourself, find your own pace, rest.
- There is a lot of information about gender and sexuality identity online, in books, and at organisations for young people. Learning about different labels can help you understand yourself better, and also gives you new ways to talk about yourself to others.
- There may be people in your life who will not understand when you disclose your feelings to them. This is not your fault; you are not responsible for their confusion, ignorance or fear. It is not your responsibility to educate them if you do not want to.
- If your grown ups are unsupportive or need more adjustment time, please don't give up seeking support elsewhere. There are people who will understand and support you. Please check out our resources at the end of this page.
- At the moment, there aren't enough services specifically for Autistic and LGBTIQA+ youth. However, you are likely to meet other Autistic people in LGBTIQA+ groups and programs, and other LGBTIQA+ people in Autistic groups and programs, including I CAN Network's online mentoring groups. We offer groups specifically for Autistic LGBTIQA+ teens as well as interest-based groups.
- Consider following your interests into groups, and you may find others who share your identity too. Let your passions lead the way to developing your sense of community, identity, and your strengths.



- Consider starting your own advocacy or peer support group in your school or local community. This will raise awareness, and provides an opportunity to connect with like minded youth. Minus18 has a great resource on how to do this.
- It is okay to keep trying out different supports if you don't feel comfortable with what you currently have. Sadly, there is still transphobia and ableism in these areas. Ask for recommendations from other people you trust, look for LGBTIQA+ friendly, and pro-neurodiversity services (see 'Checklist of good practices' on our website).
- Discussions around pronouns, gender identity, and sexuality are still new for some families, schools and communities, and particularly with older generations. While this can be really hard to deal with, it is important to understand that the language is evolving, and to find communities where you are surrounded by affirming language.
- Some people do not yet understand which words or ideas are harmful to the Autistic and/or LGBTIQA+ community. This can be triggering and difficult to know how to respond. It is not your responsibility to change their mind, you do not have to engage with people who hold these attitudes. It is your choice how you want to respond. It is okay to take as much time as you want to process and respond, you can say something like, "What you are saying can come across as offensive to my Autistic/LGBTIQA+ community. I can explain why if you would like, but I need some time to think of my answer." or, "What you have said makes me feel uncomfortable. I would prefer not to continue talking with you." If you do want to engage with this person, you could try writing a respectful letter or recording yourself talking to give yourself time and space from them. That way, if and when they respond, you can choose when and how you receive it, and you can practice self-care on either side. They may not listen to what you say, but that is not your fault.
- You do not need to spend all your time 'figuring it out', you have the rest of your life to do so. Your thoughts and feelings work the same as muscles. They need to rest so that they can recharge, and you do too. When you notice you are feeling fatigued, tired, sleepy, angry or upset, take some time out, this is your body telling you that it needs a break, listen to that and be kind to yourself.
- You may want to try out using pronouns that you haven't heard of before, such as ey/em, xe/xir, or ze/zem. These pronouns are known as 'neopronouns', and are used by some people in the transgender communities. While they might seem quite new, many neopronouns have been used as gender neutral pronoun options for centuries, and are now gaining greater use within the LGBTIQA+ community. Pronoun dressing room is a website where you can try out any pronouns, and it creates a story using your name and pronouns. This is a good way to get a feel of how they fit! This is your life and you get to choose how you want to live it. You deserve guidance from people who you trust and respect, and you deserve to feel accepted

REGARDLESS OF YOUR IDENTITY. CHECK OUT THE RESOURCES LISTED BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION, AND MAKE SURE YOU SEEK SUPPORT IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING. REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.



RESOURCES

ORGANISATIONS:

- [I CAN Network](#) (webpage, includes additional resources and information on our online group mentoring for Autistic LGBTIQA young people); [I CAN Network](#) (YouTube channel)
- [QLife](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [headspace](#)
- [YACVIC HEY Grant partners](#)
- [Youthlaw](#) (legal support for young people)
- [Youth Disability Advocacy Service \(YDAS\)](#) (website)
- [Minus 18](#) (website); [Minus18](#) (YouTube channel)
- [Ygender](#)

INFORMATION:

- [LGBTIQA+ Terminology](#) (4 min read)
- [Five non-binary people talk about being non-binary](#) (2 min read)
- [What are pronouns and why are they important?](#) (3 min read)
- [Pronoun dressing room](#)
- [AMAZE](#) (YouTube channel on puberty and identity, 2-5 min videos)
- [The Awesome Autistic Go-To Guide](#) by Yenn Purkis and Tanya Masterman (book)
- [Queerly Autistic – The Ultimate Guide for LGBTQIA+ Teens on the Spectrum](#) by Erin Ekins (book)
- [Double Empathy: Why Autistic people are often understood](#) (8 min read)
- [Emotional education: Tips for Autistic teens](#) (4-6 min videos and tip sheet)
- [Why everything you know about Autism is wrong](#) (covers social model of disability and Autistic communications - 13 min TEDx talk)
- [Ask An Autistic](#) (10-15 min videos on a range of topics related to Autism)