



HUMAN RIGHTS ARE EVERYONE'S RIGHTS

SEROTONIN SAYS MONTHLY:
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER EDITION

LGBTQ+ YOUTH AND MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

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The statistical correlation between the LGBTQ+ community and mental health is staggering. In no age group is this as clear as in the youth. A 2020 study done by the Trevor Project found that teenagers who identify as lesbian, gay, and/or bisexual experience suicidal thoughts at a rate of three times that of heterosexual teenagers, with close to 50% of homosexual teenagers experiencing suicidal thoughts in the past year. According to the same study, the percentage for transgender and non-binary teens was even higher, actually passing 50%. Further investigations, such as a study conducted in 2013 on behalf of the Association for Psychological Science, has concluded that the stigma and discrimination faced by the LGBTQ+ community is the root of this increase in harmful mental conditions, particularly depression and substance abuse disorders.

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LGBTQ+ YOUTH AND MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS, CONT.

Not only can discrimination of individuals cause and intensify mental disorders, but many LGBTQ+ people who seek help, such as therapy or even hospitalization, are denied service. For example, according to a Lambda Legal survey on discrimination in health care, 1 in every 5 transgender people said that health care providers had told them they were responsible for their own health status. This same survey found that 56% of homosexual people were either refused care, had medical staff either completely refuse or use excessive precautions when touching them, or else felt the medical providers were generally rough or abusive towards them. 70% of transgendered individuals reported having at least one of these experiences. This lack of rights exacerbates the already dramatic disparity between the mental health of the LGBTQ+ community and those outside it—and the findings from the Trevor Project and other similar studies prove this difference is only exaggerated in younger people. Many children face denial not only from health services, but from caretakers, such as parents refusing to pay for therapy for a gay or transgender child.

It has been clearly proven that LGBTQ+ children who receive validation, support, and assistance early on have a reduced chance of developing potentially harmful mental health conditions. The Trevor Project study found that transgender and nonbinary youth who reported their correct pronouns being used by family and friends attempted suicide at half the rate of those whose proper pronouns were ignored. Familial rejection is one of the most powerful triggers for worsening mental health; LGBTQ+ youth whose parents punished or traumatized them after coming out are eight times more likely to attempt suicide and six times more likely to have depression compared to those who were met with little to no rejection, according to the GLSEN National School Climate Survey conducted in 2015. Something as simple as validation and support from family, friends, and strangers can truly change the lives of young members of the LGBTQ+ community.

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LGBTQ+ YOUTH AND MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS, CONT.

It is no secret that youth in the LGBTQ+ community will face exceptional hardships throughout the world as they grow older, whether it be the obvious discrimination like a baker refusing to bake a wedding cake for two gay men or the subtler microaggressions and judgements throughout the day. Very few places have true equality, and homosexual and transgender people are still denied basic rights all across the country and the world. Showing an LGBTQ+ friend, family member, or stranger kindness and respect can make a life-saving difference, especially for children and teenagers. Everyone deserves to be happy and healthy, both mentally and physically, and no action is too small to help.

Quote of the Month

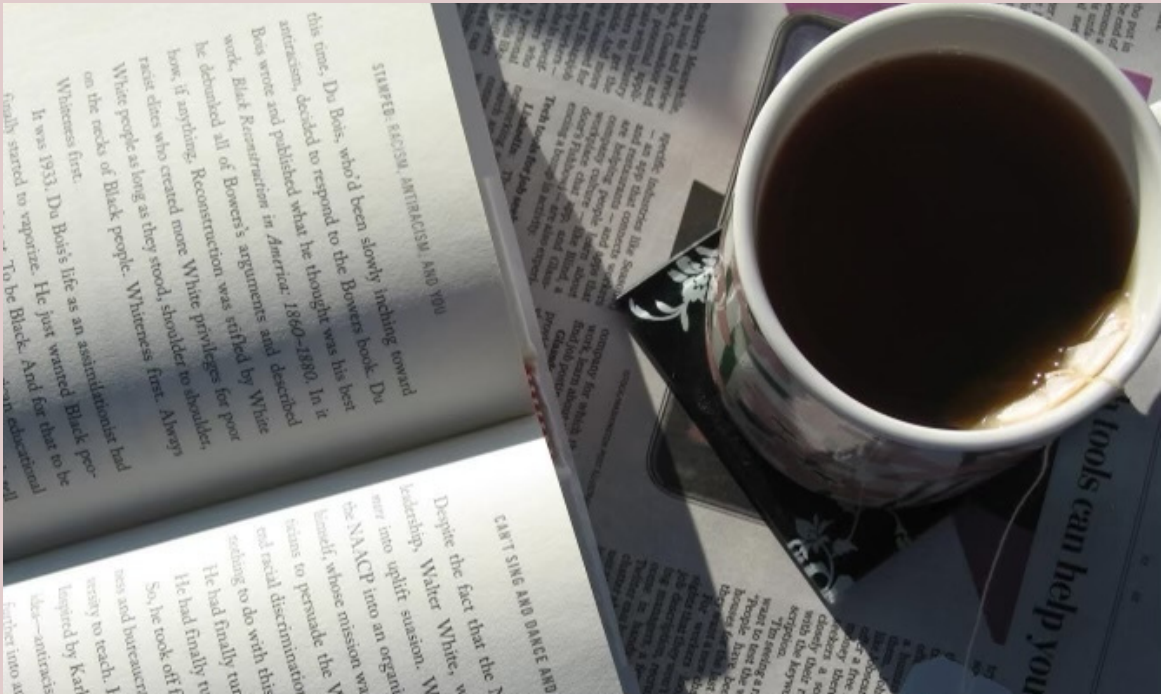
“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.” – Nelson Mandela

Song of the Month

**SCAR TISSUE BY
THE RED HOT
CHILI PEPPERS**

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER INSPIRATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

BY SOPHIE HANSEN



HEALTH AND WELLNESS ARE RIGHTS FOR EVERYONE

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ARE FOR EVERYONE

Pretty much everyone with a chronic or genetic mental illness has heard this sentence: “You probably shouldn’t have children...”

You get told your whole diagnosed life that if you had kids, you would pass on your faulty genes, you are destined to be an abuser, that you could NEVER be a good parent. But at one point, you have to challenge that narrative and the way you see yourself and your future.

This constant stream of negativity can really grate on someone. It hurts. But it’s all wrong. Limiting whether someone can have children based on something they can’t control because you don’t want to pass that trait down is even comparable in some senses to eugenics. What people do with their bodies is their choice, as long as it doesn’t infringe on the rights of others.

According to Mental Health America, the fact that a parent has mental illness alone is not enough to cause problems for the child and for their family. And mental illness is not a curse when properly treated and managed. Taking away people with mental illness’ right to have kids because of fears like passing on the illness or abuse is like telling those people that it would be better off if they were never born. People who are chronically mentally ill are NOT mistakes; they are an amazing group of diverse people, and the world will be no worse off with more of them around.

Okay, but won’t they be abusive? That’s certainly the thing you see in comment sections: “My mom was bipolar and was abusive!” Abuse is a real and terrible possibility, as it is with all parents. But when treated, chronically mentally ill people are just like any other parent: trying their best. With a support system, treatment, and emergency plan, chronically mentally ill people are well equipped to be good parents. In fact, there are online communities like [Parentingwell.org](https://parentingwell.org) that were created to provide parents with mental illness a support system and a place to ask questions when they are struggling.

No matter what, other people’s lives are absolutely none of your concern. Risk factors such as poverty, occupational or marital difficulties, and substance abuse can worsen a child’s chances of being at-risk, especially with a parent with mental health issues. But that doesn’t mean people with mental illnesses aren’t good people and can’t be good parents. They are potentially some of the most empathetic and understanding people you’ll meet. They make great parents.

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CIVIL RIGHTS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Civil rights have become more and more prevalent especially with the rise of the BLM and AAPI movements during the pandemic. The journey of America's civil rights history has been a long and arduous one, but we take a small step towards equality every day. Looking back on activists, it is often the accomplishments and significance of their work we commemorate, but the struggle and censorship behind the movement often goes unseen. We romanticize these movements and place so much admiration on these people, but it is critical that we recognize the hardship and humanity they possess.

Activists are risking more than exposing themselves to the world. Many face dismissiveness, scorn, stress, and even death threats. Even efforts to become an activist can prove detrimental.

"...when I was going through other organizations, I faced ageism a lot, along with misogyny and all those other things, so it was very discouraging," said BLM activist Nupol Kiazolu in a [Pen America Interview](#). Even with all these hardships, people of today are increasingly speaking out, and facing these challenges head-on.

The facts are evident. We have seen and discussed how discrimination and prejudice have become detrimental to various groups, resulting in things like distrust in health care, isolation, economic hardship, and other equally terrible issues. Yet another one is mental health.

According to [Mental Health America](#), in a study on black and African American communities, thirty percent of participants reported having a mental illness or receiving treatment for a mental illness and serious mental illness (SMI) rose among all ages of Black and African American people between 2008 and 2018. And according to the [American Psychological Association](#), Asian-American participants in a study reported feeling stress from the "model minority" stereotype, and other stressors resulting from a system of inequality many years old. Mental health stressors that begin the moment one is born can affect one's pathway forever.

Civil rights continues to be an important issue in the present, and even with its effects on mental health, that doesn't mean we shouldn't keep pushing. Write a letter, join a protest, sign a petition.

"...your voice is powerful, your voice holds weight, and your voice can change the world," says Kiazolu. We can never be perfect, but we can support and lift each other up. Let's bring change to civil rights and mental health.

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CHECK IN NEXT MONTH

**SEROTONIN SAYS MENTAL
HEALTH CHALLENGE OF
THE MONTH: LEARN ABOUT
A CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE + HOW
YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN
MAKING CHANGE!
NEXT MONTH: LOOK OUT
FOR INFO ON HOW TO
"LOVE YOUR HEALTH"**

**FOR MORE
MENTAL
HEALTH
CONTENT**

