



A TIME FOR HEALING

**a
2SLGBTQ+
Guide to
Healing &
Wellness**

written by

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introduction

what is this guide about?

When are we allowed to heal? Many 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are in a continuous state of survival due to the violence and rejection we receive from society. With suicide rates among queer youth being three times higher(1) than that of straight youth, something needs to change. Queer youth are also five times(2) more likely to attempt suicide.

2SLGBTQ+ folks often times have complicated relationships to family and culture. Many of us must take them time to build and find community. That being said the community and families we do find and build are filled with love and reaffirming energy. But that journey means it can take longer to develop sense of self due to things like not enough representation of 2SLGBTQ+ in different careers, not enough models of long term relationships within 2SLGBTQ communities, etc. For 2SLGBTQ+ folks it can take 10+ years longer than heteronormative folks to go on a journey of self-realization. This is because we have to navigate accepting who we are, family dynamics, workplace safety, career, building sense of self and breaking heteronormative ideas that we don't fit into.



So where does this leave us? How do we as a community find ways to not only create a safer world for our youth but also a space for other generations to heal?

Throughout this document we will discuss ways to foster wellness and prioritize our healing, both individually and collectively. We will also unpack how things like trauma can hinder us from healing.

The 2SLGBTQ+ community is not a monolith. We are diverse, with differing lived experiences based on identity, location and culture. That being said, many of the following tips are universal and can be integrated within a variety of individual and community healing practices.

1. <https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/mental-health/lgbt-suicide-statistics/>
2. <https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/mental-health/lgbt-suicide-statistics/>

all about

Decolonizing

Queer relationships and gender fluidity has been a part of human societies since the dawn of time. Contrary to more religiously formed ideals around gender and sexuality, every century, empire and culture has had varying understandings of self determination through gender and human to human relationships. The gender binary is something that has more recently been adopted through the spread of abrahamic religions and the colonization of Indigenous peoples throughout the world.

Homosexuality and Transgender people have been documented in almost every single ancient civilization. From queer relationships in ancient Rome and Greece to the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut a gender fluid ruler in 1473 BC(3). This can also be said for Indigenous communities in North America. From the asegi udanto of the Cherokee(4) to the ikwekaazo and ininiikazo of the Anishinaabeg(5). There are also the Hijra of India(6), the Waria of Indonesia(7), the Muxes of Mexico(8) and the Sistagal's of Australia(9).

Gender norms like who holds positions of power, who controls the family line and who is entitled to inherit land also differ globally. For example, Haudenosaunee women are the decision-makers in their nations(10), and clans are passed down through the women in the family. In China, near Lugu Lake, Denizen women(11) inherit land and are able to take on as many partners as they may please.

It's difficult for queer folks to begin healing if we don't first unpack and decolonize the harm and trauma we have experienced as communities and as individuals. For many, the feeling of disconnection from your own identity as a queer or trans person results from the lack of knowledge about the historical 2SLGBTQ+ presence within your community. The idea that we are a new phenomenon is used to invalidate our identities and lived experiences.

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Decolonizing

3. <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/hatshepsut>
4. <https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/asegi-stories#:~:text=In%20Cherokee%20Asegi%20udanto%20refers,mix%20men's%20and%20women's%20roles.&text=Drawing%20from%20oral%20histories%20and,intertribal%20movements%20for%20social%20justice.>
5. <https://nutmegandsage.blog/2020/05/09/example-post-3/>
6. <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/india/articles/a-brief-history-of-hijra-indias-third-gender/>
7. <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/indonesia/articles/waria-lives-indonesias-transgender-community/>
8. <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/mexico/articles/a-brief-history-of-muxe-mexicos-third-gender/>
9. <https://junkee.com/brotherboy-sistergirl-decolonise-gender/262222>
10. <https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/power-haudenosaunee-women>
11. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/ez45kj/china-last-matriarchy-himalayas-mosuo>

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Reclamation and Self-Determination

Reclaiming identity can be a huge step towards self healing. Reclaiming is retrieving or recovering a part of yourself that was given away or taken away from you. 2SLGBTQ+ people around the world have been finding ways to reclaim identity. Some even get involved in activism to fight laws and create policies that protect our communities. Self-determination through frontline activism works for some, but it doesn't always work for everyone. For some, simply being able to name yourself is as radical as taking to the streets to protest.

In 1990, queer Indigenous peoples from across North America came together at the 3rd annual Native American Gay and Lesbian Gathering in Winnipeg, Manitoba(12). During the gathering, queer Indigenous folks discussed what it meant to be queer but to not identify with the Western and colonial understandings of gender and sexuality. It is here that they settled on the term "two-spirit" or "niizh- manidoo," coming from an Anishinaabeg understanding of queerness and transness. This allowed Indigenous people from around the world to have a term that connected both traditional and contemporary understandings of their identities.

While this term is only to be used by Indigenous communities, it is an example of how reclamation and self-determination gave this community power over themselves.

Other examples of self-determination and reclamation include the legal battles and subsequent wins of the Hijra community in India. In 2014, the transgender and non-binary community of India were able to win a court battle against the Indian government. They were finally granted legal recognition by the state with an official designation of a "third gender" on their official government identity documents. This, much like the creation of the term "two-spirit," allowed a community to regain their power through political recognition(13).

Ways that you can practice Reclamation and Self-Determination:

- Learning the traditional terms for your identity
- Learning your community's history on the lands where you live
- Getting politically involved Creating spaces for queer
- individuals to reclaim their identities.

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Reclamation and Self-Determination

12. <https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/downloads/nc580m75t>

13. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-27031180>

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Self-Care and Healing

When we hear about self-care and healing, we might think of things like bubble baths and taking walks. Those things are great, but there's also a range of different forms of self-care that we can incorporate into our lives. As 2SLGBTQ+ individuals with varied life experiences, we all have things we need to heal from. It's important that we find ways to care for ourselves and feel better during that difficult process.

Self-Soothing

Self-soothing refers to the things we do to find distraction or comfort when we're dealing with difficult thoughts and emotions. Self-soothing can look like:

- TV shows and movies that make you feel good
- Bubble baths
- Deep breathing
- Cuddling Singing loudly
- Time off from home responsibilities and childcare Getting out into nature
- Connecting with our friends
- Writing and journaling

Prompt: What are some self-soothing practices you use?

Self-Care

Self-care refers to the things we do that can help us find meaning and that can support our growth and healing. Self-care can look like:

- Going to therapy to heal from things like religious trauma
- Disengaging from homophobic or transphobic individuals Connecting with new communities that support us
- Setting and keeping boundaries Exercise
- Getting medical care
- Holding family and friends accountable

Prompt: Who are your 3 self-care support people? Think of who is your high capacity, mid capacity and low capacity people?

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Self-Care and Healing Cont'

Individualism is the colonial belief that individual needs take precedence over community needs. This can often lead to inequities and oppression.

In contrast, **Collectivism** is the philosophy that prioritizes the needs of the collective and the community. It places importance on the interconnectedness of community rather than just the individual. For many 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, community care is just as important as self-care.

Community Care

Community care is a form of healing that works outside of unsupportive social systems and opposes things like capitalism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. Community care can look like:

- Childcare and education collectives
- Dignified, supportive healthcare organizations
- Intimate relationship (outside of heteronormative relationships) Freecycle and buy-nothing groups
- Co-housing
- 2SLGBTQ+ only spaces Trans-inclusive care
- Skill sharing and mutual aid Political action

Prompt: How have you been practicing community care? How has community been caring for you?

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Affirming Self

Loving self-affirmations are a great way to remind yourself of who you are, to feel better. Words of affirmations can be put on sticky notes around your room, they can be reminders on your phone or even spoken out loud to yourself in the mirror. Here are some positive, queer self-affirmations:

- My identity is valid.
- I am allowed to be happy.
- I am deserving of love, both romantic and platonic.
- I don't have to decide who I am today.
- I am more than what society says I am.
- I am not defined by my trauma.
- I am magic.

Action items

While affirmations are a great tool for reaffirming your identity, sometimes action feels more concrete. Consider trying this activity to reaffirm your identity:

- Do something around your queerness that you normally wouldn't do out of fear or shame. (ie: put on a dress, take a photo of you kissing your partner, write a poem about your pronouns.)
- Share it with people you trust! (ie: 'Close friends' list on Instagram, text it to a friend or loved one.)

Manifestation

Write down all of the things you want in life, whether it's a family, love or secure employment - anything! Read it each day and put it out into the world.

Action items Cont'd

1. **Take baby steps.** You don't need to fix everything at once. Think of healing as eating. You don't want to eat too much too fast or you may feel sick. You don't want to become overwhelmed, dramatic changes can sometimes be unsustainable. Make micro-changes! These can be small more manageable changes that will create a feeling of success and hope.
2. **Remember that you don't have to heal 100% to deserve happiness.** Healing isn't linear and can be a lifetime commitment. This doesn't mean you need to deprive yourself of happiness, relationships or the things that you want from life, just because you're still healing and growing.
3. **Be patient and persistent.** Healing isn't easy and takes a lot of work. It's so worth it but remember that it takes time. Be patient with yourself and your journey and remember to push through the hard stuff not just past it.
4. **Set realistic expectations.** We all wish we could just wave a magic wand and heal within a second. Goodbye pain, trauma and triggers. Unfortunately it doesn't work that way. So setting goals and expectations help us realize our milestones while healing. However it is important that those expectations are realistic. We don't want to set ourselves up to feel as though we have failed.
5. **View setbacks as part of the process and learning opportunities.** Setbacks are extremely normal and happen to just about everyone. It's important to not think of setbacks as failures but more as opportunities to find and learn more ways to keep on growing and healing.
6. **Prioritize self-care and self-compassion.** You're bound to make some mistakes in your healing journey. Some days will be much harder than others. Be kind and gentle with yourself. Show yourself the love and compassion that you would give to others. Make sure that you have a self-care routine to turn to on the days where it is needed.
7. **Be willing to process your feelings about the past.** It is important to move through your feelings vs simply moving over them. While you may feel as though you're over your past, old feelings and trauma can come back and unexpected times as triggers. That is why you should feel your feelings, name them, sit with them and explore where they come from and why they have a hold on you. That way you can give them the space they need so that you can let go of the power they have over you. Working with a therapist can help with this process.
8. **Ask for help. Healing isn't meant to be done in isolation.** Asking for help is never easy. It can bring up feelings of inadequacy or even fear of being let down yet again. But seeking help and reaching out to others can be very beneficial for your healing process.

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Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals to take action against the oppressive elements in their life. This allows us to unpack and remove internalized negative images of ourselves created by heteronormative oppressive ways of thinking.

Critical consciousness can represent a transformation from oppression that can liberate 2SLGBTQ+ people from oppressive ideologies and empower them to resist social injustice.

Ask yourself some of these following questions to practice unpacking some of the oppressive and negative beliefs you may have internalized:

- what is your earliest memory of understanding sexualities?
- what is your earliest memory of understanding gender?
- Were your understanding of sexuality and gender learned at school or at home?
- What is one thing you want to heal from when it come to your Queerness?

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RESOURCES

INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS TO FOLLOW:

- @NATIVEBOYTOY
- @IHARTERICKA
- @BLACKBOICOMPLEX
- @NIAZAMAR
- @QUEER.COLLECTIVE
- @MEANDSOMEBODYQUEERKIN
- @ARIELLETWIST
- @SMOKIISUMAC

BOOKS TO READ

- QUEERING URBAN JUSTICE
- QUEER RETURNS
- BLACK QUEER HOE
- QUEER INDIGENOUS STUDIES
- A RECOGNITION OF BEING
- FULL-METAL INDIGIQUEER
- JULIET TAKES A BREATH
- ZAMI: A NEW SPELLING OF MY NAME



Closing

2SLGBTQ+ identities are complex, intersectional and varied. Despite this, one thing is universal. We all deserve the time and space to heal as individuals and as communities. This journey of wellness and healing is not easy for queer and trans folks. It's not linear and it's not always clear what direction we need to go. It will be hard. There will be pain, discomfort and tears. You may lose those you love along the way.

BUT I am here to tell you that it can be done. By moving through the pain and the trauma, you will come out on the other side more yourself than you have ever been. While it can be long it is always worth it. Those you lose on this journey will be replaced by those who will love and support you in all that you are.

I leave you with a quote about coming out and into oneself by Anishinaabeg Two-spirit Elder Ma-Nee Chacaby:

"Different images come to my mind when I remember my experience of coming out. Some days I felt like I was unzipping a layer of unwanted skin, and shedding it from my body like a snake, so I could move freely for the first time. Other days I felt as if I was coming out of a dark prison cell into sunlight. And then there were days I saw myself as a piece of a jigsaw puzzle that, until then, had been forced into the wrong spaces, even into the wrong puzzle. But at last I had found the right puzzle, and I fit very well."