

How to support 2SLGBTQIA+ Muslim immigrants, refugees, and newcomers & their families as service providers

tip: click on the logos for direct links to programs

Embrace Cultural Diversity

Recognize that Muslims come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and have unique expressions of their faith. There are Muslims from various countries and regions, and their experiences and beliefs may differ.



Respect Faith-Centric Mental Health

For many 2SLGBTQIA+ Muslims, mental health and faith are intertwined, with well-being often influenced by their personal connection to faith. Respect diverse beliefs and perceptions of mental health when working with clients from various backgrounds, as resolution may be tied to individual understandings.



Supporting "Coming In"

Recognize that coming out can be challenging for 2SLGBTQIA+ Muslims, as it may involve fear, rejection, and questions about faith. Provide support tailored to their unique experiences, which may not always align with mainstream narratives.



Navigating Competing Selves

Help 2SLGBTQIA+ Muslims navigate the conflicts between their sexual or gender identity and their cultural and religious identity. Understand that these internal conflicts can lead to distress, shame, and depression.



Facilitating Reconciliation of Identities

Support 2SLGBTQIA+ Muslims in exploring and reconciling their various identities. Acknowledge that identities can be multifaceted, such as being a queer Muslim, non-practicing Muslim, or culturally Muslim. Encourage self-discovery.



Honoring Resistance to Oppression

2SLGBTQIA+ Muslims regularly challenge patriarchy and cis/heterosexism within Muslim communities, while resisting Islamophobia simultaneously. Acknowledge the various ways 2SLGBTQIA+ Muslims resist their own erasure and provide safe spaces where they can express resistance to different forms violence and oppression as our mental well-being relies on our ongoing expressions of resistance.



Supporting family members when queer & trans Muslims come out

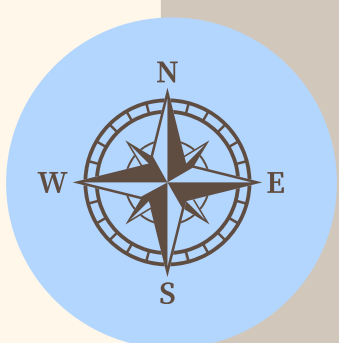
2SLGBTQIA+ Identities and Origins

2SLGBTQIA+ identities are not the result of adverse life experiences or choices. They are innate and discovering one's identity can be a challenging and isolating journey. Support your loved ones unconditionally.



This is a Western thing. Why did we not know any 2SLGBTQIA+ people back home?

Global 2SLGBTQIA+ Visibility: Lack of awareness back home doesn't mean they didn't exist; it may be due to low visibility or limited opportunities. Explore 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations worldwide, even in Muslim-majority countries. Recognize safety concerns in some places, impacting openness. Check out a historical account of [Homosexuality in the Islamic World for insights](#).



Influence of Social Context

Social context can influence a person's experience of safely expressing their 2SLGBTQIA+ identity. Recognize that many individuals may not openly express their identity due to societal norms and prejudices.



Biological Origins of Orientation

Be cautious when discussing the biological origins of 2SLGBTQIA+ orientations. Question the assumption that heterosexuality is "normal" and recognize that all orientations are natural variations in the population.



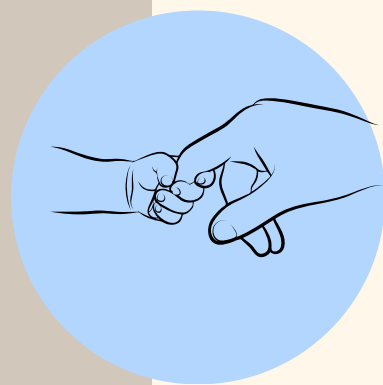
Harmful Effects of Change Efforts

Attempting to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity is harmful and has been widely denounced by major psychological associations. Such efforts have detrimental consequences for mental health and are prohibited in Canada by [Bill C-4](#) that came into effect in 2022.



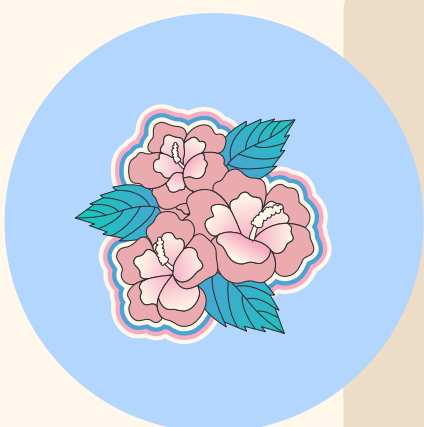
Parenting and Identity

Parenting style does not determine someone's sexual orientation or gender identity. A supportive environment for self-expression is crucial for a child's healthy self-esteem.



Beyond Binary Gender

Gender is not limited to a binary model. Many individuals transcend traditional gender roles and expressions. Embrace the complexity of gender identity and support those who don't fit into conventional categories.



Support interventions for queer & trans youth & their families: Six Operating Assumptions

Resist racist dichotomies & homo-nationalism

Reject racist dichotomies and resist pressure to embrace homo-nationalism. Global knowledge of sexuality and gender exists beyond Western contexts, shaped by exposure, education, and socio-economic factors. Challenge assumptions about newcomers and 'backward' cultures. Canada's progressiveness is not uniform; diversity exists in both racialized and white communities.



Appreciate nuances of the immigration experience



Recognize nuances in immigration: loss, sacrifice, trauma, and queerness disrupting traditional legacies. Consider the generational disconnect in racialized newcomer families dealing with immigration trauma. Migration involves sacrifice for a 'better life,' impacting both the young person seeking liberation and the family grieving the perceived loss of their child's expected path.

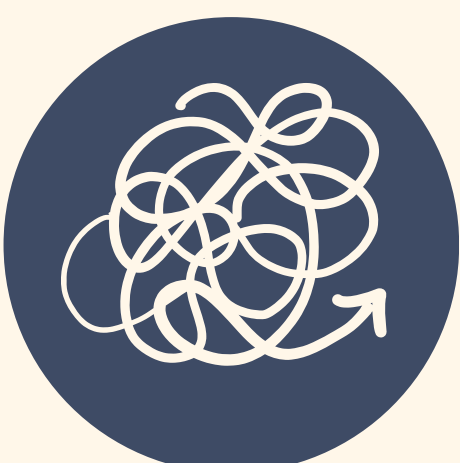
Don't pedal toward nationalism and Canadian-values

Don't promote nationalism or impose Canadian values on racialized newcomers. Instead, offer resources reflecting sexual and gender diversity across cultures. Avoid claiming 'Canadian values,' recognizing diversity within Canada. Acknowledge queer and trans individuals in their community, fostering open conversations between parents and children about identity. Facilitate connections to local resources for support.



Use reflexivity to examine biases

We all have biases. We just do. Supervision, consultation, and self-reflexivity are resources we must draw on throughout our careers so we can balance our desire to produce tangible outcomes with supporting the most vulnerable in our societies.



Take cues from the young person about support needs

Take cues from the young person. Support the most vulnerable by understanding their unique needs. Tailor support to address individual identity exploration.



Prepare for tough conversations

Prepare for tough questions and conversations! Anticipate common questions in our careers and teams. Respond with compassion and a desire to educate without being condescending. Invite people into our conversations.



Resources & Information

LGBTQ+ Muslims

Publicly Accessible Articles:

1. **How to be culturally competent when supporting LGBTQ+ Muslims:**
<https://medium.com/@rahimthawer/i-support-queer-and-trans-youth-but-their-parents-make-me-anxious-29696caf8348>
2. **Supporting family members when queer & trans Muslims come out:**
<https://medium.com/@rahimthawer/supporting-family-members-when-queer-trans-muslims-come-out-b9e2cb1e1886>
3. **'They don't represent me': LGBTQ Muslims, allies speak out after 'parental rights' protests:**
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/lgbtq-muslims-speak-out-1.6985792>
4. **Crescent Moon Facilitators Guide:**
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/619d304270f02e62ed2903a5/t/63a07efe9adabd4e6dd7efe6/1671462654789/Crescent+Moon+Curriculum_Dec2022.pdf
5. **Why LGBTQ Muslim discourse is stalled in Canada:**
<https://www.rabble.ca/human-rights/why-lgbtq-muslim-discourse-is-stalled-in-canada/>
6. Hendricks, M. (2010). **Islamic texts: A source for acceptance of queer individuals into mainstream Muslim society.** Equal Rights Review, vol. 5. Retrieved from
<https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/muhsin.pdf>
7. Suleiman, Omar. **"Exploring the Faith and Identity Crisis of American Muslim Youth."** Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, 3 Mar. 2017,
<http://yaqeeninstitute.org/en/omar-suleiman/internalized-islamophobia/>
8. **I'm Muslim and I Might Not Be Straight.**
<https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/resources/health-information/im-muslim-and-i-might-not-be-straight>
9. Khatib, Omar (2018, December 29). **Gender and sexual diversity in mental health in Palestine.** JEEM.
<https://jeem.me/en/culture/176>
10. Abdurraqib, S. (2018, May 22). **What safer space looks like for a queer Black Muslim woman.** Retrieved from
<https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/what-safer-space-looks-like-for-a-queer-black-muslim-woman/>

Tedx Talks:

- TEDx Talks. (2015). Brown, trans, queer, Muslim and proud | Sabah Choudrey | TEDxBrixton [YouTube Video]. Retrieved from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6hxrZW6l9I&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=TEDxTalks
- TEDx Talks. (2019). Queer & Muslim: Nothing to Reconcile | Blair Imani | TEDxBoulder [YouTube Video]. Retrieved from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lhaGUImO_k&ab_channel=TEDxTalks

Academic Journals:

1. Sherry, et al. (2010). Competing Selves: Negotiating the Intersection of Spiritual and Sexual Identities. Journal of Professional Psychology: Research and Practice.
2. Khan, & Mulé, N. J. (2021). Voices of Resistance and Agency: LGBTQ Muslim Women Living Out Intersectional Lives in North America. Journal of Homosexuality.
3. Shah, S., Khan, M., Abdel-Latif, S. (2021). Decolonizing Muslim Same-Sex Relations: Reframing Queerness as Gender Flexibility to Build Positive Relationships in Muslim Communities. In: Pasha-Zaidi, N. (eds) Toward a Positive Psychology of Islam and Muslims. Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology, vol 15.
4. Alvi, S., & Zaidi, A. (2021). "My Existence is not Haram": Intersectional Lives in LGBTQ Muslims Living in Canada. Journal of Homosexuality.