



The Bridge 13 Supportive Families Workbook



Printable Worksheets



This workbook contains several sections to fill out with your family. If you would like to print additional copies of these pages, they are available as a print-friendly PDF file. To download, scan the QR code above or go to <https://newavenues.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/B13-Family-Worksheets-White-Background-Final.pdf> in your web browser.

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Introduction

Let's face it- growing up is hard! Sorting out who we are and what kind of person we'd like to be is a tough question on its own and it can feel even tougher to come up with tangible steps to take to become that person. Likewise, as parents, it can be hard to strike a balance of giving both loving support and the space for your child to make their own choices.



If you're reading this workbook, you're probably already starting to answer this question in regards to your sexual orientation and gender identity. First off, congratulations! Taking this step towards self-actualization is one of the kindest things we can do for ourselves. It's important to remember that we don't need to have all the answers at once, and it's likely that your personal journey will take some unexpected twists and turns.



With that openness, curiosity, and flexibility in mind, it can still be helpful to create tangible goals as a family. What kind of specific affirming steps do we want to take? How can we better educate ourselves as parents on the topics that are meaningful to our children? What are our privacy needs and how will we protect them? This workbook presents some model frameworks for how we can answer these questions.

Stop!



The following sections are for parents and youth to read on their own respectively in advance of collaborating on the rest of the workbook.



For Parents

Supporting your child as they explore their sexual orientation or gender identity is one of the most important things you can do as a parent. While LGBTQIA2S+ folks face many challenges moving through the world, having a supportive family they can rely on is one of the most important indicators for good outcomes.



Thankfully, the most effective steps you can take towards providing that supportive base for queer children are already integral to all good parenting; loving your child, respecting their individual agency and trusting their own self-knowledge are half the battle! However, there are also critical steps to take in your own self-growth and ways that you can actively facilitate your child's process of self-actualization.



When using this workbook with your child, it is essential to always center their needs. If filling out a table of action steps feels inauthentic or too rigid for your family, then don't! If it makes more sense for you and your child to work through the material individually and then reconvene rather than working together, feel free to do that! Rather than a rigid set of tasks, think of this workbook as a source of inspiration to find steps to take as a family that feel authentic and useful to all of you.

For Parents

Tips For Identity Navigation

Validate the Big Feelings

Remember that your child is the best expert on their own experience; validate their feelings and show humility by avoiding getting defensive. It's a true privilege to go through this journey with your child and get to know them better. You are all growing together!

Question Preconceptions

Keep an open mind and don't fall into assumptions about identity. Queerness is diverse and unique to the individual; support your child's choices by respecting their particular version of queerness!

Allow For Growth

Reassure your child that they don't need to have all the answers immediately. Keep in mind that identity formation only moves in one direction: forward.

Additional Resources

For more parent-specific guidance, check out the PPS Caregiver Support Guide!

For Youth

Before we get too far into the workbook, let's take a moment to talk more about how exactly it should work and who it is for. First and foremost, this whole process is about YOU. If at any point you are uninterested in a task or are uncomfortable with a conversation feel free to stop! If it isn't feeling helpful, don't feel obligated to do it.



It can still be worthwhile to push through uncomfortable conversations to make sure that you're being heard and understood by your adults. In many cases, our parents are cisgender and heterosexual. In some cases, you might even be the first queer person that your parents have been in close relationship with. Because of this positionality, even fully supportive adults can be ignorant or confused about queer issues. Getting them educated and up to speed can be helpful for everyone!



Feel free to adapt activities in the workbook or add additional steps if it makes sense for you- it can't be stated enough that this workbook should feel helpful rather than traumatizing. If you're working on this book with your adults, they have already SAID that they are supportive; when the workbook process is complete, you all should have an idea of HOW exactly they will enact that support.

Stop!

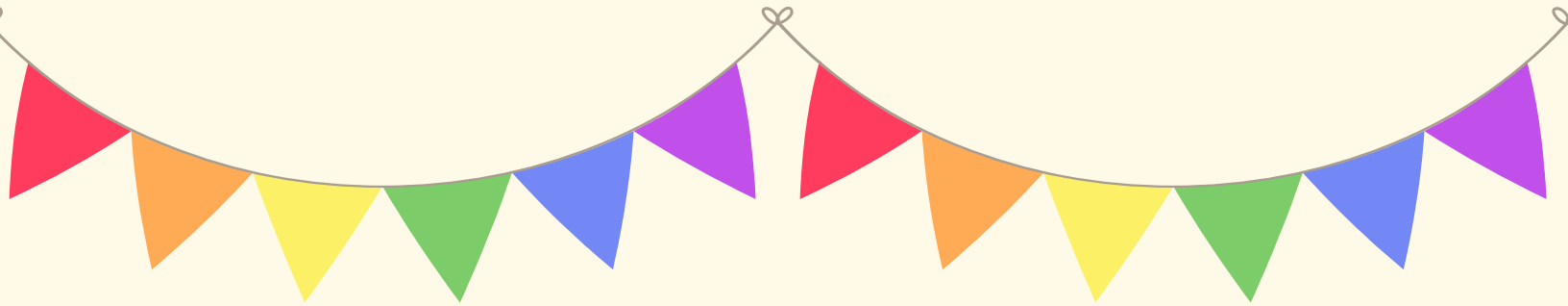


The following sections are for the whole family to read together. At times, youth or adults will be addressed directly by the text, but the overall information contained in the following pages is intended for everyone.



Text bubbles marked with this pointing finger icon indicate instructions for using the example tools in each section. Keep in mind that all the materials in this document are suggestions rather than strict mandates! Please feel free to engage with them in any way that feels helpful and authentic to your family.

Parent Education Action Steps



Let's take a moment to appreciate that it is no longer the 20th century. Queer folks have finally gotten enough cultural prominence that it's hard for anyone to claim total ignorance on who we are or the issues that face us. That said, queerness as understood by queer folks is a lot more nuanced than how it is spoken about outside the community. You might be familiar with the acronym LGBTQ+, but do you know what demiro gray-ace means?



This presents a nice opportunity for us to be gentle with ourselves! No one needs to know everything all at once and we can reframe not knowing about a particular identity or cultural practice as a wonderful chance to expand our understanding of our child, the world, and the people in it. In the following section, we will identify areas that we'd like our adults to get educated on and name specific action steps for how they will go about doing so.

Parent Education

Identify Growth Areas

Think about what aspects of your queer identity and life you would like your adults to have more understanding about. This could include your gender/sexual identities, terminology, history, or current queer events.

Find Outside Resources

Avenues for learning include documentaries, magazines, books, supportive and willing queer friends, websites and adult affinity spaces such as PFLAG.

Only The Adults Should Work!

It's important that this education not turn into work for our youth. If you are interested in teaching a topic to your adults, great! If not, identify outside resources for them to get up to speed on their own.

How to Use This Tool



Some tools for getting started with this process of education and expanding horizons are included on the following page. Brainstorm different areas of learning and potential avenues for education ranging from books to music to movies on the next page. After identifying some topics of emphasis, use the table to set short, medium, and long-term goals for engaging with those topics. As always, feel free to adapt this content in ways that feel authentic to your family!

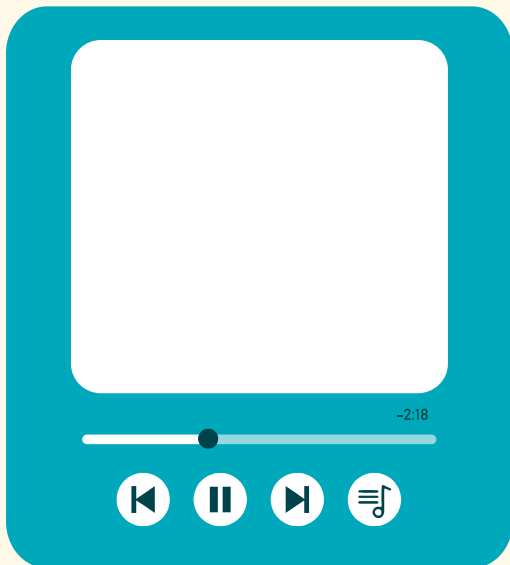
Topics to Explore

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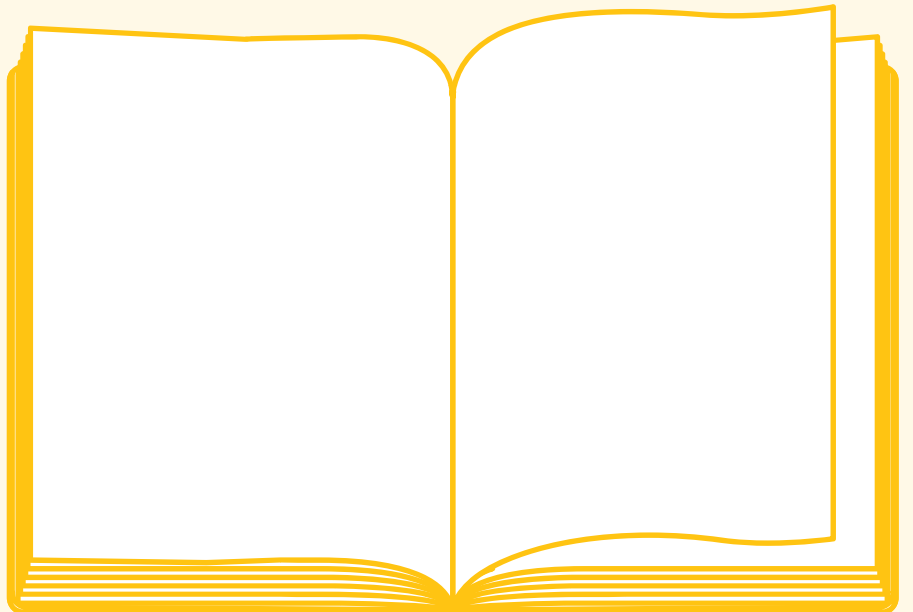
Movies/Shows/ Videos



Music/Podcasts



Books/Literature



Topics to Explore

Topic	Steps to Take Now	Steps to Take Soon	Future Steps

Affirming Goals Planning

Unfortunately, there simply isn't a blueprint for transitioning or otherwise embodying our gender and sexual identity. Affirming goals are as numerous and unique as queer people on the whole, and it is up to the individual to determine what feels authentic.



Our goals can range from social (such as going by a different name) to material (such as changing our wardrobe) to medical (such as starting puberty blockers.) Obviously some of these goals (such as starting hormone replacement or seeking gender affirming surgery,) are long term ones based on what is possible and appropriate at any specific age. Even if a goal is years away, include it in your plan! It's never too early to start laying the groundwork and it provides something to look forward to.



As with all the sections in this workbook, particular emphasis should be placed on the HOW of each goal. If we want to change how we're dressing at school, how and where will we get those clothes? If we're interested in starting blockers, when can we meet with a doctor to start the consultation process?

Affirming Goals

Examples

Social Goals

Social goals can include changing what name or pronouns we go by, joining queer affinity spaces such as TLR or SMYRC, coming out to friends or loved ones, or joining clubs or sports teams that affirm our asserted identities.

Material/Legal Goals

These more physically tangible goals can include changing our wardrobe, changing our hairstyle, buying gender affirming garments such as binders, or changing our name or gender marker legally or with our school.

Medical Goals

Medical goals can include starting puberty blockers or hormone replacement, gender affirming surgery, permanent hair removal, or voice training. It is appropriate to start thinking about these goals early due to obstacles to care as well as better outcomes for more intentional transition plans.

A Note on Affirming Goals

It can be easy to assume that setting affirming goals is an activity primarily for trans or gender expansive youth. In truth, queer folks of all stripes make changes to affirm their identities, whatever they may be. Queer culture encompasses a wide variety of practices, ranging from style of dress to patterns of speech to media consumption. If you feel like something would feel affirming to your identity, set it as a goal and go get it; everyone deserves to feel comfortable in their own skin!

Focus on First Steps!

Keep in mind that we won't have all the answers at once; affirming goals can and will change, and plotting out the entire course of your life is just not realistic. When coming up with goals in this section, we will be trying to identify the first possible step we can take towards a goal and working towards it. For example, if we had an eventual goal of starting puberty blockers, an appropriate first step would be to schedule a consultation appointment with your primary care physician.

How to Use This Tool



The following pages contain some brainstorming activities for parents and youth to complete individually about envisioning what a fulfilled life might look like for you. After working through those exercises, identify some specific affirming goals and identify first steps to take using the included table.

Youth: What would it look like to feel affirmed in your embodied experience?



Draw/doodle/write what it would look like to feel good in your body. What makes you feel affirmed in your gender and sexuality? What does that look like?

Adults: Describe a time that you were supported in making a choice that was important to your own self actualization.



What did it mean to be supported in that choice/moment? In what ways did you feel affirmed? What joyful future do you envision for your child and how would supporting their gender/sexuality journey help them get there?

My Affirming Goals

Goal	Now? Soon? Future?	Support(s) Needed	First Step

Additional Resources

SMYRC

Serves queer and trans youth ages 13-23 in Portland through drop-in social support space, counseling, support groups and resource referral.

<https://newavenues.org/smyrc/>

NAYA

The Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) serves self-identified American Indian youth and their families in the Portland metropolitan area.

<https://nayapdx.org/>

The Living Room

Serves queer and trans youth ages 13-23 in Clackamas County through drop-in social support space, counseling, support groups and resource referral.

<https://newavenues.org/thelivingroomyouth/>

Black & Beyond The Binary Collective

Black and Beyond the Binary Collective is dedicated to the healing, liberation, and safety of Black - African transgender, queer, nonbinary, and intersex (TQNI+) Oregonians.

<https://www.blackbeyondthebinarycollective.org/>

Utopia PDX

United Territories of Pacific Islanders Alliance - Portland Chapter is a non profit run by and for queer and trans pacific islanders (QTPIS) established in 2017.

<https://www.utopiaportland.org>

Triple Point

Serves youth 13-21 in Vancouver, WA. Provides a safe space, support, education and referral services.

<https://www.facebook.com/VancouverTriplePoint/>

Prism Healthcare Clinic

Prism Health offers a safe, affirming, and non-judgmental space where all members of the LGBTQ community can obtain compassionate and culturally effective healthcare they need and deserve.

<https://www.prismhealth.org>

Rest for Resistance

Rest for resistance strives to uplift marginalized communities, those who rarely get access to adequate healthcare or social support, centering the experiences of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC).

<https://restforresistance.com>

Equi Institute

The Equi Institute provides affordable, excellent culturally specific, patient empowering health care that fits the need of the individual rather than a cookie-cutter approach.

<https://www.equi-institute.org>

Lambda Legal

Lambda Legal, is an American civil rights organization that focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities through impact litigation, societal education, and public policy work.

<https://lambdalegal.org>

Paths (Re)Membered

Paths (Re)Membered offers no cost mental health services for Two Spirit and Indigiqueer 2SLGBTQ+ persons 15 years or older as well as other online resources.

<https://www.pathsremembered.org>

Full Spectrum Therapy

Full Spectrum Therapy offers both individual and group therapy for LGBTQ+ folks where their individual experience is understood, normalized and affirmed.

<https://www.fullspectrumpdx.com>



Safety Planning

Intentionally planning around safety and privacy can be a scary undertaking- while we are all surely aware of the challenges in life queer folks can face, it still doesn't feel great to intentionally imagine all of those things happening to us. Nevertheless, being intentional about ensuring our safety in all spaces we occupy allows us to be better prepared for any eventuality.



While we obviously can't plan around every possible contingency, we can proactively identify areas of concern in the various spaces we spend time in as well as identifying supportive adult allies that we know we will be able to count on in those spaces. It is unfortunately the case that sometimes there will be spaces that feel categorically unsafe- in these instances you should decide as a family if you would prefer to leave those spaces (if possible) or not be out in them.



Closeting ourselves never feels good, but is sometimes a pragmatic and necessary decision in some spaces that we are required to spend time in. If you have spaces that you intend to stay closeted in, still consider if there are individual adults that you feel safe with and think about how they can be helpful in the event you are outed or decide to come out in that space at a later date.

To Closet or Not to Closet: A Note to Youth

Closeting ourselves after taking brave steps to come out can feel like one of the worst things in the world. It's very important to remember that doing so is NOT moving backwards or lack of progress. Remember that ultimately closeting or not closeting can be an active decision rather than a reactive one! Don't feel obligated to be out in spaces that don't feel safe or affirming, but also never feel obligated to closet yourself if you are feeling safe to be authentically yourself. You deserve to live the life you choose to without harassment, full stop.



Calling in our Allies

It is helpful to have conversations with our trusted friends and adults about how they can be helpful allies. Topics include how you would like them to respond if you're being misgendered or harassed, who you are out to and in what spaces and what name and pronouns you'd like to use and with whom.



Notifying Trusted Adults

If you have trusted adults in a space, it can be worthwhile to take time to let them know that you're coming out in that space. This can help with ensuring adults are taking specific care towards ensuring equity and safety in that space and is particularly important in school settings. Additionally, many schools also have existing protocols in place to create safety plans for queer students.

Who is Responsible for Your Safety?

In this section we are making proactive plans to ensure that we are safe and affirmed in all the spaces we spend time in. It is important to remember that this does not mean that we are solely responsible for our own safety. In spaces where an adult authority figure is present, it is wholly their responsibility to ensure all youth under their care are safe. If you are feeling unsupported, the responsibility lies with the adult authority to make sure that you are treated equitably and protected from any harassment or abuse.

Additional Safety Resources

The Trevor Project

Suicide hotline for LGBTQ youth ages 13-24. Call 866-488-7386 or text 'trevor' to 202-304-1200.

Trans Lifeline

Staffed by trans individuals, this is a resource for trans people in crisis. 877-565-8860.
www.translifeline.org

Safety Planning

Space	Out? With Who?	Name/ Pronouns	Trusted Adult(s)	Safety Concerns



Safety in the Family



Coming out in any space can be complicated and this is particularly true in our extended families. As in all spaces, it is important to remember that we are ultimately in control of what information we choose to share or not share. When deciding if you want to be out with an extended family member, trust your feelings and remember that you can always change course at a later time.



There are additional topics to consider beyond the initial question of sharing your identity or not. The process of coming out to multiple family members can sometimes turn into a lot of emotional labor of explaining and teaching. It can be worth considering having another trusted family member or ally lead these teaching conversations to offload some of the emotional and intellectual labor to someone less intimately connected to the topic.



Additionally, it's important to be intentional around family members we don't feel comfortable being out with. In some cases we might feel wholly uncomfortable being in spaces with them- that's OK! In other instances we might want to remain in relationship with them while protecting our privacy- that is also OK! The important thing to keep in mind is intentionality and staying true to our needs and feelings. The following chart gives some space to plan around all of the above considerations.

Family Conversation Planning

Family Member	What's important for them to know?	What do they need to be educated about?	Who should be the lead?	If not coming out, how should the adults talk about you?

Affirming Family Goals

Family can be a complicated topic for queer folks, even in affirming environments. It can be tricky to balance honoring existing family dynamics and traditions while changing the ways that we relate to feel more affirming. Try to think of this as an opportunity to grow as a family! Family dynamics are constantly evolving as a normal process of growing up, and taking intentional time to think about that process is healthy for anyone.



When working through this section, you might learn that some otherwise well intentioned family patterns were actually unaffirming or were otherwise experienced negatively in some way. It is important not to retreat into defensiveness in these moments! We can be gentle with our past selves while committing to unlearning negative dynamics and replacing them with new ones that feel affirming and nurturing to the entire family.



While we are keeping our attention on creating a joyful future, we can still honor our existing dynamics and traditions; our relationships are evolving, not ending. Identifying the points of strength in our family connections is important for maintaining that continuity of relationship as well as giving inspiration for new ways of connecting.

What if Our Needs Are in Conflict?

While we are collaborating together on envisioning a positive future for our family it is important to remember that ultimately our youth are the experts on what is and is not affirming. If and when our visions of an affirming family life come into conflict, all parties should be able to speak to where they are coming from and collaborate to work out an equitable solution, but the youth are the ultimate decider of what affirming relationships should look like.

How to Use This Tool



The following pages contain reflection activities on family life for parents and youth to complete individually and then discuss together. Using that discussion as a jumping off point, try to identify some specific areas to work on as a family. After working through those reflection exercises, use the following page to think about what relationship elements we would like to stay the same and discuss them together.



Youth: What would it look like to feel celebrated in family spaces?

Ideas to discuss:



Draw/doodle/write what it would look like to feel seen and celebrated in family spaces. What are some important family activities/events that are meaningful to you? What would make you feel affirmed in those situations?

Adults: How did your own family dynamics growing up create feelings of acceptance or alienation?



Reflect on your own family dynamics and upbringing. What family traditions felt joyful and meaningful to you and why? What family traditions felt misaligned with your goals and desires as a young person? How does that show up today in your family?

Youth: What elements of your family dynamics do you want to stay the same?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What do we disagree about?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Brainstorm anything that you'd like to stay the same in your family dynamics, celebrations, traditions, etc. Youth: what feels meaningful and affirming to you? It's ok if something you want to keep the same doesn't make sense to other people!



Adults: What elements of your family dynamics do you want to stay the same?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



What is the same for you and what isn't? Use the space to the left to generate a list of topics to discuss.

Conclusion

As we wrap up this workbook, let's take some time to look back at the overarching themes of the work we've done. All of the activities and brainstorming we've done are rooted in principles of mutual trust, respect for individual autonomy and love for each other. Even when tough emotions come up, we are first and foremost concerned with creating positive, nurturing futures for our families.

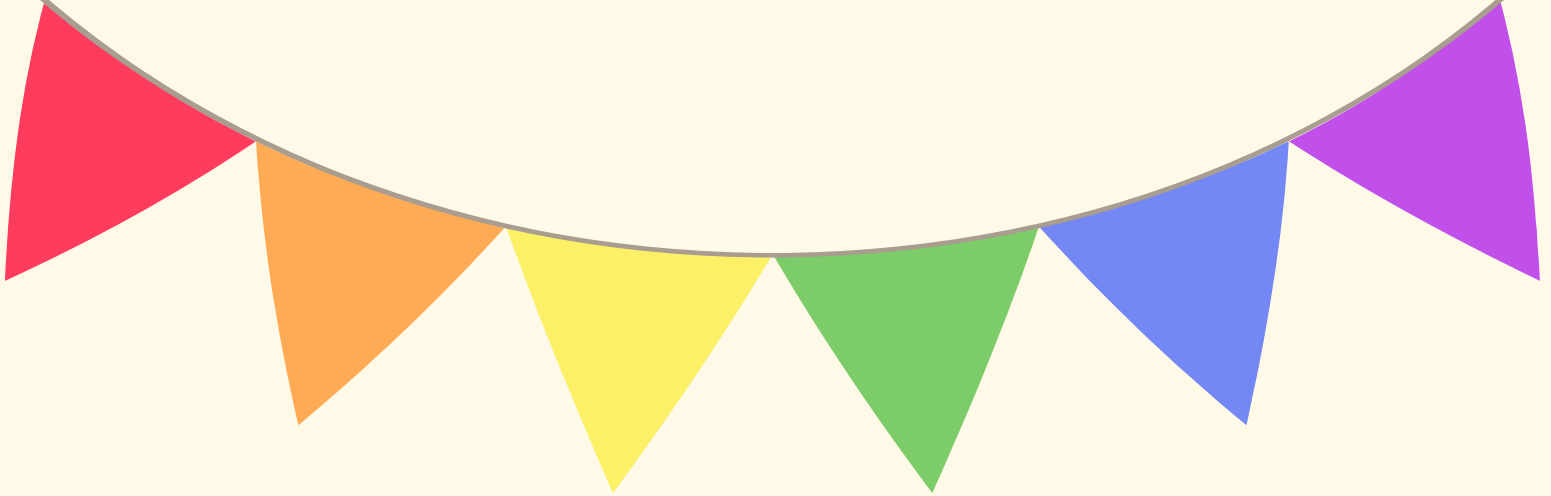


It is important that we keep these principles in mind as we continue to grow; you've made some important first moves, but the process of building an affirming future is a continuous one. Continue to learn together and build healthy and reciprocal habits of communication. When conflict arises, reaffirm your mutual love and care and work together to address everyone's needs.



Finally, do not lose sight of the fundamental excitement at the heart of it all. Identifying and growing into our true self is one of the greatest adventures we can set out on- you've taken the first steps of this journey together and will experience so much joy and surprise as you continue together down the road!

About the Authors



Bridge 13 began in 1995/96, approximately 20 years before the Tilikum Crossing: Bridge of the People became the 13th brick and mortar structure to span the Willamette River. At the time, we believed our work as an educational program functioned as the “13th Bridge” connecting multiple communities in Portland. Bridge 13 partners with schools and other organizations to provide consultations and trainings in LGBTQIA2S+ identity and equity.



In 2016, Bridge 13 joined with New Avenues for Youth, a non-profit organization based in Portland, OR working with houseless and at risk youth. Services provided by NAFY include direct housing assistance, job training, educational support, drop in spaces such as SMYRC and TLR, and assistance accessing legal support.



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FOR YOUTH



Juniper T

In addition to being a B13 trainer, Juniper T is a Montessori educator, ambient musician and scholar of the British reality program Love Island. Her practice is informed by critical pedagogy, Tibetan Buddhism and environmental justice.



Aryn Z

Aryn Z is a B13 trainer and has worked with LGBTQ+ folks in community settings for over a decade with particular focus on the needs of rural LGBTQ+ youth in Oregon. Aryn has been told their puns are "terrible," which they take as a compliment and a challenge.

Notes/Doodles

Notes/Doodles



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