The Keys to Building Resiliency; The Importance of Emotional Support for LGBTQ Transitional Age Youth

The RISE Initiative is funded by the Children’s Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant number 90-CT-0154.
BEFORE WE BEGIN...

- **LISTEN ACTIVELY**
  - Respect others when they are talking.

- **SPEAK FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE**
  - Use "I" instead of "they," "we," and "you."

- **DO NOT BE AFRAID TO RESPECTFULLY CHALLENGE ONE ANOTHER**
  - Asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks.
  - Focus on ideas.

- **PARTicipATE TO THE FULLEST OF YOUR ABILITY**
  - Growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.

- **SHARE YOUR OWN STORY AND EXPERIENCE**
  - Be mindful of other’s stories and experiences when sharing

- **BE CONSCIOUS OF BODY LANGUAGE AND NONVERBAL RESPONSES**
  - They can be as disrespectful as words.
In 2010, the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center received federal funding to launch RISE (Recognize Intervene Support Empower) to:

- LGBTQ foster youth achieve permanency.
- Increase acceptance and support for LGBTQ youth.

Facts:

- LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented within the foster care system.
- 40% of homeless LGBTQ transitional age youth spent time in foster care.
RISE helps LGBTQ youth in Los Angeles:

(1) Find durable family connections
(2) Achieve emotional permanency
(3) Obtain legal permanency in homes where they feel safe, nurtured, and loved into adulthood.
RISE Project Guiding Principles

- LGBTQ children belong at home with their family and in their community.
- Families love their children and want the best for them.
- Family’s culture must be acknowledged and honored.
- Strong, accepting communities empower strong, accepting families.
Identify RISE Indicators of Emotional Permanency.

Maximize ability to build a supportive network.

Demonstrate skills to:
• Rebuild and strengthen severed/strained connections.
• Help build and maintain natural support network.
• Understand youth’s behavior from a grief and loss perspective.

Exhibit cultural competency of LGBTQ TAY to the safe coming out process.

Apply tools to enhance youth’s ability to building self sufficiency.
RISE’s Belief from Work with the LA Gay & Lesbian Center’s Transitional Living Program

When LGBTQ youth have emotionally supportive and affirming adults in their lives, they gain the courage and confidence to embrace the steps towards independence.
“Social Support is significantly related to resilience.”

INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL PERMANENCY

- A place to stay in an emergency
- Emotional support of a caring adult
- Family members who regularly check-in
- A place to go for family meals
- Concrete support

What are we trying to achieve with these tools?

- Identify strengths of LGBTQ
- Identify youth and family driven goals
- Identify and expand community connections
- Identify supportive adults
- Improve family relationships by increasing supportive behaviors and decreasing rejecting behaviors towards LGBTQ youth.
STRENGTH’S CHAT

The purpose:
- Get to know a youth well enough so that the identified strengths inform the treatment plan and direct the youth’s goals.
- Assist the youth in identifying and building their strengths.
- Remind the youth of the positive qualities they possess.

GOAL: As the youth works to achieve their goals, the youth will be able to see their strengths grow and feel empowered to independently utilize their strengths to build upon improving their life.
Youth’s Name: ______________________

Strength’s Chat
Youth’s Name: ______________________  Month: July 2012
Number of strengths: 18
VISION STATEMENT

The purpose:
- Assist youth in identifying and establishing realistic short-term goals.

Ask 3 questions:
- Where does the young person want to be in life?
- Who does the youth want to be connected to?
- Who does the young person want to receive more LGBTQ support from?

Example:  *Find a full-time job while working towards becoming a Corrections Officer; reconnect with my aunt and build my support as a lesbian with my aunt and cousin.*

GOAL: The youth’s voice is acknowledged and the process becomes youth driven. The young person and service providers are provided clarity and direction in obtaining successful outcomes.
Vision Statement Continued

- Provides direction
- Focuses the youth and team on the goal
- Decision-making tool
- “Do your actions fit your vision statement?”
- Assists in identifying when youth is ready for graduation
ECO MAP

- **Purpose:**
  - Assist the youth in identifying and building their community connections.

- **GOAL:** Over a period of time the youth will be able to see their growth and feel empowered to appropriately use community connections on their road to success.
Eco Map

Youth:____________ Month: July 2012

Number of Community Connections: 5

Key

++ Not Supportive
+++ Somewhat Supportive
+++ Supportive
Eco Map

Youth:  Month: May 2013

Number of Community Connections: 20

Key

++  Not Supportive
+++  Somewhat Supportive
+++ Supportive
FAMILY CONNECTIONS MAP

Identify who the youth wants to:

- Reconnect to
- Connect with
- Strengthen relationships with.

GOAL: The youth is able to see the people they already have in their lives, begin to conceptualize their “chosen family”, and expand the necessary supports to achieve success.
Family Connections Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maternal</th>
<th>Non-Relatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>Cousin 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>Uncle 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother 1</td>
<td>Cousin 11</td>
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Key:
- Supportive
- LGBT Supportive
- Increase Support
- Increase LGBT Support

Youth:
Month: July 2012
Supportive Connections: 21
LGBT Supportive Connections: 22
## Family Connections Map

### Maternal

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### Non-Relatives

<table>
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<th>Relationship</th>
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<tr>
<td>Neighbor</td>
<td>Volunteer 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLP 1</td>
<td>Friend 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMP</td>
<td>Friend 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMP</td>
<td>Friend 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMP</td>
<td>Friend 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbor</td>
<td>Friend 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend 1</td>
<td>Friend 9</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Friend 3</td>
<td>Friend 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Friend 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapist</td>
<td>Friend 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLP 1</td>
<td>Friend 15</td>
</tr>
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<td>Friend 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLP 3</td>
<td>Friend 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss</td>
<td>Friend 18</td>
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<td>Volunteer 1</td>
<td>CM</td>
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### Key

- **Supportive**
- **LGBT Supportive**
- **Increase Support**
- **Increase LGBT Support**

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Youth:
Month: May 2013
Supportive Connections: 39
LGBT Supportive Connections: 40
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT

“Improving youth’s ability to form positive relationships is important for enhancing their development and well-being.”

- **Reconnect**
  - Use open ended and probing questions to identify potential people to reconnect to.

- **Connect**
  - Use open ended and probing questions to identify connections that the youth wants to maintain.

- **Strengthen**
  - Role play communications.
  - Teach youth how to maintain relationships.
  - Explore the benefits of maintaining relationships.

COMING out PROCESS

- Open discussion
- Review of RISE
  - Coming Out Process
COMING-OUT: CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS

- Empower
- Promote self-esteem
- Create wholeness
- Families come-out too

Stigma & discrimination
Fear-informed stress
Concealment
Fear of being found out

Adapted from "Creating Inclusive Systems of Care for LGBT Youth"
HOW MIGHT A PERSON FEEL AFTER SOMEONE COMES OUT TO THEM?

Grateful

Disbelieving

Appreciated

Guilty

Scared

Angry

Shocked
Rejection and Acceptance

Acceptance

- Higher self esteem
- Closer relationship with family
- Believe they can be a healthy happy adult

Require respect
Support
Advocate
Express Affection

Rejection

- High risk for HIV and SDTs & STIs
- Use illegal drugs
- High levels of depression
- Attempted suicide
- Loss of relationships

“Separations from important, intimate caregivers, and being in relationships that are abusive, rejecting, or abandoning, contribute to feelings of hurt and pain and beliefs of being unlovable and unwanted.”

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- LGBTQ youth encounter more grief and loss than others because of their experience of rejection and discrimination from family, friends, co-workers, employers, teachers and other caregivers.

- Addressing the rejection and discrimination encountered provides space for the youth to make changes necessary to reach their goals.

- Addressing the fear of future rejection and teaching the youth how to advocate for themselves helps empower the youth.
ACTIVITY

MY LIFE SOUNDRACK

Adapted from Darla Henry’s 3-5-7 Model Workbook. (2012).
“I can honestly say I have never felt as supported as I do right now.”

“The RISE team helped me to realize I can build a “chosen family” made up of people who are supportive of me.”

“I learned that I need a support system. I was able to reconnect with my family and “come out.”

“It has been a life-changing experience that will serve me for the rest of my life.”

“If I had not gotten this help, I wouldn’t be the proud, independent, successful individual I am!”

“Working with the RISE team has been a wonderful experience; it has been difficult at times but the RISE team and case manager were able to help me develop goals which included helping me reconnect with family and finding employment opportunities.”
RISE Project Guiding Principles

- LGBTQ children belong at home with their family and in their community.

- Families love their children and want the best for them.

- Family’s culture must be acknowledged and honored.

- Strong, accepting communities empower strong, accepting families.
All young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential.

-Harvey Milk