

Development and three-year pilot of an evidence-informed mental health promotion program for LGBT2Q+ youth

Dr. Claire Crooks
Associate Professor and Director,
Centre for School Mental Health,
Western University
ccrooks@uwo.ca

Dr. Alicia Lapointe
Research Associate, Centre for School
Mental Health, Western University
alapoint@uwo.ca
[@alapoint13](https://twitter.com/alapoint13)

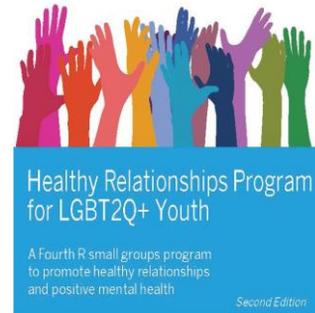


The Fourth R
Strategies for Healthy
Youth Relationships

1

Agenda

- Impetus for Program
- Program Development and Focus
- Program Overview
- Program Delivery and Evaluation
- Results
- Future Directions



Written by:
Alicia Lapointe
Janey Krusem
Sandra Strickland
Debbie Twamley
Claire Crooks
Susan Dale
Ray Higgins

Copyright © The University of Western Ontario, 2017

2

Impetus for Program

- Schools are oppressive places for LGBT2Q+ youth
(Taylor et al., 2011)



- Prejudice, discrimination, and stigma are strongly linked to mental health concerns and substance abuse among sexual and gender minority youth

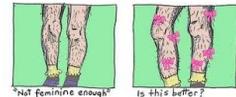
(Lowry, Johns, Gordon, Austin, Robin, & Kann, 2018; Padilla, Crisp, & Rew, 2010; Russell & Fish, 2016; Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, Card, & Russell, 2013)

- School-based programs “...have the potential to address the unique stressors that place LGBTQ youth at risk within the same ecological system where these stressors are frequently encountered”

(Heck, 2015, p. 2)

3

Impetus for Program



- Mental distress is associated with Gender Nonconformity (GNC) among female and male students
- Substance use is strongly associated with GNC among male students
- Finding highlight the importance of implementing school-based programs that embrace gender diversity to prevent substance use and promote student mental health

Lowry, Johns, Gordon, Austin, Robin, & Kann, (2018). Nonconforming Gender Expression and Associated Mental Distress and Substance Use Among High School Students. *JAMA Pediatrics*. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2018.2140

4



LGBT2Q+ Youth Programming

- **GSA**s are relevant venues to **reach LGBT2Q+ youth** and deliver mental health promotion programs
(Heck, 2015; Lapointe, Dunlop, & Crooks, 2018)
- GSAs should offer **structured programming** (e.g., guided questions) to encourage LGBT2Q+ youth to cope with victimization in healthy ways
(Poteat, Heck, Yoshikawa, & Calzo, 2017)

5

HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth

Program Development

- Adapted from the Healthy Relationship Plus Program (HRPP)
 - Evidence-informed, small group universal prevention program



Program Focus

- Affirms, validates, and celebrates LGBT2Q+ identities, expressions, and experiences
- Builds a caring and supportive community
- Explores stressors unique to LGBT2Q+ youth
- Promotes healthy coping strategies
- Encourages student-led dialogue



6

HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth (2nd ed.)

SESSION 1: I HAVE A VOICE: Introduction to the Program

SESSION 2: MINE TO NAME: Identities/Ways of Being

SESSION 3: RECOGNIZE AND RESPECT: Values and Boundaries

SESSION 4: MY JOURNEY: Coming Out

SESSION 5: MY MIND MATTERS: Mental Health and Well-Being (Part 1)

SESSION 6: MY MIND MATTERS: Mental Health and Well-Being (Part 2)

SESSION 7: THINKING AHEAD: Making Safer Choices About Substance Use

SESSION 8: I BELONG: Communities and Connections

SESSION 9: MY SUPER-POWER: Coping with Challenges

SESSION 10: WE ALL HAVE A SAY: Rights/Responsibilities/Consent

SESSION 11: MY VOICE, YOUR VOICE: Active Listening and Communication

SESSION 12: RIGHT AND TRUE: Communication Styles

SESSION 13: WORDS AND ACTIONS: Communicating Through Conflict

SESSION 14: SHIPS: Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

SESSION 15: (RE)BUILDING TIES: Addressing Relationship Violence

SESSION 16: MY SAFETY: Exits and Safety Plans

SESSION 17: ALLIES: Being There for Others

SESSION 18: CONCLUDING CIRCLE: Share and Celebrate

7

Session #2

MINE TO NAME:

IDENTITIES/WAYS OF BEING



Affirmation: MY IDENTITY IS REAL, VALID, AND MINE TO NAME

Skill: I am aware of the many identities/ways of being, and expressions in communities

Practice: Reflecting on my ways of being

8

Session #4

MY JOURNEY: COMING OUT



Affirmation: MY JOURNEY, MY WAY, MY TIME

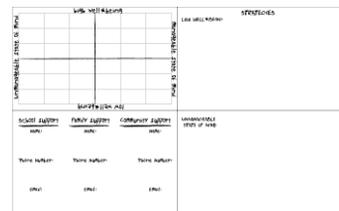
Skill: Recognize that coming out is a process that looks and feels different to different people

Practice: Creating your own coming out affirmation

9

Session #5

MY MIND MATTERS: MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Affirmation: I AM NOT STUCK; MENTAL HEALTH CAN CHANGE OVER TIME

Skill: I understand that mental health exists on a grid and I can identify and access supports that can help me

Practice: Locating your mental health on the mental health grid; learning about mental health resources in my community

10

Session #12

RIGHT AND TRUE: COMMUNICATION STYLES



Affirmation: I have the communication tools to do what is right and true for me

Skill: I know different communication styles for dealing with difficult situations

Practice: Using the assertive communication style in low-pressure situations

11

Communication Styles Video

Passive, Assertive, and Aggressive

- Student asks a teacher not to use the name on the attendance



12

Session #13



WORDS AND ACTIONS:

COMMUNICATING THROUGH CONFLICT

Affirmation: My words and actions can help me in any situation

Skill: I am able to choose a communication skill based on the situation I am in

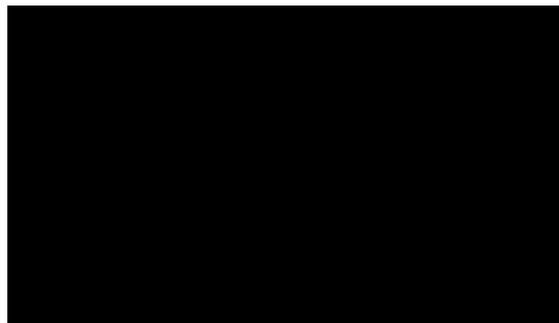
Practice: Using communication skills to delay, negotiate, and refuse based on personal values, boundaries, and circumstances

13

Conflict Resolution Skills Video

Delay, Negotiation, and Refusal

- Two youth ask their friend to help them get a binder back from his cousin



14

HRP for **LGBT2Q+** Youth Pilot (2016 - 2017)

Facilitator Training

- 1 day (mental health and well-being, LGBT2Q+ content, program overview)
 - N=11

Program Delivery

- 8 public high school GSAs
- 1 social/support group for LGBTQ+ Youth

Program Evaluation

- Facilitator focus group (n=1)
 - N=8 educators
- Youth focus group (n=6)
 - N=16 youth



15

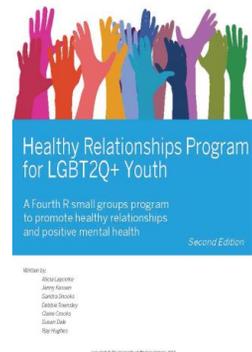
Results

Facilitators

- Structure
- Focus

Youth

- Topics and discussions
- Exploration and affirmation
- Share and learn
- Coping strategies



16

Facilitators' Experiences with the HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth

Structure and Focus



"I found it **very easy to follow** – the sessions are all organized very clearly and the **sample responses** are helpful as well."

"I loved how everything was framed in the program and so thoughtfully done...I loved having positive affirmations at the end [of sessions] and a sense of closure. I loved it. I think the kids in my group loved it...just those **positive affirmations** at the end...the **guiding questions**, having **established rules**. I thought it was all really incredibly wonderful and **I definitely think having it available for a GSA is brilliant.**"

17

**Youth's Experiences with the
HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth**

18

Results



Introducing Important Topics and Promoting In-Depth Discussions

“...I feel like the program helped to prompt some topics and guide some of the conversations; whereas...we might not have brought up the same topics...**the program sort of brought up some topics we wouldn't have considered by ourselves...it did a better job at, like, promoting topics and discussion than, like, we would have by ourselves**” (Sidney, School 2)

“I find the structure is really useful. Especially when we don't have the sessions or don't have a set thing to talk about during the meetings. We just sort of talk about our own lives. Which in some cases is good, but **I find the structure is useful and we sort of learn more things than we would just talking**” (Casey, School 1)

19

Results



Exploring and Affirming Sexual and Gender Diversity

“...I liked session two, the mine to name one, because I liked having...a space where **I could describe my own identity, and it would be valid and people wouldn't be like, 'that's not real'** (Sidney, School 2)

“**I think I discovered a little more of myself. You know, I started kind of realizing, 'Hey, like, maybe there's more to gender for me, personally...kind of like figuring out who I am...**because, you know, when you talk about...the spectrum and, you know, where you can fit...I was kind of imagining in my head and I was like, 'hey, this kind of make sense'...just helping me personally with things like that” (Cori, School 2)

20

Results



Sharing with and Learning From Peers

“...[the program] kind of gives us a way to **talk to each other and share opinions...**” (Jean, School 4)

“...the coming out lesson got us all talking and maybe learning more about each other and our situations at home, which **led to better support systems**” (Harley, School 5)

21

Results



Developing Coping Strategies

“Like honestly, it’s all stuff to help you in life...it’s to help you be...a stronger person...it was all...really good to see, like, different ways of coping and dealing with stuff” (Jesse, School 6)

“I mean some of [the sessions] got heated ‘cause we’d get talking about our family and then the rage would appear...But **we did...get to talk about like, ‘oh, how should I handle my peers doing this?’ ‘How should I handle my family doing this?’ How should I handle my partner doing this?’**” (Cass, School 5)

22

Future Directions

- Scaling-up
- Continuing evaluation
- Ongoing updates



23

Poster, Overview, and FAQ

- <https://youthrelationships.org/hrpp>



The Fourth R
Strategies for Healthy
Youth Relationships

Healthy Relationships Program for LGBT2Q+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Two-Spirit, Queer/Questioning) Youth - an adapted version of HRPP, appropriate for gender, sexual, and romantic minority youth.



- [Program Poster](#)
- [Program Overview](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)



24

Publications

Published

Lapointe, A., & Crooks, C. V. (2018). GSA members' experiences with a structured program to promote well-being. *Journal of LGBT Youth*. doi:
[10.1080/19361653.2018.1479672](https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2018.1479672)

Accepted

Lapointe, A., Dunlop, C., Crooks, C. V. (2018). Feasibility and fit of a mental health promotion program for LGBTQ+ youth. Manuscript accepted for publication in the *Journal of Youth Development*.

In Preparation

Lapointe, A., & Crooks, C. V. (2018). Supports and strategies suggested by educators to enhance the delivery of a mental health promotion program offered in GSAs.

25

Questions



26