

AUCD-Sex Talk For Self-Advocates #6  
Tuesday, December 3, 2019  
2:00-3:30pm  
Remote CART Captioning

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>> Anna: Hello and welcome to sex talk for self advocates webinar number six. I'm the resource and dissemination manager here at AUCD. Before we begin, I would like to address a few logistical details. Following the speakers' presentations, there will be time for questions. You can submit questions at any time during the presentation in the chat box. You may send a question to the whole audience or just to the presenters. We may not be able to address every question or combine some questions. The webinar is being recorded and will be available on AUCD's website following the event. There will be a short survey at the close of the webinar. We encourage you to provide answers to the survey. Julie?

>> Julie Atkinson: Thank you, Anna. I am the co-chair for the AUCD's sexual health special interest group and one of our goals is to connect individuals and researchers, professionals with information and resources. This self talk for self advocate series has been going on for the past year, year and a half. It has been a great series. We collected questions from individuals about relationships and sexuality and have turned that into a fantastic educational opportunity. This is our sixth webinar and we are looking forward to our conversation as we discuss LGBTQ+ relationships. I'm excited to introduce our panelist speakers and educators and today it is a little bit different. We've invited our sex ed caters invited individuals to come and speak about their experience and answer the questions that have been submitted.

Our first panelist is max Barrows. He is the outreach director for self advocates and has been in that position since 2007. He mentors youth and adults with developmental disabilities to speak up for themselves. Their team assists state and local organizations across the nation. In his work, he advances the message that when you meet an individual with a disability, presumes confidence. He invited a few people and you will meet who he invited today.

Next, is Katherine McLaughlin and she trains parents and staff on sexuality and developmental disabilities and trains them to become peer sexuality educators hearse. She is an author of an agency and a school curriculum for those with developmental disabilities, one for your parents,

talking to your kids and you can contact Katherine at her e-mail on the screen.

Katherine, the folks she invited will get introduced in a few minutes.

Erica Thomas is our last sexuality educator and she is the education and outreach specialist in Washington, D.C. She previously was at the Georgetown UCED and she mentors future DSPs. She delivers one-on-one coaching sessions with developmental disabilities on an array of wellness topics. She implements education sections, including health relationships, a community safety for people with disabilities and support teams. She enjoys traveling the world and spending time her new baby boy. So before we get to our speakers and into the topic itself, just a few housekeeping items, throughout the webinar today and throughout the series, we tried to make sure we're using person first language and as we're reading questions from participants, we are using their own words and the way it is written and that we're using medical accurate terminology. There is other way to address all of these, but that is the way we structured it for the series.

Certainly, relationships in sexuality are personal topics, and as you're watching the webinar today, if anything comes up and it invokes previous memories of something maybe bad happened, seasonally, you're not alone and I would encourage you to reach out and the number you can call is the crisis care center and it is on the screen right now and we will add it to the chat box so everyone can see it. Later on, if you need to access this number, it will be in the chat box. You know there are people there who you can talk to and will help you.

How to use the chat box, at the bottom of your screen, you're going to see the little bubble with the three dots and you want to click on that and will open up the chat box and you will be able to see questions or comments from participants. If you have a question as we are going throughout, we'll do question and answer at the end of the webinar, you can add the questions to the chat box right now or as we go throughout the webinar. If you would like to send a private message where it does not go to anywhere, you can Sunday it directly to a Tanisha Clark. It would not be tied to anyone to maintain your anonymity. She just put that first one in the chat box, so that is how you can just click on her name and send a private message to her.

How this webinar is going to work, I'm going to turn it over to our educators in this next minute and they will go through introductions with our guest speakers and we'll go through about the next hour talking about these different topics and questions that have been submitted and at the very end, we will reserve 15 minutes to do question and answer and talk about resources and things like that. With that -- one last slide, this, as I mentioned is an ongoing webinar series, so five other webinars have already occurred on a variety of topics, relationships, sex and intimacy, sexually transmitted infections, relationship experiences and birth control. They are all recorded and if you want to go back and watch them, you can click on the links if you want to access the previously recorded webinars we have done. With that, I'm going to stop sharing my screen and turn it over to Katherine McLaughlin who will get us started with our panel.

>> Katherine McLaughlin: Great. Thank you. There are many people who are LGBTQ who talk about how they feel invisible during sexual education classes. Although, we have threaded

this topic over the last four or five, we wanted to do one just on this topic, so people can learn about this community and not feel invisible as well.

So we have five panelists who have disabilities and identify, in some way with this community and this population, so we're going to have each of them introduce themselves first, so Raisin, do you mind starting and this is just your name, where you live, your preferred pronoun and how you identify and any of these things you can leave out, you don't have to answer any of this, so name, where you live, your preferred pronoun and how you identify.

>> OK, I'm from Arlington, Virginia. My pronouns are she, her, and hers, although people have used they with me and that is fine. It kind of makes sense. I identify as queer. I'm also autistic, I use first language when I talk about myself.

>> So glad you're here. Thank you.

>> Glad to be here.

>> I think Angel is on now. Angel? You have to un-mute.

>> Angel: There we go. Yes, I am on now.

>> Katherine McLaughlin. : You are on. A little louder.

>> Angel: Hold on a second. Hold on one moment. Technical difficulty.

>> Katherine McLaughlin: Do you want us to come back to you? Angel, why don't I have other people introduce themselves while you get situated? OK, all right.

>> Angel: Can you hear me at all?

>> Yep, talk really loud.

>> Angel: My preferred pronouns, she, her, and hers.

>> Where do you live?

>> I'm in Lansing, Michigan.

>> How do you identify?

>> I identify as female.

>> I heard female and that is it.

>> Anything with LGB?

>> Yeah, I identify as pans sexual.

>> OK, great. We'll talk about that, too.

>> How about Andy? Can you introduce yourself?

>> Andy: Hi, everyone. How is everybody? My name is Andy and I'm from D.C. now, but I'm in L.A. where my home is. I am a gay male and my pronouns are him, him, and he.

>> Great, thank you. Glad you're here. And then Thomas and then we'll hear from Pauline. Thomas?

>> Hi, this is Erica. Thomas had difficulties getting here, so Thomas is not going to make it.

>> Pauline, I know you're on because I heard your voice earlier. Can you introduce yourself?

>> Pauline: Hi, I'm Pauline and I identify as female. I am transgender and I live in the wonderful state of Massachusetts and I am the director and founder of the rainbow support group for people with disabilities in Massachusetts.

>> Great and your preferred pronoun?

>> Pauline: She.

>> Great, thank you all. So we're going to talk about some definitions, but also the panel can jump in on any of this as well, if you can show Julie the gender unicorn, you may familiar with this. Just to give you some definitions and people can talk more about the definitions, but there is a man from Vermont, his name is Thomas, not Thomas that couldn't attend, but he has done great work around these definitions and I believe we are going to get the definitions that he has come up with to you. He has a disability and is a gay man.

The first thing is gender identity, which is how somebody feels inside and they might feel they are a male or a man or female or woman or a combination of the two or neither as well, so we're hearing more from people about how they identify and that is part of the preferred pronouns because it helps people understand how people want to be referred to. We'll talk more about these things. So that is gender identity and you see that on the unicorn. The unicorn is thinking this, right, how do feel? This starts for people at age 3 or 4 feeling their gender identity.

Gender expression, I like what Thomas came up with for gender expression, he said have you thought about getting a new haircut? Do you like shopping for new clothes?

People express themselves in different ways. Try not to guess a person's gender or pronoun by the way they look. You can see the unicorn and that is the dotted green, it is how you express yourself and your gender, so it is kind of the hair, the way you act, all of that is expression.

So then the sex assigned at birth, so we look at the sexual parts and we assign gender and we don't know if that is going to match up all of the time. Some are suggesting that we wait until people are 3 or 4 and not assign a gender when we don't know. That is the biology, we use biology to talk about gender, but it is more about how a person feels inside than what their body parts are. So that is gender identity, gender expression and identity and sexually orientation. We think if a man carries a purse, we think he is gay, but we don't know if he is gay. He is expressing his gender in a way that we may not think of for males in our culture, maybe in other countries males carry purses all of the time, but we get them confused. Gender identity is who the person is and sexually orientation is who the person is attracted to, who do they like, love, and lust.

All right, so we have a couple of questions and I would love the panel to jump in now, so this was a quote that someone put on the survey when we asked questions and it said, it is important to hear from self advocates and LGBTQA disabilities peoples who are experts instead of university staff, absolutely, so people who live the experience. To the panel, why is it important to hear from self advocates who identify as LGBTQ+? Anybody want to start?

>> Andy: So I think it is really important for people and I'm sorry, this is Andy if people can't see me. I should announce myself. For people with disabilities to always be at the table, regardless what their sexual identity or orientation is. When we speak about ourselves, especially as something so intimate as orientation and sexuality, when we're being spoken to by people who may not identify as lesbian, gay, transgender or any kind of spectrum, it is really devaluing, I think. I heard a speaker early on in my advocacy career when she was talking about how she did all of this work in the LGBTQ community and I was just starting my community disability groups and I was so excited about meeting another disability person. The way she was speaking, it was her lived experience and she is like, no, I'm a straight woman and I was like very hurt by that because she was doing the work and, like she wasn't claiming to be an ally. She was sort of saying I'm the expert in this life and all of these topics and she wasn't LGBTQ and it was just alarming to see that was the norm and everybody looked at this person as the expert and me an LGBTQ person who lives the struggle and lived the coming out experience felt it was devaluing for myself and the audience to hear that. It still happens today, I think.

>> Katherine: Thank you, Andy. Anyone else want to jump in and talk about why it is important to hear from people in this community?

>> Raesin: I think it is important to see ourselves positively represented and I think there shouldn't be anything about us without us when people like us seeing representation, seeing themselves in other people, they are reminded they are not alone and they get to see that people can have happy, healthy lives, especially if they feel isolated and they don't see other people like them.

>> Angel: This is Angel. For me, I try to think about what it was like when I was didn't know what my sexuality was and how I was going to be portrayed and how they were going to think, so to know there is an intersexuality is really valuable.

>> Katherine: Can you say more, the intersexuality piece, what do you mean?

>> Angel: Being disabled and a member of the LGBTQ community, as well as being an African American and a woman sitting in more than one minority group.

>> Katherine: Great, thank you. I think I'm going to pass it over to Erica now. She is going to talk about terms and ask some other questions to the panel as well.

>> Erica: Thank you, if we can get the vocabulary please. All right, so I'm going to go over a few of the words that are in the LGBTQ vocabulary and I believe in the resource section at the end there are others that can be looked at as well, so when you get a minute, you can go through those.

Just before we get into the vocabulary, I just want to make sure everyone knows and understands that it is very important that we remember to respect the words that people use to describe themselves. People who identify as LGBTQ will use different terms to describe themselves and their experiences and not all of the terms fit all of the people, so these words may not fit everyone and that is fine. It is important to ask people what language they want to use, so when we asked what pronoun you would like to use and it is OK to ask someone for their preferred name and pronoun even if the pronoun does not fit on the outside. You may know someone for a long time and that person may want to be someone else or change or another letterhead or another vocabulary, so you should respect that person at all times and refer to the person with their appropriate pronouns that the person chooses. Sometimes people are not sure which identity label fits them and that is OK, too and you want to give people time and space to figure it out, you don't want to figure it out for the person, let them figure it out for themselves. The terms and language can change overtime and that is normal and perfectly OK.

With the vocabulary words we have listed here, we have L., which is lesbian, so that is a woman who is primarily attracted to women. We have gay who is a man who is attracted to other men and sometimes gay can be a word that is used just overall for someone who is attracted to the same-sex. Bisexual is someone attracted to people of their own sex and of the opposite gender. Transgender is a person whose gender identity differs from what their gender was assigned at birth, so when Katherine was talking about when you are born your genitalia is looked at and it is determined if you are male or female. Queer is a person that is an umbrella term, so it is inclusive of many identities and variations that make up the LGBTQ+ community. Questioning is someone who is questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity or gender expression. Intersect is someone's anatomy or chromosome do not fit with the general markers of male or female. An ally is a non-queer person who advocates for the queer community and individual within the LGBTQ community can be an ally as well. A-sexual does not feel an attraction to any group of people. It is not the same as celibacy and A-sexual has many subgroups and pan sexual is someone who experiences physical attractions of all gender identities and expressions and not just people who fit into the standard status quo. With that being said, I'm going over the vocabulary. A quote was shared within our community when we were gathering questions and someone said there should be more stuff on LGBTQIA stuff, so I would like to ask, is there enough on LGBTQ+ relationships and disability?

>> Angel: Intersexuality wise -- can you hear me? Can you hear me?

>> Yes, we can hear you.

>> Angel: OK, as far as the intersexuality between disability and sexuality, I find there is not a lot of information on being both and sometimes being all, so sometimes, I remember when I first discovered my sexuality I was feeling very alone, because it was like do I need to add one more thing to an already complicated life with me being disabled/woman, do I need to add another minority to this mix? But, realizing it is not a choice and even for disabilities, it is not a choice, like, even if -- sometimes -- you can say it is not a choice, but you get those comments like, you're already disabled, do you have to be gay, too? I get a lot of comments like you're already disabled, do you have to be LGBT, too? It is like, yes, yes, I do.

>> Andy: So I have a similar sort of experience to Angel. You know it was very difficult to accept my LGBTQ and disability and it was only when I accepted it wholeheartedly like this is the person you're meant to be, because I had to wrap that around my spirituality, the fact I'm a Christian and that I held high and in both communities, being disabled and being gay is like, you need to be healed from both of those things because that is not what God wants for you. This is how God made me. This is what I know to be true in my heart and who I am and I always joke with my friends and I say I have gay face. It is a joke within my gay male friends, you know, like, it is like if that is the truth then this is who I am and I'm going to live in my truth.

As far as resources, there's not enough when we talk about intersexuality, we usually pick the one thing, right? If we're going to be intersectional, we're going to talk about disability. If we're going to be intersectional, we're going to talk about LGBTQ, if we're going to be intersectional, we talk about people of color and I am all of those things. I feel I have to choose which person do I need to highlight the most, because how are people going to hear me, right? I'm talking to predominantly people of faith or color, I have to choose, if I am talking to a LGBTQ group, I talk to that. I never felt a full acknowledgment of my full self. When I do public speaking, I have to compartmentalize and for the future of this work, I think we have to look at accepting somebody in all their facets and not just picking the pieces that we want to hear from them because it really makes it so of a mind -- like it tweaks with the mind a little bit, especially me emotionally when I have to take so many different pieces depending on who I'm addressing, so yeah that is my experience.

>> Erica: Pauline, do you have anything you want to add about resources and if there is enough information out there on LGBTQ relationships and disability?

>> Pauline: I would like to add in my time, as long as I have been doing this, I have had to come up with my own resources and come up with things to help me with my dad, because it is not easy. Not everybody wants to talk about it, not everyone everybody wants to understand it, but I turn around and say, well, it is needed and only because of me here in Massachusetts, I'm getting the developmental service here in Massachusetts. They are the ones that are funding me to go out and do trainings and go out and do this because they are saying, like hey, someone needs to go out and talk about this, so I'm creating the stuff here in Massachusetts

as I'm going along. It hasn't been easy, so.

>> Erica: Thank you, Pauline. Raesin, did you want to add anything?

>> Raesin: Yeah, I think it is important to have things like this so we can be visible because it is not in the realm of possibility that people with disabilities want romantic relationships or sexual people and until people start realizing that is very much the case, we're not going to be on their radar enough unless we elbow our way in, so I appreciate being able to do that here.

>> Erica: Thank you. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm hearing, as far as resources and information, there is not a lot out there and if there are resources, I'm hearing from Pauline, she is the person who is developing resources and she is talking to people. I know Andy in D.C. is going out and spreading the word to everyone, too. For the resources that may be available, do you all have any idea how to access them or any resources that you want to briefly tell us about that are available?

>> Pauline: This is Pauline. For me, the biggest resource that I came across was the resource of GLAAD, which is out of Boston. They don't have anything for people with disabilities, but they have a wide variety of material that I have used or I have helped or, you know, use for my groups or whatever like that, but other than that, I mean, I don't think there are many resources.

>> Andy: I will go briefly, so like many on the call, I feel like I had to develop and sort of archive my own resources. I started several community groups and advocacy groups with both seniors and people with disabilities around LGBTQ and disability and there is a need out there, because when I have the community groups, we would start with five and it would end up being 30. I feel like -- I always went to the gay and lesbian center as the hub and they would always go like, oh, my gosh, this is so innovative, this is so amazing. I would be like, no, is it no. These are people who have been here and you're just because I'm forcing my way through, you're allowing us to be at this table.

I think the gay LGBTQIA community needs to recognize us as part of their community, right. I think they -- I'm sorry, LGBTQ brothers and sisters, sometimes they can be the most segregating community because we don't fit into their visual norm, I guess, and I had these discussions with directors of centers and media individuals in GLAAD where they are like, yeah, there is a lot of unconscious bias even a little bit of racism and different things and ableism is prevalent in that community. I push them a lot to recognize us and the need that we need a space for us in their community.

>> Erica: Thank you, Andy. Anyone else, Raesin, want to add? OK, what resources do you want to see? So in a perfect world, what would you want to see?

>> Angel: For me, I would I'm glad to see there is more media representation of people with disabilities in the media and we do have some representation of people with disabilities that are a part of the LGBTQ community. Netflix just created a television show called "Special" that is about a gay man who has cerebral palsy. Media representation is important because a lot of



people watch TV and they watch Youtube and they watch the media and listen to the radio. I know for a long time, I didn't find anyone who had a disability on TV and if I did, it was a wild thing, you know, but I think that is changing.

The other thing I would like to see is just people acknowledging that people with disabilities are still beings and have sexuality and can and want and need the same thing as everybody else. I don't think they have that message in schools, I think you need to teach kids young that classmate of yours is just like everybody else. When I was growing up, it was we were friends, but as you're growing up and you're becoming a human, you don't see a lot of people wanting to start relationships, they look at the chair and say I can't be with her or they look at aspects or they couldn't want a relationship anyway. It doesn't matter. I would like to see resources just kind of more action when your talking to preteens and early teenagers about sexuality and equality and making sure they know their disabled classmates is not that different from them.

>> Erica: Anyone else, what resources would you like to see?

>> Pauline: This is Pauline. Go Andy.

>> Andy: I wanted you to go. I feel like I'm talking too much. You go ahead.

>> Pauline: I will go. One of the ideas I think should be happening is there should be more address on the Internet, more information building up because I think the Internet is really a key part and almost people with disabilities don't know how to use the Internet, but we're learning gradually. I think if we can have more websites or more information on the Internet it would help a lot.

>> Andy: So just to say I agree with everything that has been said previously and I do this media is the key and marketing and just advertising for LGBTQ disability at the same time within that community. Maybe you know I'm an actor as well and I was acting in Los Angeles for years before I decided to work in policy in D.C. and one of the reasons I switched jobs so easily is because casting directors were telling me to be less gay or telling me to be more disabled. They did not want to see all of this at one time. My friend Ryan got a special, but he and I were having the conversation and he said it is a very white show. It is a -- my experience, social safety net, privileged view of disability and LGBTQ. My experience with that was not that nice. It was hard for me to date. It is hard for me to date now. I've been in relationships, thank goodness, that have been fostering and loving and caring, but you think about this swipe right mentality and you're always debating, am I going to tell this person I have a disability? Am I going to put it in my profile? Am I not? It is very, again, it chips away at the self esteem a little bit and you have to have a thick skin to deal with that level of rejection as the only way to think about it, because people who aren't disabled have trouble recognizing that people with disabilities are sexual individuals, are able to have relationships and meaningful connections, so the media is the only key. When you talk about media, you also have to talk about the intersectionality of different cultures and different experiences while you're talking about disability and LGBTQ.

>> Julie Atkinson: Go ahead, Max.

>> Max: I don't know why there was a silence there, but I am Max. My question -- here is -- say that again? Did somebody say something?

>> Erica: My connection might be a little off. Max take it away.

>> Max: Here is another question from self advocates and they asked, how do you know you are LGBTQ and now before you answer, panelists, I want to share a few thoughts I came up with a good colleague of mine who also identifies as -- who identifies LGBTQ+. If you are having sexual thoughts or feelings, do not be ashamed, do not keep them inside. Find a healthy way to let those feelings out and talk about them. For some, it may be hard to come out as something different. You may feel alone. It may be hard to understand and talk about your sexual feelings. Discovering your LGBTQ sounds similar when I discovered I have autism. In both situations, I would recommend taking the time to consider who you are comfortable talking to. When coming out or questioning your sexual orientation, it helps to think about who are the people you trust the most. If you are feeling confused about your sexuality, feel open to talk with someone you trust. Keeping feelings inside and not talking about them can be hard, finding people I could open -- I could feel open and safe talking about autism was so liberating. Having other people accept me as a person with autism made me feel more secure and comfortable with myself. OK, back to the question asked my self advocates, how do you know you are LGBTQ and I'm going start out with this question to Pauline.

>> Pauline: How did I know? I knew at the age of 5 or 6 years old that was something different about me. I did not feel right wearing boys clothes. I grew up in a very small country town, very small. I never felt comfortable. It wasn't until when I was about 10 years old, I tried on one of my sister's bathing suits and that is when I found out I was trans. I didn't know what the word was until I watched Phil Donahue when he had the first transgender person on television that is how I found that out. It was very interesting because I said that is the way I feel and that is when I figured it out.

>> Max: Cool, how about Angel?

>> Angel: Sorry about that. I was having technical difficulties and I wasn't able to hear.

>> Max: So the question is -- sorry.

>> Angel: Hold on. Come back to me.

>> Max: OK, let's move on to Raesin.

>> Raesin: OK, it took me a while to figure it out. I started dating in college and I was dating guys. I just thought it is not the right guy for me until I met the first girl I had a crush on. I didn't date that girl, but I knew I was interested in her, like too interested, not too interested, but interested in a way that was not -- wasn't just about friendship and that is how I figured it out and from that point forward, a lot more things started making sense. I didn't fight it and I told my parents within two months and the rest is history.

>> Max: Nice. How about Andy? Is Andy still on?

>> Katherine: He is on mute.

>> Andy: Can you hear me now?

>> Max: Yes.

>> Andy: Sorry about that. My fingers were not helping me. I'm going to be real because I know this is a national webinar and I want to get as much as possible. It took me a while to realize that I was really gay. I experienced, like many people in the LGBTQ community, I experienced sexual abuse when I was younger in the foster care system, so I was confused if I was gay or not. I feel like a lot of people go through something like that in their life. They may not be in the LGBTQ arena, but I want to draw attention to going through something like that and being LGBTQ is separate and different and it took me a minute to realize that I felt these real feelings at 4 or 5, but the instance happened and I put them on pause because I didn't think they were real. About the age of 14, I started to feel like this is who I am really am and it has nothing to do with the previous experience, so I just did take me a minute being OK with dating men and being intimate with men because of previous experience. I know that happens in these communities and I think that the more we share these stories, the more important it is.

>> Angel: I can tell you, Andy, I got a similar experience and I still today get a lot of questions from people who know about my history of abuse, I get a lot of questions, are you sure you're really LGBTQ, stop asking me that. It almost makes me angry. Be a little mad because people are like you're discounting this part of my life. There's a complete difference between the two.

>> Andy: Right, a lot of people -- it is hard for them to reconcile it within themselves and when people start questioning it as legitimacy because that happened to me when I was in foster care. They are like, oh, no, it is only because of what happened to you and you feel that way and they are not real feelings. I completely agree and thank you for sharing that as well.

>> Max: Thank you boat. Angel, did you have anything else to share, because I skipped over you because you had technical difficulties, besides what you just said?

>> Angel: I grew up in a household that told me being gay was wrong, but I grew up in a household that diminished me because I had a disability. I didn't come out until I was 22 and I was angry at myself for a long time for being gay though I remember that's not -- it is not a choice anymore than having C. P. is a choice. I have C. P. that's not a choice. I am LGBT, also not a choice. Also, you have a tendency when you are coming out, it did diminish part of it. I did not want to come outing a being sexual. I will just be gay that is fine that is bettering that been weird and pan sexual, right? People don't understand that. So for a while I discounted all parts of my sexuality because it took me a minute to figure out what was happening and to have other people questioning it all of the time as well as being discounted because I have a disability, it was a lot. I think we almost needs a it gets better campaign for the intersectionality between disability and LGBTQ.

>> Max: Thank you for sharing that and thank you all for sharing your answers. Turning it over to, I think Katherine, you're next with the next question.

>> Katherine: Yeah, and just to say what Angel said, it gets better campaign or it is like Youtube. People are telling their stories around coming out and being gay and to have it more focused on disability and LGBTQ, your own campaign is a great idea.

So the question was, what do people need to know to support people who are LGBTQ+ and maybe it is self advocate or someone with a disability or staff person, what support is needed when someone says I want to be in a relationship and it might be a gay relationship or I want to transition from female to male, how can allies be supportive and others be supportive? Raesin, you want to go first?

>> Raesin: Sure, I would say be supportive, listen. Don't try to convince someone that they are not who they say they are, take them at their word. If you are LGBTQ+ or not, it is important to encourage healthy friendships and healthy relationships above everything else. It is helpful for people who are new to dating. It is good for people to share scripts of what to say if they are on a date and they no longer want to be on the date or they are in a position where they have to negotiate their way out of something they don't like. I think it can happen where if you're in a family where it is not acceptable to be LGBTQ, you can't ask your mom or dad or some other family member, what happens if this date goes left, what do I say because they don't want to have the conversation with you, so I think finding a resource that way is helpful.

>> Angel: It is also important to nurture the fact that everyone wants a relationship. Even without being LGBTQ, a disabled person mentions a relationship and abled people and staff go, no, we don't talk about that. No, we do talk about it and we need to talk about it appropriately, so by telling them not to talk about it doesn't help anything. It makes them feel like they are not allowed to have a relationship. I can't tell you as a peer mentor, I talk to people who say I'm not allowed to have a relationship or I'm not allowed to do this and it is like, you know that false sense of complacency ruins more than just one aspect of your relationship there's a difference between behavior modification and just shutting someone up and so, I think it is important, particularly for the autism community, because they have so many people telling them what is appropriate and what is not appropriate. They need to know it is appropriate to have these feelings, it is normal, you're not being autistic by having sexual feelings, you're just a human. I think that's the biggest thing for everybody, whether LGBT or not, the disability community needs to know it is OK to want to have a relationship or not.

>> Katherine: Andy, did you want to say something and the other piece of the question that people asked in particular starting a support group is something that you think is helpful?

>> Andy: So I think. It takes one person, right, one person you can be yourself or your authentic self when you're starting that journey. For myself, I couldn't talk about being gay to anyone except one person and that sort of why I started when I was advocating and started a LGBTQ center in Los Angeles and now in D.C., I run these scripts because we are by community standards, I still feel invisible. It is very hard to be seen in the LGBTQ community

even when you're going out in public. People always placate and pat you on the head and say gosh, you're so brave for being out in a bar or you're so brave for doing this or you're so brave for dating and I have been out for a very long time. I have been out for over 10 years and I still deal with this on a daily basis, so I think having the community, having friends that see all of who you are regardless of who you choose to be or identify as that is so important because I still don't talk to my family about LGBTQ issues. I feel like they are not going to be supportive or thoughtful or be awake around them. They don't deserve to know those parts of me, so that is a personal choice, so again wrapping it around it just takes one person and from that one person grow your tribe.

>> Katherine: Great, thank you. Pauline?

>> Pauline: Can you hear me?

>> Katherine: Yes.

>> Pauline: So I think the important thing from what I have learned over the 15 years I have been doing this is that you have to have good people, but you also have to be able to train them to teach them the difference between a person with a disability and a person that is LGBT. One of the words I always used in my training is it was born with a disability and I'm LGBT community, but I have a double whammy. I have two things that society is going against me and I use that as my platform. I'm saying, yes, I have a disability. I'm LGBTQ. I'm transgender. I'm proud of it and I'm also educating people the difference between a person with a disability and the person that is LGBT. If you take a person with a disability and you say can you empty that trash can, yes, I can. You show them how to do something because they are going to say thank you, I can do something. The same thing when I do my speaking engagement, I do -- I say, look, just be honest and truthful. I have one guy who was part of a group. He came up to me and said what does it mean when I like somebody like me, I said like another man and he said yes, I go that means you're gay. He said thank you. I said why. He said none of his staff or support people would answer that question because they were afraid that the power of elements of service would say you influence on him that we're gay. You influence on him saying he is gay, she is a lesbian and that is the biggest issue I'm dealing here in Massachusetts is that staff people and agencies are afraid they are going to get in trouble because they influenced that person who says the words, LGBT and that is the biggest issue I'm trying to overcome right now.

>> Katherine: Thank you, Pauline. She shared with me that the rainbow group just celebrated 15 years in Massachusetts. Max, back to you.

>> Max: So panelists, could you please share your personal experience or story about identity and I will start with you Pauline.

>> Pauline: My personal story of identity is it's been a long road to figure out who I am on the inside and the outside, because the one thing I learned being transgender is a mental condition. You have to get your mind ready for little changes that might happen, if you're from male to female, like I am, you have to get used to saying things like how do you walk in heels?

How do you put on makeup? The little changes that are going to make you feel better, but it takes a long time and it has taken almost 30 years of my life of figuring out who I am and where to go and what to do and it hasn't been easy. I have had people come up to me and say you shouldn't be doing that. You shouldn't be allowed to walk out of the house like that or something like that, but I overcome it because I say, you know, I don't care. After my mother died, like 10 years ago or whatever, the rest of my family disowned me, so I have no brothers, no sisters because they didn't want to have anything to do with me, yet, I have lots of friends and people are in my circle that are supportive of me and that is all I need. As long as I have friends, I'm happy I could carry less if I don't have a brother or sister that don't want to talk to me anymore.

>> Max: Thank you for sharing that. Let's go to Angel.

>> Angel: Identity for me is a complicated concept because I'm at the intersection of so many different minorities, so during a lot of times I grew up in Detroit, so I like country music and I have a lot of Caucasian friends and my family would say you're being too white like that is a thing. They would say that and I'm like that is not a thing. You can't -- I'm not white. I can't be too white because I'm not white. It doesn't make sense to me. So when it comes to identity, figuring out that I was LGBT and finding out I was pans sexual and not just gay was an identity crisis in an of itself. Trying to figure out how I fit in an abled body world while having a disabled, while being LGBT and while being a woman and being sexually abused, I was full of identity crisis. I think as time goes on, a lot of therapy, talk therapy and kind of just being OK to be me and finding out that people accept me and not listening to my family. Like she said, I was just trying to -- I went home this weekend and I went back to Detroit this weekend and my family thinks they can tell me what they can do, mostly because I can't walk. I had to inform that is not case. I think identity is something you have to -- it comes when you decide to be you regardless of what society says or your parents say or you know your friends say, you have to decide to be you every single day. I don't have the luxury of hiding any parts of myself and neither does anybody because hiding anything will eat at everybody's soul.

>> Max: Thank you so much for sharing that. How about Raesin?

>> Raesin: What is the question again, the identity and how it came to be?

>> Max: The question is, if you could please share your personal experience or story about identity.

>> Raesin: I have intersectionality to deal with, I'm black and I'm queer and that has been the defining experience that trumps everything else, but it brought a resilience that made it easy for me to tell people I'm queer and I'm autistic. I bring all three. Everywhere I go I tell everybody and I don't know how to do it any other way. Any time I might hide anything is when I feel like I might be in physical danger, but thankfully that is rare as far as people's reactions, good and bad, but people talked about the importance of just surrounding by your chosen family. I have lost biological family over being out and it is OK, because the last thing I wanted at my wedding was someone frowning at me, so it was a happy day.

>> Max: That is honest. Thank you very much for sharing. Andy?

>> Andy: Can you hear me?

>> Max: Yes, I can.

>> Andy: Perfect. Like many on the webinar, I feel the same, you know we're all intersectionally sort of connected, which is great. I kind of want to continue the conversation with all of the panelists after this webinar, but I feel like coming out as LGBTQ, of course, I had my disability first, but I didn't want to be disabled and queer. When I figured out that is what I was, I was angry at life because I figured I had gay friends and they were really shallow and I'm like I don't want to be that person. I don't want to be alone at, you know, my late 20's, early 30's or 40's. I was going out to bars and I don't want to be this person, so even now, I get told I dress too feminine and people assume I want to transition, but I'm not able -- like I'm too gay for being me, right, or extra and I tell people I created a hash tag that boys can be pretty too because I am a boy and I consider myself a male. Because sometimes I dress sort of on the feminine side, people assume I want to transition and that is not my identity at all. I enjoy being a male and it is OK that I like pretty things and it is very interesting how people react to that, like someone said previously on the webinar, I do carry a purse and I have nothing wrong with that. It is a functional tool for me, but it is part of my identity as an LGBTQ disabled person. I think it is still a challenge for today when I roll into a professional setting and they are like, is that a professional person? I'm not sure because he has highlighted hair or what have you, so I think it is still a challenge today. I have accepted myself, right, and I have a tribe that accepts me, but in the disability world, in the professional world, I think it is still a challenge for many people to accept us as a visual representation of who we are and we just sort of have to overcome it on a daily, sometimes hourly basis.

>> Max: Thank you so much for sharing. So my next question, first, can I get a time check, please?

>> Julie Atkinson: We have about 10 minutes, Max. I might switch to the question and answer portion, if that is OK?

>> Max: I was wondering about that that is why I was wondering about a time check. We can go through that. Thank you.

>> Julie Atkinson: I will pull up a couple of resources that speakers and panelists shared. Katherine shared with us the gender unicorn and we will send out a recording and send out the links to these resources and it so you know it will also be coming. The gender unicorn and the human rights campaign and also there are good resources there at Twainbow and Max's, one of his friends put together this vocabulary, what words mean and that is one we will also, and Katherine read a couple of those definitions earlier as well, so we will get the links and the resources out to you at the end of the webinar, in the coming days. One last slide, just a preview before we start question and answer, of 2020, we still have a few topics within the self advocacy series that we will address. We don't have dates selected, but things to look forward to of are webinars on families, children, and parenting, marriage, and sexual self advocacy. I'm

going to put my e-mail in the chat box during questions and answers. If there are any questions you have or any questions about the webinar today, you are welcome to reach out to me. Tanisha, if you are on, I will let her guide us through the question and answer.

>> Tanisha: Hi, Julie and I'm sharing your e-mail for -- oh, wait, it looks like it linked in weirdly, I shared previous webinars in the sex talk series, but the questions we have, while first someone said thank you all to the panel. Thanks for being real in your conversations. The first question is, can you tell us if there is information somewhere that we can use to determine someone's cognitive ability to consent if that information is somewhere else or where they can find that?

>> Katherine: I can jump in here for a minute. I think Max said it earlier, presume competence unless otherwise shown, I think we have to assume that someone with a disability can consent unless we see some particular reason that we're not sure that they can. There are different assessments and things, but that's, you know, it is a little more about being in sexual relationships than specifically LGBTQ, but there is probably similarities where people are giving those messages around you can't -- how do you know you're gay? It is probably just that you're autistic, so we need to believe people when they speak up and we can share maybe other resources. You should look at your consent laws in your state as well, but there are assessments that people use, but assume competence.

>> Tanisha: What do you think we can teach parents to do differently with younger kids, as early as primary school so kids can learn to be effective self advocates for all aspects of themselves as they grow older?

>> Andy: I didn't know any could speak up or you needed to do something. I would say to parents, as your child is developing, acceptance of whatever they decide to present to you that is the key, I think to whatever your family dynamic is, if your kid comes to you and says I may be gay. I may be transgender, I may be feeling these feelings to not say no, you're not, but to always say OK, let's talk about it. Let's have a conversation and then do follow-up conversations. Don't ignore it and don't deny it because it is only going to fester and it is only going to become problematic in the future.

>> Angel: The other thing I would say is, you want to make sure your kid feels comfortable regardless if they get a college degree or if they don't. I have a friend and they went to college, but because of the trauma they faced in college with not being taken care of, not having proper physical care, they are not able to use their college degree because of the anxiety that comes with it and they always feel less than for not having a job, but they can't have a job mentally, so I think you have to be able to accept your children whether they have a disability and telling them they are less than because they can't walk or can't read or they may be dyslexic and have a wheelchair and stuff like that, but I think it is dealing with LGBT growing up, parents love to say you can tell me anything, I encourage parents to mean that when they say it. When parents tell their children, you tell me anything, no matter, I've encouraged parents to look at themselves and ask themselves, am I meaning what I say when I say that to my child?

>> Thank you. Any other thoughts? All right, the next one says, Andy broadcast up casting



directors being overwhelmed by disabilities. How do you help potential partners navigate through layers of a person's intersectionality?

>> Andy: You mean like dating partners?

>> Tanisha: I would presume so.

>> Andy: Within the last four years of the whole tinder and grinder and all of the LGBTQ apps that are out there, I made a conscious decision to put my wheelchair front and center. I have a cute little anecdote about being in a wheelchair and being gay and unicorn on wheels is how I say it and I put it front and center because I want people that could be open to disability to have the visual of it. I always had to explain what being in a wheelchair was, because when I would tell people later on after they just saw a profile of my face or whatever; I said wheelchair and therapy thinking, oh, my goodness. How do you move? You're paralyzed. Does everything work? I did a Youtube video and I said my name is Andy. I'm in a wheelchair and this is what it means and I put on my dating profile. I don't want explain to people what CP is and how my body works, but I do put a photo of my disability within that dating profile, so people know, yes, I'm in a wheelchair and you're either going to accept it or you're not. If you're not or you're not open to it, I don't want to have a conversation with you. You don't belong in my world, so I think our ownership of who we are physically and whatever capacity that is so important and just be open and honest with our partners about what our body can do and what it can't do because I can tell you when it comes to the intimate parts of my life, my body is different and somebody needs to be along for that ride and if they are not, then they are not my match.

>> Angel: I do that in all aspects of my life. There is zero point in me hiding my disability. I did it in a job interview. I don't skate by oh, they don't have to ask about that, they can't ask about it, no, but I can tell them about it. There is no point in hiding it when you have a physical disability. I find there is no point in hiding it when you don't have a physical disability. There is something that someone needs to know about you in order to better assist you in being supportive, whether to be an employer or -- makes you a better employer or better partner or a bird kid or better sister then you need to tell them what your struggles are so they can help you.

>> Julie Atkinson: Thank you, Angel and Andy, Raesin and Pauline thank you for being here and to have the conversation and Max. It is one that is important and one we've been looking forward to.

>> Max: I want to thank all of the panelists and answering questions that we had for them. We had good answers, which I learned from. I want to thank all of you as well.

>> Julie Atkinson: I did put a link in the chat box for survey evaluation of today's webinar. We would love to hear from you about your experience today and a huge thank you to all of those who helped participate and make this happen. We will be getting the recording out and the resources and if you have any questions or questions that were not answered, feel free to e-mail me and I would be more than happy to connect with our panelists and speakers to get

those questions answers. So thank you for your time and participating in our webinar today.

>> Max: Did we miss saying thank you to another panelist, I thought there was four people.

>> Julie Atkinson: Did I get everybody.

>> Katherine: You got it.

>> Max: All right. Have a good day, everybody.