

LDS & LGBTQ+ Support: For Leaders

As a leader in The Church of Jesus Christ of Later-day Saints, it may seem difficult to show love and support for LGBTQ+ individuals while keeping Church guidelines and policies. This guide, and the accompanying video on tjcounseling.com/videos, was created to help you in that goal.

The Church's website* (quoted in *italics*) can provide more information, and help clarify current official church positions. Although there are many questions we don't have answers to, and many things we cannot control, as church leaders and members we can always strive to make our wards a safe, stable, and welcoming spiritual home for our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters.

Things to avoid:

- ◆ **"Next life" comfort.** The church has no official doctrine regarding LGBTQ+ people in the next life, and suggesting things will be different after this life can increase suicidal thinking.
- ◆ **Causes** - *"The Church does not take a position on the cause of same-sex attraction."* Speculating on causes leads to further shame for the individual.
- ◆ **Cures** - Suggesting "cures" implies the individual is broken and needs fixing. *"A change in attraction should not be expected or demanded as an outcome by parents or leaders."*
- ◆ **"Sign of the last days" or "attack on family"** - These statements severely hurt the already vulnerable LGBTQ+ individual, and are not official church doctrine.
- ◆ **Inappropriate questions** - If a question/conversation would be too personal or cross a line with a straight/cisgender person, it is probably also inappropriate to ask an LGBTQ+ person.
- ◆ **Comparisons** - Well-intended leaders often use comparisons to handicaps/addictions/older single sisters to try and provide hope. But these comparisons are inaccurate and often feel dismissive.

Things to do:

- ◆ **Ask and listen** - simply get to know their life, their experiences, etc, with no expectations.
- ◆ **Clarify church desires** - some may want full church activity, others no. Meet them where they are.
- ◆ **Communicate Love** - remind them specifically of both their Heavenly Parents' and your love for them, and clarify that this love is regardless of church activity or different life choices.
- ◆ **Mirror language** - Use the same terms/labels as they are choosing to use.
- ◆ **Stand up for inclusion** in your wards or lessons by openly discouraging language/comments that are exclusive or attacking of LGBTQ+ people.

Mental Health

Being LGBTQ+ is not a mental health condition. However, LGBTQ+ people are at higher risk for depression, anxiety, and suicide, and seeking professional help for these issues is encouraged.

Personal Revelation

Revelation you receive on how to best help the LGBTQ+ individual may be very different than expected. Pray to know how God feels about them, and what will actually help them feel loved and spiritually healthy. Remember their path may be different than is typical, and God is aware of them.

"Latter-day Saint leaders, along with the rank and file, need to listen to and understand what LGBTQ members are feeling and experiencing. We must do better than we have in the past until all feel they have a spiritual home... a place to worship and serve the Lord." - M Russel Ballard

Resources:

Find a more comprehensive list on tjcounseling.com/resources

- ◆ **Leading Saints** - podcast specifically for local Church leaders, with special LGBTQ+ episodes
- ◆ **Questions from the Closet** - podcast answering questions about the LDS & LGBTQ+ experience
- ◆ **Listen, Learn, and Love** - podcast guests share their stories and experiences as LDS & LGBTQ+

* <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay>