Promoting LGBT Wellness: Adulthood to Mid-Life

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What is Wellness?

A way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual more fully within the human and natural community

(Myers, J.E., Sweeney, T.J., & Witmer, J.M. (2000)

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What is Wellness?

A conscious, deliberate process that requires a person to become aware of and make choices for a more satisfying lifestyle.

The focus of this presentation will be on the Indivisible Self Model of Wellness as applied to LGBT persons adulthood to mid-life

Emphasis will be given to individuals coming out (to self and/or others) in adulthood to mid-life.

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Four Phases Approach to Wellness Counseling

- Orientation to Wellness
- Assessing Wellness
- Wellness Planning
- Evaluation and Follow-Up
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Contexts

• Local (safety)
• Institutional
• Global
• Chronometrical

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Contextual Challenges: Local (safety)

• Family
  ➢ Family of origin acceptance or rejection
  ➢ Safe to come out?

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Contextual Challenges: Local (safety)

• Neighborhood:
  ➢ What appear to be beliefs and values of neighborhood?
  ➢ Same neighborhood or different neighborhood?
  ➢ Safety concerns?
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Contextual Challenges: Local (safety)

- Community:
  - What appear to be beliefs and value systems of the larger community.
  - Safe to come out?

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Contextual Challenges: Institutional (policies and laws)

- Education:
  - What messages are being given relative to LGBT issues/identity in educational settings?
  - Do educational policies promote non-discrimination against LGBT students?

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Contextual Challenges: Institutional (policies and laws)

- Religion:
  - Is the larger religious context supportive of or negative toward sexual and/or gender identity diversity?
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Contextual Challenges: Institutional (policies and laws)

- Government:
  - Do policies of local, state, and federal governments allow discrimination based on sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression?
  - Do local, state, or federal laws or policies violate the civil rights of sexual minority persons?

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Contextual Challenges: Institutional (policies and laws)

- Business/Industry:
  - Protection from non-discrimination in the workplace if currently working?
  - Access to work environments that are inclusive of LGBTQ persons.

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Contextual Challenges: Global

- What world events (i.e., political, cultural) might influence (negatively or positively) decisions about coming out at adulthood/mid-life?
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Contextual Challenges: Chronometrical (lifespan)

• Have stages of lifespan development been delayed or altered as a result of being closeted or denial of LGBTQ identity?
• What impact may coming out have on lifespan development?

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Essential Self

• Includes:
  ➢ Spirituality
  ➢ Gender Identity
  ➢ Cultural Identity
  ➢ Self-Care Behaviors

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Essential Self (cont.)

• Threats to the Essential Self may be experienced as crises (Moe, Perera-Diltz, & Rodriguez, 2012) (e.g., Existential Crisis, Crisis of Faith, Crisis of Identity)
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Essential Self Within Context of LGBTQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife
- Hopelessness, Despair, Purposelessness
  - Facing an uncertain future (coming out process)
  - Facing and grieving losses that coming out will bring (both real and perceived)
  - Dealing with earlier traumatic experiences (e.g., bullying, gay bashing)

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Essential Self Within Context of LGBTQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife
- Disconnect with Spirituality
  - LGBTQ as sinful or against God’s plan
  - Rejection from community of faith because of LGBTQ status
  - Redefining/renewing spirituality
  - Developing a new community of “faith” if desired.

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Essential Self Within Context of LGBTQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife
- Gender roles and gender identity
  - How to make sense of here and now if past gender roles have been inauthentic
  - How to make transition to gender identity that is consistent with authentic self (transgender)
Essential Self Within Context of LGBTQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife

• Cultural identity as LGBTQ
  ➢ Who am I culturally as a sexual minority person
  ➢ What is the cultural history of LGBTQ persons as an oppressed minority?
  ➢ How to integrate LGBTQ culture while navigating other cultures to which I belong?

Self-Care

• Identifying self-nurturing behaviors
• Finding a healthy balance between my needs while coming out as LGBTQ while also being responsive to the needs of significant others (e.g., spouse, children)

Coping Self

• Includes:
  ➢ Holding realistic beliefs
  ➢ Stress management strategies
  ➢ Leisure activities that promote fun and enjoyment
  ➢ Sense of Self-Worth
  (Myers & Sweeney, 2005)
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Coping Self (cont.)

• The Coping Self is comprised of coping skills (rather than aspects of self-identify).
• Threats to the components of the Coping Self are usually manifested as increased levels of stress.
(Moe, Perera-Diltz, & Rodriguez, 2012)

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Coping Self Within Context of LGTBQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife

• Coping when the "world is falling apart."
• Chronic stress and its effects (emotionally, psychologically, physically)

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Creative Self

• Includes:
  ➢ Thinking, feeling, and working self
  ➢ Participation in multiple life contexts
  ➢ A sense of control
  ➢ Feelings of self-efficacy and usefulness
(Myers & Sweeney, 2005)
Creative Self (cont.)

- Components of the creative self are considered the building blocks of talents and strengths used to contribute to society.
- Components of the creative self are considered building blocks of talents and strengths for the individual to create the kind of life he or she finds meaningful.

(Moe, Perera-Diltz, & Rodriguez, 2012)

Creative Self Within Context of LGTBQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife

- Feeling out of control
- Fears about coming out at work
- Inauthentic career choices
- Becoming engaged in the LGBTQ community

Physical Self

- Includes:
  - Health components of exercise and nutrition
  - Preventative healthcare behaviors
  - Effects of chronic stress on health (my addition)
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Physical Self (cont.)

- Components of physical self encourage consideration of how exercise and nutrition affect mental health and wellness. (Moe, Perera-Diltz, & Rodriguez, 2012)
- To this, I would add consideration of how the effects of chronic stress on the physical self affect mental health and wellness.

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Physical Self Within Context of LGBTQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife

- General fitness concerns (e.g., exercise and nutrition)
- Specific physical concerns (obesity, eating disorders, stress-related disorders)
- Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco Use
- Safe Sex Practices
- Access to health care providers knowledgeable about LGBTQ health-related concerns.

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Social Self

- Includes sub-domains of...
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Love or Intimate Relationships
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Social Self (cont.)
- Consideration of the Social Self encourages exploration of the relative importance of the three sub-domains in overall functioning and life satisfaction.

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Social Self Within Context of LGBTQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife
- Family
  - How to manage children from opposite-sex marriages as part of coming out
  - Relationship with former opposite sex spouses
  - Building "families of choice"

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Social Self Within Context of LGBTQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife
- Friends
  - Coming out to friends
  - Ending friendships with those who cannot accept LGBTQ identity
  - Making new friends in the LGBTQ community
Social Self Within Context of LGBTQ Wellness: Adulthood/Midlife

- Love or Intimate Relationships
  - Concerns about how/where to meet others to date.
  - Navigating sexuality
  - Ageism

Wellness Planning

Essential Self

- Healing the Broken Spirit
- Integrating gender identity and cultural identity
- Developing/enhancing/implementing self-care behaviors
Coping Self
- Building/enhancing coping strategies
- Identifying and implementing stress management strategies
- Building/Regaining/Enhancing self-worth
- Identifying and participating in leisure activities, perhaps with other LGBTQ persons

Creative Self
- Enhancing a sense of self-efficacy and usefulness
- Reevaluating and implementing new ways of thinking, feeling, and working
- Identifying and implementing strategies for engaging with the LGBTQ community.

Physical Self
- Identify and implement general fitness goals
- Identify and implement options for addressing alcohol, during, and/or tobacco use
- Develop and implement a plan for sexual health, including safe sex practices
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Social Self

• Identify and implement ways to manage family relationships,
• Identify and implement strategies for building a “family of choice”
• Identifying resources for dating. Develop and implement a plan to seek out significant other relationship(s)

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Evaluation and Follow-Up

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Bibliography


