



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Supporting trans and gender diverse children and young people in schools

25 October 2018





Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Opening

Katherine Browne, Principal Policy Officer, Commissioner for Children and Young People





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Welcome to Country

Ingrid Cumming





Commissioner for Children and Young People
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Introduction

Commissioner for Children and Young People Colin Pettit







Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Presentation by Inclusive Education WA

Katie Darby, Project Lead, Inclusive Education WA





Supporting trans and gender diverse students in WA schools

Katie Darby (She/Her/Hers)

Project Lead - Inclusive Education WA



Delivered by

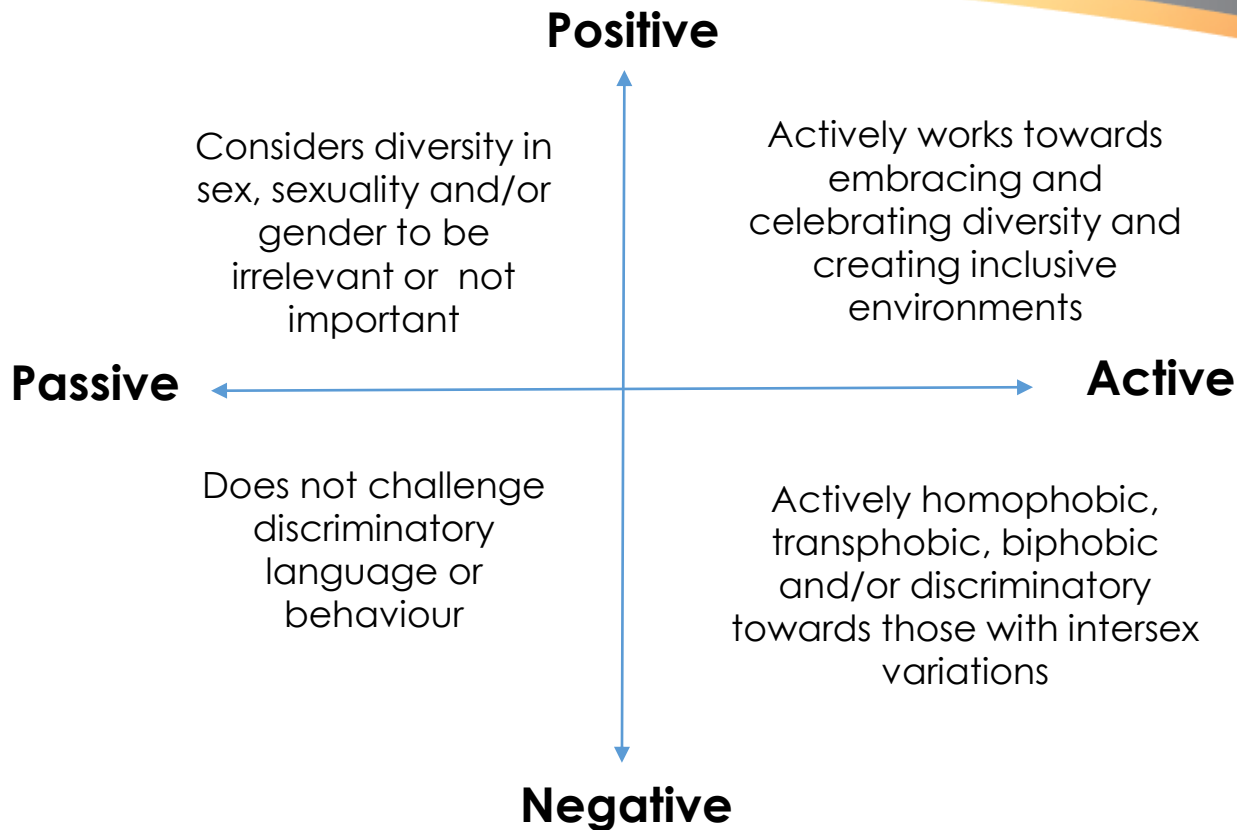


Western Australian
AIDS COUNCIL

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The Terminology

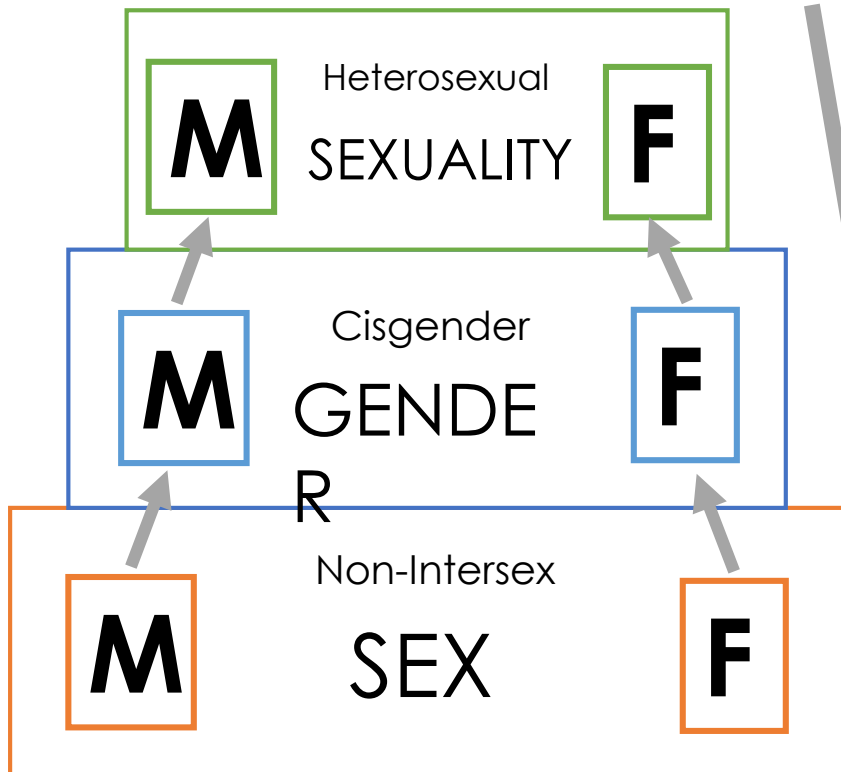
• **LGBTIQA+**

- **L**esbian, **G**ay, **B**isexual, **T**ransgender, **I**ntersex, **Q**ueer/**Q**uestioning, **A**sexual or otherwise diverse in sex, sexuality or gender

• **SSAIGD**

- **S**ame **S**ex **A**ttracted, **I**ntersex and **G**ender **D**iverse

HETERONORMATIVITY



LGBTI+

Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual +

SSAIGD

Same Sex
Attracted

10%

Transgender

Gender diverse

1.2-4%

Intersex

Intersex

1.7%



How might heteronormativity be reinforced in our schools?

**FORMS
AND
DOCUMENTATION
S (M/F)**

**PARENT
COMMUNICATIONS**

**DISCUSSIONS
ABOUT
FAMILIES**

PRONOUNS

**EXAMPLES
IN CLASS**

**TEACHER
TITLES**

**GENDERED
GREETINGS**

**FRIENDSHIP
GROUPS**

**ASSUMPTIONS
ABOUT
PARTNERS**

**SUBJECT
CHOICES**

**SCHOOL
FORMALS**

UNIFORMS

FACILITIES

**SPORTS
AND
ATHLETIC
DAYS**

**SEPARATIO
N OF
CLASSES**

**SCHOOL
LEADERSHIP
ROLES**

**SEX
EDUCATION**

Small things can make a big difference

1. Consistently challenge LGBTI+ discriminatory language and behaviours
2. Take the pressure off gender and avoid heteronormativity
3. Make LGBTI+ diversity visible in your school community
4. Provide positive examples of LGBTI+ diversity
5. Be available and prepared to support LGBTI+ students
6. Support student led initiatives to create change



Guide to supporting a student to affirm or transition gender identity at school.

What is gender identity?

Gender identity is broadly defined in the Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013 as meaning, the gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person's designated sex at birth.

This Act protects people from discrimination in regards to their gender identity. It does not matter what sex the person was assigned at birth, or whether the person has undergone any medical intervention. This includes people who identify as women, men or as neither male nor female. The terms people use to describe their gender identity may include transgender, gender non-binary or gender. Although the Sex Discrimination Act does not use these specific labels it is intended to cover these identities and more.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities use various terminology to describe or identify a person assigned female or male at birth and identify or living partly or fully as another gender. Some communities may use terms such as 'Gijerjirij' or 'Sindherboj', or they may use alternative words relevant within local language. Use and spelling of the terms may vary across different groups and communities, and other cultures will use different terms to describe gender diversity. This guide also applies to supporting those students.

"The day that my friends at school said 'she' instead of 'he' and I could be myself was the best day of my life."
- Jennifer, transgender female student.



How this guide can help.

This guide is intended to help all schools to provide support for students who are taking steps to affirm a gender identity at school that is different from the sex that they were assigned at birth. This process is often referred to as gender transition or affirmation.

This guide aims to help schools to develop active school processes that respond appropriately and positively to the student's needs, address privacy and safety concerns, and acknowledge the specific support needs of other students and staff.

Many schools have managed this process in a seamless and supportive manner. The following steps may assist you to create a written management plan that reflects both the needs and desires of the student and the unique capacity of the whole school community.

Ensure a student led process.

The person who understands most about their gender transition or affirmation is the student themselves. It is crucial to the success of this process that they are included in every decision made and every action taken. Consideration should be given to the age and maturity of the student and whether it would be appropriate to involve the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) in each decision.

Assess the support given by a student's family members or carers, and think through the needs of any siblings, especially those attending the same school. If a student does not have family or carer support for the process, a decision to proceed should be made based on the school's duty of care for the student's wellbeing and their level of maturity to make decisions about their needs. It may be possible to consider a student a mature minor and able to make decisions without parental consent.

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5 things trans and gender diverse students want school staff to know

"Being trans is rough. Really rough. Nearly 50% of us attempt suicide, and around 70% of us have self-harmed. Any and all support that a teacher can give is massively appreciated. So, thank you."
Roy, Year 12, Metro Perth

Gender diversity exists in every school community yet even those school staff with the best intentions can find it difficult to know how to best support trans and gender diverse students.

When any student does not feel safe or supported at school, both their educational outcomes as well as their overall health and wellbeing can be impacted. Trans and gender diverse people who reported having issues in educational settings were more likely to have reported engaging in reckless behaviour and experiencing depression or anxiety than those who did not have issues in education settings¹.

It is important to note that these poor outcomes are not directly because an individual is trans or gender diverse, but instead are related to the treatment of trans and gender diverse people in society. When trans and gender diverse students are supported, valued, and celebrated for who they are, they can have similar or better outcomes to their cisgender peers².

¹School staff need to take responsibility of their own education on transgender issues, rather than relying on trans people to educate them.³
Non-binary male, Year 11, Metro Perth

We asked trans and gender diverse students from Western Australian schools what they wanted school staff to know about gender diversity and how our schools can better support them.

Research from the Trans Pathways⁴ report paints a picture of what it might be like to be a young trans person in Australia today.

78% of trans and gender diverse young people have experienced issues with school, TAFE and university,
74% experienced bullying and
69% reported being discriminated against because of their gender diversity.

Trans and gender diverse people who self-harmed were 3.6 times more likely to have experienced issues in educational settings and those who attempted suicide were 3.8 times more likely to have issues in educational settings.



Keep in touch!

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Western Australia

Young people from Commissioner's 2018 LGBTI Advisory Committee

Fred, Benji & Hannah



Etiquette and Existentialism

Told by that one person with the glasses



Getting to know you

20 seconds
each!

- Name
- Pronouns
- Something you learnt today

I'm not feeling good Mr. Education System



Has a mistake been made?

Yes

Correct yourself and move on.

No

Chill beans

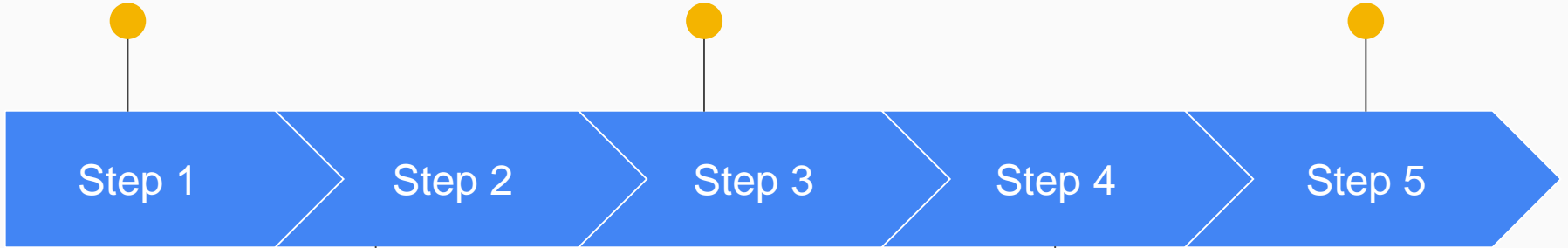
There's flow charts on the starboard bough

Life is like a box of chocolates...

Explain

Listen

Get learned



Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

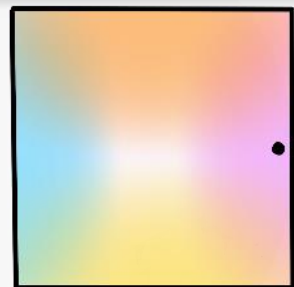
Step 4

Step 5

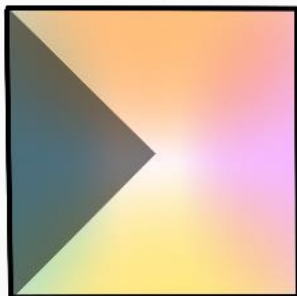
Ask to ask

Respond
accordingly

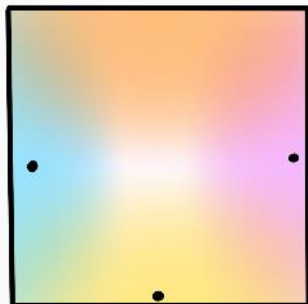
Funky spectrums



Specific

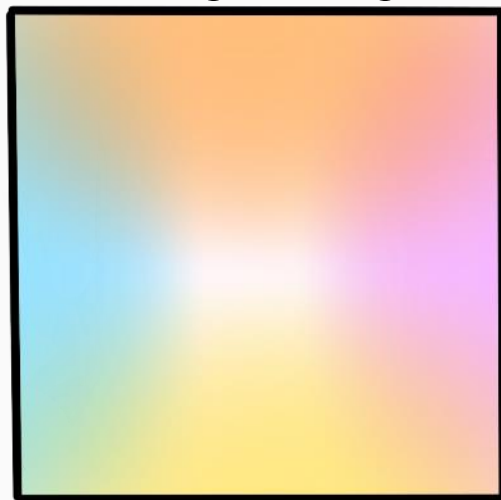


Non-specific



Multi/bi/poly etc

Strong feelings

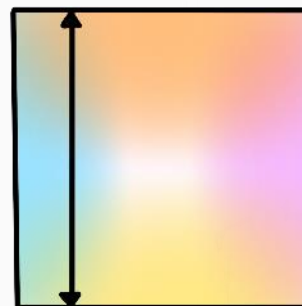
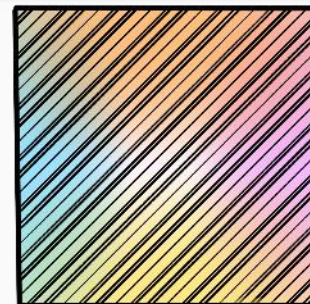


Masculine

Feminine

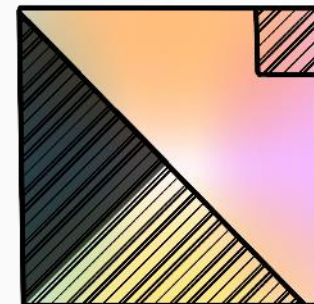
No feelings

Fluid



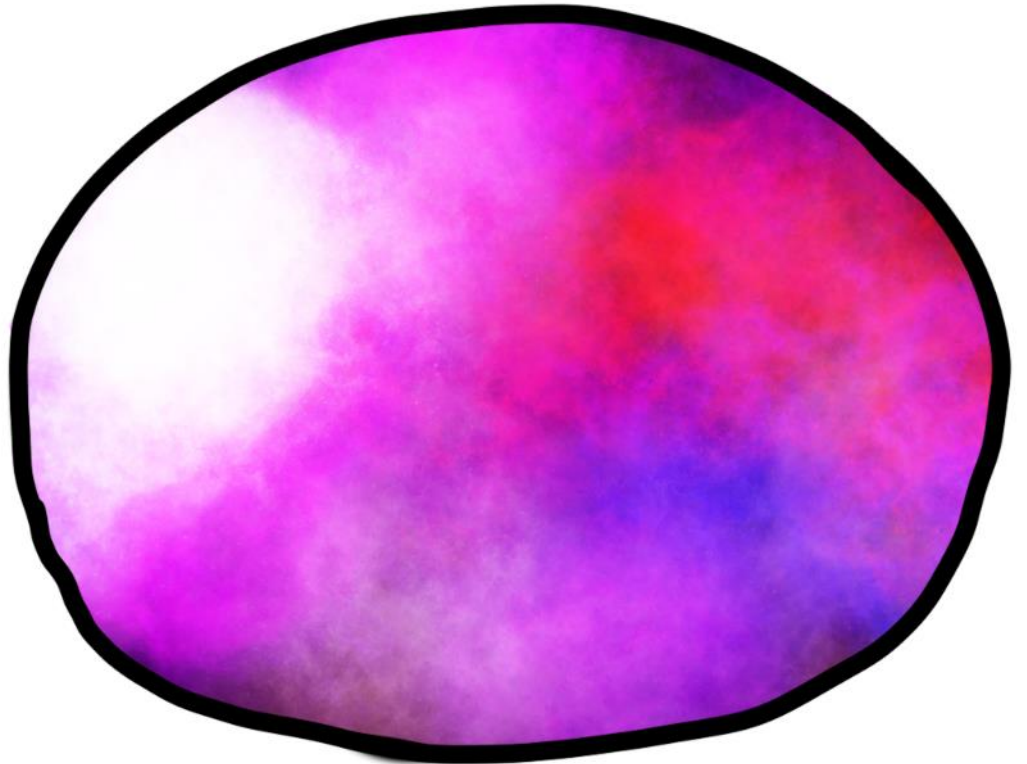
Flux

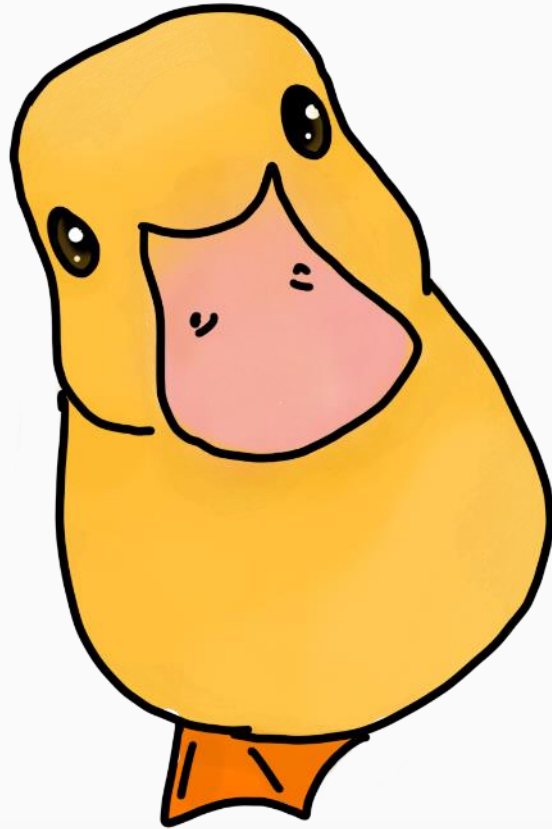
Or a combination!



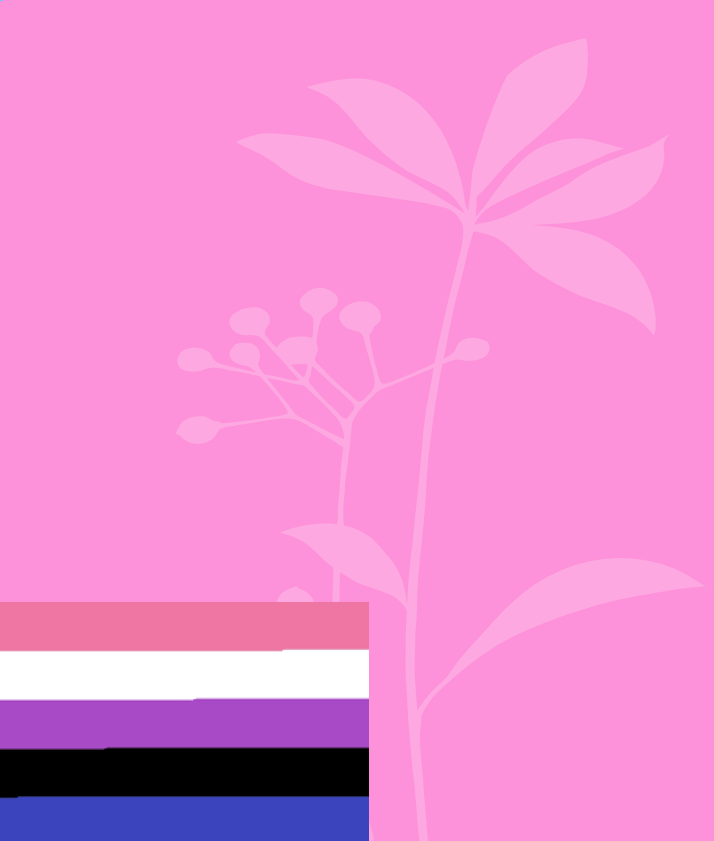
Frankly, my dear, you should give
a damn

The last hurrah





I call them Gerald



BEING A CONSCIENTIOUS ALLY

Learning things
with Benji



Rule of thumb - Pronouns

- Use their preferred pronoun, or
- **Avoid using pronouns**
- Use Inclusive pronouns “They, them”
- Have an open mind
 - Allow for questioning,
 - Allow for ‘switching up’ or ‘changing back’
 - Love/support from a distance

Limiting Damage

Use inclusive pronouns, or avoid using pronouns altogether

~An Example~



Open mindedness

- Most children/adolescents play with roles, gender



- Not everyone is trans or gender diverse
- Not everyone is a boy or a girl
- **Questioning** is important to many

Support Questioning in school – Why?

- Mental health
- Self esteem
 - Easily crushed, **very** slowly rebuilt
- Confusing time - Identity
 - Who am I?
 - What do I want?



Sensing distress: How to **help**

Fundamentals

1. Trust

- I like you, but I'm intimidated by you

2. Personal

- My story isn't necessary for you to know

3. Readiness - Not there yet

- I don't know what I don't know

4. Timing

- You got me on a bad day

5. Temperament

- Benji might prefer that you help him and be left alone, Xia might prefer to tell you what they want and have an active and open dialogue

Confrontation; Being Careful

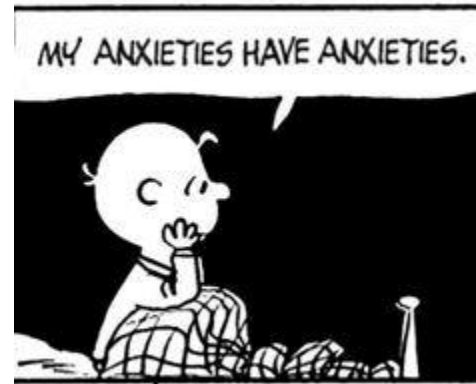
- Inclusivity
 - Hello, class
 - “I’m worried about” box
- Student email
- Parents
 - Be **careful**; some parents are supportive, some are not.
 - Better to call/email and ask about grades, and casually ask about how (the child) is doing

How to ask if they need help

- Give them an out (next slide)
 - Keep it short, keep it casual, keep it friendly.
 - Remember fundamentals
1. **Timing!** - Headspace of student
 2. **Temperament;** Would confronting them really be best?
 3. **Trust;** What is your relationship with them?
 4. **Personal;** Are your questions overly intrusive?
 5. **Readiness;** Remember they might have the answers yet

Giving an out: Conversations with an anxious person

- Allowing them to dodge and change the subject
 - Timing, Temperament, Trust, Personal, Readiness
 - Don't push it
- Not responding doesn't mean they didn't hear you
 - It hurts, I'm sorry but I can't acknowledge that **please let it slide**



General tips

Offensive language;

- Transsexual, hermaphrodite, ‘a transgender’, girlboy, boygirl, ladyboy, misgendering, transvestite, confusing sexuality and gender, **outing**

Offensive questions

- Cost of surgery, amount of surgeries, your opinion/s of surgery
 - Are you asking because you need to know, or because it’s entertaining to hear about?
 - **These questions cost us**



THE END

Y'all are pretty special, congrats



Presentation by Hannah





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Video





Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Facilitated discussion





Committee members: Fred, Hannah, Benji & Kit
Katie Darby, Inclusive Education WA
Liz Walters, Ellenbrook Secondary College

Facilitator: Katherine Browne, Office of the
Commissioner for Children and Young People





Thank you!

We welcome your feedback – please fill in form

Further resources are available from ccyp.wa.gov.au

Contact the Commissioner



info@ccyp.wa.gov.au



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