

Spectrum of Colours

Embracing and Navigating

LGBTQIA+ Diversity in Aotearoa

New Zealand



Ministry for
**Ethnic
Communities**
Te Tari Mātāwaka



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Adhikaar Aotearoa

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The Rule Foundation is an organisation set up to administer the estate of Peter Rule, a Royal New Zealand Air Force pilot who was forced out of a job he loved and eventually committed suicide due to the shame that society projected onto him for being a gay man. Peter Rule's story should have had a different ending; an ending where he found love, passion and purpose, an ending where he was able to be himself. Peter's memory is indelible in the work we do. We do what we do for stories like his, and particularly for those from ethnic LGBTQIA+ communities, to live out their lives they are meant to.

None of this work would have been possible without grants from these two organisations. We thank you sincerely.

About Adhikaar Aotearoa

The idea for this charity came from the story of Sanjeev, born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand to an Indian family, and a closeted gay man. He knew that he could never come out to his family because, if he did, he would be disowned and shunned by the people he loved. So, with the fear that had been instilled in him from a young age, Sanjeev pretended to be a certain way. He started to date women, stopped hanging out with his closest friends, and convinced himself that if he “acted” straight for long enough, he would not be shunned from the only people he had ever known. Sanjeev is one of the hundreds, if not thousands, of South Asian LGBTQIA+ people in Aotearoa New Zealand with the same experience.

Adhikaar, in many South Asian languages, means “right”. Sanjeev has the right to be free, the right to love, and the right to be himself. In creating this organisation, we are re-instilling the rights that our ancestors had to be queer and trans without fear. While Adhikaar Aotearoa is for all people of colour, we are specifically focused on supporting those with South Asian ancestry. The eight South Asian countries that derive this ancestry include: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Adhikaar Aotearoa is all about flax roots and systemic change, which is underpinned by our three focus areas: education, advocacy, and support.

Education is all about producing, disseminating, and using knowledge and information in a way that benefits our communities. Education is key to filling the information gaps that many in our community, and more generally, society, has. We have four focus areas when it comes to education: providing information for LGBTQIA+ people of colour, providing information for the families of LGBTQIA+ people of colour, enhancing the awareness of LGBTQIA+ persons within the South Asian community, and providing education for broader society.

Advocacy is all about using your voice to support and propel a particular cause when things are wrong, or when things are fine but could be better. Advocacy to us is about talking to our communities, seeing what they need and getting it. Advocacy to us is about ensuring that the work we do has a large-scale and long-lasting impact, and manifests the hope that we hold in the world and the promise of change.

Introduction

As LGBTQIA+ people of colour, we have multiple and intersecting identities that shape our experiences and perspectives. We are not only queer, but also ethnic. We are not only ethnic, but also diversely gendered. We are not only gendered, but also sexually diverse. We are not only sexual, but also human beings with diverse cultures, histories, languages, religions, abilities, and aspirations.

While we know Aotearoa New Zealand is generally a welcoming place for the LGBTQIA+ community, we still face discrimination and prejudice because of who we are. When you throw race, ethnicity, class, caste, disability, and neurodiversity into the mix, this discrimination and prejudice can be exacerbated even further.

As LGBTQIA+ people of colour, we often struggle to find spaces where our entire selves are fully celebrated. While we may face racism and xenophobia in LGBTQIA+ spaces, we may also face queerphobia in ethnic spaces. While we may feel invisible, isolated, or misunderstood in mainstream society, we may also feel pressured, rejected, and silenced in our own communities. Our intersectional identities might mean we struggle to access appropriate health, education, or social services, or participate in civic or political activities. All of these factors can lead to significant discrimination, violence, and/or trauma in our lives.

That being said, we should not have to choose between our identities or conform to anyone else's expectations. We can create our own spaces that allow us to express ourselves authentically, connect with others who share our experiences, and support each other in our journeys. We can also join forces with other marginalised groups, and advocate for our rights and recognition. We can celebrate our diversity, and embrace our complexity. We can fight against harmful labels and stereotypes that try to box us in to one category. We can realise that we are limitless.

This journey can be hard, but that is where this self-help guide comes in. This guide is designed to provide guidance for LGBTQIA+ people of colour on their personal journey, should they need it. We have collated frequently asked questions and observations around the queer POC experience in Aotearoa New Zealand, using research, personal interactions, personal and collective experiences, and consultations with POC therapists in Aotearoa New Zealand. We hope that by

formatting this resource through a series of question and answers, you will be able to navigate the content easily, find the information that is most relevant to your personal journey, and gain insights at your own pace.

To ensure the safety and acceptance of all community members, this guide aims to recognise the unique journeys we go through as LGBTQIA+ people of colour.

Although we may share a lot of similarities, everyone's experience is different.

What works for one person might not work for another, and the guide's relevance may vary based on each person's individual experiences and stages of exploration.

We would also like to note that this is a generic resource. It does not replace mental health or any other kind of professional advice for your specific situation, and we recommend contacting a registered service provider if you need.

Celebrating Diversity

Let us start this journey by thinking about sex, gender, and sexual identities, which can be different from most others in your family, kin, and social networks.

Q: What are my sex, gender, and sexual identities?

A: Understanding your sex, gender, and sexual identities means recognising and accepting your own unique experiences and feelings related to your sex characteristics, your internal sense of gender, and your sexual orientation. This can be a deeply personal and ongoing journey, and it is absolutely okay if these aspects of your identity evolve over time. There is no single or “correct” way of knowing this, and each person’s journey is unique in their own ways. What is most important is that you trust your inner feeling around what feels the most right for you. That is what makes you, authentically you!

Q: What if these identities are different from those in my family, kin, or social networks?

A: Everyone's experiences with sex, gender, and sexuality are unique. For example, while members of your family may identify as cis gender and/or heterosexual, you may identify as a different gender from the one you were assigned at birth, or be attracted to people of the same and/or different gender(s). Even if these identities are different from those of your family, kin, or social networks, it is important to remember that everyone, including you, has the right to self-identify how they like.

Q: What are some challenges I might face in accepting my identities?

A: Challenges might include pressure from society to conform to traditional gender roles, a lack of understanding or acceptance from others, or internalised negative beliefs about your identities. You might also face challenges like accessing healthcare or legal protection.

Our sex, gender, or sexual identities are often misunderstood by our family, relatives, and social circles. They might react with fear or disgust to your expression of these identities, which can make you feel ashamed of who you are. Their reaction is often influenced by myths and archaic notions of what is “right” and “wrong”, and it’s important to recognise that this doesn’t necessarily make them bad people. However, it can create an unsafe environment for you to openly express or celebrate your identity around certain people in your life.

Q: How can I overcome these challenges?

A: Overcoming these challenges often involves a combination of education, seeking support, and self-acceptance. Joining support groups, seeing a therapist, and educating yourself about what diverse identities exist is a good place to start.

Because we cannot always rely on others to validate our identity, self-validating your own identity is a crucial step to feeling empowered, comfortable, and confident in who you are. To do this, you might want to consider the following steps:

- Seek information about your identity from reliable, evidence-based sources.
- Explore the history of your identity within your own ethnic communities. Remember, homophobia, transphobia and queerphobia are colonial imports, and do not represent the rich history of LGBTQIA+ identities in South Asia. Our resource, “Our Histories Are Queer”, can help you learn more about this.
- Find inclusive spaces and supportive networks where your identity is celebrated and accepted. For instance, joining queer youth groups like Rainbow Youth, going to meet ups like IOPNZ, Inside Out’s Shift Hui, getting involved in Pride events, following social media pages of supportive networks, and celebrating queer histories. The section on Community Connections of this guide offers more information.
- Seek out and connect with other LGBTQIA+ individuals from similar ethnic backgrounds. Shared experiences can provide validation and a sense of belonging.

We may think that we need other people to accept us unconditionally. However, as adults, we have to accept that not everyone will understand or appreciate us for who we are. Instead of seeking external validation, focusing on finding self-acceptance and practicing self-love, which includes setting clear boundaries with the people in our lives around what we will not tolerate, is a better use of our energy. These boundaries allow us to foster healthier and happier relationships, while also protecting our own dignity and integrity.

Q: How can I celebrate my LGBTQIA+ identity while still be sensitive to my culture?

A: Participating in cultural practices, learning about your cultural history, and maintaining connections within your cultural community while also expressing your LGBTQIA+ identity should not be mutually exclusive. No culture or tradition has the authority to violate your right to self-expression or treat you with disrespect because of your sex, gender, or sexual identity. However, extremist values placed upon culture, which have become incorrectly reinforced as cultural values, may be unaccepting of LGBTQIA+ identities within their traditions and practices.

That being said, being in a limiting or damaging cultural setting might just mean creating new traditions that honour all aspects of your identity, or reaching out to cultural communities that accept and celebrate your unique identity. Your LGBTQIA+ identity and culture are part of who you are, and they are equally valid. Celebrate your diversity and remember that you are not alone. There are communities and resources out there to support you.

Letting In/Coming Out

This segment addresses unique challenges related to Letting in (Nakhid et al 2020) – also known as coming out – the act of self-disclosing one’s sex, gender, and/or sexual identity – within ethnic families and communities.

Letting in/Coming out is a deeply personal journey that is unique to each individual, and can vary based on personal circumstances, cultural context, and societal attitudes. For some, it may be a moment of profound self-acceptance and outward expression of their identity to the world, while for others, it may be gradual process that happens with only a few people at a time.

Letting in/Coming out can be a challenging process, especially so for people of colour who may face additional barriers and pressures from their ethnic families, communities, and wider society. As one of the ethnic queer therapists we consulted when developing this self-help guide says:

“In some (but certainly not all) ethnic families or communities, there can be a strong resistance to the idea that ethnic people can have LGBTQIA+ identities. Sometimes there are strong views that these identities are negative or shameful. In extreme circumstances, letting people in can mean exposing ourselves to violence. Additionally, in non-ethnic LGBTQIA+ communities, people can sometimes be judgemental of people who are not 100% out in all parts of their lives. Sometimes, people are unwilling to be in romantic relationships with people who are not ‘out’ to their families. This can feel like a double marginalisation, as we feel unable to find acceptance of our whole selves in any part of our lives.”

In many cultures, the concept of coming out may not even exist or may take on different forms. It is important to remember that there is no universally ‘right’ way to come out. Each person’s coming out journey is valid and unique to their own experiences and cultural background.

On top of that, not everyone in the LGBTQIA+ community will have a coming out experience. Some people may choose not to disclose their sexual or gender identity for a variety of reasons, including personal preference, safety, or cultural considerations. This does not make their identities any less valid or real.

For many people, particularly those from ethnic backgrounds, the concept of 'letting in' may be more applicable and meaningful.

While 'coming out' emphasises a person feeling *obligated* to disclose their identity to others, 'letting in' emphasises a person's agency in *choosing* who they want to let in and know their authentic selves.

Letting in is relevant to ethnic LGBTQIA+ people because it acknowledges that a lot of the time, ethnic LGBTQIA+ people cannot come out to their families or communities because of cultural stigma and myths around queerness, as well as the weight that community perceptions of your family holds and the fear of bringing shame onto them - particularly for NRI families that rely so heavily on their cultural community for support.

Therefore, if you cannot come out for these reasons, letting in emphasises that it is about letting in people who you feel will understand and accept your identity without the risk of being discriminated against or violated by your community.

In that way, letting in is culturally sensitive because it acknowledges that a lot of ethnic queer people do not have the choice of "coming out" that Pakeha culture seems to suggest is normal. It validates the queerness of those that can likely never "come out".

If you are considering coming out or letting in, here are some questions and responses that might be useful for you:

Q: What does letting in/coming out mean?

A: Letting in/coming out is the process of disclosing your sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics to yourself and others. It is not a one-time event, but a lifelong journey of self-discovery and expression. Letting in/coming out can have positive effects on your mental health, well-being, and relationships, but it can also involve risks and challenges, such as rejection, discrimination, or violence.

Q: Why is letting in/coming out important for LGBTQIA+ people of colour?

A: While letting in/coming out is not mandatory, it can help LGBTQIA+ people of colour to affirm their identities, connect with supportive communities, and advocate for their rights and needs. It can also help to challenge the stereotypes and stigma that often surround LGBTQIA+ people of colour in their ethnic families and communities.

Here are some ways that letting in/coming out can be beneficial:

- We can find allies who support and celebrate us for who we are. These can be people from our own ethnic backgrounds, or from other cultures and races. They can understand our struggles and joys, and offer us friendship and solidarity.
- We can connect with other ethnic LGBTQIA+ people, and learn from their experiences. They can inspire us with their stories, and help us to navigate the particular challenges that we face. They can also enrich our lives with their diversity and creativity.

However, it is important to think about the following things when letting in/coming out:

- Whether you choose to come out or let in, set your own boundaries, and do not feel guilty or ashamed for keeping some things private. Choose people who you feel safe and comfortable around, and take some time to ensure that they are people you can trust and will respect your truth.
- Be selective and careful about who you let in, and do not settle for anyone who does not respect or value your truth. Take your time getting to know people, and see if they are worthy of your trust and love. Give people a chance to show you their true colours. While some may be initially surprised, give them time to digest it and eventually show their true colours. Be open to the idea that they might surprise you.

Q: How do I know when and how to let in/come out?

A: There is no right or wrong way to come out. It is a personal decision that depends on your own feelings, circumstances, and goals. You may choose to come out to different people at different times and in different ways. As one therapist says:

“People might pressure you into letting people into your identity before you feel ready. They often have their own experiences that are likely to be distinct from yours. Try not let this pressure get to you, and instead make considered decisions based on your own experience and knowledge of the people around you.”

Some factors to consider before coming out are:

- **Reasons and expectations:** Why do you want to come out? What do you hope to gain or achieve by coming out? How do you think the person or people you are coming out to will respond?
- **Readiness and confidence:** Are you comfortable with your identity? Do you have enough information and support to answer any questions or deal with any reactions?
- **Safety and wellbeing:** Are you in a safe and supportive environment? Do you have access to resources and services that can help you if you face any negative consequences?

Q: What are some of the unique challenges of letting in/coming out within ethnic families and communities?

A: Letting in/coming out within ethnic families and communities can pose some specific challenges for LGBTQIA+ people of colour, like:

- **Cultural and religious beliefs:** some ethnic families and communities may have strong cultural and religious values that do not understand LGBTQIA+ identities. They may see them as sinful, unnatural, or shameful, with the belief that you are disrespecting your community. They may also expect you to follow traditional norms, like getting married and/or having children.

- Language and communication barriers: some ethnic families and communities may not have the words or concepts to describe LGBTQIA+ identities. They may also have different ways of expressing emotions and opinions that do not align with your own. This can make it hard to communicate your identity and experiences to them, and to understand their perspectives and feelings.
- Navigating identities: LGBTQIA+ people of colour often have to navigate between retaining their ethnic identity and defying racial stereotypes in white queer spaces, while also seeking affirmation of their LGBTQIA+ identity from their cultural community and society.
- Blame culture: some ethnic families and communities may face racism and discrimination from the wider society, which can affect their sense of belonging and identity. Belonging is a fundamental human need. It is tied to our sense of identity, which is shaped by various factors including our ethnicity, culture, and personal experiences. When ethnic families and communities face racism and discrimination, it can disrupt their sense of belonging because they may feel rejected by the wider society. This rejection can lead to a feeling of being 'othered' or alienated, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and self-worth. This external rejection can also cause individuals to question their own identity. They may start to see their ethnicity or culture as a source of disadvantage or stigma, rather than a source of pride and individuality. This internal conflict can lead to a sense of identity crisis, where individuals struggle to reconcile their self-perception with how they are perceived by others. For LGBTQIA+ members within these communities, the impact can be even more profound. They not only have to navigate the challenges associated with their ethnic identity, but also their sexual orientation or gender identity. The intersection of these identities can create unique challenges. When communities internalise negative messages from wider society, they may project these onto their LGBTQIA+ members. This can happen in several ways. For instance, communities might view LGBTQIA+ identities as a 'western concept' and therefore see it as a threat to their cultural or ethnic identity. Alternatively, they might blame LGBTQIA+

members for bringing additional discrimination or stigma upon the community. This blame culture can create a sense of isolation, shame, or fear for LGBTQIA+ people of colour. They may feel that they have to choose between their ethnic and LGBTQIA+ identities, as embracing one might seem like rejecting the other. This can lead to internalised homophobia or transphobia, and further exacerbate feelings of not belonging. Hence, the loss of belonging and identity can translate into blame towards LGBTQIA+ members as they are seen as contributing to the challenges faced by the community.

- Fear of rejection: there can be a fear of being rejected or ostracised by your family, community, and society because of your intersectional identity.
- Lack of representation: there can be a lack of visible social support and representation within your community.

Q: How can I cope with the challenges of letting in/coming out within ethnic families and communities?

A: Letting in/coming out within ethnic families and communities can be difficult, but it can also be rewarding and empowering. Here are some tips to help you cope with the challenges:

- Seek support and information: find people and organisations that can offer you emotional, practical, and informational support. This can include LGBTQIA+ people of colour, allies, counsellors, mentors, or groups. You can also access online resources, such as websites, blogs, podcasts, or videos, that can provide you with relevant and accurate information and advice.
- Be patient and respectful: understand that coming out can be a process for both you and the person/people you are coming out to. They may have questions, concerns, or emotions that they need to express, or simply some time and space to process the new information. It can be difficult, but try to be patient and respectful of their feelings, while also standing up for your own identity and needs.

- Celebrate and embrace your identity: remember that your identity is valid and valuable, and that you have the right to be yourself and to be happy. Celebrate the aspects of your identity that make you unique, and find ways to explore your identity, such as through art, music, literature, or activism. Connect with other LGBTQIA+ people of colour who share your experiences and aspirations.

Being Out

In this section, we delve into the journey of embracing and expressing your LGBTQIA+ identity. In particular, we will discuss how you can approach conversations about sexuality and gender identity with your family, extended family, friends, and colleagues.

'Being out' often translates to the idea that you are openly acknowledging and living in accordance with your true identity. However, it is crucial to understand that 'being out' is not a mandate – 'being in the closet' and 'being out' are cultural constructs that may resonate differently across different cultures. Remember, it is a personal choice, and one that depends entirely on your individual circumstances and comfort levels. You know yourself and your context better than anyone else.

Whether you choose to be 'out', or stay 'in the closet', your decision should be respected and supported by the people in your life. Everyone's journey is unique, and what matters most is your comfort, safety, and wellbeing.

If you are considering 'being out' to the people in your life, here are some advice that may help you along in your journey:

Q: What are the benefits of being out as LGBTQIA+ in ethnic families and communities?

A: Being out as LGBTQIA+ can have many benefits for your personal and social well-being:

- You may be able to be more authentic with yourself and others, and reduce the stress and anxiety of hiding your identity.
- You can build stronger and deeper relationships with the people who accept and support you. It might be easier to find a sense of belonging and community with other LGBTQIA+ people of colour.
- You can be a role model and a source of inspiration for other ethnic LGBTQIA+ people who are struggling with their identity.
- You can openly contribute to the diversity of your ethnic family and community, as well as actively challenge stereotypes and stigma that are often attributed to ethnic LGBTQIA+ people.

Q: What are the challenges of being out as LGBTQIA+ in ethnic families and communities?

A: Being out as LGBTQIA+ can also have some challenges and risks, especially in ethnic families and communities that may not be accepting or understanding of your identity. Being openly LGBTQIA+ means expressing you are authentic gender and sexual identity to those around you - however, your community might not see it that way.

Some of the challenges can include:

- Facing rejection, hostility, or violence from the people who do not support your identity, which could mean losing important relationships.
- Being told that you are accepted, but only if you hide or suppress your LGBTQIA+ identity.
- Experiencing discrimination, harassment, or bullying in your family, community, workplace, and/or public spaces.
- Feeling isolated, lonely, and/or conflicted because of your identity, which can negatively impact your mental health and self-esteem.
- Having to balance your cultural and LGBTQIA+ identity due to pressure and expectations from your ethnic family and community.

Q: How can I be out as LGBTQIA+ in ethnic families and communities safely and confidently?

A: Being out as LGBTQIA+ is a personal and ongoing decision that depends on your own situation. When someone asks you about your identity, you can choose to see it as an opportunity to share your perspective - it is good to assume that they are being genuinely curious and respectful. It also allows an opportunity for the person to become more educated about your identity, and you can point them in the right direction to learn more about LGBTQIA+ issues.

As one therapist says:

“You don’t have to engage with people who are clearly trying to bait you or provoke you. However, in a lot of parts of queer culture, there is a stance that we shouldn’t have to educate people. This does a disservice to us and our communities. If you are unwilling to talk to people in your life/community, think about where else they might be getting their information from. We want to build relationships, not sever them”.

Accepting who you are, and being comfortable and confident in your identity, allows you to be less affected by other people’s negative opinions. However, it is also important to protect yourself from any potential harm that you might face. Carefully decide what you are willing and not willing to share with others, especially when it could put you in a dangerous situation.

Here are some tips that can help you be out safely and confidently:

- **Assess your safety and well-being:** before you decide to be out, consider the possible risks for your physical, emotional, and financial security. Make sure you have a plan and a support network in case you face any negative consequences.
- **Choose your timing and method:** think about when and how you want to be out, and who you want to be out to. You may choose to be out gradually to different degrees and in different contexts. You may also choose different ways to communicate your identity, such as verbally, in writing, or through actions.
- **Prepare yourself:** educate yourself about LGBTQIA+ issues and identities, and be ready to deal with any reactions and answer any questions. Seek advice or guidance from other ethnic LGBTQIA+ people that are out, or from professionals or organisations that can support you.

Celebrating Traditions

In this section, we will look at how you can maintain your cultural identity without feeling like you have to sacrifice your LGBTQIA+ identity.

We often struggle to find a place where we can fully express our identity and feel like we belong, both in our own culture and in queer spaces.

One of the ways we can cope with the challenges of being LGBTQIA+ in our culture is to create our own rituals and celebrations. We can find or make spaces where we can express our identity and celebrate our diversity with people who accept and support us. We can also invite our allies and loved ones to join us and share our joy and pride.

Another way we can assert our belonging is to ask our community to include us in their cultural events and activities. We can respectfully request that they make room for our whole self, and acknowledge our presence and contribution.

However, we also have to be realistic and recognise that some traditions may not be very welcoming to us. This can be extremely painful and frustrating, but we have to choose our battles wisely. We have to decide what is worth fighting for and what is better to let go. Sometimes, focusing on the places where there is more space and acceptance of you is the best use of your energy.

Here are some strategies that might help:

- **Self-acceptance:** accept that all aspects of your LGBTQIA+ identity are valid, even if your culture says otherwise.
- **Education:** traditions are a vital part of our identity. They represent a critical piece of our culture and help form the structure and foundation of our families and our society. They serve as reminders that our history that has shaped our past, is shaping our present, and will influence our future. Educating oneself about diverse identities and LGBTQIA+ issues can help one navigate their own identity within their cultural context.
- **Acknowledging and celebrating the distinct cultural stories:** Our cultures have long embraced diverse gender and sexual identities, with traditions and stories that honour and celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community. For more

information, please refer to another resource developed by Adhikaar Aotearoa, titled 'Our Histories Are Queer', available on our website.

- **Engaging in Pride Events:** These events are vibrant celebrations that honour the diversity and uniqueness of LGBTQIA+ individuals of all backgrounds, identities, and expressions.
- **Dialogue:** having open conversations with family, friends, and community members about your identity can help challenge stereotypes and misconceptions that they may have. Approach these conversations with patience and understanding, as change often takes time. However, if these conversations become toxic and/or your safety is in question, seek help immediately.
- **Advocacy:** Advocating for greater acceptance within your cultural space can help create a more inclusive environment for both yourself and others. However, do not put yourself at risk or harm of any sort.
- **Boundaries:** it is important to establish personal boundaries within your cultural community, and ensure your own safety. This might mean limiting contact with individuals who are not supportive or understanding of your authentic self.
- **Support networks:** connecting with others who share similar cultural experiences can provide a sense of community and understanding. This could include joining ethnic LGBTQIA+ groups, or seeking support from mental health professionals.

Navigating Life

This section talks about dating, building healthy relationships, and addressing potential cultural differences.

Dating and building healthy relationships can be challenging for anyone, but especially for ethnic LGBTQIA+ people in Aotearoa New Zealand. We may face discrimination, stigma, and isolation from both our ethnic and LGBTQIA+ communities. We may also struggle to find people who can truly understand and appreciate us for who we are.

The extent to which we are out may also affect our relationships. While there is no right or wrong way to be out, we should at least be aware that our choices may be a relationship dealbreaker. For example, someone may not want to date us if we are not out publicly, and that is their choice. We have to decide what is more important to us, and respect the decisions of others.

As ethnic LGBTQIA+ people, we may feel that our dating and relationship options are limited. If we feel lonely and are constantly seeking love and acceptance, this may lead us to make poor choices about who we let into our lives. We may settle for less than we deserve, or tolerate abusive or unhealthy behaviours. We may also compromise our own values, beliefs, or goals to please others. However, it is important not to settle for anything less than what you want or need in a relationship.

On dating

You may find it easier to meet potential partners through online platforms, such as apps or dating sites, that cater to ethnic LGBTQIA+ people. You can also look for events or venues that are LGBTQIA+ friendly and culturally diverse, such as festivals, clubs, or community groups. Be honest and respectful about your expectations and boundaries, and communicate clearly about your needs. Be aware of the possible risks and challenges of dating, such as discrimination, harassment, or violence, and seek support if you need it. For instance, a person might be rejected solely based on these characteristics, rather than personal compatibility; an individual might receive derogatory comments or threats on a dating app due to

their ethnic background or LGBTQIA+ identity; anything from physical assault to more extreme forms of hate crimes; making an insensitive joke about the individual's ethnicity or LGBTQIA+ identity; and they might be expected to behave in certain ways or have certain interests. Also, be informed of support structures available to you (mentioned under health and well-being sections of this guide).

You might want to be reminded of the following:

- Do not let the fear of missing out or being alone make you settle for less than you deserve. Quality matters more than quantity when it comes to relationships. Be happy and confident with yourself first.
- Some people in LGBTQIA+ communities may use their past trauma as an excuse for their harmful behaviour in relationships. But trauma is not a license to hurt others. You have the right to expect and demand better treatment from your partner.

On building healthy relationships

You may face some difficulties in building healthy relationships with your partner, family, friends, or colleagues, due to cultural differences or misunderstandings. You can try to overcome these by being open and respectful of each other's perspectives and values, and finding common ground and interests. You can also seek advice or guidance from other ethnic LGBTQIA+ people who have similar experiences, or from professionals or organisations that can support you. Celebrating and embracing the richness of your culture and identity in your relationships should feel natural and be encouraged.

On addressing potential cultural differences

You may encounter potential cultural differences in various aspects of your life, such as language, communication, norms, beliefs, or customs. You can try to address these by educating yourself and others about cultural issues and identities, and being ready to answer any questions or deal with any reactions. You can also seek support and information from online resources, such as websites, blogs,

podcasts, or videos, that can provide you with relevant and accurate information and advice. Be respectful and curious about other cultures, and learn from them. For example, it is important to understand and respect different communication styles if a potential partner comes from a different culture; a person might interpret indirect communication as being uninterested or distant; in some cultures, it is common for couples to live together before marriage, while in others, this might be frowned upon; etc.

Q: How can I establish boundaries with people in my life who may not understand or accept my identities?

A: As we have previously discussed in our section around letting in/coming out, boundaries are important because people may not understand or accept your identities. This could mean telling someone that they cannot make disparaging comments about the LGBTQIA+ community in front of you. While it is natural to seek acceptance from others, it is crucial to focus on finding self-acceptance. Looking for unconditional acceptance from others can set us up for failure and damage our relationships.

Some useful factors to keep in mind include:

- Setting boundaries are essential for healthy and respectful relationships.
- Understanding people by their actions, not by their identity. How they behave towards you and others shows their true nature and motives. This can help you decide who you let into to your lives and how you navigate that relationship.

Violence

This segment addresses identifying intimate partner violence/bullying, protecting yourself from intimate partner violence/bullying, addressing enforced isolation by family, religious places, and/or social networks, and bullying and other forms of unhealthy practices in relationships.

One of the challenges that people who are being violated by others face is the feeling of isolation and scarcity of relationships. It is the feeling of isolation by their partner, which may prevent them from reaching out to other trusted people in their lives due to fears of judgement or retaliation from their partner. This can make them more susceptible to the abuse and control of those who exploit their vulnerability.

This is especially true for people in LGBTQIA+ communities, who may have experienced various forms of trauma in their lives. Trauma can affect how people relate to themselves and others, and sometimes lead to unhealthy or harmful patterns of behaviour in their close relationships. The situation is worsened when a person is isolated from their family and communities, causing significant emotional distress and consequences to their mental health.

If someone has internalised shame and stigma about their LGBTQIA+ identity from their families, communities, and society, they may have low self-esteem and feel unworthy of respect and dignity in their relationships. They may adopt manipulative or dysfunctional ways of being in relationship with people, which can perpetuate the cycle of violence and abuse.

As one therapist shares:

“Ethnic LGBTQIA+ people are more at risk for violence both in our communities and in our relationships. Pay attention to how possible partners treat both you and the people around you. Is this person respectful of your friends and family? Do they respect your ‘no’s’? How does this person respond when you have conflict or ask for something you need?”

If you are experiencing violence or abuse in your relationships, it is important that seek out support and talk to a trusted person. Going to individual or group therapy, where you can explore your feelings and needs in a safe and confidential space, is a

great way to start. Recognise that your LGBTIQ+ identity is not something to be ashamed of. Being proud of and celebrating your unique identity might boost your self-esteem and know you deserve better from the people in your life.

Learn more about what healthy relationship practices look like, and how to communicate and resolve conflicts in respectful and constructive ways. There are many resources available from organisations mentioned in the Community Connections section that can help you.

Finally, it is important to remember that trauma is not an excuse for toxic or dysfunctional relationship behaviour. You have the right to set and affirm boundaries, and to expect respect and dignity from your partner. It can be hard to resist the urge to enable their bad behaviour because you feel sorry for them, but remember that you are not responsible for their actions or feelings. You are only responsible for your own well-being and happiness.

If you are faced with violence in your relationship, the following questions might offer some insights into your situation:

Q: How can I identify intimate partner violence or bullying?

A: Intimate partner violence (IPV) can take various forms of abuse. Here are some signs to watch out for:

- Physical abuse: unexplained injuries, bruises, or frequent accidents.
- Emotional abuse: constant criticism, humiliation, or controlling behaviour.
- Sexual abuse: coercion, unwanted sexual acts, or lack of consent.
- Financial abuse: controlling finances, restricting access to money, or stealing assets.
- Verbal abuse: involves the use of words and language to undermine someone's dignity and security through insults or humiliation, in a sudden or repeated manner. It can include belittling, constant criticism, sarcasm, intimidation, manipulation, refusal to ever be pleased, name-calling, yelling, or swearing.
- Abusing your sense of spirituality: misuse of spirituality to manipulate, control, and dominate a person. It can involve using one's spiritual position

or the spiritual teachings or values of a person to degrade, demoralise, or manipulate another person. It can also include controlling a person's spiritual activities, forcing adherence to certain beliefs, or preventing participation in spiritual practices of their choice.

If you experience any of these signs, consider seeking professional help or contacting organisations mentioned above. If you are in immediate danger, call the Police or a trusted individual in your life.

Q: What should I do if I'm experiencing intimate partner violence?

A: Seek the following:

- Safety plan: create a safety plan with trusted friends or family. Identify safe places to go if there is an emergency.
- Document evidence: keep records of abusive incidents, including dates, times, and descriptions.
- Seek support: reach out to support networks, counsellors, or helplines (more information on Community Connections section of this guide).
- Legal protection: consider applying for a 'Protection Order' through the Family Court.

Q: How can I deal with bullying and unhealthy practices in relationships?

A: It is important that you:

- Recognise red flags: be aware of controlling behaviour, manipulation, or gaslighting.
- Communicate assertively: communicate your boundaries and expectations clearly.
- Seek professional advice: speaking to a therapist or a counsellor can help you take the first steps in leaving violent or unhealthy relationships.

Always bear in mind that you are not isolated in your journey. The Community Connections section and the Resources section are brimming with local resources waiting to be tapped into. These resources are there to provide support, guidance, and a sense of community. You are inherently deserving of relationships where safety, respect, and love are the norm, not the exception. Do not hesitate to reach out and connect, for you are not alone.

Remember that you are not alone. Reach out to local resources mentioned in the Community Connections section as well as in the Resources. You deserve to feel safe, respected, and loved in a relationship.

Please note that this information is not a substitute for professional advice.

If you are in immediate danger, call 111 or your local emergency number.

Mental Health Matters

This section talks about self-care tips and information on accessing mental health services –specifically for ethnic LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Self-care is the practice of taking care of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. It can help you cope with stress, enhance your resilience, and improve your quality of life. Some self-care tips for ethnic LGBTQIA+ individuals are:

- Be kind and compassionate to yourself: recognise and acknowledge your feelings, needs, and strengths. Do not judge or criticise yourself too harshly – treat yourself the way you would treat a friend. You can also practice positive affirmations, gratitude, or self-compassion exercises to boost your self-esteem and confidence.
- Seek support and information: find people and organisations that can offer you emotional, practical, and informational support. This can include LGBTQIA+ people of colour, allies, counsellors, mentors, or groups. You can also access online resources, such as websites, blogs, podcasts, or videos, that can provide you with relevant and accurate information and advice.
- Engage in activities that make you happy and healthy: find ways to express and explore your identity, such as through art, music, literature, or activism. Finding hobbies and physical activity that you enjoy is also helpful, as well practicing breathing exercises, journaling, meditating or learning about LGBTQIA+ rights and history.
- Connect with other LGBTQIA+ people of colour: they may share your experiences and aspirations, and therefore be capable of understanding what you are going through.

There are various mental health services available in Aotearoa New Zealand that can help you with your mental health and wellbeing. Some of these services include:

- OutLine, is a rainbow mental health organisation providing support services across Aotearoa. They provide a free nationwide 0800 phone line and online chat support service staffed by trained volunteers, a transgender peer support service for trans and non-binary people in Auckland, and specialist

face-to-face and online video counselling exploring gender and sexuality for LGBTIQ+ people across Aotearoa. Anyone can call OutLine on 0800 OUTLINE (0800 688 5463), or access their chat service, any evening between 6pm and 9pm to talk about rainbow-related issues.

- Diversity Counselling New Zealand (DCNZ), is a charitable trust, established in September 2013. Their team of qualified, registered, and experienced professionals are passionate in making a difference to the community. They provide counselling services for individuals, couples, families, and groups, with a focus on cultural diversity and LGBTQIA+ issues.
- Mental Health Advocacy and Peer Support Services (MHAPS), is a peer-led and peer-delivered mental health and addictions service. Options at MHAPS include: peer advocacy, peer support in groups or for individuals, and change programmes and workshops. All MHAPS peer workers have personal lived experience of mental distress and/or addiction and recovery.
- Local mental health and wellbeing support, where you can also find local mental health and wellbeing support services in your area by visiting the Mental Health Resources and Information provided by the Mental Health Education and Resource Centre. You can search by keyword, category, or location to find the service that suits your needs. Some of the categories include LGBTQIA+, ethnic communities, counselling, crisis, and youth.

Sexual Health

In this segment, we explore what safe sex looks like, how to access condoms, and other questions related to sexual health.

As ethnic LGBTQIA+ people in Aotearoa New Zealand, we face multiple forms of oppression and discrimination that affect our sexual wellbeing. Desirability politics, which refers to the social norms and expectations that shape who is seen as attractive, worthy, and desirable in our society, may influence how we see ourselves. This is often influenced by colonial values, which privilege whiteness and devalue our own diverse cultures, identities, and bodies. When we internalise these values, our self-esteem can often be negatively affected.

Conversely, we may often find ourselves being objectified or fetishised based on our skin colour, rather than being valued for our complete identities. This can lead to negative impacts on our sexual health. For instance, the objectification and exoticisation can result in us engaging in risky sexual behaviours, which in turn can increase our susceptibility to sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. Furthermore, the mental health implications of such experiences should not be underestimated. When we internalise this fetishisation, accepting the notion that our brown and black bodies are merely objects of exotic fascination, it can hinder our ability to form healthy, fulfilling relationships with ourselves and others. It is crucial to understand and challenge these harmful perceptions for the sake of our overall well-being.

It is important to challenge your own beliefs around desirability politics, and understand what sexual agency and autonomy looks like to you. You can do this by educating yourself about what a healthy sexual life looks like and what your sexual rights are. Seek out resources and support services that are inclusive and affirming of your diversity and needs in a sexual relationship. Practicing self-care and self-love also means honouring your bodies, desires, and boundaries.

Here are some helpful questions and answers around what looking after your sexual health means:

Q: What is sexual health?

A: Sexual health is a state of physical, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, where having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence, are vital.

Q: What is safe sex?

A: Safe sex is any sexual activity that does not involve the exchange of bodily fluids (such as semen, vaginal fluids, blood, or saliva). Safe sex can reduce the risk of getting or passing on an STI, such as HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, herpes, hepatitis B, or HPV.

Q: How can I practice safe sex?

A: The best way to practice safe sex is to use a barrier method, such as a condom, a dental dam, or a glove, every time you have sex. A barrier method can prevent the transmission of bodily fluids and skin-to-skin contact with the genitals, mouth, or anus of your partner. You should also use a new barrier method for each sexual act, and check the expiry date and condition of the barrier method before using it.

Q: How can I access condoms?

A: Condoms are widely available in Aotearoa New Zealand, and you can get them for free or at a low cost from various places, such as:

- Family planning clinics, sexual health clinics, youth health centres, and some general practices.
- Some pharmacies, supermarkets, convenience stores, petrol stations, and vending machines.
- Some community organisations, such as Rainbow Youth.
- Some schools, universities, and polytechnics.

- Online.

Q: What else do I need to know about sexual health?

A: Some other important things to know about protecting your sexual health are:

- You have the right to decide when, where, how and with whom you have sex.
- You have the right to say no to any sexual activity that you do not want or feel comfortable with.
- You have the right to access sexual health information, education, and services that are respectful, inclusive, and appropriate for your needs. This is regardless of your sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, or immigration status.
- You have the responsibility to respect you and your partners' sexual health, and to communicate honestly and openly about your expectations, boundaries, and preferences.
- You should get tested regularly for STIs, especially if you have multiple or casual partners, or if you notice any symptoms, such as unusual discharge, pain, itching, or sores in your genital area.
- You should seek medical advice and treatment if you have any concerns or questions about your sexual health, or if you experience any problems, such as pain, bleeding, infection, or pregnancy.

General Healthcare

This section explores identifying ethnic LGBTQIA+-friendly healthcare providers – particularly when it comes trans healthcare.

It is important to keep in mind that not all service providers and community organisations acknowledge that the needs and experiences of ethnic people within the LGBTQIA+ community can be different from the general population. Finding a doctor who is LGBTQIA+ friendly can be difficult, especially if you live in an area where there are not many options. You might feel anxious or uncertain about how they will treat you, and whether they will understand your specific healthcare needs.

It is vital to identify those who understand the unique challenges faced by ethnic people within the LGBTQIA+ community, and are focused on providing support that is sensitive to these experiences.

Fortunately, there are some resources and networks that can help you find LGBTQIA+-friendly healthcare providers. For example, organisations like Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa, Burnett Foundation, and Gender Minorities Aotearoa have lists of providers that can be accessed online or by phone. You can also join groups through social media platforms, like Facebook or Reddit, where other LGBTQIA+ people share their experiences and recommendations with different healthcare providers. This can be especially helpful if you live in a small town where there are not many immediate resources available.

Always remember that you deserve to be treated with dignity and care by any healthcare professional. If you feel mistreated or abused because of your identity, do not blame yourself or feel ashamed – know your rights as a patient and stand up for yourself. If you do not feel comfortable doing this on your own, you can always bring a support person, like a friend, family member or advocate, with you to any appointment.

Be aware that there are ways to report and address any unethical or unprofessional behaviour by a healthcare professional. You can file a formal complaint with the relevant authority, such as the Health and Disability

Commissioner, the Medical Council, or the Human Rights Commission. Seek legal advice or counselling if you need it.

Finally, it is important not to make assumptions about whether someone will be LGBTQIA+ friendly based on their identity, such as their gender, ethnicity, religion, or age. Instead, try to find out more about their attitudes and practices from other sources, like their website, reviews, or social media groups like we have mentioned. Most importantly, trust your own intuition and feelings when you interact with them. Do they make you feel comfortable and safe?

Please note that for the purpose of this guide, our primary focus is on assisting LGBTQIA+ individuals in finding healthcare that affirms their identity and respects their unique needs. However, we want to emphasise a broader, more fundamental issue. If you are a healthcare professional wanting to make your services more responsive to the LGBTQIA+ community, the ultimate aim should be to transform the healthcare system at its core to be inherently inclusive and respectful of all identities. This means not just training healthcare providers to be more understanding and accepting of LGBTQIA+ individuals, but also ensuring that the policies, procedures, and structures within the healthcare system are designed with the needs and rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals in mind. We envision a healthcare system where inclusivity is not an afterthought, but a fundamental principle. A system where LGBTQIA+ individuals do not have to search for affirming healthcare, but where all healthcare is affirming by default. This is the change we advocate for, and this is the change we believe is not only possible, but necessary.

The following can give some idea as to where to begin:

- “Providing Health Services for Transgender People” is a web page from the Health New Zealand website. It provides advice and resources to health professionals who provide health services for transgender people. It includes general advice, guidelines for gender affirming health care, and information on referring for gender affirming surgery.
- “LGBTQIA+ Health” is a web page from the Community and Public Health website that supports the health and wellbeing of the local rainbow community. It includes an overview on gender identity, a podcast series on

living as a trans, gender diverse or non-binary person in Aotearoa, a glossary of transgender terms and how to use them, and a free online course on supporting transgender people.

- “Rainbow Health 101” is a training programme offered by Pride in Health, a national organisation that works to improve the health outcomes of rainbow communities. It is designed to increase the knowledge and skills of health professionals who work with LGBTQIA+ people, and to promote inclusive and respectful health care practices.

Community Connections

This segment helps to identify local LGBTQIA+ and ethnic community groups and resources.

As we have talked about previously, it can be hard to find spaces as ethnic LGBTQIA+ people that fully embrace and celebrate our identities and experiences. We do not always feel like we belong or fit in anywhere.

But that should not stop us from trying to find or create our own spaces. Not everyone who shares your identity will understand or relate to you, but that is why our communities offer so much diversity. Take the time to find a space that makes you feel seen and understood; somewhere that makes you feel proud of who you are and what you have to offer.

When you feel ready, reach out to organisations for support, and connect with others who may have had similar experiences. You might want to explore the following:

- Nevertheless is a Māori, Pasifika, and Takatāpui LGBTQIA+ mental health non-profit organisation. They exist to support the holistic well-being of individuals, whānau, and aiga who are Takatāpui, LGBTQIA+, or a part of Pasifika Rainbow communities.
- Mana Tipua, Mana Ora is a kaupapa Māori organisation led by takatāpui, and is the only rangatahi takatāpui-focused organisation in Waitaha. Their purpose is to support the hauora (health & wellbeing) and mana (spiritual power or authority) of rangatahi takatāpui and their whanau. This means enabling all Māori, especially those with diverse genders, sexualities, and sex characteristics, to flourish in the fullness of their identity.
- EquAsian is a new social-support group based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland for LGBTQIA+ people of all ages who descend from all parts of the Asian region. The group was established to provide a safe, fun, and inclusive space for Asian Aucklanders to socialise and support one another.
- Same Same But Black is a collective working for black, indigenous and people of colour within rainbow communities in Aotearoa.
- Indian Origin Pride New Zealand supports rainbow Indians in Aotearoa through education, engagement, events and utilising support networks.

- InsideOut is a national charity in Aotearoa New Zealand working to make the country safer for all rainbow young people. They provide resources, workshops, consulting, advocacy, and support for anything concerning rainbow communities.
- Rainbow Hub Waikato is a community hub that provides support, information, resources, and events for rainbow people in Waikato.
- Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura - Outing Violence is a project that aims to cultivate peace based on loving and equitable relationships in the Rainbow community through strengthening social networks. They provide information, resources, training, and research on family, partner, and sexual violence in Rainbow communities.
- Body Positive Inc. is a group founded by and run for people with HIV/AIDS in New Zealand. They provide a broad range of services for people living with HIV, in an attempt to break down the sense of isolation HIV+ people often experience and to build a sense of community.
- The Burnett Foundation Aotearoa, formerly known as the New Zealand AIDS Foundation (NZAF), is New Zealand's national HIV prevention and healthcare organisation. They offer free condoms, HIV tests, provide information about PrEP, U=U, and other ways of staying safe.
- RainbowYOUTH is a national, youth-led organization dedicated to supporting queer, gender diverse, takatāpui and intersex young people, as well as their whānau and wider communities. They run drop-in centres in Auckland, Tauranga and New Plymouth, operate social groups in Auckland, Northland, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki and online, provide one-on-one support to young people around gender and sexuality, and publish a range of information resources on their website.
- Curious is a hub for queer and trans youth in Aotearoa New Zealand. Run by youth, for youth, Curious aims to support queer and trans youth by providing them with a place to connect with each other.
- Gender Minorities Aotearoa is a transgender support and advocacy organisation, run by and for trans, non-binary, intersex, and irawhiti takatāpui people.

- Rainbow Path is an advocacy and peer support group for the rights of rainbow refugees and asylum seekers living in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Tīwhanawhana is a takatāpui community group based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington that provides a resource hub for takatāpui and their whānau.
- F'INE Pasifika provides support for MVPFAFF+ and other Pasifika rainbow people in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.
- Moana Vā is a collective providing community connection, support, advocacy, and mentorship for Pasifika rainbow/MVPFAFF+ people in Ōtautahi Christchurch and Canterbury.
- Gender Dynamix is a support group for gender diverse people in Tauranga.
- Q-Youth is a youth-led organisation that provides support, education, and advocacy for rainbow young people in Whakatū Nelson.
- Qtopia is a youth-led organisation that provides support, education, and advocacy for rainbow young people in Ōtautahi Christchurch.
- Dunedin Pride is a community organisation that celebrates and supports rainbow people in Ōtepoti Dunedin.
- Day of Silence NZ Campaign is a non-violent protest for high school aged students, which aims to draw attention to the silencing effect on youth due to homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Intersex Aotearoa is a registered charitable trust and provides information, education and training for organisations and professionals who provide services to intersex people and their families.
- QSA Network Aotearoa is a youth leadership organisation that connects school-based Queer-Straight Alliances (QSAs) to each other and community resources through peer support, workshops, and events.

Simultaneously, there are many informal ways - for allies/people further along in their LGBTQIA+ journey to form connections with those just starting their journey - to offer support to ethnic or people of colour within the LGBTQIA+ community. Here are a few suggestions:

- Peer support: sometimes, the most valuable support comes from those who have had similar experiences. Encourage the formation of informal peer

support groups, either in person or online. These can provide a safe space for individuals to share their experiences and advice.

- **Mentorship:** older or more experienced members of the LGBTQIA+ community can offer guidance and support to those who are beginning to understand their identity. This can be particularly valuable for younger people or those who may not have other forms of support.
- **Community advocacy:** individuals can advocate for the rights and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals within their own communities. Advocating within your own communities can help to get more involved with people similar to you and form connections. This can involve challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, and promoting understanding and acceptance.
- **Individual support:** simply being a good friend can make a world of difference. This can involve simple actions like listening, offering a shoulder to lean on, or standing up for them if they are being discriminated against.
- **Education:** sharing accurate information about LGBTQIA+ issues can help challenge stereotypes and prejudices that another LGBTQIA+ person may be dealing with. This can be done through social media, informal discussions, or even through art and storytelling.

Final Reflections

This guide, “Spectrum of Colours”, is a testament to the vibrant diversity and resilience of the ethnic LGBTQIA+ community in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is a celebration of our unique identities and a recognition of the challenges we face. It is an opportunity for us to find and create spaces where all parts of ourselves are accepted and celebrated.

This guide is not intended to be a roadmap, because at the end of the day, your journey is your own. Your experiences, your identities, your struggles, and your triumphs are uniquely yours. If anything, we hope that this guide can be a compass, pointing you in the direction of finding your truest, most authentic self.

We hope you are able to reflect on the insights it offers, question them, apply them in ways that make sense for you, and share them with others. Not only does this help us grow as individuals, but it helps build stronger, empathic, and more inclusive communities.

Finally, we invite you to contribute to this living document. Your stories, your perspectives, and your wisdom can help others navigate their journeys. Together, we can ensure that this guide remains relevant, dynamic, and truly representative of our diverse community. Feel free to write to us through our website, and/or on any of our social media pages. As always, we would love to hear from you.

Thank you for being a part of this journey. Remember, you are not alone. You are part of a vibrant, diverse, and resilient community. We stand with you, in solidarity and in pride. We are limitless by nature, and together, we can create a world where everyone, including you, is celebrated for who they are.

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