



Pride365 

Empowering your joy in life



Finding joy — that steady, internal sense of peace and contentment — can make a meaningful difference in your life. It may sometimes feel out of reach, especially given the many challenges the LGBTQ+ community faces. But even in tough times, you can nurture joy and, in so doing, lift your spirits and support your overall mental health and well-being.

Ready to cultivate more joy? Following are some ways to consider getting started.



Prioritize your well-being

Taking care of yourself is important to your overall health and well-being. It includes the usual suspects, such as getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods and staying active. But it also involves uncovering and pursuing a sense of purpose and protecting your own best interests.

A sense of purpose drives you to keep pushing forward, even when things are difficult. It's what gets you up in the morning and looking forward to tomorrow. It's very personal and unique to the individual, and can be what you do for a living, like teaching, advocating or caregiving, or for your own personal interests, such as fostering animals, the arts or fitness.

It's about finding what motivates you, gives you a sense of fulfillment and adds meaning to your life. For some people, this might be obvious, like someone who knew since they were a child they wanted to be an astronaut or a teacher. For others, it may be a lifelong journey. And for many, it will change over time, especially as we gain experience. The key is to keep pursuing it.



Realize your value

A big part of nurturing joy is finding and feeling value in yourself. Being comfortable with who you are means you understand and accept your strengths and your areas for improvement. It also means you expect others to treat you with respect and kindness. Sometimes that means making difficult decisions, like distancing yourself from a friend who adds stress to your life or moving to a city where you feel welcome.

It's also crucial to set healthy boundaries to protect yourself. Boundaries come in many forms, including emotional, physical, time, financial and sexual. When you set healthy personal boundaries, you're valuing yourself and protecting your health and well-being.

To figure out if you need to set more healthy boundaries in your life, consider what causes you stress, or makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Those are all signs of something trespassing on your personal limits and comfort zones. Think about guidelines you could put in place for yourself and others to redraw the lines. For example, if you feel unsafe walking alone in public, you could create a buddy system that you and others could rely on. If a relative repeatedly makes comments that feel hurtful, you might choose to address it directly, explaining your perspective. You could also choose to stop speaking to that relative as often or at all.

Another way to value yourself is to know your rights, whether in school, at work, as a resident in your community and this nation. While many policies and laws seem to be in flux right now, many aren't. Rather than assuming or believing something because someone you trust says it, it's best to know with accuracy. If you aren't sure where to look or find the information, consider contacting a local or national organization that supports LGBTQ+ rights.

If you're concerned about your rights and the rights of others slipping away, consider ways you can help make a difference. For example, you could attend local town halls and congressional meetings to stay informed and engaged. You could also find ways to support LGBTQ+ organizations, such as by volunteering, speaking up, donating to a cause or attending sponsored events. Whatever you choose, taking action can help you feel empowered and more in control. When you focus on the things you can influence and let go of the things you can't, it helps reduce stress and anxious thoughts. And all these mental health benefits nurture that sense of contentment and peace inside you.



Spend time in supportive spaces

Seek out spaces and places where you feel valued and safe. Wherever you feel like you can be yourself is a good place to start. That may be a local youth group, an online chat group or your favorite band's live show. Depending on where you live and who surrounds you, finding people who support you and places that welcome you could be easy or not-so easy. But it's important to find both. When we feel supported, we feel like we belong — and both feelings boost overall well-being. They help reduce stress, anxiety and loneliness, and increase self-esteem and resilience, too. In practical terms, this could mean spending more time with certain family members and friends, and less with others, or making new connections all together.

Many LGBTQ+ individuals who feel isolated where they live, go to school or work find it very helpful to reach out to others in the LGBTQ+ community through digital spaces. You can find affirming sites, chat groups and influencers who offer emotional support and shared lived experiences through [community and mental health resources](#). To help online visitors who may be in unsupportive environments, many of these digital spaces provide a quick escape button, so you can automatically exit and be redirected if needed. Entertainment media, like movies, books and video games with positive, affirming storylines also offer comfort and joy. For many people, entertainment offers a much-needed mental and emotional escape from everyday life and an opportunity to relax and recharge. So does creative expression, such as journaling, drawing, gardening, singing, dancing or whatever else gives you a sense of release and freedom.



Maintain hope and optimism

It's a natural part of life to go through ups and downs, to face and overcome challenges, and to experience calm and joy. If you're ever feeling down, try to remember times you felt better to remind yourself that good times do happen in your life. Also, look for reasons to be happy and joyful, so you can find them. Even small things, like petting a kitten or puppy, or chitchatting with your favorite barista, can bring welcome jolts of joy.

If you do find yourself feeling isolated and lonely or simply looking for an uplift, consider the fact that, however it may feel in the moment, you're a valued member of a much larger community. Millions of people identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community and millions more support the community. Try taking comfort in knowing that progress continues over time, and each generation has the opportunity build on the success of those who came before it.

While the broader community grows and progresses, everyone will experience their own unique journey. As you go through life, some people will be more welcoming than you expect, while others may be less so, even within the LGBTQ+ community. But whatever your sexual orientation and gender identity, you can choose to move through the world with your own sense of curiosity and optimism.



Visit pride365plus.com for more information on additional LGBTQ+ resources

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