

Ethics and Intersex People

- Intersex people are often not treated fairly in society. We should not have to worry about experiencing discrimination or prejudice from our therapists too.
- Intersex people often have autonomy taken away. We should be allowed to make our own informed choices about our lives.
- Intersex people should be free from damaging medical interventions and discrimination. We deserve to be protected from harm.
- Mental health professionals should be educated on intersex people and should work to do good for intersex clients and our whole community.

“The therapist I had who was willing to seek out information from intersex sources to help me was the most helpful.” -Niki, intersex therapist

- We should be able to trust our mental health professionals. We might have some trouble trusting you at first.
- Be honest with intersex people. Many of us have been lied to or not told the entire truth about ourselves. Honesty is necessary to develop a good relationship with an intersex client.
- Protect our privacy (within the limits of confidentiality). Never out an intersex person.

“Many intersex people have been told to remain silent, and telling one's story is a profound act of trust.” -Bonnie, therapist



What We Wish Our Therapists Knew

“I think being intersex is cool. I wouldn't want my body to be "fixed," I just want to be supported and appreciated the way I am.”



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InterACT
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Intersex Mental Health Facts

→ Intersex is separate from gender identity and sexual orientation. Intersex people can be straight or gay or any other sexual orientation. Some intersex people are cisgender, some are transgender, and some reject either label.

Intersex-affirming care is trauma-informed

→ Intersex people often have not been allowed to control our own bodies. We may have had medical interventions that we didn't want. We might have lasting physical problems and psychological distress because of things done without our permission.

→ We are often not told the truth. Honesty and openness are vital for us to develop a good relationship with any professional.

→ We might be looking for support for something unrelated to being intersex.



“Being intersex impacts every aspect of my identity. It intersects with my gender, religion, politics, disability and medical experience, you name it.”

Just because a therapist is LGBTQ-informed doesn't mean they're automatically intersex-informed.

What Sessions Should Look Like

- Emphasize self-advocacy and empowerment.
- Educate yourself about medical and social aspects of being intersex.
- Explore the positive aspects of being intersex. Many of us like our intersex bodies, our community, or have had other positive experiences because of being intersex.
- Use inclusive and non-pathologizing language (e.g. “intersex person” or “person with a variation in sex development” as opposed to “person with a disorder of sex development”). Never use the term “hermaphrodite.”

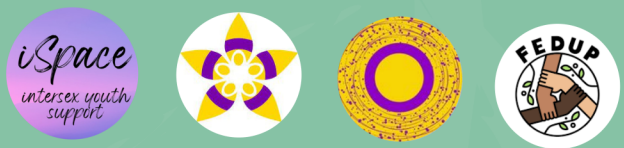


“I wish my therapist knew that my feelings about my past medical interventions are complicated, just like my relationship to my body and my gender is complicated.”

“I wish more therapists understood that for me, being intersex doesn't define my gender identity, but it isn't totally separate from it either.”

Peer support resources

Peer support and community connections can be life-changing for so many intersex people who grew up feeling isolated because they didn't know anyone else like them.



- iSpace intersex youth support
- InterConnect support network
- Club Intersex support group
- Fighting Eating Disorders in Underrepresented Populations: A Trans+ & Intersex Collective



“A therapist doesn't have to know everything about the intersex experience to be a strong support; they just need to be willing to listen and learn.”

