



# It's On Us Workshop: Tapping Into LGBTQ+ Hookup Culture

# Agenda

- Introductions
- Self care check in
- Dating apps and norms
- Practicing safe sex
- Sexual communication
- Self care reminder
- Post-training survey

# Learning Outcomes

Assess safety and norms within queer hookup culture.

Practice safety strategies around drug/alcohol use, sexual health, and boundaries.

Distinguish unhealthy sexual behaviors and recognize sexual violence.

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# INTRODUCTIONS

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# SELF CARE CHECK

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# DATING APPS AND NORMS

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**WHICH DATING APPS DO YOU USE?**



**What unwritten rules or “norms” do  
you notice on dating apps in  
LGBTQ+ spaces?**

**Do different apps have different  
hookup norms?**

**ACTIVITY #1:**  
**UNPACKING DATING APP NORMS**

# HOW IT WORKS:

- **Set up:** Separate your participants into groups of 3-4. Give each group sticky notes.
- **Directions:** The facilitator will read out the question(s)/put the question(s) on the board. Each group will have 3-5 minutes to write answers to the question on the sticky notes. Then, one group at a time will share out their answers and place their sticky notes on the board.
- **Read the questions aloud:**
  - “What are the unspoken rules or expectations you’ve noticed in LGBTQ+ hookup culture?”
  - “What kinds of messages do you see in dating profiles or app bios about who is desirable and who isn’t? These could be things you’ve experienced yourself or just noticed as patterns within the community.”

## HOW IT WORKS, CONTINUED:

- The first group to share out should place their sticky notes on the board/wall spaced out, but keeping similar ones near each other. Each group following will place their sticky notes near similar ones from previous groups to start to create clusters.
- Once every group has shared their sticky notes and placed them on the board/wall, ask participants to label each cluster (example on the next slide).
- **Debrief:** Do any of these clusters feel harmful? Which might feel protective or related to safety?
  - How do these norms influence the way people present themselves in dating apps?
  - Who seems to be centered versus excluded in these digital spaces?

MASC4MASC  
ONLY

MUST HAVE  
ABS OR GYM  
PICS

TRANS PEOPLE  
MESSAGED  
FOR HOOK UP  
BUT NOT  
RELATIONSHIP

"I'VE ALWAYS  
WANTED TO  
TRY A TRANS  
GUY"

BEAR EMOJI

NO FEMMES

GOLD/STAR  
PLATINUM

TRANS  
PEOPLE ARE  
ALWAYS  
BOTTOMS

DL/CLOSETED  
ONLY

MUST HOST,  
DON'T BRING  
ANYONE  
OVER

CONDOMS  
OPTIONAL IF  
ON PrEP

ASIAN GUYS  
ARE ALWAYS  
BOTTOMS

BLACK MEN  
ARE TOPS

NO PROFILE  
PIC = SAFER

BAREBACK =  
MORE  
DESIRABLE

ASSUMPTIO  
N HIV+  
PEOPLE  
SHOULD  
DISCLOSE  
FIRST

LATINO =  
PASSIONATE

WHITE MEN  
AS THE  
STANDARD

### BODY TYPE/MASCULINITY

- Anti-femininity and misogyny
- Alignment with cis/heteronormative standards of gender
- Exclusive to trans and nonbinary people
- Pressure on queer people to fit into a gender box
- Can contribute to harmful beauty standards

### TRANSPHOBIA AND FETISHIZATION

- Objectifying trans people for their bodies
- Forcing cisnormativity on trans people
- Treating trans people as a commodity or against a norm
- Seeing trans people as sexual objects for one's own desire instead of whole humans
- Minimizing trans people to their body parts
- Intersection of biphobia and transphobia to brag about only having certain kinds of sex or associating with certain body parts

### DISCRETION / VISIBILITY

- Implies that being queer is something to hide or be ashamed of
- Stigmatizing being out
- Power dynamics involved with secrecy
- Risk to the person who is sharing identity when the other person refuses to disclose
- Secrecy can be used as an excuse to silence survivors of sexual assault
- Reinforcing that "passing" is more desirable

### SEXUAL HEALTH AND STIGMA

- Normalizing unsafe sex practices
- Shaming people for using safe sex practices
- Stigmatizing people who are HIV+ as dirty, undesirable
- Spreading myths that only HIV+ people are responsible for safe sex practices
- Coercion or pressure to not use safe sex practices

### RACISM AND OBJECTIFICATION

- Stereotyping Asian men as less masculine or not real men
- Stereotyping Latino men as dramatic, overly emotional, or hypersexual
- Stereotyping Black men as aggressive, dominant, or violent
- Centering White men as the norm or standard

**ACTIVITY #2:**  
**SWIPE RIGHT/SWIPE LEFT**

# HOW IT WORKS:

- **Set up:** Read out different norms or other unspoken rules from queer hookup culture.
- **Directions:** The facilitator will read out the statements. Participants will move to the right side of the room (“swipe right”) if they’ve seen/experienced it, or move to the left side of the room (“swipe left”) if they haven’t.
- Read the statements aloud (examples on the next slide) and let participants move to either side of the room.
- After each, ask the participants to react to the statement:
  - What do you think about this norm? Is it harmful? How does it harm our community?

# EXAMPLE LIST OF NORMS

- Profiles that say Masc4Masc only.
- You have to post shirtless or gym pics to get attention.
- Being femme means you're less desirable.
- People assume bigger-bodied folks aren't attractive.
- Profiles that say No Asians, no Blacks.
- Asian men are assumed to be bottoms.
- Black men are assumed to be tops.
- White men are seen as the default or most desirable.
- Condoms are assumed optional if someone's on PrEP.
- People shame or reject HIV-positive folks who disclose.
- Bareback sex is treated as the preference.
- DL only.
- No pics = safer.
- You're expected to host, not bring someone over.
- People get blocked for being 'too out' or flamboyant.

# EXAMPLE LIST OF NORMS

- Transgender people are treated as ‘experiments.’
- Nonbinary people are told to ‘pick a side.’
- Cisgender people swipe left automatically when they see ‘trans.’
- Bisexual women always end up with men.
- Bisexuality for men is just a phase before coming out as gay.
- If you’re bi, you’re more likely to cheat.
- You can’t be trusted to date within the queer community if you also date straight people.
- Femmes aren’t taken seriously as masc presenting sapphics because people assume they’re straight.
- Masc are expected to always be dominant or tops.
- Transgender women are excluded from gay/lesbian spaces.
- Transgender men are excluded from gay/lesbian spaces.
- Apps geared toward women are treated as ‘safer’ but there is often a preference for White lesbians.

# DEBRIEFING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What patterns did you notice in these norms? How might these harms be harmful? How these norms affect us, our relationships, and our community?
- What norms feel protective or affirming?
- **Dreaming up solidarity within our community:**
  - How can we recognize the difference between genuine attraction or preference versus bias/fetishization?
  - How would we know if our hookup culture centered are care, consent, and respect for all bodies? What norms would we see?
  - What are actions we can take in our own profiles, conversations, and hookups to push back on harmful norms and create these new norms?

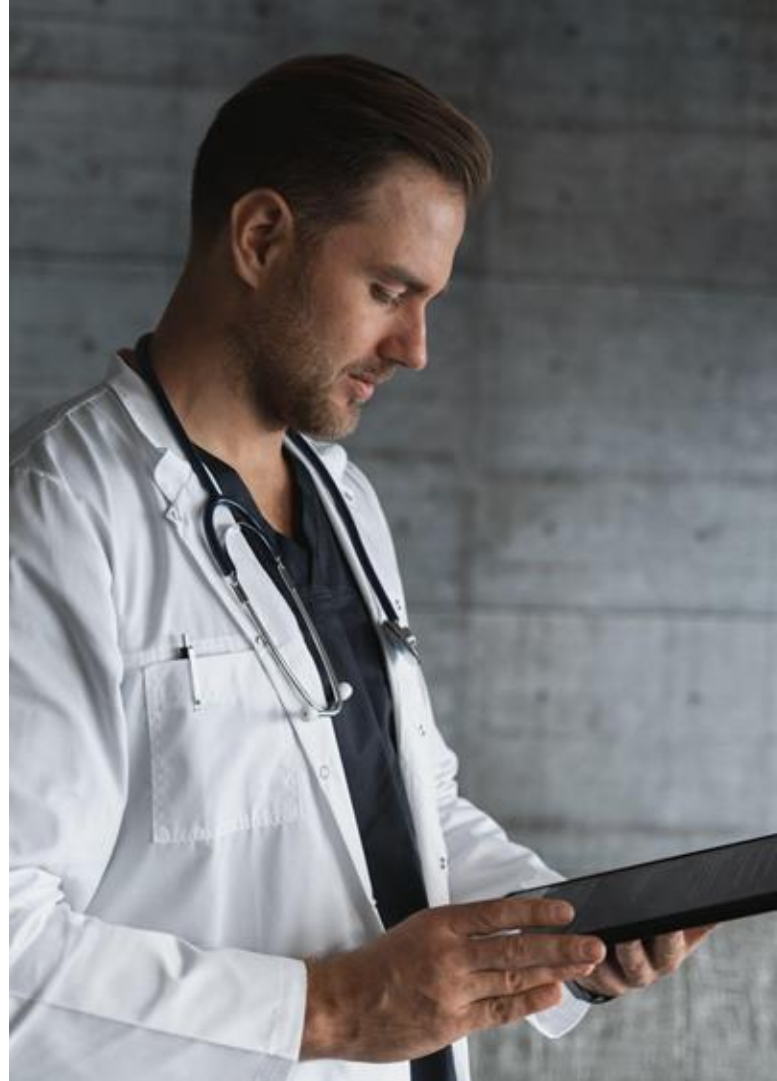
# TAKEAWAYS

- **Challenge exclusionary language** → Instead of “no fats, no fems, no Asians,” ask: is this preference based on attraction or internalized bias?
- **Affirm trans and nonbinary people** → Treat all genders as valid instead of curiosities.
- **Model body positivity** → Use pictures or language that celebrates a range of bodies and presentations.
- **Practice safer norms** → Normalize open conversations about sexual health without shame.
- **Reject secrecy rooted in stigma** → Differentiate between choosing privacy for safety versus silencing others.
- **Name and disrupt stereotypes** → Challenge assumptions (e.g., “Black men are always tops”) when you hear them.
- **Center boundaries and communication** → Remember that hookups should be about mutual pleasure and satisfaction, not risk and exclusion.

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# PRACTICING SAFE SEX

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**ACTIVITY #3:**  
**MYTHS & FACTS**

## **MYTH or FACT?**

You can't get pregnant if you're on testosterone.

## MYTH

Testosterone can suppress ovulation and reduce the likelihood of pregnancy, but it is not a reliable form of birth control. Ovulation can still occur even after being on it for a long time.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

Hormonal Replacement Therapy can contribute to risk  
of yeast infections.

# **FACT**

Testosterone can change the bacteria and pH balance in the vagina. This can result in increased risk of bacterial vaginosis and yeast infections.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

Having a STI is no different than having any other infection.

# **FACT**

**STIs are just like all other bacteria and viruses. They are labeled as “sexually transmitted” because they are often passed through body parts associated with sex. All bacteria/viruses labeled “STI” can be transmitted in nonsexual ways.**

## **MYTH or FACT?**

Scientists predict that nearly all sexually active people have had an STI at some point in their life.

## **FACT**

The most common is the human papillomavirus (HPV), that is estimated to have affected over 80% of sexually active people. HPV often goes undetected.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

People who contract a STI are dirty.

# MYTH

STIs can be transmitted in many ways. Just like you wouldn't call someone "dirty" for contracting the common cold, we shouldn't shame people who have an STI.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

**WLW relationships don't need to use protection  
because they don't need to worry about pregnancy.**

# MYTH

There are many reasons to use protection, including both contraception and protection from STI contraction. People in WLW relationships can still use finger cots and dental dams to prevent the spread of infections.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

You can make a dental dam out of a condom.

# **FACT**

Snip the tip and cut down the long side of a condom to  
make a dental dam.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

To use a dental dam properly, you should hold it taut against the person's body.

## MYTH

Stretching a dental dam could tear it, making it ineffective. Instead, lay it on your partner's genitals and gently hold it in place. Do not chew on the barrier as this could also create holes.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

You should not use the same dental dam or condom near the vulva and anus.

# **FACT**

Using the same dental dam/condom for the anus and vulva could result in infection. It is safer to use a different one.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

Getting an STI must mean you're a "slut" or have multiple sex partners.

# MYTH

STIs are transmitted in many ways. People can get STIs by having sex with an exclusive partner who has had sex with a previous partner. STIs are not a test of morality. No one deserves to be judged for their sexual behaviors.

## MYTH or FACT?

If you get a yeast infection or a UTI after sex with an exclusive partner, it's because your partner cheated on you.

# MYTH

Yeast infections and UTIs can be contracted by wiping in the wrong direction, eating certain foods, and many other ways. These do not necessarily mean that you got it from your partner.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

If you contract an STI from your partner, they cheated on you.

## MYTH

STI contraction and transmission can be from past partners. STI's may have an incubation period or be asymptomatic, leading someone to not know that they are carrying the virus. This is why it's important to get tested regularly and before having sex with a new partner.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

Wanting to get tested to STIs in an exclusive relationship does not mean that person cheated.

# **FACT**

Because of incubation periods and the possibility of an STI being asymptomatic, it is a good idea to continue to get tested for STIs even if you become exclusive with your partner.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

People with internal genitalia (e.g., vagina, uterus)  
don't need to worry about PrEP.

# MYTH

People with internal genitals are actually at an increased risk for contraction. The vaginal lining is susceptible to HIV contraction. Other conditions that cause inflammation can also increase risk of contraction.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

HIV is a punishment for being gay.

# MYTH

HIV affects people of all genders and sexualities. HIV is more often spread in communities that have been denied access to sexuality education and healthcare.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

HIV can be spread through common contact like  
handshakes and hugs.

# MYTH

HIV is spread through bodily fluids like blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk.

## **MYTH or FACT?**

When it comes to HIV, undetectable = untransmittable.

# FACT

Certain HIV treatments used as prescribed can lead to such a low amount of the virus in the blood that a lab test cannot measure it. At this point, the virus is non transmittable to other people.

**ACTIVITY #4:**  
**COMMUNICATION ABOUT SAFE  
SEX SCENARIOS**

# TIPS FOR SETTING BOUNDARIES

- Be honest and clear.
- Be specific and say what you mean. Don't leave room for interpretation.
- Set a firm boundary, avoid “just,” “if that's ok,” and “I think.”
- It's ok not to be sure, you can always ask to try things slowly.

You matched with someone on an app and agreed to meet for a hookup. When they arrive, you realize you're not feeling it anymore. They say: "But I came all the way here..."

1. How might you go about starting a conversation or setting a boundary in the moment?
2. How could you effectively communicate your decision?
3. What are your options if you don't feel safe continuing?

What could the other person have done better in this situation?

OR What would be a safe and respectful response from the other person? How could they make sure that they are making the other person feel more comfortable?

**You invite a hookup over from an app. After they arrive and you're getting undressed, you notice a sore on their genitals.**

- 1. How might you go about starting a conversation or setting a boundary in the moment?**
- 2. How could you effectively communicate your decision?**
- 3. What are your options if you don't feel safe continuing?**

**What could the other person have done better in this situation?**

**OR What would be a safe and respectful response from the other person? How could they make sure that they are making the other person feel more comfortable?**

During the hookup, your partner keeps moving their hands to places you don't want them to touch. When you pull away, they laugh and say, "Come on, relax."

1. How might you go about starting a conversation or setting a boundary in the moment?
2. How could you effectively communicate your decision?
3. What are your options if you don't feel safe continuing?

What could the other person have done better in this situation?

OR What would be a safe and respectful response from the other person? How could they make sure that they are making the other person feel more comfortable?

**You want to use a condom/dental dam but your partner says, “I don’t like how condoms/dental dams feel. Don’t worry, I’m clean.”**

- 1. How might you go about starting a conversation or setting a boundary in the moment?**
- 2. How could you effectively communicate your decision?**
- 3. What are your options if you don’t feel safe continuing?**

**What could the other person have done better in this situation?**

**OR What would be a safe and respectful response from the other person? How could they make sure that they are making the other person feel more comfortable?**

**You meet someone at a queer bar, and they ask you to leave together. They've been drinking heavily and keep insisting they're "fine."**

- 1. How might you go about starting a conversation or setting a boundary in the moment?**
- 2. How could you effectively communicate your decision?**
- 3. What are your options if you don't feel safe continuing?**

**What could the other person have done better in this situation?**

**OR What would be a safe and respectful response from the other person? How could they make sure that they are making the other person feel more comfortable?**

**You're hooking up with someone who makes comments like, "You don't really seem queer," or "You're too hot to be trans."**

- 1. How might you go about starting a conversation or setting a boundary in the moment?**
- 2. How could you effectively communicate your decision?**
- 3. What are your options if you don't feel safe continuing?**

**What could the other person have done better in this situation?**

**OR What would be a safe and respectful response from the other person? How could they make sure that they are making the other person feel more comfortable?**

Partway into a hookup, your partner says, “I want to try something rougher,” and asks you to start choking them. You know that there is no safe way to choke someone and you are afraid of hurting them.

1. How might you go about starting a conversation or setting a boundary in the moment?
2. How could you effectively communicate your decision?
3. What are your options if you don't feel safe continuing?

What could the other person have done better in this situation?

OR What would be a safe and respectful response from the other person? How could they make sure that they are making the other person feel more comfortable?

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# SEXUAL COMMUNICATION

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**ACTIVITY #5:**  
**SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND  
NEGOTIATION**

# Sexual Harm Can Take Many Forms

- **Stealthing:** Lying about using protection or discontinuing use during sex without the other person's knowledge or against their will.
- **Verbal Coercion:** Using pressure like strong emotions, threats, nagging/begging, or quid pro quos to force or convince someone to do something sexual against their will. For example:
  - Withholding hormones or other gender-affirming items
  - Threatening to out someone
  - Saying someone will lose their friends, community, or chosen family
- Intentionally lying about your status to make someone do something sexual when they wouldn't if they knew the truth.
- Forcing someone to go off PrEP or other forms of protection in order to control them.

# HOW IT WORKS:

- **Set up:** Post the “Menu” on the next slide on the board or print out a copy as a handout.
- **Separate participants into pairs.**
- **Directions:** “Imagine the following the scenario: You are going to the It’s On Us Pizzeria. You each have \$10. You will have three minutes to decide together what kind of pizza you are going to order and how you are going to pay for it.”
  - Do not share any more instructions just yet. We want the conversation to go naturally.

It's On Us Pizzeria

# Menu

## CHOOSE YOUR CRUST

Garlic Salted	\$3	Thin	\$2
Cheese Stuffed	\$3	Hand-Tossed	\$3
Pretzel	\$4	Detroit Style	\$4

## CHOOSES YOUR BASE

Garlic butter	\$3
Marinara Sauce	\$2
White Sauce	\$3
Pesto	\$4

## CHOOSE YOUR TOPPINGS

Pepperoni	\$4
Three Cheese	\$3
Bell Peppers and Onions	\$2
Sausage	\$4
Ham and Pineapple	\$5
Anchovies	\$6

## FULL MENU



Pizzas



Salads & Sides



Bread

# Pizza Activity

It's On Us Pizzeria

## Menu

### CHOOSE YOUR CRUST

Garlic Salted	\$3	Thin	\$2
Cheese Stuffed	\$3	Hand-Tossed	\$3
Pretzel	\$4	Detroit Style	\$4

### CHOOSES YOUR BASE

Garlic butter	\$3
Marinara Sauce	\$2
White Sauce	\$3
Pesto	\$4

### CHOOSE YOUR TOPPINGS

Pepperoni	\$4
Three Cheese	\$3
Bell Peppers and Onions	\$2
Sausage	\$4
Ham and Pineapple	\$5
Anchovies	\$6

### FULL MENU



Pizzas



Salads & Sides



Bread

# DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- How did your conversation go?
- Was it an easy discussion?
- Did you disagree or have to negotiate at all?
- Did anything make the discussion difficult?
- Did you set any boundaries?
- What feelings came up during the conversation? What signals was your body giving you when making decisions together?
- How do this conversation relate to sex?

# Sexual Communication is...

- **Mutual** — anyone involved should be checking in with each other.
- **Caring** — even if it's a casual hookup, it requires caring for each other's safety and wellbeing.
- **Free from Pressure** — if it takes convincing, it's not consensual.
- **Certain** — If you're unsure if you OR another person wants to do this, it's better to stop and check in or do something else altogether.

**What can make sexual  
communication difficult or tricky?**

**What are some examples of asking  
someone what they want?**

**What are some examples of telling  
someone what you want?**

# MORE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What does good sexual communication feel like in your body? What are the signs? How do you know when you feel safe and heard?
- How can you say what you don't want without shaming the other person?
- What are some short, clear phrases you could use to express your boundaries?
- What's a non-verbal way to communicate that you want something? How can you make sure it's mutual?
- How do you know for certain that someone is into something? What does uncertainty feel like in your body? How can you honor that feeling when it comes up?

## DAILY HABITS



- Drinking enough water
- Eating filling foods
- Getting enough sleep
- Talking to friends or family

**Taking care of basic needs is the beginning!**

## SELF-SOOTHING



- Taking a bubble bath
- Getting a massage
- Zoning out on social media
- Cooking a cozy meal
- Doing something fun with others

**Take time to tune out daily stressors.**

## MANAGE EMOTIONS



- Meditating or spiritual practices
- Exercising
- Snuggling up to a favorite movie
- Listening to calming music
- Venting to a friend

**Practice regulating your nervous system with familiar things.**

## EMOTIONAL WORK



- Journaling
- Counseling & therapy
- Reflecting
- Feeling emotions fully
- Practicing coping skills

**Work through your emotions towards healing.**

## HEALING WITH COMMUNITY



- Participating in cultural practices
- Engaging in spiritual or religious gatherings
- Group dancing or singing
- Advocacy and activism
- Group discussion or reflection
- Sharing a meal

**Intentional community with others is the ultimate path to healing!**