



PRIDE ALL YEAR LONG: HOW TO BUILD A MORE INCLUSIVE JEWISH SPACE

As spring ends, and we move from Pesach to Shavuot, we want to encourage you to take some of the traditions and values of these holidays and incorporate them into your daily life. Both holidays can teach us about inclusion.

Passover teaches us the importance of standing against oppression. During Passover we are asked to accept the hard truth that we are never truly free unless everybody is free. We are asked to recall the experience of being enslaved, oppressed and freed in Egypt as if we were enslaved, oppressed and freed. Not an ancestor or another Jewish person but we ourselves. [This resource from the Anti-Defamation League](#) is a great way to learn more about the connection between Passover, justice and anti-oppressive work.

Shavuot, which celebrates the completion of the seven-week Omer counting period immediately following the first nights of Passover, is a holiday known for staying up all night learning. Shavuot also uplifts the belief of radical inclusivity, where every single Jew is invited to receive and transmit Torah. For this reason, the holiday encompasses major themes around inclusion. [This resource from the Jewish Federations of North America](#) is great for learning more about the relationship between Shavuot and inclusivity.

June, which often houses Shavuot, is the national month of Pride, but our inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ Jews into our broader communities shouldn't end there! There are lots of ways to incorporate inclusion into the day to day, and a lot of important information that you should constantly be aware of. If you're feeling a bit lost on some little (and not so little) ways to be more queer inclusive this year, this is the resource for you.

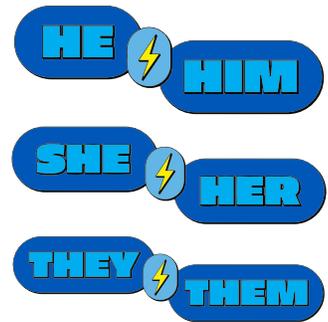




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1. Use the Right Pronouns and Names

It may not seem like a huge deal to you, but this can make or break a space as inclusive. Consider updating your forms, email signatures, name tags, etc., to be more inclusive, and always make sure to use the name and pronouns a person identifies with. If you're not sure, ask. If you use Hebrew names in a space, or conduct b'nei mitzvot, remember we can do this in Hebrew too. [This great Jewish resource from Keshet](#) goes into more detail.



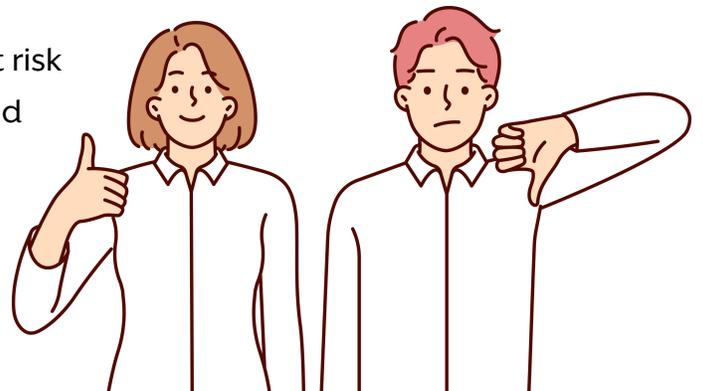
2. Don't Make Assumptions

Even if you think you have the best “gaydar” in the world, you can't tell gender or sexuality simply by looking at someone. Speculating can be hurtful and harmful. Remind others that part of what makes a space safer is establishing good boundaries around this.



3. Don't Talk About Someone Else's Sexuality or Gender Without Express Consent

People may only be “out” (open about their sexuality) to a certain group or to certain people. Queer people still face discrimination at work and in other public spaces. Globally, an estimated 83% of LGBTQIA+ people still hide their gender or sexuality from “all or most” people in their lives(1). Avoid lashon hara (“evil speech,” slander, rumors, etc.), and don't risk “outing” someone by talking about them behind their back. [Do not spread gossip among your people. Do not stand idle when your fellowman is in danger: I am the Eternal. \(Leviticus 19:16\)](#)



(1) Yale Medicine

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4. Educate Yourself

Many queer folks experience a death by a thousand cuts situation where they are constantly put in the position of explaining gender, sexuality, etc. It can be exhausting and demoralizing to have to educate everyone. Luckily there are amazing resources online. Please consider taking it upon yourself when you have questions and not putting the extra labor on a queer person. Educating yourself can be a big or little task: If someone uses a term you don't know, look it up. Or if you represent an organization, you can invite an educator to come in and lead a training. Here's a good tool: PFLAG published this [glossary](#) of terms.

5. Stick Up for Others

You might be surprised by how frequently, when it comes to queer issues, folks are encouraged to “just” let things go or not make a big deal of them. Standing up for an LGBTQ+ person might seem small, but the impact can be huge. The compounding trauma of always letting things go can really affect one's mental health — as can feeling unsafe or unwelcome in community spaces.

Beyond a lack of emotional safety, the queer community experiences significant sexuality and gender-based violence. We never know when leaving someone to fend for themselves will leave them vulnerable. Here are some stats you might not know:



The Movement Advancement Project and Centerlink reviewed 208 LGBTQ+ community centers in 45 states and found that **71% had experienced hate or harassment over the past two years (2)**.



49% of LGBTQ+ people ages 13-17 reported being bullied in person within the past year, and 24% of those who are 18-24 reported the same (3). Between January and June of 2024, 23% of LGBTQ+ young people and 28% of trans teens (4) reported that they have been physically threatened or harmed due to either their sexual orientation or gender identity.

(2) [Glaad.org - Unsafe America, New Glaad Data Shows Unprecedented Threats and Attacks Against lgbtq](#)

(3)(4) [The Trevor Project Survey](#)



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6. Don't Be Silent

You might feel uncomfortable or simply not know what to do, but remaining silent supports the status quo. In our current society, that means LGBTQIA+ people typically do not get included and may not feel safe in spaces. As the Holocaust survivor and human rights activist Elie Weisel said, “We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”



We understand the world of LGBTQ+ inclusion is a big space with a lot of new words and plenty of social pressure to keep things as they are, but to fight against oppression is a Jewish value and one we at Blue Dove hold closely.

It's OK if you can't be perfect or do everything as soon as you stop reading. Start with one step. As Rabbi Tarfon said in Pirkei Avot, “[You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it \(2:16\).](#)”

