

Effect of the coming out process on the mental health of LGBTQ youth

Uchenna Lizmay Umeh

Self-employed life coach, USA

Abstract

Children, teens, and young adults who identify as (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer plus (LGBTQ+) hitherto referred to as Queer, are at greater risk of struggling with mental health conditions, suicidality and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than their peers who identify as straight and cis-gendered. Transgender youth face further disparities as they are twice as likely to experience depressive symptoms, seriously consider suicide, and attempt suicide compared to cisgender lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and questioning youth. For many LGBTQ+ people, socioeconomic and cultural conditions, discrimination, prejudice, denial of civil and human rights, harassment, and family rejection, can also lead to new or worsened symptoms, particularly for those with intersecting racial or socioeconomic identities. Health disparities are common in the LGBTQ+ community because of the internalized homophobia amongst Queer people, perceived or experienced homophobia and ostracization, and surprisingly, lack of education particularly among clinicians and healthcare providers. The process of coming out (realizing one's sexual orientation or true gender and sharing it with the outside world) in a world that is still largely homophobic and unsupportive is responsible for a great majority of stress and mental health challenges experienced by queer persons. What if Queer people did not ever have to "come out"? What if we rather create a world free of homophobia and judgment which in turn allows them to rather invite us into their world? What if their trauma and stressors never existed? Imagine all the heartaches and pain we could be saving them? We shall discuss 10 ways in which we, particularly clinicians can become better allies for the Queer folk in our lives. We shall learn how to create safe spaces for them to in turn help decrease the health disparities and their mental health challenges.

Received: August 12, 2022; **Accepted:** August 18, 2022; **Published:** August 28, 2022

Biography

Uchenna Lizmay Umeh, M.D aka Dr Lu Lu is a Nigerian-born, pediatrician and queer mom of a non-binary transgender young adult. She is a life coach, speaker, bestselling author, youth suicide prevention activist and award-winning LGBTQ* advocate.

A former Lt. Col and commander in the US Air Force, she is currently a youth confidence coach, and helps parents with self-acceptance and support of their queer children.

Uchenna Lizmay Umeh, M.D aka Dr Lu Lu speaks publicly on parenting, childhood trauma, LGBTQ* issues, and youth suicide

prevention. She has been featured on local, national, and international television including The Diaspora Show on the Nigerian Television Authority, and the nationally syndicated CBS This Morning with Gayle King.

Uchenna Lizmay Umeh, M.D aka Dr Lu Lu is the bestselling author of "How to Teach Your Children About Racism", "A Teen's Life" and "How to Raise Well Rounded Children." Her next book: "Invited In: How to Create a Safe Space for the LGBTQ* Child", is due out May 2022.