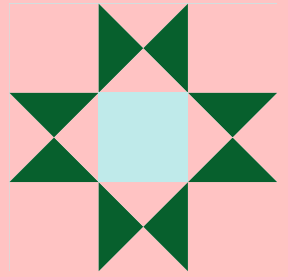


HEALTHY QUEER RELATIONSHIPS



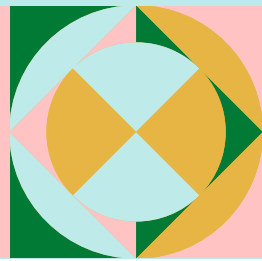
A Resource Guide





THIS ZINE WAS LOVINGLY
CREATED ON THE UNCEDED,
STOLEN ANCESTRAL
TERRITORY OF THE
SECWEPEMC PEOPLE.

The land, water, air, animals, and plants
have been part of communities here
since time immemorial.



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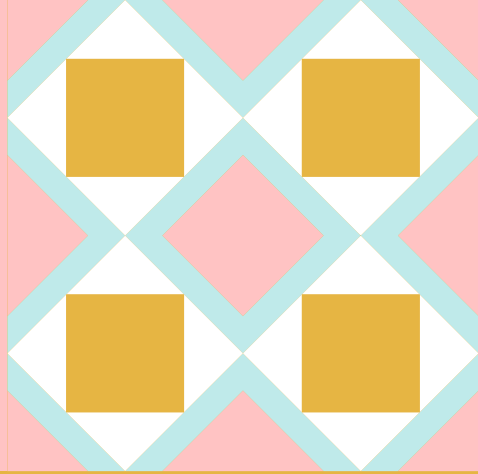
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WHAT DO QUEER RELATIONSHIPS LOOK LIKE?

Like any other type of romantic relationship, **queer relationships can take on many different forms and dynamics**. Here are a few examples:

- A monogamous partnership (two people of any gender who only see each other)
- An “open” relationship (two people of any gender who consensually agree to see other people in a casual way)
- A polyamorous relationship (two people of any gender who have other partners; or an interconnected group of partners, sometimes called a “polycule”)



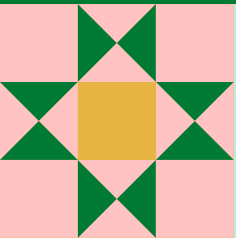


None of these relationship styles are inherently healthy or unhealthy – **they're just different!**

It's often suggested that monogamy is the best, most rewarding, or 'default' relationship style, and that's not always the case for every person. The idea that monogamy is superior comes from a colonial, heterosexist viewpoint that has been absorbed over time by our dominant culture. Over the last few decades, **“forms of consensual non-monogamy have grown from ‘deviant’ practices into full-fledged identities and communities”** (Hammack et al., 2019, p. 572), as far as mainstream Canadian culture is concerned.

In the same way that not all queer-identified people practice non-monogamy, not all people who practice non-monogamy are queer-identified.

If you're new to non-monogamy, or you're interested in learning more about healthy non-monogamous relationships, see the Further Reading page at the back of this zine.



REGARDLESS OF THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP, THERE ARE SIGNS AND SIGNALS TO LOOK OUT FOR THAT INDICATE A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WHERE ALL PARTNERS CAN THRIVE:

Conflict resolution: All relationships experience conflict at some point. In healthy relationships, conflict is handled in a considerate, non-judgmental manner.

Playfulness: Healthy relationships are fun to be a part of. Making time for one another, planning outings, and surprises are ways to grow with one another, continuing the excitement.

Intimacy: Relationships require a certain level of vulnerability. Emotional and physical sensations, like the ones that come with sex, should be underlined by feelings of safety, well-being, and connection between you and your partner(s).

Individuality: If you are at ease spending time with and without your partner(s) and enjoy your 'alone time', that's a sign of a healthy relationship. We all need time to develop our sense of self – that's what helps us respect one another at times when we do disagree.

Good communication: Nothing in a relationship comes without communication. We communicate to share our wants and needs, our likes and dislikes, and to share what's going on in our internal world. Good communication is mutually respectful, even when tensions are high.

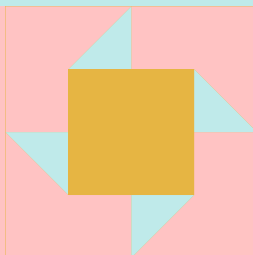
Trust: All relationships move at the speed of trust. In a healthy relationship, you feel safe with your partner(s), respect each other's boundaries, and feel confident that your partner(s) will not hurt you or share private information.

Teamwork: Willingness to work through problems together, share tasks, and celebrate each other's successes is an important feature of any healthy relationship.



NAMING & DEFINING VIOLENCE

No matter what, violence is never the
fault of the person being harmed.



Acts of violence can happen to anyone, regardless of sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, or other aspects of identity.

Like heterosexual relationship violence, “**violence in [2SLGBTQ+] relationships involves the conscious manipulation and control of one person by another through the use of threats, coercion, humiliation and/or force**” (Hart, 1986; Island & Lettelier, 1991; as quoted in Ristock, 2005). Factors like mental health concerns or drug and alcohol use may impact how people behave, but they are never excuses for violence.

The following examples are considered acts of relationship violence, regardless of who you're dating:

Physical: hitting, slapping, biting, punching, pushing, restraining

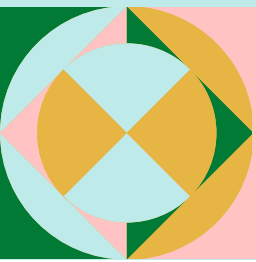
Sexual: forcing someone into any sex act against their will, sharing a partner’s suggestive photos or materials without permission

Emotional: manipulation, isolation, humiliation, lying, suicide threats, racialized attacks or threats, intimidation, threatening to “out” a partner to someone (as queer, HIV+, etc.)

Verbal: name calling, insults, yelling

Financial: stealing or demanding access to money, creating debts/deliberate feelings of “owing”, forcing a partner to work or preventing a partner from working

Digital: stalking or embarrassing a partner over social media, forcing a partner to share passwords/account access, constant texts or calls to “check up” on a partner, monitoring a partner’s calls or texts, emotional or psychological harm over email or social media



Help is available for both survivors of violence and perpetrators. See the Resources section at the back of this zine for more information.

"QUEERING" VIOLENCE

Some acts of violence are specific to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. These include:

Outing: threatening to share and/or sharing information about your sexuality or gender identity against your will

Leveraging community stigma: ridiculing your queer identity; turning children against you; using a marginalized identity against you ("as a trans person, I'm allowed to belittle you", etc.)

Gender stereotypes and transphobia: Claiming you're not a "real" member of any given community; claiming they know what's best for you; blaming behaviour on hormones; inappropriate gendered or sexual statements ("this is how real women like sex", etc.)

Undermining 2SLGBTQ+ identity: deliberately not using your pronouns; claiming your identity is disrespectful of theirs; not allowing you to discuss 2SLGBTQ+ topics; offensive remarks about identity ("nobody will believe you because you're trans", etc.)

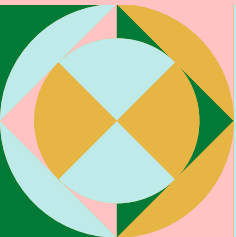
Restricting access: Coercion around medical treatments or hormone therapy; hiding or throwing away gender-affirming clothes or other items; controlling finances to pay for gender-affirming treatment at the risk of basic needs not being met

QUEER STRENGTHS

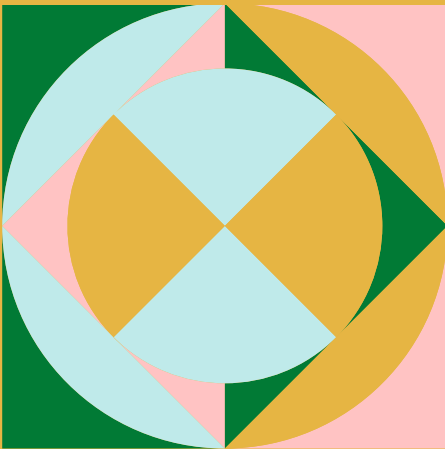
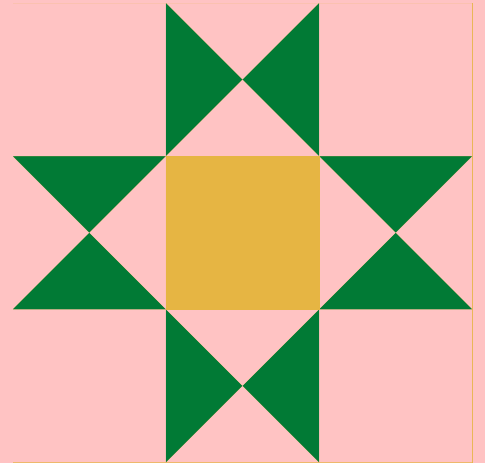
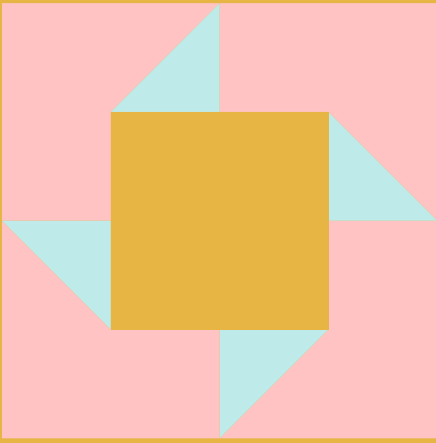
Historically, the 2SLGBTQ+ community has created its own sense of safety, in the absence of support from traditional social safety nets. The concept of **chosen family** is close to many queer people's hearts, too: a 2010 study suggests that 2SLGBTQ+ folks have a higher number of close friendships than our straight counterparts, and that we rely on those friendships more for support.

Support and safety planning do not need to occur in a professional setting. You've probably used your own emotional support and advocacy skills with your loved ones recently, or had space held for you.

When someone discloses their story to you, **believe them**, and be patient and compassionate. Ask if they need help with anything, or just someone to listen. **Only promise the help you know you can give.**



QUEER SUPPORT AND
ADVOCACY HAVE
ALWAYS STARTED AT
THE LEVEL OF
COMMUNITY.



SAFETY PLANNING

If you're in an unhealthy, abusive, or otherwise uncomfortable relationship, or you know someone who is, take some time to **identify supports in your community**. These can be professional (like a doctor or counsellor) or informal (like friends, family, or coworkers). Go over the following checklist, and consider who might be a good fit to provide support with each task.

Active listening when I need to talk

Name/Contact:_____

Providing a place to stay overnight

Name/Contact:_____

Providing rides

Name/Contact:_____

Watching kids and/or pets

Name/Contact:_____

Providing or coordinating meals

Name/Contact:_____

Checking in over text/phone

Name/Contact:_____

Doing something fun together

Name/Contact:_____

Lending money

Name/Contact:_____

Finding out about/getting connected to community resources

Name/Contact:_____

Accompanying to appointments

Name/Contact:_____

Storing belongings in a safe place

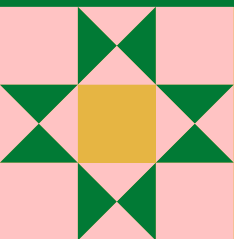
Name/Contact:_____

Helping with household chores

Name/Contact:_____



HARM REDUCTION



Even in large urban areas, queer communities can be small and close-knit. In small cities, towns, and rural areas, the "everyone-knows-everyone" sensation can be very strong.

If you or someone you know has been harmed by someone in the community, **it might not be realistic to plan on never seeing them again.** This can lead to unnecessary anxiety and avoidance of hobbies, events, and tasks that are important to your well-being.

Instead, consider what you might say to that person, or what you would do in a situation where you encountered them. Write out your worst case scenario, and **describe in detail how you would respond.** Though the worst is unlikely to happen, you now have a strategy for dealing with an uncomfortable situation if it arises.

SET BOUNDARIES, FAST!

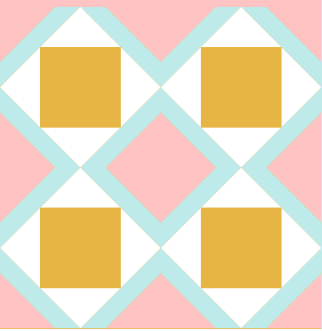
Not sure how to set a meaningful boundary in the moment? It can be tough, but boundaries are an essential part of interpersonal interactions – and especially romantic relationships. Regardless of how strongly you need to enforce your boundary, remember the acronym FAST:

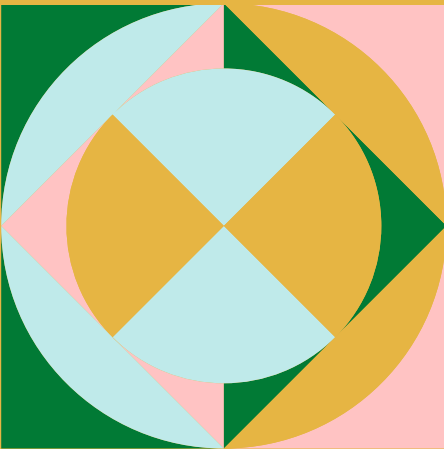
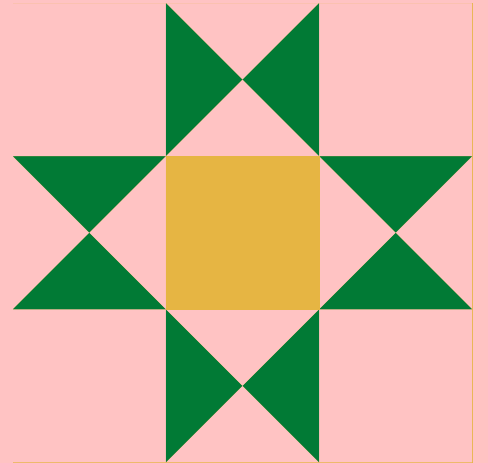
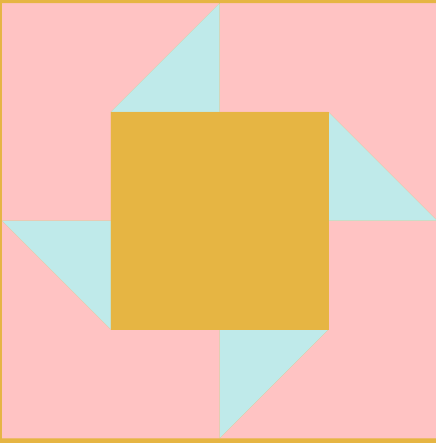
F: (be) Fair. Not only to your partner(s), but to yourself too.

A: (no) Apologies! Don't apologize for yourself, your needs, or the fact that you take up space.

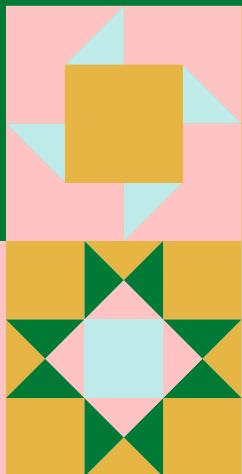
S: Stick to your values. Your boundaries are there to protect you and what you believe in.

T: (be) Truthful. State your needs plainly, without exaggeration or minimization.





QUESTIONS FOR PARTNERS



Buttons vs. Boundaries: What are your “buttons” (things that annoy or otherwise bother you) and what are your boundaries (non-negotiable “lines” that shouldn’t be crossed) in a romantic relationship?

How would you describe **your communication style**? How do you communicate when your buttons are pushed or your boundaries are crossed?

The questions on these pages are intended for **self-reflection**. You don't need to answer them all at once, and it's ok if your answers change over time.



Is not talking at all better than **having an argument** with your partner(s)? Why or why not?

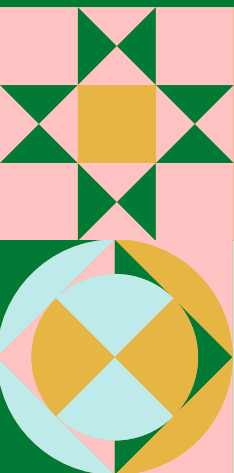
How are your **personal values** reflected in your relationship? How is your queerness honoured?

Where do you put most of your **time and energy**? Is that energy positive or negative? Are there areas that are being neglected?

Do you have any boundaries that are **specific to your queerness**? Are there details that shouldn't be shared with specific people?

FOR PRACTITIONERS

Regardless of how long you've worked alongside the queer community, **consider the following reflection questions** in your anti-violence work with 2SLGBTQ+ folks.



Who benefits from the way we usually talk about partner violence? **Does it matter?** Why or why not?

How does someone's **social location (i.e., who they are in the world)** impact how they report and/or talk about experiences of violence?

How do I currently work within the **gender binary system?** Where and how could I step away from that system?

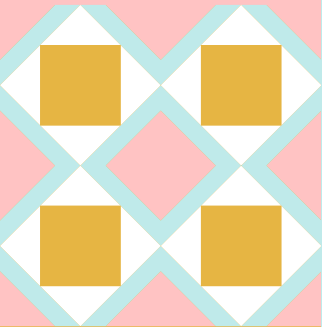
What does **intersectionality** bring to my work?

How do I ensure that my office/space of practice is **safe for 2SLGBTQ+ people** to access?

QUEER SUPPORT IS NECESSARY!

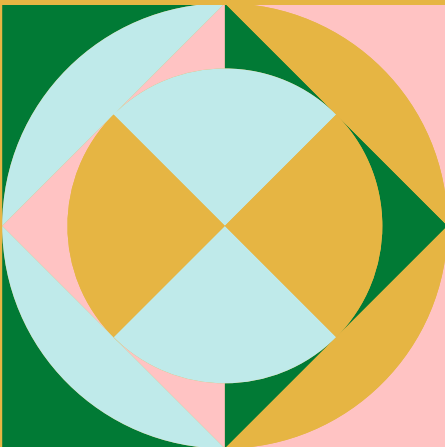
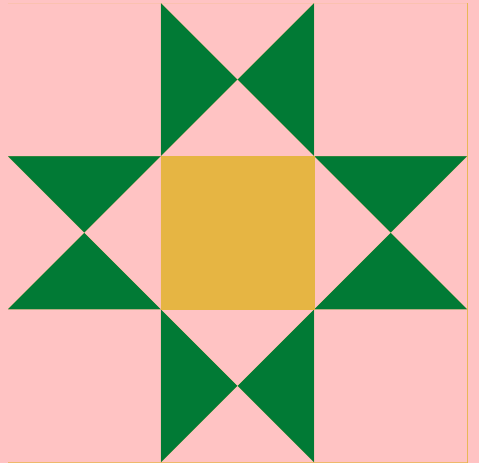
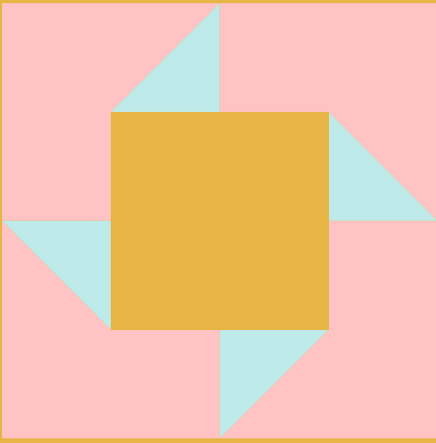
You don't need to be queer to assist people in the 2SLGBTQ+ community, but it helps to have a sense of queer-specific barriers to care. **A queer paradigm of care doesn't make assumptions based on heteronormativity.** Instead, it's possible to focus on "**plurality** (i.e., attraction to multiple gender identities simultaneously) and **fluidity** (i.e., change in desire and/or identity across the life course)" (Hammack, Frost, & Hughes, 2019, p. 568).

An understanding of queer partner violence "requires an understanding of the way [that] **violence is connected to homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism along with other forms of prejudice and oppression, including (but not limited to) sexism, racism and classism**" (Ristock, 2005, p.3).



ACCESS BARRIERS

- The framework of existing services for people experiencing violence were built largely on feminist frameworks by cisgender women, meaning most services are geared towards cis, heterosexual women. Often times, funding bodies determine who organizations can and cannot help.
- **Mainstream crisis organizations are not reliable for data about queer partner violence because it is usually not reported; most available research focuses on white, educated LGBTQ+ people.**
- Gay men and trans-masc folks sometimes report the feeling that they “should be able to defend themselves” against violence, even though it isn't their fault.
- **Some people fear that open discussion of queer violence feeds into existing negative stereotypes about the 2SLGBTQ+ community.**
- Some practitioners hold outdated, stereotypical views that can inform their work with queer survivors. For example, in a butch/femme lesbian relationship, some might automatically assume the butch is the aggressor.
- **Shame and self-blame can be magnified among queer people; “if I was in a straight relationship this wouldn't have happened”.**
- 2SLGBTQ+ folks are more likely to be marginalized in other ways, including along lines of class and race, or within the 2SLGBTQ+ community itself.



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Burk, C., Dillsi, S. A., & Crager, M. (n.d.). It takes a village, people!: Advocacy, friends and family, & LGBT survivors of abuse. The NW Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse. National LGBT Training & Technical Assistance Initiative.

Call Bubbie (2023). Safety plan: A workbook–zine to use as a crisis toolkit. Call Bubbie, Portland, OR.

Ending Violence Association of BC. (n.d.). Resources on intimate partner violence in LGBT2SQ+ relationships.

FORGE (n.d.). Trans–specific power and control tactics.

Hammack, P. L., Frost, D. M., & Hughes, S. D. (2019). Queer intimacies: A new paradigm for the study of relationship diversity. *Journal of Sex Research*, 56(4–5), pp. 556–92.

Linehan, M. M. (2014). DBT (R) skills training handouts and worksheets, second edition (2nd ed.). Guilford Publications.

Ristock, J. (2005). Relationship violence in lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer [LGBTQ] communities: Moving beyond a gender–based framework. Violence Against Women Online Resources.

LOCAL RESOURCES

These resources were compiled specifically for people living in the Secwepemc'ulecw/Kamloops, BC area.

QMUNITY BC // qmunity.ca

A non-profit organization based in Vancouver, BC that works to improve queer, trans, and Two-Spirit lives through services, connection, and leadership. QMUNITY offers services such as free counselling, and access to gender-affirming garments.

Kuu-Us Crisis Line Society // kuu-uscrisisline.com/

Provides crisis services for Indigenous people across BC, including Two-Spirit folks. Call **1-866-925-4419**.

Trans Lifeline Canada // translifeline.org

A trans-led organization that connects trans people to the community, support, and resources they need to survive and thrive. Call **1-877-330-6366**.

YWCA Canada Kamloops // kamloopsy.org

Provides emergency shelter (up to 30 days) and community outreach services to women, children, and gender-nonconforming folks who are fleeing violence at home.

Ending Violence Association of BC // endingviolence.org/who-we-are/

EVA BC works collaboratively to improve prevention and response systems that support communities impacted by gender-based violence, harassment and hate. Multicultural and trans-inclusive programs are available to perpetrators of violence.

TRU Sexualized Violence Prevention & Response //
tru.ca/current/wellness/sexual-violence.html

Support is available to all faculty, staff and students of TRU, and to survivors of all genders and sexual orientations. Whether the experience is historical or recent, a wide variety of supports are available, including emotional support, safety planning, and emergency housing. SVPR also offers workshops and training for staff and students.

Interior Community Services // Safe Spaces //
<https://www.interiorcommunityservices.bc.ca/programs/youth/safe-spaces>

Provides a number of services to 2SLGBTQ+ folks 26 and under, including drop-in and individual appointments, group support, support via email, as well as workshops for community practitioners and school groups about sexuality and gender.

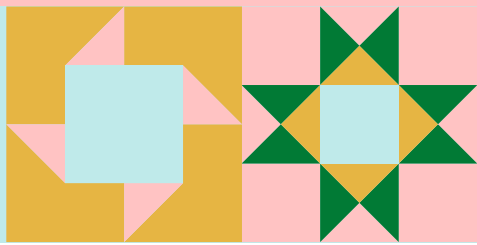
TRUSU Pride // Queer Connections //
tru.pride.on.campus@gmail.com

A long-standing TRUSU club that hosts regularly scheduled events in their Queer Connections series. These events offer a safe space at the TRU Wellness Center for members to socialize, while the organizers provide a new activity in each event biweekly.

Battered Women's Support Services // Resources for LGBTQ2S and non-binary survivors of violence //

<https://www.bwss.org/support/lgbtq2s/> // 1-855-687-1868

A Vancouver-based anti-violence organization that provides extensive support and services for people affected by intimate partner violence, including members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.



FURTHER READING

Readings for practitioners:

FORGE. (2019). **Self-assessment tool: "Is your agency ready to serve transgender and non-binary clients?"** <https://forge-forward.org/resource/self-assessment-tool/>

FORGE. (2016). **First do no harm: 8 tips for addressing violence against transgender and gender non-binary people.** <https://forge-forward.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/do-no-harm-8-tips-addressing-violence-FINAL.pdf>

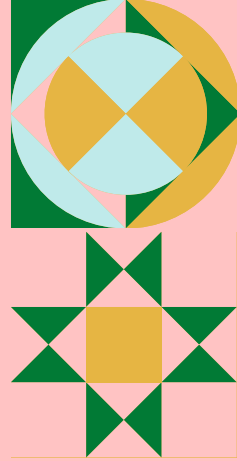
Victoria Sexual Assault Centre. (2017). **Supporting trans, two-spirit, and gender diverse survivors: For healthcare professionals and service providers.** <https://vsac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Supporting-Trans-Two-Spirit-and-GenderDiverse-Survivors.pdf>

Readings on ethical non-monogamy:

Janet Hardy & Dossie Easton, **The Ethical Slut** (1997; book)

Jessica Fern, **Polysecure: Attachment, Trauma, and Consensual Nonmonogamy** (2015; book)

Margeaux Feldman, **Loving Laterally: Soft Monogamy and Radical Friendship** (n.d.; zine)



Readings on crisis survival:

Call Bubbie (2023). Safety plan: A workbook-zine to use as a crisis toolkit. Call Bubbie, Portland, OR.

Readings on lived experience of queer violence:

Maneo Mohale, **Everything is a Deathly Flower** (2019; book)

Lexie Bean (ed.), **Written on the Body: Letters from Trans and Non-binary Survivors of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence** (2018; book)


Queer readings about maintaining healthy relationships:

bell hooks, **All About Love: New Visions** (2000; book)


Kimberly Dark, **Damaged Like Me: Essays on Love, Harm, and Transformation** (2021; book)


adrienne maree brown, **Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good** (2019; book)


Jo Green, **The Trans Partner Handbook: A Guide for When Your Partner Transitions** (2017; book)

 sexualized
violence
prevention
and response

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