

# A Journey to Healing: A guide for LGBTIQ-led organizations implementing mental health programs



Stephen Lewis  
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# Foreword

*Through the analogy of a river, this guide illustrates the origin and flow of mental health programs carried out by six LGBTIQ+ organizations working in Kenya and Uganda.*

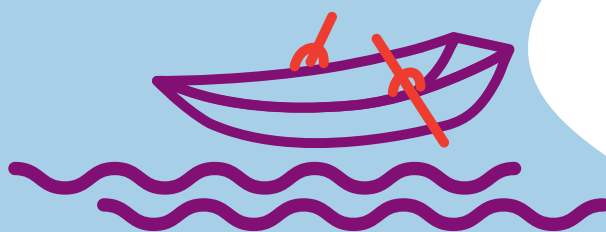
This community guide shares the remarkable journey of six community-led organizations whose work is documented within. Similar to a river with multiple sources, it represents diverse experiences coming together as currents of information flowing through communities.

In this guide, we aim to share this journey in the hope that others can learn from our experiences and successes, create new opportunities and better navigate challenges. Our aspiration is to provide a valuable resource for community-led work in the field of mental health.

Our destination is singular: to ensure that our communities who are grappling with various mental health needs are held and supported. Boats and rafts symbolize strategies, tools and resources that we rely on to 'sail' toward this shared goal.

The work is ongoing. Through this resource we track our collective journey over the last two years, and we look to the future with determination and hope.

Together we navigate toward liberation and safety for all.



# Introduction to the guide

## *Why was this resource developed?*

This guide is crafted as a practical resource to showcase the efforts and accomplishments of six LGBTIQ+ organizations in Kenya and Uganda engaged in mental health programming within their communities. While these organizations have focused on serving the needs of their respective communities, we recognize that there are numerous other organizations working directly with LGBTIQ+ clients.

Our aim is for this guide to serve as a valuable tool for those looking to implement or enhance LGBTIQ+ mental health programs. We hope that the knowledge and experiences shared within these pages prove beneficial in your efforts. Although many agencies already have a range of tools and resources in place to assist in the provision of mental health services within wider psychosocial support programs, The Right to Health and Healing project has established that LGBTIQ+ community members are still in desperate need of increased access to stigma-free and equitable mental health support. At the same time, human rights defenders engaged in the vital fight for the rights of LGBTIQ+ communities continue to face trauma with little meaningful support for their own mental health and well-being.

The Right to Health and Healing project was designed by the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) in collaboration with six LGBTIQ+ partner organizations to pilot the implementation of mental health programs with an objective to facilitate increased respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights for LGBTIQ+ people. The partners who implemented the project are Freedom and Roam Uganda, (FARUG), Icebreakers Uganda (IBU), Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), HIV & AIDS People's Alliance of Kenya (HAPA-Kenya), HOYMAS and MAAYGO.

To substantiate and amplify the impact of mental health programs tailored for LGBTIQ+ communities, it was imperative for these organizations to meticulously document their experiences. The resulting compilation serves as a practical guide for other organizations contemplating the initiation or fortification of LGBTIQ+ mental health initiatives in East Africa and beyond.

This guide emerged through the collaborative process involving all six participating organizations, also known as partners in this project. It draws from a thorough review of narrative reports on activities, roundtable discussions, individual interviews, fireside chats, and a joint writing endeavour among the SLF team and the partners. Importantly, all insights and practices presented in this resource were reviewed and validated by each participating partner.

## *Who can benefit from using this guide?*

This guide supports organizations and communities serving LGBTIQ+ clients as well as those aspiring to implement LGBTIQ+ mental health programs. Insights gained by the partners provide a comprehensive understanding of the journey and impact of their mental health programming. The guide considers the immediate mental health and well-being needs of LGBTIQ+ communities and human rights defenders. It serves as a valuable resource for agencies and communities, offering a foundation for conceptualizing effective mental health services.

## How is the guide structured?

This resource draws from various sources and, like a river, starts narrow and shallow but expands to encompass diverse experiences. It contributes to a broader understanding of mental health programming for LGBTQ+ communities in East Africa, particularly in Kenya and Uganda.

Emphasizing a non-academic approach and rooted in the philosophy that there are many ways of knowing, this guide shares the lived experiences and expertise of community partners. We express deep gratitude for their generosity in sharing their insights and strategies.

**This resource is organized into the following sections:**



### The source: Unique contexts and intentional community responses

The journey begins at the headwaters where the river originates. This section explores the source of the need for mental health programming. It examines the landscape for challenges and identifies the factors that give rise to the necessity for focused efforts in mental health for LGBTQ+ communities.



### Boats and rafts: How we respond

Like a river gains momentum, so does our response. Imagine navigating the currents on boats and rafts. Each boat or raft represents a unique strategy or tool employed in mental health programming. Here, we begin to understand the dynamic responses offered by community partners. They navigate and support mental health in LGBTQ+ communities. For reasons of safety and security, descriptions of implemented programs and activities are general and anonymized, while outlining successes, challenges, project milestones and lessons learned as well as community reach and proudest accomplishments.



### Navigating the rapids: Reflections on impact

A river flows over varied terrain. This section navigates the rapids and explores twists and turns, challenges faced, and transformative experiences along the way. Here the community partners share what can be learned by navigating the river. We look at the work partners have shared while piloting the project and what has surfaced about the impact of mental health work.



### Finding calm waters: Caring for ourselves

In this section, we anchor in a serene stretch of the river. In these calm waters, we delve into the vital aspect of self-care, exploring strategies and insights to maintain balance and well-being amid the currents of mental health work. It is also an opportunity to ask questions:

*Who cares for the carers? How do we keep our compasses true? How do we replenish?*

*Is there a lighthouse to guide us? How do we give light and direction to others? Are there lifeboats to keep others afloat?*



### Paddles: Shared resources and tools

Specific tools that have been developed through this work will provide a way for others to build from existing material and repurpose information. These tools will be provided in a separate compendium document.



# The source: Unique contexts and intentional community responses

The implementation of LGBTIQ+ mental health programs is crucial, especially considering the limited initiatives for equity-deserving populations in East Africa. Success in these programs hinges on a comprehensive understanding of the unique contexts surrounding LGBTIQ+ organizations across countries. Recognizing the distinct nuances of mental health within LGBTIQ+ communities is vital for developing effective and culturally sensitive interventions.

## The need for mental health support for LGBTIQ+ communities

LGBTIQ+ individuals served by our partners face disproportionate challenges related to mental health due to various forms of stigma and discrimination, including homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, violence and isolation. Partners have shared that community members experience a higher burden of mental health challenges, including suicidal ideation, depression, self-harm, substance use and social anxiety. Their burden is further amplified by legally entrenched discrimination.

Additionally, partners have noted other significant issues affecting community members, including HIV status, involvement in sex work and misogyny. The experiences of multilayered discrimination are pervasive, touching on aspects of sexuality, gender expression, sexual orientation, mental health conditions and other stigmatized factors.

## Human rights defenders and mental health

Many leaders and activists working in LGBTIQ+ organizations are subjected to violence, homophobia, transphobia and biphobia while also working in an environment characterized by socio-political persecution and legally entrenched discrimination. The amplified risk to their personal safety and security negatively affects their mental health.

## Why is there an urgent need for LGBTIQ+ mental health services?

Although LGBTIQ+ communities have a right to stigma-free and equitable mental health services, the majority suffer from a chronic lack of access to services. Partners have shared that lack of access stems from:

**Structural oppression:** Degrading and discriminatory treatment toward LGBTIQ+ individuals by mainstream health professionals when seeking mental health services.

**Provider knowledge:** Mainstream mental health providers are not trained to understand or address the specific mental health needs of LGBTIQ+ communities.

**Dearth of resources:** A lack of meaningful support for LGBTIQ+ organizations means that there is no prioritization of funding for mental health programs.

## Different contexts in different countries: An LGBTIQ+ snapshot of Kenya and Uganda

The context in which the work is done shapes the strategies that partners can use to reach their communities. In Uganda, the political, economic and legal landscapes have undergone significant changes in the recent past. There has been a surge in homophobia across the country, fuelled by the spread of misinformation as well as the Anti-Homosexuality Bills of 2009 and 2023.

These bills have resulted in increased discrimination, harassment and violence targeting LGBTIQ+ individuals and their allies. Organizations are also facing heightened scrutiny, intimidation and operational limitations. Some have been forced to suspend their activities or operate clandestinely due to safety concerns.

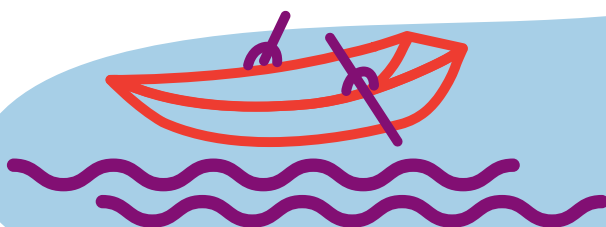
LGBTIQ+ organizations have drastically adapted their community outreach and engagement strategies, including working underground and remotely. To prioritize safety during outreach to new clients, peer educators only refer individuals after screening them to confirm their connection with communities.

They continue to explore alternative implementation strategies, like holding events virtually rather than in person. Due to the volatile environment, Ugandan LGBTIQ+ organizations must pivot to meet the growing demand for online sessions. Establishing secure online spaces for delivering mental health support has become a critical priority.

In neighbouring Kenya, there have also been significant changes in political, economic and legal contexts. On February 24, 2023, the Supreme Court ruled that LGBTIQ+ people in Kenya have the right to freedom of association, including the right to form associations of any kind. While this ruling was affirming, it led to violent backlash. LGBTIQ+ community members faced verbal attacks and threats to personal safety and security. There has also been a proliferation of misinformation online — by public officials, religious organizations, popular artists, celebrities, bloggers and vloggers and others — regarding the Supreme Court ruling.

Another concerning development is the submission of the so-called Family Protection Bill to the Kenyan National Assembly on April 7, 2023. This bill, if passed, criminalizes the existence of LGBTIQ+ individuals in Kenya and programs and services that support and benefit them. Further, it criminalizes those who fund, sponsor or provide the programs and services.

Additionally, on April 12, 2023, the Parliament of Kenya unanimously passed a motion calling for the government to ban any discussion, publication or dissemination of information related to same-sex relations in Kenya. This motion complicates the development and implementation of HIV and health policies and programs for LGBTIQ+ people and other key populations by the Ministry of Health, which undermines health promotion and service delivery for these communities.



# Boats and rafts: How we respond

How do we navigate these challenging currents? This section shares more detail on the responses implemented around LGBTIQ+ mental health services in Kenya and Uganda. It offers descriptions of activities and delves into the strategies we call boats and rafts. We share about the challenges of implementing mental health programming in a volatile context as well as project milestones and lessons learned.

It is important to note that this project was grounded in a collaboratively developed logic model that outlines connections between program activities and intended outcomes. Activities were chosen and prioritized by each community organization based on their clients' actual needs, organizational capacity, mandate and fit with other programming. The recommendations herein are general and should be adapted appropriately for the context at hand. This section provides some strategies and experiences to consider as you plan mental health programming.

To help launch our boats and rafts, we implemented program activities to:

## 1. Deepen our knowledge of community needs

Understanding the diverse needs of LGBTIQ+ community members is imperative to providing meaningful services. Partners sought to strengthen their knowledge of their clients through needs assessments. These assessments offer necessary insights to strengthen an organization's outreach. They were able to enhance their intake and screening tools and adapt their program and services according to the community's expressed needs.



## 2. Promote feelings of connection while navigating challenges

Meaningful connection begins with ensuring the people who are doing the work can feel grounded and connected to each other and the organizational mission. This is more than simply nice to do; it is an essential part of supporting staff wellness. Well-being and teambuilding retreats bring together staff, peer educators and board members outside of the work environment. They build social connections with each other, overcome work-related stress, and improve their personal well-being. Internal networks of care and support are created within the organizations to support their staff as people first.





### 3. Create community cohesion and safe spaces

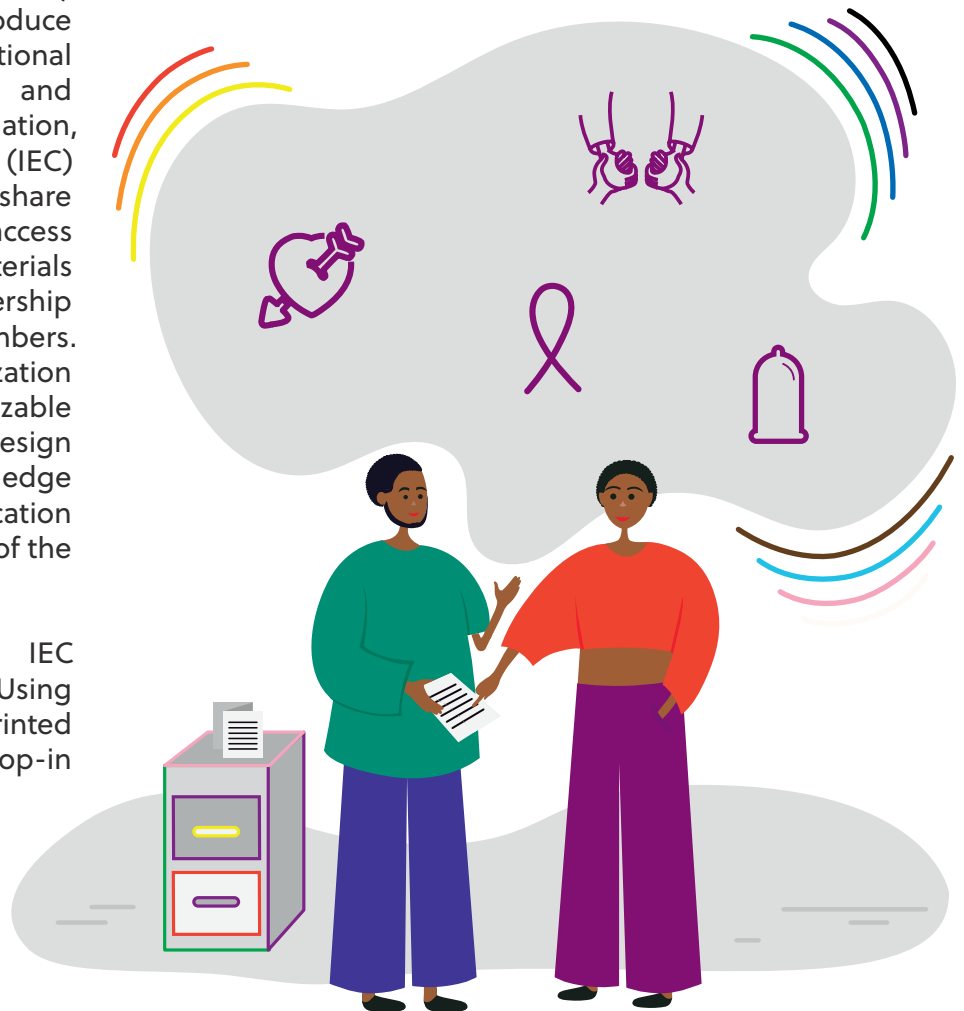
Community wellness activities were organized by staff teams to promote mental health and well-being among LGBTQ+ community members, including community leaders and activists. Activities included the creation of a safe and non-judgmental environment for people to be able to freely express themselves. Opportunities to recognize and address intersectional issues were intentionally created, because while these intersections are not always immediately visible, they are integral to the experiences of community members.



### 4. Create awareness of mental health

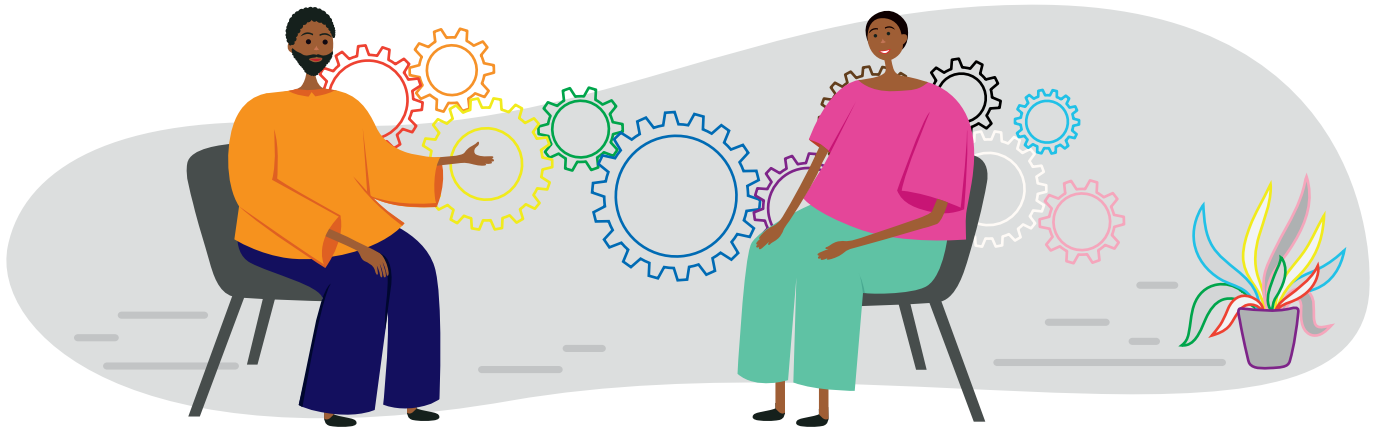
Create and share client-specific wellness tools to encourage daily mental health practices and produce informative and promotional content on mental health and well-being. Through information, education and communication (IEC) materials, organizations can share key messages and pathways to access help. Different types of IEC materials were co-developed in partnership with LGBTQ+ community members. The process included prioritization of topics that are most recognizable in their communities. The design process also accounted for knowledge gaps and optimal communication methods for the specific context of the community.

Images and infographics in IEC materials increased accessibility. Using social media increased reach. Printed materials were distributed at drop-in and peer education centres.



## 5. Centralize mental health and well-being information

Mental health and well-being information hubs, online and in person, proved to be important platforms for addressing social isolation and a wide range of psychosocial issues through counselling and therapy. Partners implemented various wellness information hubs, including the mental health desks that offered 24-hour support by a psychosocial therapist and peer leaders.



## 6. Provide mental health services for clients

Partners prioritized online and offline therapy and psychosocial support for individuals and groups. These sessions provided an opportunity for LGBTQI+ individuals experiencing mental stressors to share their experiences, coping strategies and information about diseases or treatments. Some of the counselling sessions were given by peer educators or clinical psychologists. When needed, referrals were made to relevant support groups, educational events, psychiatric care and LGBTQI+ shelters.



## 7. Review government health policies

A review of the regulatory framework, when advocating for LGBTQI+ mental health and well-being, can help contextualize existing health policies. It is important to develop an understanding of health policies, their provisions and implications. A close look at policy frameworks can reveal gaps that advocacy messages can be created to address. It can also increase public awareness of policy contents and the steps needed to advance policy to meet the needs and uphold the rights of LGBTQI+ communities.

The partners who contributed to this guide have formulated key action points to advocate for the revision of government health care policies to include LGBTQI+ communities in mental health programming.

These actions include:

- a. Empowering local mental health champions. They actively engaged in the development and implementation of mental health policies and advocated for the inclusion of gender-diverse groups and related issues.

- b. Allocating resources to mental health. They aimed to redirect financial and human resources toward mental health services, to address the significant burden of mental health-related issues, particularly at the county level.
- c. Improving appointment systems. By enhancing the appointment system for mental health care, they aimed to ensure improved access and efficiency.
- d. Advocacy for mental health prioritization. By engaging in advocacy efforts to elevate the prioritization of mental health, they raise awareness to reduce stigma and discrimination, diminish dysphoria and promote help-seeking behaviours.
- e. Continuous mental health monitoring. Establishing a systematic approach for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the mental health of clients, with a specific focus on LGBTIQ+ individuals.



## 8. Share resources and co-creation networks

The LGBTIQ+ organizations developed a network of local partners to share and co-create mental health resources, materials and activities. This resulted in a robust mental health support network promoting well-being and resilience.

As one contributing partner shared:

“We learned valuable lessons from this engagement. We discovered that government health facilities and private institutions offer various therapy sessions, including one-on-one, group and family therapy. Additionally, we found that government health institutions provide services to LGBTIQ+ individuals, but many from this community do not access these services due to fear of stigmatization and discrimination. Furthermore, while services are available in government health institutions, most providers have not received specific training to support LGBTIQ+ persons, highlighting the need for targeted training in this area.”



## 9. Develop peer leaders and staff members into mental health champions

Partners strengthened their own human resources by expanding training to peer leaders and staff in basic counselling skills, cognitive behavioural therapy, substance use, addiction and referrals. Trained peer leaders became an additional support system increasing community access to mental health services.

Training for staff significantly enhanced their comprehension of mental health issues, encompassing symptom recognition, stigma reduction and the promotion of mental health and well-being. They felt better equipped to address the mental health needs of both their colleagues and clients.



## 10. Invest in staff and volunteer mental health champions

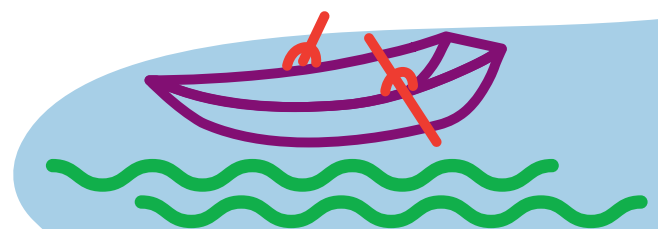
Preventing burnout is key to sustainable programming. Partners provided online and in-person therapy and psychosocial support to their staff, peer leaders and peer educators, including debriefing sessions for groups and individuals. Stress management training for staff and collective healing strategies were also reported to work well. Staff were also trained in various skills, including yoga and meditation, which have been effective in managing work-related stress.



## 11. Strengthen organizational systems to create and enable an environment that promotes mental health

Partners sought to actively create an organizational culture around mental health by developing workplace policies. Through a collaborative process, partners established what was needed to enable mental health and developed and defined policy to promote compliance.

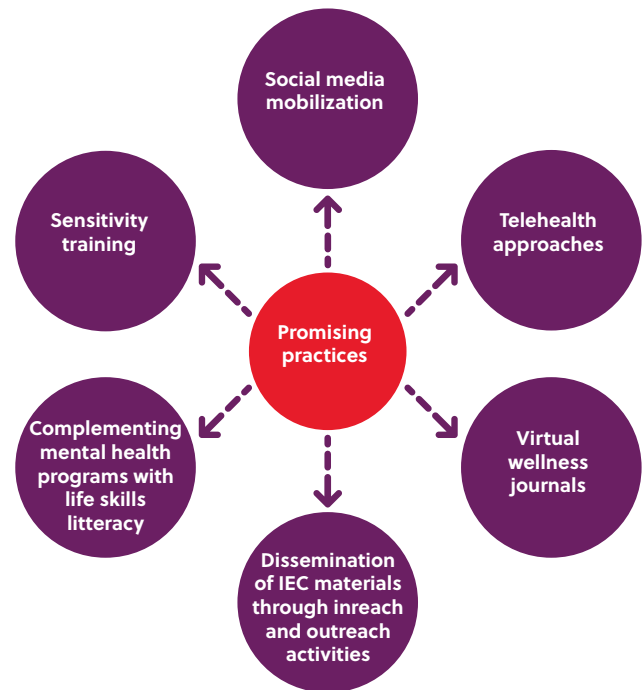
They began by conducting risk assessments to identify workplace stressors and developed policies to address the stressors. Highlights include the enforcement of a 21-day annual leave and a week-long leave specifically for mental health, monthly staff counselling and flexible work schedules.



# Navigating the rapids: Reflections on impact

The journey has been promising and, when reviewed in its totality, offers a map to guide organizations in implementing mental health programs within their own organizations.

There have been significant benefits from the mental health initiatives that have been implemented through The Right to Health and Healing project. Participating community-led organizations noted key accomplishments:

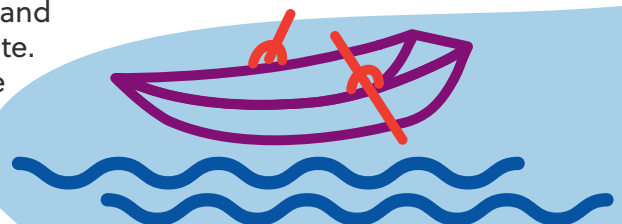


- We have expanded our knowledge base concerning mental health, underscoring the pressing need to normalize mental health discussions within mainstream mental health facilities in the country.
- We are now able to offer a broader spectrum of LGBTIQ+ mental health services.
- We now embrace a culture that prioritizes mental health and well-being, establishing safe environments for both employees and community members. These spaces encourage open dialogue about mental health concerns and provide accessible mental health supports.
- We have adopted innovative and alternative approaches to addressing mental health challenges. Some of these methods include wellness journals, risk assessments, the establishment of regeneration and support groups, and the incorporation of expressive art as a therapeutic tool. Art can include activities like bottle painting, clothing design, weaving and podcasting. We also engage in the powerful practice of storytelling, which fosters a sense of community and emotional release. We encourage play, which involves reminiscing about childhood games, and serves as a reminder to confidently seek out what brings us happiness.
- Establishing a mental health desk — a location where clients can access comprehensive and centralized information specific to mental health at any time — has significantly enhanced access to psychosocial support.
- Bi-monthly wellness activities that have proven instrumental in identifying mental health concerns.
- Adding a therapist to the staff, in addition to positive word-of-mouth referrals from current and former clients, has been met with a substantial increase in the demand for mental health services.
- Collaborative partnerships with psychiatric centres have streamlined the process of referring individuals with complex needs that necessitate multidisciplinary care to combine medication and therapy.

- The provision of mental health support has yielded broader positive impacts as evidenced by a notable reduction in risky sexual behaviours among clients who have engaged in four or more therapy sessions.
- Additional funding for programming has been secured.
- Improved data collection by monitoring the number of clients accessing mental health services and observing shifts in the frequency or nature of the support they seek. This has shown an encouraging development in session commitment and a reduction in cancellation rates among returning clients.
- Through the practice of intentional listening and responding among staff members, in their own contexts as whole persons, they report to have experienced a sense of healing. They have weekly staff check-ins where they connect with colleagues, discuss their weekend experiences and share how they are feeling. Staff have also shown increased openness in discussing the challenges they encounter while working. This transparency allows for constructive conversations about necessary changes and improvements, fostering a safer and more comfortable work environment.

Important factors and recommendations to consider:

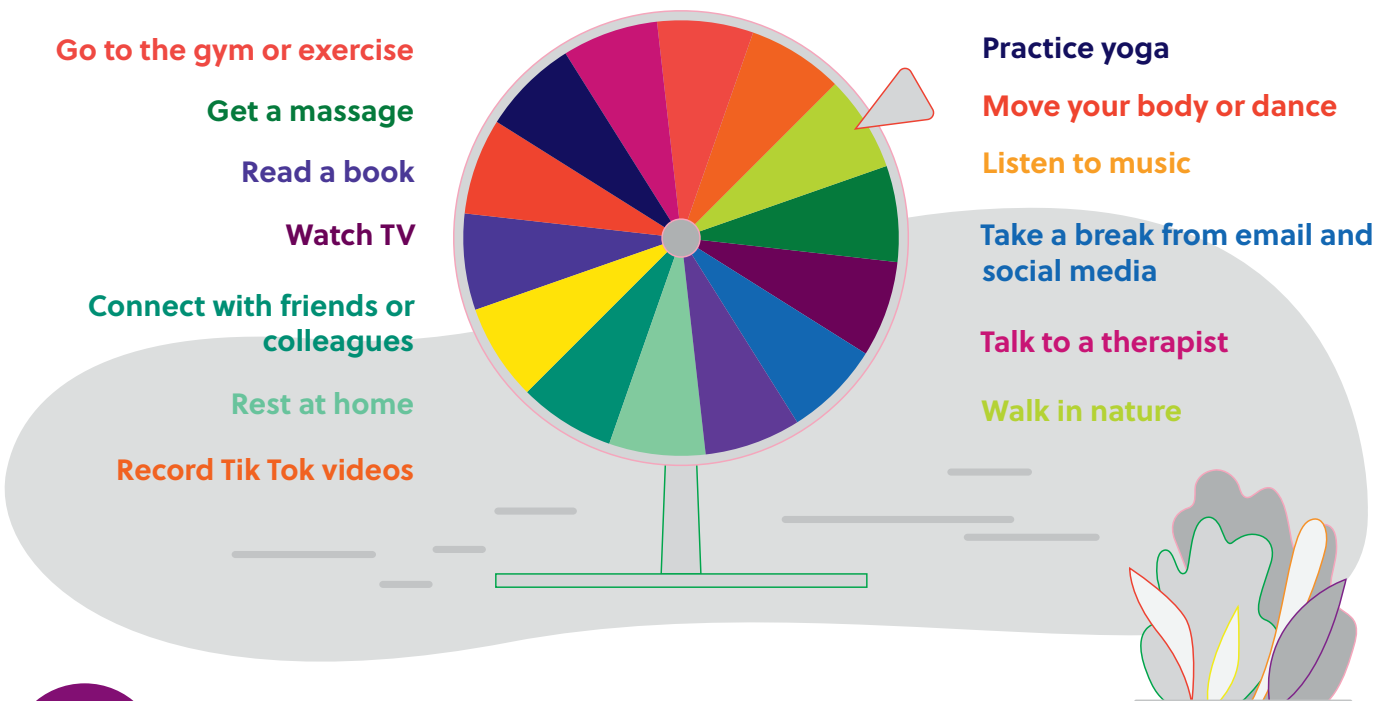
- A tailored approach is needed for the provision of LGBTIQ+ mental health programs. Before implementing activities, providers require an in-depth understanding of the specific community's unique needs at the intersections of mental health.
- Meaningful engagement with LGBTIQ+ communities throughout project design and implementation is important for centring their voices and needs. Promote awareness and the use of community-friendly language.
- Addressing mental health stigma and engaging the broader community in normalizing conversations on mental health is a step toward removing barriers to stigma-free services. Participatory community engagement to develop and distribute communication materials can also help to address stigma related to mental health.
- Incorporate mental health services in all program work and integrate mental health considerations into all areas of that work.
- Provide ongoing support to staff as an essential practice. This ensures they are supported to debrief about the impact of their work, including vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue.
- Engage and collaborate with other organizations, partners and allies. Mental health work should not be carried out in isolation. Collaborate on project design and decision-making to facilitate the exchange of resources, mitigate duplication of work and facilitate learning.
- Complement mental health programs with life skills, social enterprise and economic empowerment. Mental health programs alone are not sufficient to support the healing journey.
- Adopt a context-specific, human rights-based approach to programming.
- And finally, ensure that mental health supports, and the way they are delivered, are culturally appropriate. Include community voices and needs throughout the planning, materials and provision.



# Finding Calm Waters: Caring for ourselves

How do activists and leaders take care of themselves? We must find ways to recharge and rejuvenate.

It is important for leaders within LGBTIQ+ organizations to have space to reflect, share and develop their capacity and tactics to manage stress and decompress. Here are some ways leaders enact self-care:



## Adventurous Activities

“ I find solace in thrilling activities such as quad biking, climbing, and zip-lining. These adventurous pursuits not only provide excitement but also serve as a form of self-care, allowing me to refresh my mind and soul.



## Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

“ We have established dedicated wellness spaces for leaders within our organization. These spaces are distinct from sick leave and serve as a proactive means to ensure the well-being of our staff. While it may not directly contribute to our financial bottom line, we recognize it as a necessary investment.

“ I actively access counselling services, specifically staff support counselling. This resource provides valuable guidance and a safe space for me to address my mental health needs. I have access to a psychologist, which has proven invaluable in helping me navigate my thoughts and emotions.





## Artistic and Fun Pursuits

“

*I nurture my artistic side by playing the guitar.*

“

*I listen to calming music as it provides a sense of calm and relaxation amidst the challenges of my profession and daily life.*

“

*I record TikTok dances.*

“

*I watch ... 'nonsense' shows on TV.*

“

*I engage in reading, both books and social media, but also recognize the importance of social media breaks when it becomes overwhelming. Knowing when to step away is crucial; it allows me to rejuvenate and return to work with a refreshed perspective, always adhering to the principle of do no harm.*

“

*I also prioritize fun by creating opportunities to watch movies and enjoy activities that don't involve alcohol or substances.*



## Healthy Social Circles

“

*Spending quality time with friends and my family, which helps me unwind and find joy in my life.*

“

*I carefully manage my friendships and interactions, ensuring that I surround myself with positive and supportive individuals.*

“

*Effective communication with my colleagues has been a key aspect of my well-being. I make an effort to share what I'm going through, fostering a supportive work environment.*

“

*I've learned the importance of reaching out and expressing my thoughts and emotions. I used to bottle up my feelings, but now I have the courage to talk and share my authentic self with others.*

“

*I cook and eat with my colleagues. We have a day themed Pork Fridays. \ I rely on my support network, reaching out to friends and my dedicated support team when I need a listening ear or guidance.*



## Supervision

“

*I engage in peer-to-peer supervision with fellow counsellors, which is a valuable exchange of experiences and insights through conversation, helping us bolster each other's energy and effectiveness.*

“

*I have been fortunate to secure some funds in June to assist in covering the costs of my personal therapy and supervision. I am under the guidance of a clinical supervisor who has played a crucial role in helping me establish essential documentation and tools for my work. While these funds have been exhausted, I remain optimistic about the possibility of continued support.*



## Resting and Work-Life Balance



*Taking care of myself also involves setting aside a day to disconnect from the demands of daily life when I feel fatigued. This break allows me to unwind and recharge away from any stressors. I've shifted away from working endlessly, understanding the importance of taking breaks to recharge. When I return, I am more energized and focused.*



*I take my leave days seriously, managing my time and avoiding overwork. This helps me maintain a healthy work-life balance and prevents burnout.*



*I turn off email notifications to avoid feeling overwhelmed when notifications pop up.*



*I take my leave days seriously, managing my time and avoiding overwork. This helps me maintain a healthy work-life balance and prevents burnout.*



*Taking care of my mental well-being has become increasingly important to me. I've come to realize the value of resting, even when the pressures of ongoing projects make me reluctant to step back. People around me, who hold me accountable, have made me appreciate the significance of regular rest.*



## Physical Fitness Activities



*I take walks alone or in groups.*



*Each morning, I run, which that not only boosts my self-esteem but also contributes to my physical well-being.*



*Swimming is another way I unwind and manage stress, providing a refreshing escape.*



*I'm an active member of a gym and I regularly exercise. This benefits my body and has a positive impact on my mental health.*



## Other Stress-Management Strategies



*Planning plays a significant role in my life, whether it's related to finances or fostering friendships. I actively manage my expectations and focus on what I can control, which helps reduce anxiety and frustration.*



*I've learned the importance of setting boundaries, not only in my living situation but also in my relationships. I prioritize my connections with my partner, chosen family, and colleagues, ensuring open communication about what's happening in my life, without delay.*

“

*I've transitioned from living alone, recognizing that it wasn't conducive to my mental health. Now, I share my living space with a roommate who understands and supports me, helping me break free from unhealthy patterns.*

“

*One significant change I've made is learning to let go of negative emotions, such as thoughts of revenge, which only weighed me down.*

“

*I have adopted strategies to minimize pressure and stress in my life. This includes learning to incorporate other people's ideas, which has proven effective in reducing unnecessary stress.*

“

*I actively role-play scenarios that demonstrate the possibility of having a good time without relying on alcohol or substances, supporting others in the process.*

“

*I invest in capacity building and maintain a personal development plan. This commitment to self-improvement ensures that I continue to grow and evolve.*

“

*I avoid toxic environments and prioritize my mental well-being over negative influences.*



## Digital safety

“

*Protect your digital world using strong passwords for your computer, phone and sensitive documents.*

“

*Do not reveal personal information (cell phone number or addresses) on social media. Remember that both supporters and non-supporters might be following you on your social handles.*



## Strategies for Supporting Others

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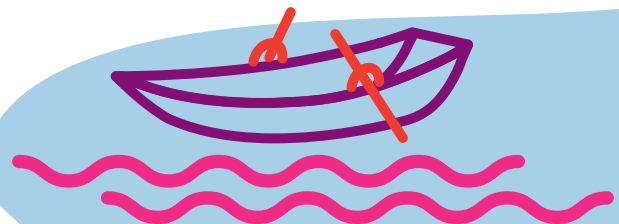
*In terms of supporting others, I believe in being as available as possible and working within a team to provide the best assistance to our beneficiaries. Communication is key, so I don't keep quiet; I explain our mandate and what is realistically achievable. This clarity fosters trust and helps manage expectations effectively.*

“

*Being a good listener is another crucial aspect of my well-being strategy. I am intentional about listening to others, and if I notice any behaviour that seems out of character, I initiate informal conversations to offer support. I make myself available to those who need me, being generous without depleting my own resources.*

“

*I have paid it forward before the project by providing financial support for therapy to individuals in need, reciprocating the help I received to access therapy in the past.*





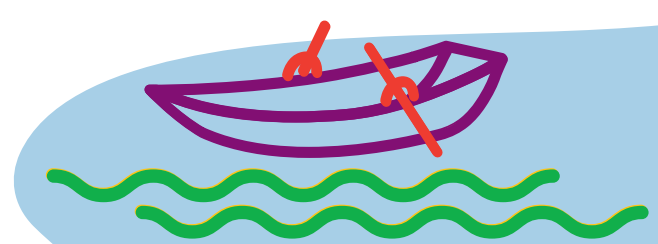
# Final thoughts

This community guide is a collaborative work in progress. We leaned on the analogy of a river and the river continues to flow. We find ourselves continuously building and fortifying our rafts. While the waves are strong, often treacherous, and ever present, onward we move, day over day.

We hope this will be a living document and that its ripple effects will expand until they reach the shores of our destination: liberation and safety for all.

We will continue sharing our journey, our learning, our hopes and our achievements for mental health programming. We hope those who navigate the river next will proceed with the concept of *mtu ni watu* in mind. Translated from Swahili, this means “a person is made up of people.” It underscores the importance of compassion, interconnectedness and that we all need each other.

As our journey continues, we hope this community resource will enrich the collective body of knowledge and contribute to better mental health programming for the communities we serve.



With much appreciation and acknowledgement to Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG), Icebreakers Uganda (IBU), Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), HIV & AIDS People’s Alliance of Kenya (HAPA-Kenya), HOYMAS and MAAYGO, and Stephen Lewis Foundation Field Representative Mūhaari A. for their contributions to the creation of this resource document.

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Doug Stollery



# Championing health and human rights to end AIDS.



**Stephen Lewis  
Foundation**

**20  
Years**

## **Stephen Lewis Foundation**

260 Spadina Ave., Suite 100,  
Toronto, ON, Canada M5T 2E4  
[info@stephenlewisfoundation.org](mailto:info@stephenlewisfoundation.org)  
[stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://stephenlewisfoundation.org)  
[@stephenlewisfdn](https://twitter.com/stephenlewisfdn)

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