

MYTHBUSTING

Conversion therapy facts and fictions

There are a lot of myths and misconceptions about conversion therapy. You might have questions or things you're unsure about. Or you might be looking for ways to debunk beliefs that people in your life hold. Either way, this resource is for you! Read on for a breakdown of some of those myths—although this is by no means an exhaustive list.

MYTH: CONVERSION THERAPY WORKS

Fact: The short answer: no, conversion therapy doesn't work.

The longer answer: there are no evidence-based methods of changing someone's gender identity or sexual orientation. What many conversion therapy practitioners do instead is encourage or force people to repress their desires, behaviours, or sense of self. Some tactics include shaming someone, encouraging them to question their own lived reality, forcing them to engage in gendered or sexual behaviours matching the heterosexual or cisgender norm, or encouraging them to associate 2SLGBTQIA+ identities with negative feelings. Sometimes, these practices might change how someone behaves. But they do not change their core lived experience. Instead, they make people hide parts of themselves due to fear, trauma, and shame. [Many survivors](#) of these practices have talked about both the [pain they have caused](#) and how these practices [did not accomplish](#) what their supporters claimed.



No Conversion Canada

MYTH: 2SLGBTQIA+ IDENTITIES ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH RELIGION/FAITH

Fact: There are many 2SLGBTQIA+ believers and leaders, as well as allies, across all faiths. If you or someone you know is being told that conversion therapy is essential to being able to live life according to the tenets of your faith, it might be helpful to seek out 2SLGBTQIA+-affirming faith communities or resources.

Here are some examples of 2SLGBTQIA+-affirming faith-based resources:

Believe Out Loud

[Believe Out Loud](#) is an international digital community centering and sanctifying queer spirituality. They are a program of Intersections International, an international social justice ministry and NGO. Believe Out Loud offers online worship services, a grantmaking program supporting faith-driven LGBTQIA+ peacebuilders around the world, and social media platforms for community conversations.

Two-Spirit: My Journey Home

[This article](#) is written by Lynn Young, a drummer, drum maker, activist, educator, and artist of Lakota heritage. In the article, Young discusses their Two-Spirit identity, Lakota heritage, and Native American Traditionalist spirituality.

Sexual Diversity in Islam: A Literary Zikr Project

[This article](#) is an adaptation of Dr. Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle's chapter "Sexuality, Diversity, and Ethics in the Agenda of Progressive Muslims" in *Progressive Muslims* (ed. Omid Safi) for the Muslims for Progressive Values website. Dr. Kugle shows that Islam supports many kinds of diversity and shows that LGBTQIA+ Muslims deserve a place in Islam.

TransTorah Resources

TransTorah, a website that collects trans and genderqueer Jewish resources, compiled [this list](#) of ritual and liturgy, essays, sermons, & poems, videos, and art to help Jewish communities be welcoming sanctuaries for people of all genders.

We're Queer and We've Been Here: Rediscovering Buddhism's LGBT history of gay monks, homoerotic samurai, and gender-nonconforming practitioners and gods.

Dharma teacher and LGBTQ+ activist Dr. Jay Michaelson published [this blog post](#) in *Trike Daily*, a project of the leading independent journal of Buddhism in the West. The post explores the vast spectrum of queer experience throughout Buddhism.

MYTH: CONVERSION THERAPY IS IN THE PAST—IT USED TO HAPPEN BUT IT DOESN'T ANYMORE

Fact: While the mainstream acceptability of conversion therapy in Canada has decreased—especially now that there are laws against it—efforts to change people’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression still occur. While exact statistics are difficult to determine, [a 2019 survey from the Community Based Research Centre](#) found that 10% of gay, bi, trans, and queer men and Two-Spirit and non-binary people had experienced conversion therapy, and [a 2019 survey from Trans PULSE](#) similarly found that 11% of trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit survey respondents had undergone these practices.

MYTH: CONVERSION THERAPY IS SOMETHING THAT ONLY TAKES PLACE IN RELIGIOUS SETTINGS

Fact: Conversion therapy can take place in many different settings. Outside of religious settings, this can include but is not limited to secular counseling, medical settings, “support groups,” summer camps, online resources and communities, and more.

MYTH: NOW THAT CONVERSION THERAPY IS BANNED IN CANADA, THE FIGHT IS OVER

Fact: Even though conversion therapy is now banned in Canada, there is still work to be done. Conversion therapy does still occur behind closed doors. Survivors of past conversion therapy practices still need access to support, community, and healing. And the attitudes and beliefs behind conversion therapy—that being heterosexual or cisgender is preferable to being 2SLGBTQIA+—are still influencing our lives and communities in many ways. That’s why it’s important to learn to take care of ourselves and each other and build a more inclusive society for all.

MYTH: CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE TOO YOUNG TO KNOW ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY, SO IT'S DANGEROUS TO ALLOW THEM TO EXPLORE THEIR GENDER WITHOUT JUDGMENT

Fact: Many kids and teens have experiences and ideas about their gender and how they feel best expressing themselves. Part of healthy child development is making space for young people to explore their identities in age-appropriate ways. When it comes to gender and sexuality, there is often a double standard in how children are raised. Cisgender and heterosexual identities and expressions are seen as appropriate for children to learn about and explore for themselves, whereas the same kinds of identities and expressions are [seen as more “adult”](#) when they relate to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. All of this leads some people to think it's beneficial to repress 2SLGBTQIA+ expressions in children, including by using conversion therapy. But this is actually harmful. Studies have found [promising](#) mental health [benefits](#) to supporting trans and gender diverse youth in their gender expression and exploration, and [significant harms](#) associated with practices which force children and youth to repress these aspects of their identities.

