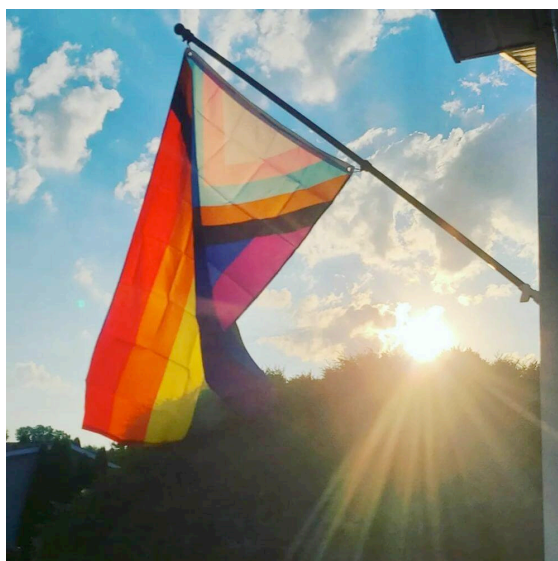


From the **MidAmerica Messenger UUA newsletter**
Volume 13 Issue 1 • January 2025

LGBTQ+ Youth Survival Guide: 2024 and Beyond

By Nico Van Ostrand, Ember Kelley , Mylo Way



Dear beautiful, fabulous gender creative and sexually non-conforming youth and teens—all those who are queer, trans, non-binary, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and a hundred other wonderful self-proclaimed identities,

Our hearts are breaking. This is not the future we wanted or have been fighting for. Yes, queer folks are under attack, so we need to be prepared to fight for ourselves and for each other. Together, we have access to the stories, information, and can build the communities that we need to survive.

Here are some places to start:

First and Foremost, Tend to Your Well-Being

- Take actions that feel good and right to you. Do what you need to survive. In the words of **Kate Bornstein**: “Do whatever it takes to **make your life worth living**. Just don’t be mean.”
- If you are contemplating suicide, please reach out to a trusted adult in your life. Call the Trevor Project at 866-488-7386 or go to their online chat or **texting system**. You are loved. Reach out.
- Limit how many stories of violence and harassment you take in. Antiqueer violence and harassment is designed to terrorize all of us. Take in only what you can, and what you feel you need to know in order to live well and take action.
- Find all the stories of hope you can. Share them! These stories help us feel less alone, less traumatized, and be more ready to take action.
- Engage in spiritual practices that are meaningful to you: light a chalice (here are **some words** to get you started), make an altar, pray, meditate, sing a hymn, go to church.
- Help your feelings move through your body. Sing, reach out to people you love, play, listen to music (here’s a **playlist** to get you started), do yoga, dance, run.

Go outside and feel Mother Earth holding you up, make art, scream, cry, revisit your favorite stories.

- Create safe places for yourself with people you love and who love you, to process trauma and experience joy. Promise each other you will keep making these safe places.
- Queer UU-adjacent books to ground yourself in:
 - [Authentic Selves: Celebrating Trans and Nonbinary People and Their Families](#)
 - [The Black Trans Prayer Book](#)
 - [Spilling the Light](#)
 - [Breaking and Blessing](#)
 - [Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements](#)
 - [Pride: An Inspirational History of the LGBTQ+ Movement](#)
 - [The Stonewall Generation: LGBTQ Elders on Sex, Activism, and Aging](#)
 - [This Book is Gay](#)

Build a Support Network

- Parent(s) and other family members: If you are out to your parent(s) and/or other family members, talk to them about how you are feeling and what you need from them. Discuss what you might be able to do as a family to be an active part of the resistance against hate.
 - If you are not out to your parent(s), talk with other trusted adults or friends about whether or not this is a safe time to come out to them. If it is not safe, lean on your other supports to make a plan for your safety and survival.
- Friends: Check in with one another. Make and give each other silly little gifts. Hang out. Ask for help. Explore identity together. Do what you already know how to do in order to be a good friend, and do it more.
- Teachers and school counselors who you know are LGBTQ-supportive: Talk to them about your feelings, fears, and needs. Ask them to join [GLSEN](#) (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network), a group that helps teachers get the information they need and support them when the going gets rough.
- Trusted LGBTQ adults: Connect with any LGBTQ adults you know personally. Reach out to public queer and trans adults on social media. If you don't get a response right away, try again, or try someone else. We are here for you.
- Religious community: [Unitarian Universalists](#) recently passed a [Business Resolution](#) that officially states that “embracing transgender, nonbinary, intersex and gender diverse people is a fundamental expression of UU religious values”. [Search for a list of Unitarian Universalist congregations](#), many of which have online options.
 - UU ministers care about you. Reach out to talk, find out if their congregation would be a good community for you, or to get connected to

community supports. Note that in many states, the rules around mandated reporting are different for ordained clergy/ministers versus non-ordained adults. This applies especially in states where adults are required to report parents who help their children access gender affirming care (or similar). While some clergy and some non-ordained adults will choose to act according to their ethics rather than the law, it is best to know [your state's laws](#) and get explicit confirmation from the adult that they will hold you in confidentiality. Err on the side of caution. Talking about a hypothetical situation or telling a story about “a friend” are reasonable ways to still access help without putting yourself at risk.

UPLIFT Programs for Trans/Nonbinary+ UUs Trans/Nonbinary+ Gatherings & Pastoral Care Space

Welcome to the UPLIFT monthly gathering & pastoral care space for trans, nonbinary, questioning and other not-entirely-or-at-all-cis UUs. Join us to connect with other trans/nonbinary UUs and co-create support and community across our faith.

[UPLIFT Programs](#)

- Some National LGBTQ Centers and Organizations
 - [PFLAG](#)
 - [GLSEN](#)
 - [Pink Haven Coalition](#)
 - [Lambda](#)
 - [ACLU](#)
- Therapist: If you're not out, make up a reason to ask your parent(s) if you can see a therapist. Try to get one sooner rather than later in case of changes in health care coverage. Use [Psychology Today](#) to search for a LGBTQ friendly therapist. Try to call any potential therapist in advance (anonymously, if possible) and ask them if they would maintain confidentiality with respect to your parent(s), and also what their views are on being LGBTQ. Don't waste time with a therapist who isn't enthusiastically supportive. If your parent(s) can't help, you may find a local clinic available for teenagers, a local LGBTQ center may provide counseling, or a supportive school counselor could help you find someone.

Be Prepared for Immediate and Long-Term Changes

Things look foreboding, we understand. We need to be responsive and aware, but we also need to avoid internalizing all of the worry onto ourselves. Planning can help you feel more prepared and give a sense of control in the face of an uncertain future. Stay in the loop, and be ready ahead of time to take action to keep yourself as safe as possible in response to legislative changes.

Here are some resources for staying up to date:

- [ACLU LGBTQ Law Tracker](#)
- [2024 Anti-Trans Bill Tracker](#)
- [A4TE Trans Legal Survival Guide](#)
- [Movement Advancement Project: LGBTQ Equality by State](#)
- Side with Love: [Action Center](#) | [Facebook](#)
- UUA: [Press Room](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

Build Community Resistance

Remember that acting in the face of oppression can help you feel strong and purposeful. You are strong. You can have an impact on the world. Not just later, now. You can:

- Be part of and leave a strong network to support queer youth in your school.
- Be public about what your group does so that even if people are too scared to come, they'll know they're not alone.
- Get involved with LGBTQ groups resisting, locally and/or online. This work is already in progress, and ready for you to join!
- Keep the adult world, including your support network, in the know about what's going on so they can take action and better support you.
- Learn from LGBTQ elders and activists who have been doing this work for a long time. They have tips, tricks, and survival strategies you can learn from. You have wisdom and experiences to share with them, too.
- Recognize intersectionality—I can't be free until you are free. Have each others' backs and resist oppression in all its forms, wherever you find it.
- Remember that "joining the resistance" often means deepening your support network, showing up when you're asked to help, trying/failing/learning/laughing. It is not fancy. It is life-giving.

Make a Plan and a Dream for Yourself, Long Term

Most importantly, please survive. Please make the healthiest choices you can to survive.

- Dare to dream of the future you want for yourself. Do this with your support networks, and find ways of being together that brings that dream into being. **Small is good, small is all.**
- Talk to your support network to plan an exit strategy if needed. College is one exit strategy that often brings you into closer contact with LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students. College is not always an option for financial, age, or academic reasons, and there are other ways to regroup yourself in affirming community. Make an exit strategy with the support of others, including trusted adults.
- Move to or push your state to follow the example of **states with friendly laws.**

- BIPOC LGBTQ youth, this moment is incredibly difficult. Remember that you are supported by your people, your ancestors, and by movements of people who have endured and suffered and have made [a way out of no way \(YouTube\)](#).

Remember That Whatever Happens

Remember that whatever happens, you are made of the same stuff as [Audre Lorde](#).
As [Alice Walker](#).

As [Marsha P. Johnson](#) and [Sylvia Rivera](#) and all the trans and queer folks who fought back at Stonewall.

As [Leslie Feinberg](#) and [Kate Bornstein](#). As [Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon](#) and [Gertrude Stein](#) and [Alice B. Toklas](#).

As [Oscar Wilde](#) and [Walt Whitman](#). As [Bayard Rustin](#) and [Harvey Milk](#).

And as [Laverne Cox](#), [Janet Mock](#), [Urvashi Vaid](#), [Keith Boykin](#), [Wanda Sykes](#), [Mary L. Bonauto](#), and all the other leaders who are fighting right now for us. And you.

When you need strength, read our history. You are made of the same fabulousness.

Adapted and updated by trans members of the Youth and Emerging Adult Ministry Staff team on November 18, 2024, drawing on a [post](#) by Evin Carvill-Ziemer, originally posted November 21, 2016.

For more information contact youth@uua.org.