

The Stories We're Told

UNRAVELING THE NORMATIVE



Niharica Shah, For CMTAI Conference, Nov 2022

About Me

Niharica Shah (she/her)

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Founder of Interior Gardening Psychological Services (2018 onwards)

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Queer Affirmative Practitioner

Therapeutic Dance and Art Therapy Facilitator



Interior Gardening
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QUEER/TRANS STORIES CHALLENGE THE IDEA OF A STRICT 'NORMAL'

Normative = Compulsory

Who decides what is the norm? How & where all is the norm enforced? Who or what does the norm permit and reject? What happens to those whose stories are not normative?

Queer Affirmative care does not exclude your cisgender, heterosexual, or monogamous clients.

It allows you to make an informed and supportive space for clients with identities that otherwise put them on the margins of society.



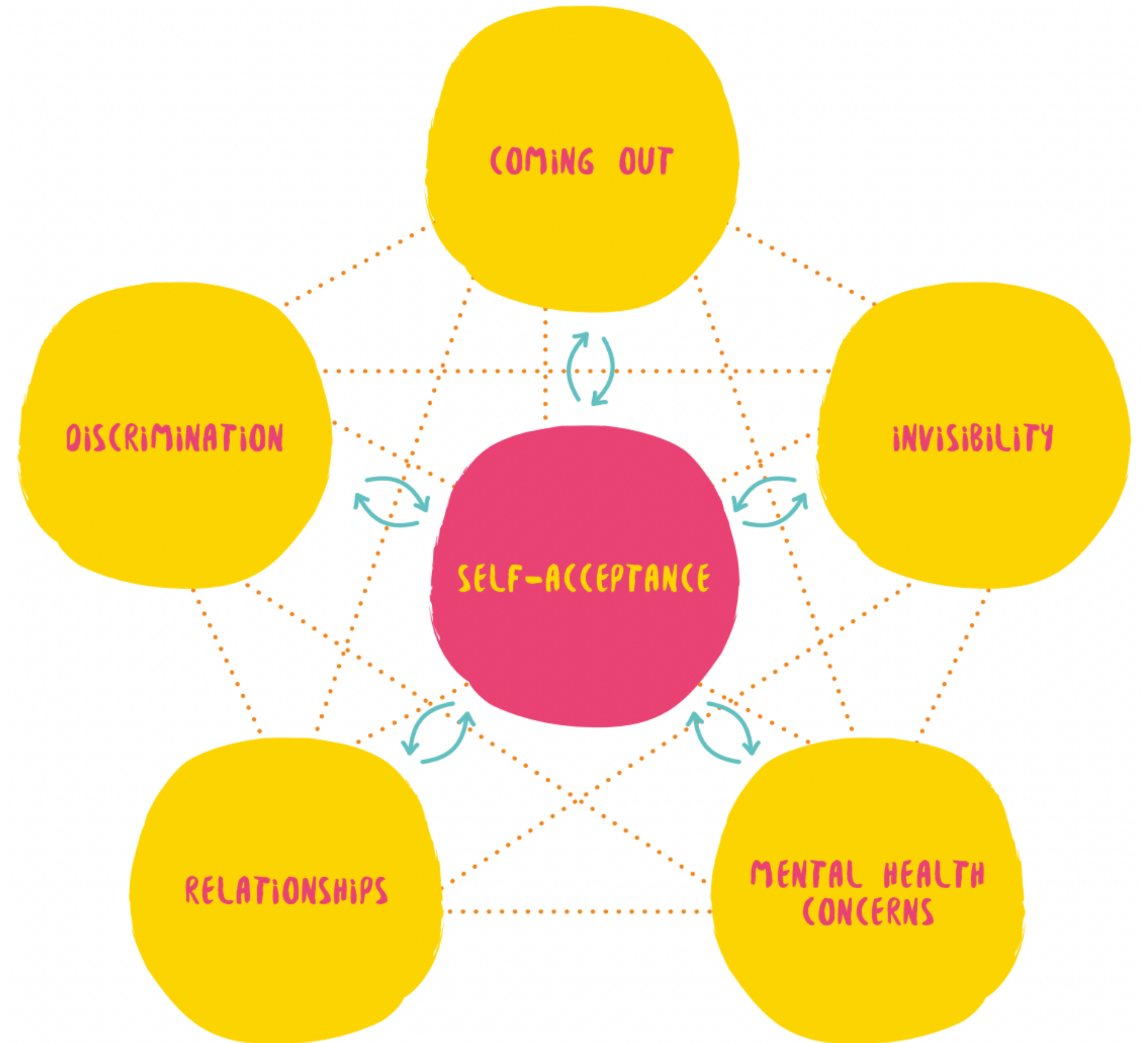
Unique Life Stressors

Understanding how unequal social and systemic structures influence the emotional landscapes of Queer/Trans Clients

- Self Acceptance – how to integrate that which has been told is bad, wrong, a joke, a phase, abnormal?
- Invisibility – systemic erasure of queer identities and stories as a part of the human experience
- Coming Out – unique to individuals who do not have normative identities
- Discrimination and Harassment – as experienced from various systems, groups, and individuals
- Relationship Issues – living outside what is socially-sanctioned puts unique pressures on the relationship
- Transgender Life Struggles – gender dysphoria, passing, medical gender transitioning, misgendering & erasure, discrimination and violence
- Mental Health Concerns – anxiety, depression, suic*ality, PTSD & C-PTSD, over-diagnoses

UQS Matrix

Source: Mariwala Health Initiative,
QACP Resource Book
www.mhi.org.in/qacp





**Alok V Menon (they/them) &
Johnathan Van Ness (they/he/she) in
Getting Curious**

Why *MGP* Allyship Matters

- The Psy disciplines have been complicit in the oppression of LGBTQIA+ identifying individuals. Silence is compliance when you hold more power than others.
- We hold a unique position of power in offering (at times) the only space where clients are seen as whole and valid.
- The distress of Queer/trans folks is often seen as personal and not socially located, resulting in the pathologization of responses to oppression.
- Diversity is the norm, not out of the norm. If we work only from the normative/neutral framework, we're missing a massive chunk of the human experience.
- It is our ethical responsibility to educate ourselves about the unique struggles of our clients, instead of simply turning them away with even fewer options remaining.



Reflections & Questions

What are you sitting with from today's session?



Connect

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