

# Virtual GSA Activity Ideas

The following activity guide intends to spark ideas for keeping your virtual meetings relevant, meaningful and adaptive to your new context as well as responsive to emerging needs and concerns of your participants. They are categorized into the three main GSA functions, 'Mutual Care & Support', 'Social and Cultural Engagement', and 'Organizing and Activism'.

# START

In addition to name and pronoun check-ins, it can be helpful to do a general check-in at the start. This way you can capture how members are feeling and allow everyone to feel seen, heard and included.

Regardless of when and what kind of check-in you are doing, it is important to remind everyone that they can always pass their turn.

## Getting Started

As always, it is important to do group introductions including name and pronoun sharing whenever there are new members to any group. Even if everyone already knows one another, this is an important practice when moving your GSA to a virtual format. Remember, the name/pronoun someone goes by at home, may be different compared to what they go by at school. If possible, encourage participants to share this information on their screen name within the video conferencing tool you are using. For more on pronouns, check out this [resource](#) or watch this [video](#).

Here are some quick and easy check-in formats that you can use to open your meetings:

- *Share a rose (highlight) and thorn (low point) from your day/ week/time since we last met*
- *My energy level right now is \_\_\_*
- *If I could describe myself right now as a type of weather I would be \_\_\_\_*
- *Share where you are currently at or how you are feeling with an emoji or a GIF*

# Mutual Care and Support



## Facilitate Peer Support Discussion

GSA meetings can be a vital opportunity for participants to access or offer community care and support. This is especially important when it is even more difficult to be seen, heard and validated. If possible, it may be helpful to have a staff advisor facilitate these types of sessions. Regardless of who facilitates these types of sessions, they should feel comfortable and competent in using a range of [active listening strategies](#).

It is important to emphasize that sharing is completely optional and that anyone is free to quietly remove themselves from a conversation that may not be feeling good for them. Participants should be encouraged to practice self-care strategies and to ask for additional support if they need it.

For more on facilitating peer support groups check out this [resource](#).

Here are some prompts to spark the kinds of conversations that might allow for this type of discussion. Ask your GSA participants to submit question prompts for the kinds of conversations they want to have!

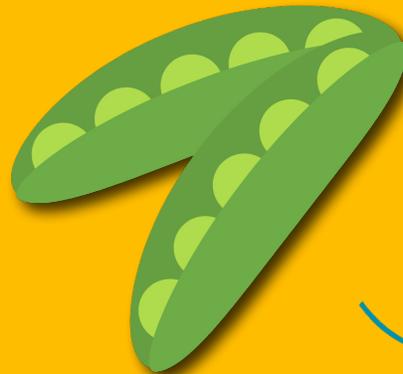
- What I miss most about life before [exceptional circumstance] is ...
- One of the most surprising things about this strange time has been...
- The thing I am most disappointed to have missed is...
- What I am most looking forward to after this is all over is...
- One new thing I have seen, done or heard is...
- Which physical queer space are you feeling the loss of the most?
- What queer online space, event or resource have you stumbled upon because of these exceptional circumstances?
- Name one person or thing that has really helped keep you grounded during this time
- Is there a form of care, support or resource you can safely offer to anyone in the group at this time?
- Name one way you would like to be supported by your GSA at this time
- What does self-care look like for you at this time?
- What does community care look like for you?
- How do you stay connected with affirming community during quarantine?
- Are you performing or expressing gender any differently now that you are out in the world a little less? How?
- Are there certain gender habits you have dropped or picked because of your new context? How is that feeling for you?

## Virtual Show and Tell

Ask participants to prepare ahead of time one idea, activity, tool or resource they are excited about. Have them explain what it is, why they are excited about it, how they found it, what is it inspiring them to do? Encourage them to add it into a shared file.

## Move Your Bodies Together

You may wish to use your virtual GSA meeting to do some stretching exercises or to do some gentle movement together over videoconference. Check out this [tip guide](#) on keeping your bodies moving during quarantine and try Egale's signature LGBTQI2S exercise routine!



## Organize a Care Pod

Your GSA can be a good place to introduce the idea of co-creating a care pod, a concept put forward by author and performer [Kai Cheng Thom](#) and inspired by [Mia Mingus](#) and the [Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective](#). A care pod is a small circle or network of mutual support, facilitated by a tool such as a group chat. The group is updated on respective needs of members within the group and make plans for support. Kai Cheng discusses important elements of successful care pods such as fostering a culture of consent, boundaries and ensuring members are supported. For more on care pods check out this [link](#).



## Facilitate a Closing Circle

If a meeting involves some intense discussion or sharing of personal experience, doing a closing circle at the end can help the group feel like they are supported and not alone in their feelings. These check-ins can also be a good way of gauging how the group is feeling about an activity and if you need to spend more/less time on something or create additional space for support.

Here is a list of closing activities that can help your GSA members express their feelings and needs after a meeting:

- *“Share one word or one action that expresses how you’re feeling right now.”*
- Use Rock, Stick, Leaf: *“To close our day, we’ll go around the circle and have everyone share something that rocked for them, something that will stick with them, and something they’d like to leaf (leave) behind.”*
- *“Leaving this meeting, what is one thing you are going to do today to take care of yourself, or to make yourself feel good?”*



## Attend a Live Online Event Together

There are several queer and/or social justice-focused learning, entertainment and engagement opportunities online. Have GSA members pool together a list of suggested events such as webinars, livestream panel talks, or any events by queer artists and cultural producers like [Glad Day TV](#) and vote together on which ones you would like to attend together. This is a great way to support queer and trans artists during particularly rough times. As another option, if only some of your group can attend a certain event, reserve some time in your GSA meeting for a show and tell, for an opportunity to report to the group and share their experience of attending the event!



## Invite a Guest Speaker

Take advantage of the plethora of willing community activists and cultural workers who would be interested in coming to your GSA to speak. You can invite speakers to talk about anything your GSA is interested in, including anti-oppression, LGBTQI2S history, art therapy, sex education, career or post-secondary planning, LGBTQI2S experience, decolonization, DIY projects, astrology/tarot - anything!

*Please note that we recommend you take some time to raise funds to hire speakers who work directly in the community. People living at the intersections of multiple systems of oppression, including QTBIPOC people, or trans feminine people, are often the ones to provide the most valuable perspectives to critical movements, yet it is often this labour that is often undervalued and underpaid. Please, pay your guest speakers.*



## Virtual Open Mic

A virtual open mic can be a fun and engaging activity to do with your GSA. Does your membership have untapped talent? Do they play instruments? Want to try stand-up comedy? Want to read their poetry? Can they juggle? Do acrobatics or magic tricks? Sing? Can't sing? (Karaoke is always a good time!)

## Film or Book Discussion

Hosting a film or book discussion can be a great way to ground larger conversations about LGBTQI2S experiences, problems, feelings of in/exclusion, social justice, and more.

Pool a list of titles together and vote on your choice of what to read or watch together as a group. Ask your members to bring topics, comments, and questions for discussion after they have read a certain number of chapters.

Be sure to provide an appropriate content warning for each book or film whenever possible. Ensure your group knows they can take space to breathe or work through any sensory overload or content triggers.

Check to see if your GSA members have access to a common movie or TV streaming service like Netflix or Crave. Some services have options to watch together in real time, such as [Netflix Party](#). Be sure that you are not excluding any member of GSA in your choice. Some videoconferencing tools may have decent screen sharing options.

There are also some excellent free LGBTQ film streaming opportunities available through [CBC](#) and [your local public library](#).

Here are some ideas and prompts for book or film discussions:

- Who is the imagined audience for the film or book?
- Whose voices are centered in the narrative? Whose voices are marginal? Whose are missing entirely?
- If there is one main question the filmmaker or author wants audiences to think about or reflect upon?
- Are there any parts of this film that were uncomfortable, problematic, or that used outdated language? How does this change our perceptions of the film?
- Did any questions come up or were there things that sparked your curiosity to learn more?
- Were there ideas or opinions you agree or disagree with?
- How did the main characters express their gender and/or sexualities in a way that was affirming for them?
- Was sexuality or gender key to the plot?
- Did this film feature QTBIPOC (Queer and trans black, indigenous, or people of colour)? Were there parts of the characters identity outside of their gender/sexuality taken up in a meaningful way?
- What were the moments that stirred your emotions and what emotions did they bring up?
- Did you make any connections to other events, ideas or experiences?

Get in touch with Egale to arrange access to stream [Sex, Sin and 69'](#), a documentary commemorating 50 years since the decriminalization of homosexuality. The documentary comes with learning materials and a discussion guide.

Check out and order titles featured at [Glad Day Book Shop](#), the World's Oldest LGBTQ Bookstore, and in doing so support a vital queer community space and organization.

# Organizing Action

Another key function of your GSA is organizing for action towards positive change in your school community and beyond. Are there action projects or campaigns your GSA was working on before these exceptional circumstances occurred? What adaptations or adjustments can be made to your action plan to continue the project in this new environment? Have new priorities emerged?

Set aside GSA meetings to discuss how your GSA is going to sustain and define/redefine its action-oriented goals and projects.

Here are a few ideas your GSA can pursue in learning, engaging and organizing!

## Impacts of COVID-19 on LGBTQI2S Peoples

- <https://egale.ca/egale-in-action/covid19-impact-report/>
- <https://www.dailyxtra.com/how-covid-19-impact-lgbtq-communities-169752>
- <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Covid-19-Sent-LGBTQ-Students/248633>
- <https://www.minus18.org.au/articles/dealing-with-unsupportive-family-during-self-isolation>

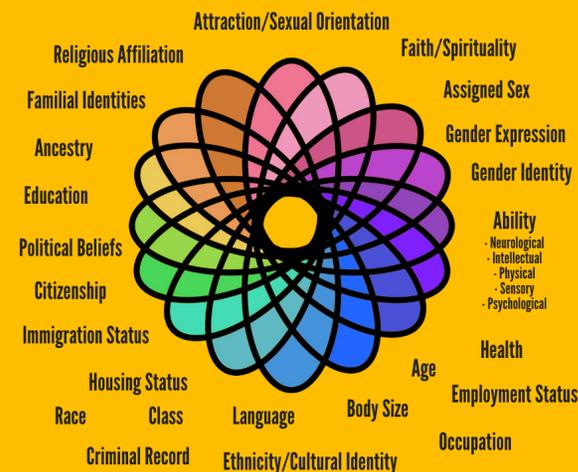
## COVID-19 and Labour Rights

- <https://marker.medium.com/america-is-about-to-witness-the-biggest-labor-movement-its-seen-in-decades-3aa47f0edf52>

## Keep it Intersectional

Large-scale crises have a way of shining a light on existing realities of injustice. Your GSA may wish to pursue learning about the range of emerging social justice organizing that takes place. You could tap into such issue-areas as disability rights movements, labour rights movements, anti-racism, disparities in access to healthcare, disproportionate impacts on LGBTQI2S, racialized and other marginalized identities. Discuss how these issues overlap and intersect with issues facing diverse LGBTQI2S people and what your GSA can do to raise awareness your school community and beyond.

Here are some links to get you started in your collective learning and action planning!



## COVID-19 and Racism

- [https://theyee.ca/Opinion/2020/04/10/Five-Ways-To-Take-Anti-Racist-Action-During-COVID-19/?fbclid=IwAR0wrIQ9VabfYojhz8HcJG1CWn0WO0esBkFe3ySE\\_JnE8zCY52IRjh8IRds](https://theyee.ca/Opinion/2020/04/10/Five-Ways-To-Take-Anti-Racist-Action-During-COVID-19/?fbclid=IwAR0wrIQ9VabfYojhz8HcJG1CWn0WO0esBkFe3ySE_JnE8zCY52IRjh8IRds)
- <https://www.voicesofyouth.org/covid-19-your-voices-against-stigma-and-discrimination>
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/race-and-blame/609946/>
- <https://www.thestar.com/podcasts/thismatters/2020/04/16/indigenous-communities-systemic-racism-and-covid-19.html>

## COVID-19 and Disability Rights

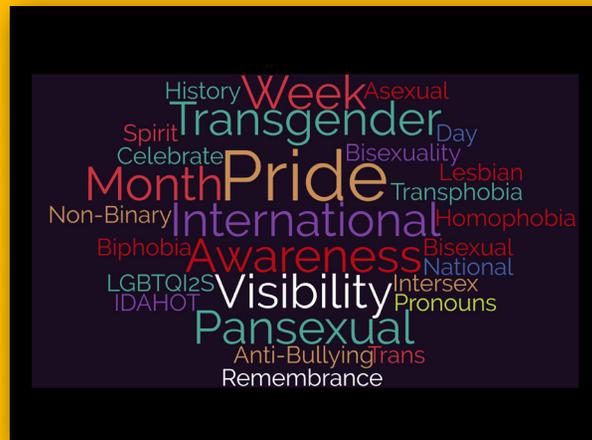
- <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/covid-19-and-disability-movement>
- <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/26/protect-rights-people-disabilities-during-covid-19>

## Initiate a Digital Campaign Against Anti-LGBTQI2S Cyberbullying

With more time spent in online environments than ever, and general stressors being higher, now is an especially important time to remind your school community about the importance of respectful, inclusive and violence free environments online and beyond. Check out [Egale's Anti-LGBTQI2S Cyberbullying resource](#).

## Connect with and Pool Resources and Efforts with other GSAs

Community is imperative during exceptional circumstances, reach out to other neighboring GSAs and see what they are doing. Given the online format of your GSA at this time, now could be a great opportunity to connect and exchange ideas and resources with another school's GSA.



## Recognize a Queer Event of Significance

Your GSA can discuss how to meaningfully mark and engage with days/events of significance in a virtual way. Events and days like Pride, Trans Day of Remembrance, Trans Day of Visibility, and International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia are some significant examples.

Check out Egale's [#PrideInside guide](#) and join us for [Queer Prom!](#)

