


# Four Step Guide to Empowerment

## FOR 2SLGBTQI STUDENTS



Starting a new school year can feel daunting, full of new experiences and emotions. This can be especially true for students who are uncertain if their identities will be respected and supported. While many schools have made great strides in protecting the rights of 2SLGBTQI people, some still have room to grow to be truly inclusive. 2SLGBTQI communities have always been resilient and many continue to fight at the forefront of activism and social justice movements for their rights and the rights of others.



This resource is a guide for 2SLGBTQI students that supports empowerment, resilience, and self-advocacy in the school community and beyond. It's important to remember that you are not alone in building safer and more accepting schools.

Everyone has a part to play, including your classmates, caregivers, teachers, and other school staff.

# 1) Validate your feelings

The 2SLGBTQI community is commonly associated with feelings of pride, but we don't always start there. As a 2SLGBTQI young person it can be difficult to foster that level of comfort and confidence in who you are, especially for 2SLGBTQI students who feel unsafe, unsupported, or simply alone in their school environment. No matter where you are on your journey, your identity and experiences are deserving of respect, understanding, and support. Whether you are queer, questioning, out or not, your feelings deserve to be validated.

## Ask Yourself

- ? How can I be kind to myself?
- ? How can I acknowledge my feelings while remaining hopeful?
- ? What makes me feel better when I hear or experience something upsetting?
- ? What outlets do I typically use for expressing my feelings?
- ? Are there any other outlets that I can try?

## Remember:

To quote Chris Colfer "There is nothing wrong with you. There's a lot wrong with the world you live in." It's important to remember that you do not have to keep your feelings to yourself. In fact, there are many benefits to sharing our feelings and emotions with others. You can also journal, write poetry, read a book, get outside, reach out to a close friend when you are experiencing difficult feelings or 2SLGBTQI discrimination.

## 2) Build a network of support

Having a community of people who love and support you for who you are can be incredibly affirming. It can sometimes feel challenging seeking out supportive people who you trust, or who understand what you are experiencing. Know that there are many people who will love and support you for who you are.

### Ask Yourself

- ❓ Who do you feel most comfortable around?
- ❓ Do you have friends at school who you can share your experiences with?
- ❓ Is there a teacher, guidance counsellor, or other affirming adult at your school who you trust?
- ❓ Is there anyone in your family you have a close relationship with?
- ❓ Are there safe online support networks you can access?

### Remember:

You do not have to build a network of support all by yourself. Caregivers, teachers, or other affirming adults in your life can help you connect with supportive communities. It is also possible to find support from people whom you do not know personally. For example, it can be empowering to engage with 2SLGBTQI TV shows, movies, and books, surround yourself with affirming messages on social media, or learn more about 2SLGBTQI identities and experiences online.

## 3) Advocate for yourself and others

Advocacy is any way that you stand up for yourself or others. It is about using your voice to address issues of 2SLGBTQI discrimination you witness or experience. Advocacy can take many forms. Often, several small choices and actions can lead to big changes. Learning about the different ways to advocate for yourself and others and discovering which ones feel right for you is an important part of making sure your advocacy efforts are safe, sustainable, and fulfilling.

### Ask Yourself

- ? What am I specifically advocating for?
- ? Who can I meet with to advocate for the changes I want to see?
- ? Do I have people who can join me in my advocacy?
- ? What safety considerations should I be making?

### Remember:

If you try to fix every issue you notice, you'll likely burn out. Instead, focus on one or two issues that you have the greatest potential to influence. Advocacy is also a form of allyship. Standing up for your needs or what you believe in often has a positive ripple effect for other students in your school community. It can look like getting involved in your school's GSA or correcting someone if they misgender you or someone you know. Finally, you don't have to fight every fight yourself - everyone within the school community has a part to play in building safer and more inclusive spaces.

## 4) Look beyond your school community

There is a lot to be proud of as someone in the 2SLGBTQI community and many places of empowerment inside and outside of your school community. You can find empowerment by connecting with community organizations and clubs, finding local or online 2SLGBTQI events to attend, learning more about 2SLGBTQI histories, legacies, and people through books, documentaries, and by following 2SLGBTQI social media influencers and community organizations.

### Ask Yourself

- ❓ What advocacy efforts/social groups already exist in my community?
- ❓ Do I feel comfortable sharing this part of myself with others, or would I rather take a quieter role by engaging anonymously online or with media?
- ❓ What would a friend group that is empowering to 2SLGBTQI folks look like to me? How can I help create that?

### Remember:

2SLGBTQI communities are no stranger to fostering resiliency in the face of discrimination. This has created communities that are skillful in fighting for their right to be seen, listened to, and understood. There may be times you don't feel a strong connection to your local community. Feel reassured that the community still exists, is fighting for you, and is excited to welcome you when you are ready for it.

# Additional Resources

- **Affirmations Deck,  
Teen Health Source**

[https://teenhealthsource.com/wp-content/newfold-page-cache/blog/resource-affirmations-deck/\\_index.html](https://teenhealthsource.com/wp-content/newfold-page-cache/blog/resource-affirmations-deck/_index.html)

- **It Gets Better Canada**

<https://itgetsbettercanada.org/stories/>

- **Good2Talk**

<https://good2talk.ca/>

1-866-925-5454

- **Hope for Wellness Help Line**

<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

1-855-242-3310

- **Kid's Help Phone**

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

1-800-668-6868

- **Talk Suicide**

<https://talksuicide.ca>

1-833-456-4566

- **Trans Lifeline**

<https://translifeline.org/>

1-877-330-6366

- **Youthspace.ca**

<http://www.youthspace.ca>

778-783-0177