



Helping Those Who Sincerely Believe They Need to Change



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www.stopconversionpractices.ca

A Knowledge Centre created by and with survivors of conversion practices, for all who are working to support survivors and end these harmful practices in Canada

The Community-Based Research Centre
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What if you have a service user or client who expresses a sincere desire to *change* and may or may not be a person of faith who is angry that conversion “therapy” has been criminalized?

It is important to recognize that there are many reasons why people may want to change or “fix” their sexual orientations, gender identities, or gender expressions. As practitioners and service providers, it is critical that we respect each person and acknowledge the [many pressures, fears, and beliefs](#) that make it feel impossible for them to accept a sexual identity that is not heterosexual, or a gender identity or expression that is not in alignment with their assigned sex at birth.

Service users or clients may feel anxious about accessing any kind of support that is outside their faith or ethnic community or outside their comfort zones. It can be really scary to speak to someone about these things if they’ve never spoken about them before. It is therefore critical that practitioners and service providers have a fulsome understanding of conversion practices and their impacts, and are able to provide care that is both trauma-informed and respectful of a person’s choices regarding their faith community and beliefs.

Assure them that they are not alone, and that there are many people just like them who have been through similar experiences, struggled with similar thoughts and emotions, and found the journey to be ultimately life-giving. Connect them to the variety of supportive resources they can find at [StopConversionPractices.ca](#).

Below is a list of questions you can use to engage with those who want to change. The questions are all related to the desire to change, deny, or suppress their sexual attractions, gender expressions, or gender identities. Talking them out with you as a trusted confidante, or encouraging them to speak with someone of their faith, or someone on a phone or chat help line can be very helpful.

For discussion with people who want to change

1. In 2013, Exodus International—the largest Christian organization that practiced conversion “therapy” since the 1970’s—closed its doors permanently and [apologized](#) for the harm it had caused to thousands of people. How do you imagine the leaders came to this difficult decision? (See Netflix’s documentary [Pray Away](#).)
2. Discuss: What is informed consent? For consent to be considered valid, it must be “informed” consent. They must have: received an adequate explanation about the nature and purpose of the proposed practice, treatment, or service; have been told about its anticipated outcome or goal; have been informed about the significant risks involved and what alternatives are available. Did they receive this information?
3. What are the risks and potential harms of engaging in talk therapy or programs which have as their goal making a person heterosexual or making their gender identity or expression align with their assigned sex at birth? Invite them to look at

StopConversionPractices.ca (which has an escape button on each page) to learn more about conversion practices and their impact, and about the professional and religious organizations who oppose them.

4. If religious texts were different, would that make a difference in their desire to change? What are the key passages that inform their decision? Have they considered all the possible interpretations of these passages? How did they land on the one they now hold?
5. Where does their discomfort with their sexual or gender identity come from? What messages have they heard, on and off the record, that make them feel bad about who they are and what they feel? Have they internalized negative religious and societal prejudices about what it means to be queer, trans, or Two-Spirit (internalized homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia)? Are they frightened of being 2S/LGBTQIA+? Why are they frightened?
6. We are all under pressure to conform to what we have been taught. Ask if there is any room for them to challenge the idea that being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or gender non-conforming, are inherently pathological, sinful, or intrinsically dis-ordered? If not, ask them how they came to that conclusion?
7. What might a first small step of self-acceptance look like for them?
8. Could they consider speaking with someone of their faith who is queer, trans, or Two-Spirit? Encourage them to check out the list of [Affirming Faith Organizations and Networks](#) to find someone from their faith to speak with.

For more information

- [Supporting Survivors of Conversion Practices](#)
- [Faith-based Supports and Resources](#)
- [Research with a Religious Focus](#)

Read more about the who, what, why, where, and how of conversion practices and access a variety of supports and resources at www.stopconversionpractices.ca