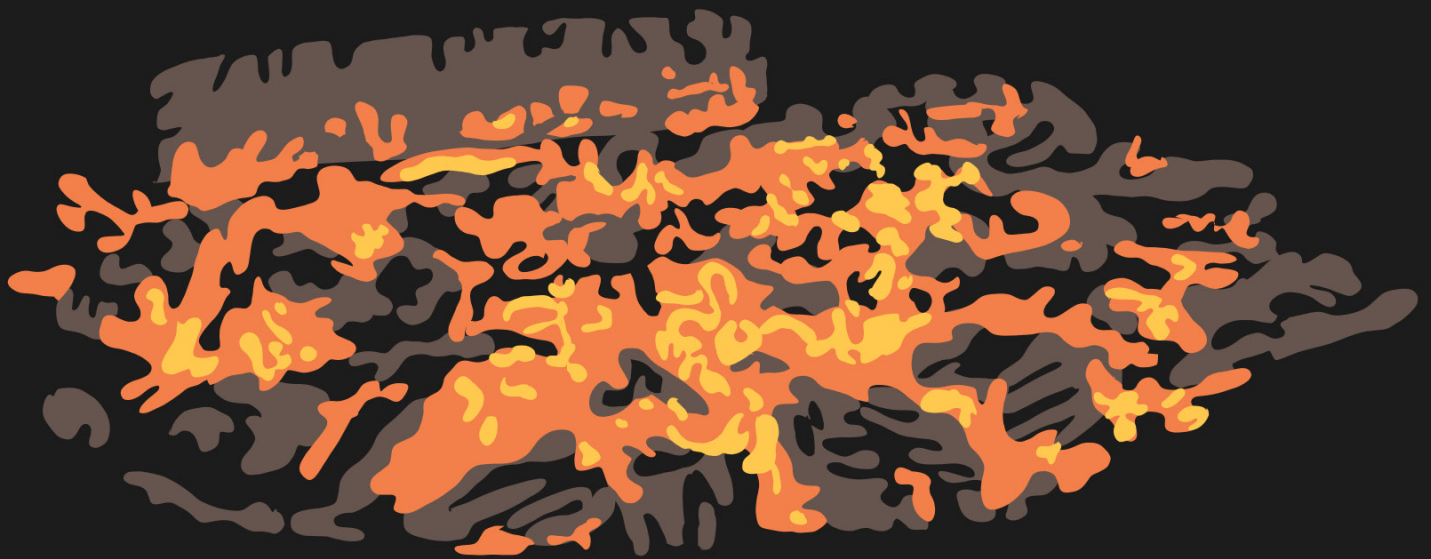




Kindling Our Curiosity

A Trans Sexual Health Zine



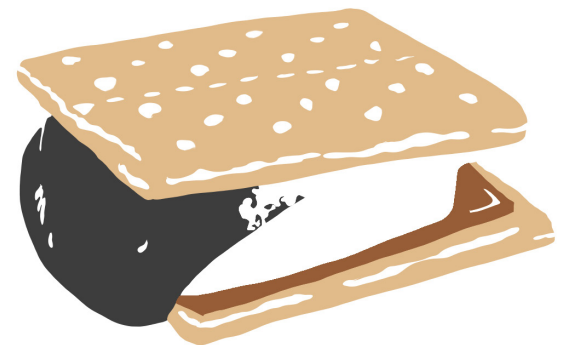
Volume 3
Lighting the Fire

Trans Care BC
Provincial Health Services Authority

Trans Care BC operates on the unceded lands of many Indigenous peoples. This zine was created on the unceded lands of the x̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉạ́ỵəm (Musqueam), Sḳẉx̣ẉụ́7̣mesh (Squamish), and sə̣ḷiḷẉə̣ṭə̣ł̣ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and we recognize their stewardship of this land for generations. We recognize and celebrate the contributions of Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer and trans Indigenous people within these communities, whose voices and experiences enrich our understandings of sexuality, gender and community care.

This zine was written and created by staff and contractors for Trans Care BC in 2024. Many subject matter experts contributed to the vision and content, and we are grateful for their trust, vulnerability and contributions to this work.

Themes and framing imagery in this zine were inspired by resources created by the Native Youth Sexual Health Network and the game *Let the Fire Soothe* by Lyra Vega. Information and ideas were influenced by the book *Trans Sex* by Lucie Fielding, as well as the zines of Mira Bellwether, specifically *FTW: A Zine About the Sex Lives of Trans Women*, and the contributors to *Learning Good Consent*.



Content note

While this zine celebrates trans sexuality, it also discusses topics that may bring up complicated feelings, like body parts, and acknowledges the potential for difficult experiences that can lead to trauma. Some content may prompt unexpected emotions. We encourage you to prioritize self-care while reading.

Financial contribution:

This is not a safer sex guide.

What we won't be doing:

- Telling you what sex acts are “risky” and “safe”
- Describing how STIs are passed or when and how to get tested
- Discussing birth control and pregnancy

What we will be doing:

- Asking questions, like:
 - What does sexual health mean for you?
 - What experiences do you want to have?
 - What feelings do you want to experience?
 - How do you want to keep yourself safe?
- Providing resources that may help you with the above

As trans, Two-Spirit, and non-binary people, it can be difficult to access any health care—let alone sexual health care. Decisions about sexual health may seem like a balancing act between safety and pleasure. We want to encourage you to prioritize both.

This zine discusses nuances of our sexual health and validates the difficult, exciting, and complex experiences trans, Two-Spirit and non-binary people have exploring our sexualities.

How to use this zine

- Print it, download it, screenshot sections of it
- Scribble on it, highlight it, make notes on it
- Cross out language or sections that don't feel relevant or useful
- Fill out activities on these pages, in a journal, or in a notes app
- Flip through it and take away one useful piece of information

There are some prompts and activities included.
They are optional. Pick and choose what you want to do.

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Lighting the Fire

Disclosure & Consent

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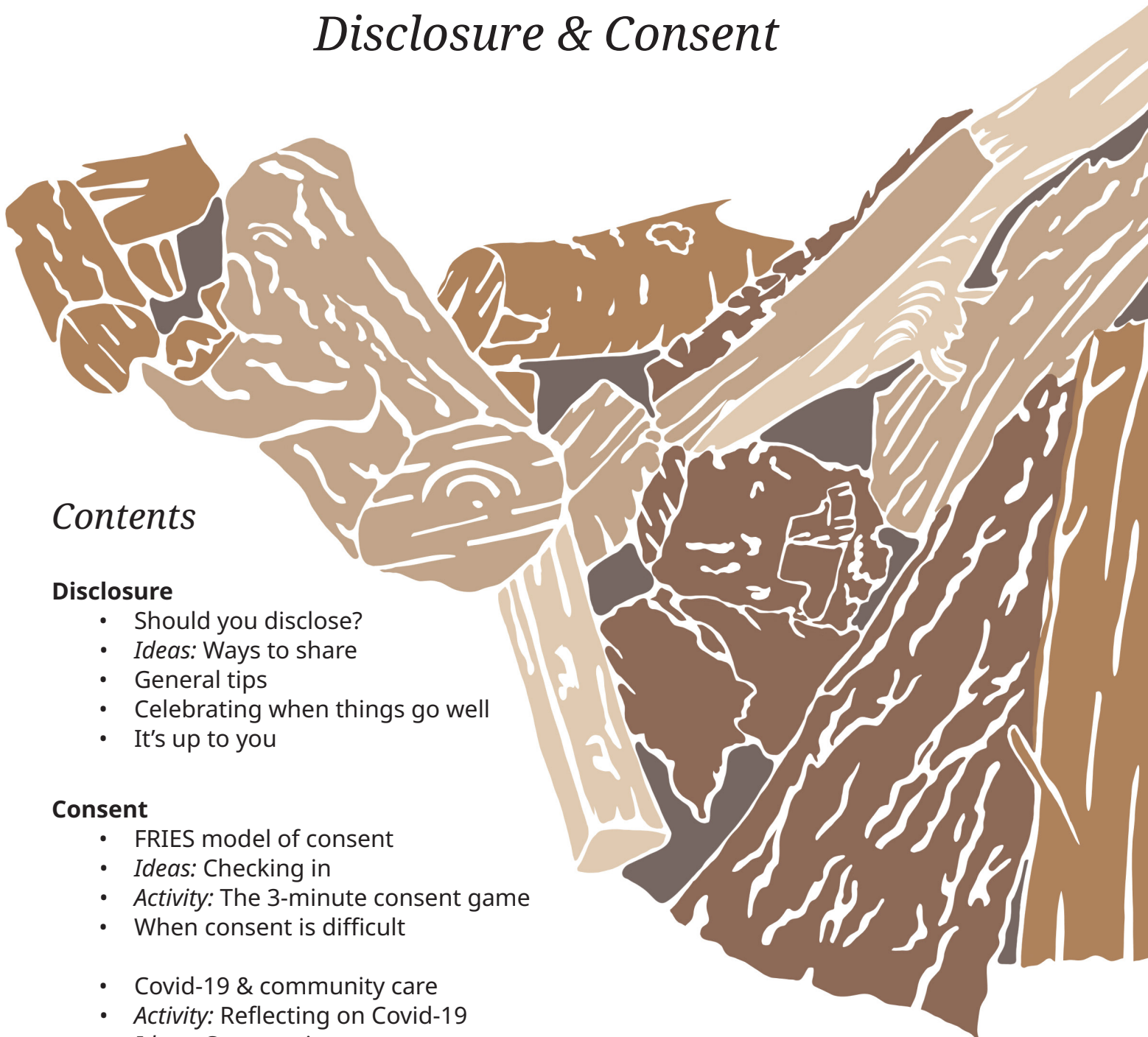
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Disclosure

When is the right time to tell someone that you're trans, Two-Spirit, or non-binary? What's the best way to share this information? Do you even need to share this information at all?



Should you disclose?

You might choose to talk about your gender with some people and not with others. This is personal information and you have a right to keep it private.

When it comes to sex and dating, sharing information about gender, surgeries or hormone therapy can be important, and sometimes it may be unavoidable. Some people share this information upfront; some prefer to wait until they have built more of a connection; and some people choose to not share this information at all.

Deciding whether to share this information can be complex. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- **You have the right to decide if, when and how to share about your gender.**
 - No one has the right to know or share information about your gender
 - You have the right to keep this part of yourself private
 - Keep in mind that someone may share this information without your permission
- Disclosure can be **affirming**, especially when this information is received with care & respect
- Disclosure can be **vulnerable**
 - It can lead to greater intimacy with sexual and romantic partners
 - It can increase risk of harassment, discrimination, violence, losing relationships, and housing instability
- Disclosure can create **special opportunities**, like opening us to specific relationships (e.g., "T4T")

Ideas: Ways to share

Online (e.g., in a dating profile):

- Sharing your pronouns helps others to refer to you correctly
- Sharing about your gender:
 - May attract attention from people who are interested in dating trans people, including “chasers” (a term for people who seek out trans people as partners primarily on the basis of their trans status), or other trans people
 - For some, attention from “chasers” is not an issue, and can even be flattering
 - For some, the attitude and attention from “chasers” can feel intrusive, objectifying or dehumanizing, especially if it seems like potential partners don’t see beyond the aspects they find sexually exciting
 - Many trans people actively seek out other trans partners, and for some, “T4T” interactions can be special or affirming
- There is no guarantee that someone will read your profile and notice this information

Messaging (e.g., text or direct messages):

- Less ‘risky’ compared to sharing in-person, giving you control of if, when, and how you share this information
- May not be as intimate as an in-person conversation

In-person:

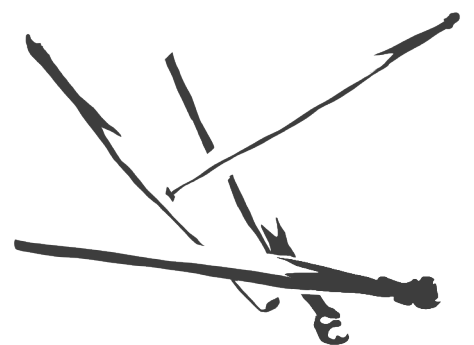
- Can be stressful, especially with people we do not know well, since there is a risk they will react negatively

Through a friend:

- Asking someone else to share this information for you may feel safer than sharing it directly

Choosing not to share:

- Sometimes, gender is simply not relevant to our relationships, and there is no need to share this information
- This can be a good way to maintain privacy and safety. If someone learns this information at a later time or from someone else, they may be happy that you have trusted them with that information, or they may have a more negative reaction



General tips

There are different ways that people may respond. Some people will immediately be positive and affirming, others may need time to process the information. Some people may have negative responses. Here are some tips to help you stay safer:

- No matter how you choose to disclose, prepare yourself emotionally for different kinds of responses
- You can practice what you might say. You can also plan how you might respond to different kinds of reactions. Some people find it helpful to roleplay with someone they trust
- You may have an idea of how someone will react based on previous conversations or their social media
- If you don't feel sure how the conversation will go, you can make a plan to debrief with someone you trust after the conversation
- If you're disclosing in person, consider letting someone you trust know where you will be and who you are meeting. You can share your location on your phone, and have a time set to check in afterwards
- You can ask the person you are sharing with not to respond right away so they can take some time to let the information sink in
- Let them know if it is ok to disclose this information with others, or if you would like them to keep it confidential
- If someone reacts negatively, you might say: "I get that this information may come as a surprise. You'd probably like some time to digest this. I'm ready to talk about it when you are." It may help to try to stop them before they get too far. You could put your hand up and say something like, "I wasn't asking for your opinion"
- If a situation is emotionally or physically unsafe, do your best to leave
- If you have a difficult experience and don't have someone you feel comfortable talking to, consider calling Trans Lifeline for support at (877) 330-6366 in Canada

For more tips, visit Trans Care BC's [web page on Coming Out](#).

Extra tips for people who do sex work

For those of us who do sex work, there are complex considerations and risks that influence whether or not we share about our gender. Some of us may keep this information private, while others may openly share it.

The choice to disclose is deeply personal and depends on individual circumstances, including safety considerations, our work settings, our social locations, financial situations and support systems.

There is no right or wrong answer about whether to share this information with clients. Trusting your intuition and building a support network (including other trans people, sex worker organizations, queer and trans support groups and legal aid services) can help you to determine what choice feels right for you.



Celebrating when things go well

Sharing about our gender can be a positive experience. While some people may have negative or uncertain reactions, there are many others who will receive this information with appreciation, kindness and even love. Many people are supportive of trans people and will appreciate the courage it may have taken for us to share with them.

Consider taking some time to do something to honour and celebrate yourself, and enjoy when these conversations go well.





It's up to you

We have the right to safety and privacy. Information about our gender is not something we owe to other people. To learn more about your rights, visit transrightsbc.ca

There are many stereotypes about trans people, especially transfeminine people, including the misconception that we are “deceptive” if we don’t disclose our gender history immediately to people we interact with romantically or sexually. These stereotypes are not true.

Sometimes these cultural beliefs might make us feel very pressured to share before we are comfortable or ready. It’s up to each of us to decide what information we want to share and when. The way we navigate these conversations may change over time and circumstance.



Consent

You might feel like getting verbal consent is awkward, or might change the mood, or slow things down. You might find it difficult to ask for what you want. You might not even know what you want!

This is all normal.

Asking for and giving consent is something we can learn and practice. If this concept feels new to you, be kind and patient with yourself as you learn this skill.





The FRIES model of consent

There are many ways to confirm that you and your partner are consenting to the same experience. One useful model of consent is the FRIES model from [Planned Parenthood](#), which emphasizes the importance of clear communication, mutual respect, and active participation to ensure that everyone involved feels safe, respected, and empowered.

Freely given

- Consent should be freely given without any form of coercion, pressure, manipulation, or influence from drugs or alcohol. Everyone involved should have the ability to make a voluntary choice about whether to engage in the activity.

Reversible

- Consent is not permanent and can be revoked at any time, even in the middle of things. We have the right to change our minds and withdraw consent, even if we've said yes before.

Informed

- Informed consent involves having all the necessary information to make a decision about engaging in a particular activity. This includes understanding each other's STI screening practices and results, and being honest about intentions, boundaries and expectations (e.g., agreeing to use condoms). This is an ongoing process.

Enthusiastic

- This means doing things that everyone is excited to do. It's about actively wanting to engage rather than feeling pressured or obligated.

Specific

- This means that when you agree to something (e.g., making out), you are specifically agreeing to that activity, and not also consenting to other activities (e.g., oral sex). Agreeing to one sexual act does not imply consent for any other activity. Each new interaction requires its own clear and explicit consent.

Ideas: Checking in with partners

There's no single correct way to communicate with a partner or partners. Here are some suggestions that might help you get started if you're unsure of what to say or how to say it:

- Discuss hard limits and desires beforehand
 - "When we finish, I want to cuddle and have some time to hold each other"
 - "What words do you want me to use?"
 - "I love when people go down on me, but I'm feeling masc today so treat it like a dick if you do"
 - "I want to be spanked, but I haven't tried it before. Let's take it slow and check in a lot"
- Check in throughout
 - "Can I take off your shirt?"
 - "How does that feel?"
 - "What would you like me to do next?"
 - "Can we do more of [...]?"
- Check in after
 - "How was it when I [...]?"
 - "Did you like when I called you [...]?"
 - "What did you think about [...]?"
 - "How did [...] feel for you?"
 - "Is there anything you don't want me to share with other people when I talk about this experience?"
 - "Do you want some water?"
- Use numbers to indicate what level of engagement you want
 - "If 1 is gentle kissing, 2 is kissing and petting with clothes on, 3 is [...], what number are you feeling today?"
 - A system like this can help to communicate if you or a partner feels guilt around saying no, or if talking about explicit activities feels difficult

More ideas from elsewhere:

- [8 Steps to Creating the Intimate Explorations You Love](#) by Zahava Griss at *embodmorelove.com*
 - This is aimed at festival/play party attendees, but can be used in any situation
- [27 Alternatives To Asking "Is This Okay?"](#) by Marcia Baczynski at *askingforwhatyouwant.com*



The 3-minute consent game

To practice asking, giving, and receiving consent, play this simple game created by Harry Faddis:

Take turns asking each other these questions, in any order:

- **How would you like me to touch you for 3 minutes?**
- **How would you like to touch me for 3 minutes?**

After each answer, make sure to repeat back what you heard and clarify any misunderstandings.

Negotiate as needed, and notice what feelings, thoughts and reactions come up as you ask and answer.

Dr. Betty Martin developed the Wheel of Consent—another great consent-focused activity—based on this game.

More information about both activities are available at Betty Martin's website, bettymartin.org

When consent is difficult

“Each person we encounter is an accumulation of social, physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, financial, and environmental health. They also hold their ancestors’ experiences. Difficulty being in our bodies (even with a desire to feel embodied) or accessing the erotic can come from physical or nonphysical causes. It can look like individual, collective, and/or ancestral trauma.”

Jamee Pineda

We may have had experiences that make it difficult for us to register our bodies’ desires and boundaries. These can include historical and ongoing world events, as well as personal experiences.

Many of us have complicated relationships with our bodies, which can affect how we experience pleasure and desire. It might be very difficult to recognize and feel an “enthusiastic yes,” or to recognize whether difficult feelings during an encounter are arising from dysphoria, a lack of desire, or something else.

Consent can be difficult to give fully when these histories are in our bodies. It is always worth taking the time to be gentle and loving with yourself and others—to take things every small step at a time and practice what consent looks and feels like for you, both verbally and non-verbally. Speaking with a trusted friend or accessing counseling can also help us process these experiences and feelings.





Covid-19 & community care

“The work we are doing to stay safe matters. The work we are doing to keep ourselves alive—fully alive, not just existing—matters.”

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha and Tina “constant tt” Zavitsanos

There are many ways we can care for ourselves and each other. Taking steps to lower the risk of passing Covid-19 and reducing harm in our community is an act of love and survival.

Trans people are at higher risk of developing Long Covid than cis people, which is a disabling illness that affects every aspect of our lives, including our sexuality and sexual expression. Trans and queer people have often been overlooked in public health efforts aimed at safeguarding against disease. This makes it even more important for us to be aware of the individual actions and shared responsibilities we can take to help protect ourselves and our communities.

We all have our own unique “risk tolerance” levels, influenced by what feels right for us and what we prioritize. As safety measures ease up, it can be tricky to navigate where we feel comfortable. Especially when we’re craving social interactions and intimate connections, finding that sweet spot of comfort can be a journey.

Reflecting on Covid-19

Reflecting on our values and priorities can help us make decisions about balancing our desire for social or sexual connection with our desire to stay safe from Covid-19. For example, personal risk factors, community transmission rates, safety measures in place at an event, the number of people involved, and our ability to communicate our boundaries may inform our choices at any given time.

There isn't a single risk avoidance strategy that suits everyone, and it can be helpful to think about our personal needs, and to take time to reflect on the choices we've made, and why.

Set aside time to journal or think deeply about your experiences and feelings related to dating and sex in the context of the ongoing COVID pandemic.

Here are some suggestions to consider:

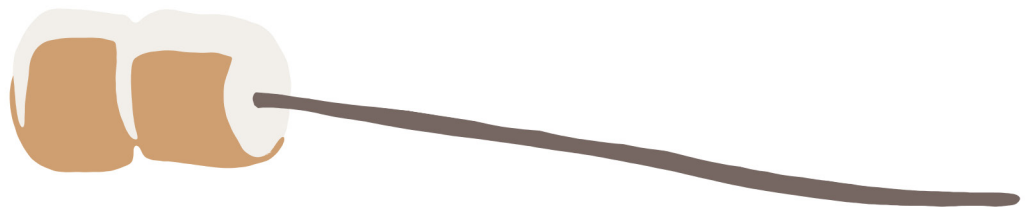
- Are there specific situations or interactions where you felt uncertain or anxious about safety?
 - What are some ways you responded to this uncertainty?
 - Is your body still holding some of these feelings?
- Write about any changes you've made to your dating or sexual practices to reduce COVID risks, such as discussing boundaries with partners or exploring virtual alternatives to in-person encounters.
 - What are some of the ways you kept yourself and others safe?
 - What difficulties did you experience while trying to do this?
 - Is your body still holding some of this pain?
 - What are you currently open to with potential partners who have lower risk tolerance than you?
 - What are you currently open to with potential partners who have higher risk tolerance than you?
 - When navigating experiences with potential partners whose risk tolerances are different than yours, how might you negotiate each other's needs and wants?
- Have your feelings and needs about COVID safety in the context of dating and sex changed over time?
 - Is this different from any other areas of your life? Why or why not?

Ideas: Community care

While there are many things we can do to keep ourselves safe as individuals, Covid-19 is best countered by community efforts. If you organize events (big or small), there are steps you can take to lower risk for yourself or make them more accessible to others.

Here are some examples:

- Normalize talking about Covid precautions, along with other conversations about sexual health and substance use
- Improve air quality: use air purifiers and increase ventilation
 - For an example of a DIY air purifier, see [“A Fourth Grader Explains How to Build a DIY Corsi/Rosenthal Box Air Cleaner”](#) by Aaron Hanai on YouTube
 - Move events outside, or open windows
- Offer the option to attend virtually
- Request Covid-19 rapid antigen testing (RAT) prior to entry, and provide free tests on-site
- Request that participants wear high quality masks and provide them for free
 - Free masks are available via [donateamask.ca](#) or [maskbloc.org](#)
- List the actions you are taking to lower risk of transmission on your website or event pages
- Provide tips for reducing risk, such as using protective nasal sprays and CPC mouthwashes



Enhancing protection measures is not only about safeguarding our physical health but also about celebrating our holistic well-being, including pleasure and happiness.

By prioritizing our safety, we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of trans people and our right to live fulfilling and joyful lives.

Let's create inclusive spaces where we can thrive, feel valued, and experience pleasure without fear of discrimination or harm.



Resources & support

Resources

- [SmartSex Resource](#)
 - Information on [STIs](#) and [STI fact sheets](#), a [clinic finder](#) and sexual health services
- [Options for Sexual Health](#)
 - Information on [STIs](#), [birth control](#), [abortion](#), and [HIV](#)
 - Ask any sex-related question using the [Sex Sense](#) resource
- [Health Initiative for Men](#)
 - Resources for gay, bisexual and queer men and [gender diverse people](#) on [sexual health](#) (HIV PrEP & PEP), [mental health](#) and [substance use](#)
- [YouthCo](#)
 - Youth-led organization with programs and resources on sexual health & harm reduction
- [Native Youth Sexual Health Network](#)
 - Organization by and for Indigenous youth focused on sexual & reproductive health, rights and justice
- [reproductiveaccess.org](#)
 - Downloadable PDFs on [abortion](#), [contraception](#), and [miscarriage](#)
- [Trans Care BC](#)
 - Health information, peer support resources & help navigating care
- [Trans Rights BC](#)
 - Human rights information

Sexual health guides

- [Brazen 2.0: Trans Women's Safer Sex Guide](#), the 519
- [FTW: A Zine About the Sex Lives of Trans Women](#), Mira Bellwether
- [PRIM3D: A sexual health guide for queer trans men, transmasculine, and non-binary people](#), Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance
- [PUMP: Sexual Pleasure & Health Resource Guide for Transmen who have Sex with Men](#), Callen-Lorde
- [TransLash Guide to Trans Sex: T4T and Trans-Cis](#), TransLash
- [Safer sex for trans bodies](#), Human Rights Campaign

Support

- [Trans Lifeline](#)
 - Connects trans people to the support and resources we need to survive and thrive
 - Canada-wide toll-free line: 1-877-330-6366
- [Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre](#)
 - 24-Hour Crisis & Information Line:
 - Canada-wide toll-free line: 1-877-392-7583
 - Lower Mainland: 604-255-6344
- **Native Youth Sexual Health Network:** [Two-Spirit Mental Health Peer Support Manual](#)

