



2020

Creating and Maintaining Healthy Relationships

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About us

The Domino Project, a peer led for and by Black LGBTTQ+ youth (16-29 years old) in Toronto. This 24-month pilot project funded by OTF's Youth Opportunities Fund and is a joint venture between the Black Queer Youth Collective (BQYC) and Parkdale Queen West Community Health Center (PQWCHC).

Introducing The Domino Table Talk

On May 25, 2020, the Domino project introduced the Domino Table talk, an eclectic online series consisting of five online discussions. On June 29th we held our last part of the series on Creating and maintaining healthy relationships. For the final session in our series, we explored various types of relationships including familial relationships and friendships. An interpersonal relationship refers to a strong bond, association, connection, and interaction between two or more people. There are 4 main types of interpersonal relationships: friendship/platonic, romantic, familial and professional/work.

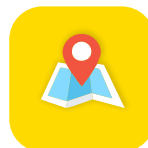


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Background

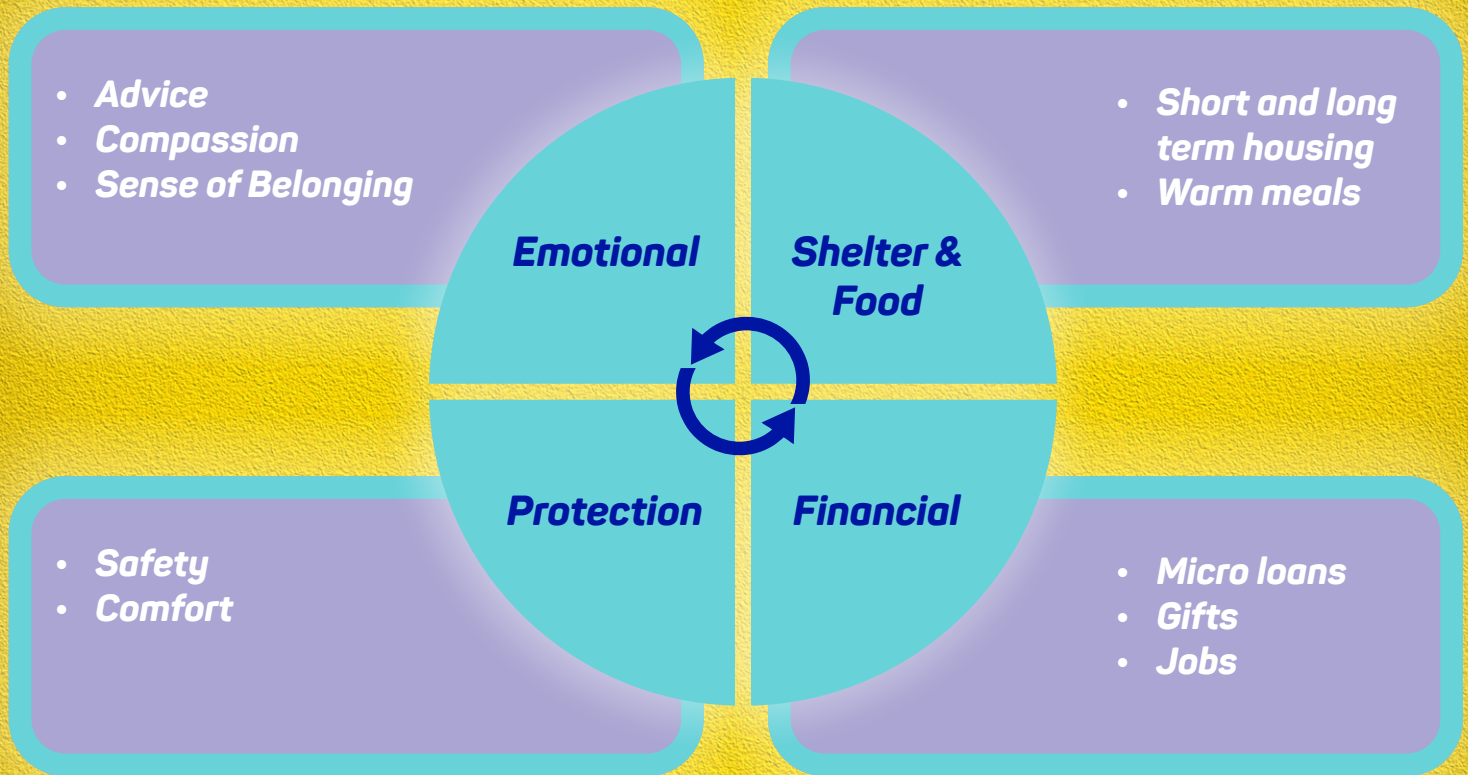
In September 2018, the Black Queer Youth Collective launched the Domino Project to help Black Queer and Trans Youth in Toronto connect with each other to form and maintain healthy relationships. Over the course of 2 years of programming, we engaged a significant amount of Black Queer and Trans youth who accessed either our drop-in program, community outings and/or community events. We strongly believed in the potential of the domino effect to promote inclusion and cohesion in Toronto's Black LGBTQ+ community. A key feature of our drop-in program was the peer-led model that we used to highlight different interest and skills of various Black LGBTQ+ youth to motivate and inspire other youth. Our drop-in program explored a range of topics related to the general health and wellbeing of Black youth. For more information about past workshops, events and community outings, visit our social media at [DominoProjectTO](#) on Facebook and Instagram.

Supporting Black Queer Youth

*There is a range of supports that Black Queer and Trans youth many require throughout their lives. While historically, familial support is often the main form of support for youth. Family in the context of Queer Culture, particularly for Black youth who may not be connected to their biological family is described by Pepper Labeija in *Paris is Burning* as "a group of human beings in a mutual bond."*

Since there are many connections and relationships Black LGBTQ+ youth may form after they come out or start their transition, it is important to ensure youth have the support they need to thrive and survive.

Types of Support from Family and Friends



While having a support system is essential to the overall health and wellbeing. Sometimes relationships can be toxic and abusive.

Our panelist spoke to some of the difficulties maintaining relationship both inside and outside of the Queer community. The panelist shared, "I feel like my relationship with my family is the same across the board, whether it be with my family family or chosen family... umm I feel like. I don't know for reasons that I'm actually in the middle trying to figure out right now like.... My relationships right now are like trash. I don't know my family relationships are trash. Keeping it 100. My relationships are not strong and like even as far as like what I would consider um like my chosen family or like extended family. I don't feel as supported as I would like to or as you would hope to consider that it's family you choose you know what I mean so ... yeah"

At the Intersection being a Black, Queer or Trans youth in Toronto



There are many factors that prevent youth from forming and maintaining healthy relationships with other youth in the City. Based on their identity, social location and upbringing, youth may experience a range of challenges accessing supports that are affirming and welcoming. This is particularly true for youth who may feel isolated in their home community and in the Queer community. While it may be difficult, it is not impossible. There are quite a few options for youth who want to connect with each other both online and in-person.

Where are youth connecting with each other?

- Downtown (Toronto core)
- School
- Online/ social media

Peer support is a program model used to connect individuals with similar experiences to a program. While peer support models are usually effective with bringing individuals with shared experiences together. There may be challenges with group cohesion due to various intersecting aspects of their identity. These challenges with group dynamics may also play out in youth personal relationships.

Activity:

1. How would you define the following aspects of your identity?

- Race _____
- Ethnicity _____
- Gender _____
- Sexual Orientation _____
- Class _____
- Marital Status _____
- Parental status _____

2. Does your friendships and relationships reflect your identity?

- Yes No

3. What do you value most in your friendships/relationships?

"Being queer from the hood versus being queer in the downtown scene really sets aside and ostracized people you know what I mean."

Ending Dysfunctional Relationships In Black Queer And Trans Communities

What is a Dysfunctional family and how does it lead to codependency?

A dysfunctional family is one in which members suffer from fear, anger, pain, or shame that is ignored or denied. Underlying problems may include any of the following:

1. An addiction by a family member to drugs, alcohol, relationships, work, food, sex, or gambling.
2. The existence of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.
3. The presence of a family member suffering from a chronic mental or physical illness.

Dysfunctional families do not acknowledge that problems exist. They do not talk about them or confront them. As a result, family members learn to repress emotions and disregard their own needs. They become “survivors.” They develop behaviors that help them deny, ignore, or avoid difficult emotions. They detach themselves. They do not talk. They don't touch. They don't confront. They don't feel. They don't trust. The identity and emotional development of the members of a dysfunctional family are often inhibited.

Co- Dependency

Co-dependency is a learned behavior that can be passed down from one generation to another. It is an emotional and behavioral condition that affects an individual's ability to have a healthy, mutually satisfying relationship. It is also known as “relationship addiction” because people with codependency often form or maintain relationships that are one-sided, emotionally destructive and/or abusive. The disorder was first identified about ten years ago as the result of years of studying interpersonal relationships in families of alcoholics. Co-dependent behavior is learned by watching and imitating other family members who display this type of behavior.

6 Questions To Identify The Signs Of Co-dependency

1. Do you keep quiet to avoid arguments?
2. Are you always worried about others' opinions of you?
3. Do you doubt your ability to be who you want to be?
4. Are you uncomfortable expressing your true feelings to others?
5. Do you frequently wish someone could help you get things done?
6. Are you confused about who you are or where you are going with your life?

This condition appears to run in different degrees, whereby the intensity of symptoms is on a spectrum of severity, as opposed to an all or nothing scale. Please note that only a qualified professional can make a diagnosis of co-dependency; not everyone experiencing these symptoms suffers from co-dependency. ers of a dysfunctional family are often inhibited



Collective care refers to seeing members' well-being – particularly their emotional health – as a shared responsibility of the group rather than the lone task of an individual. It means that a group commits to addressing interlocking oppressions and reasons for deteriorating well-being within the group while also combatting oppression in society at large.

It places an emphasis on joint accountability, with the aim of collective empowerment. These ideas originate from queer and Black feminist organizing, such as the Combahee River Collective, and disability perspectives.

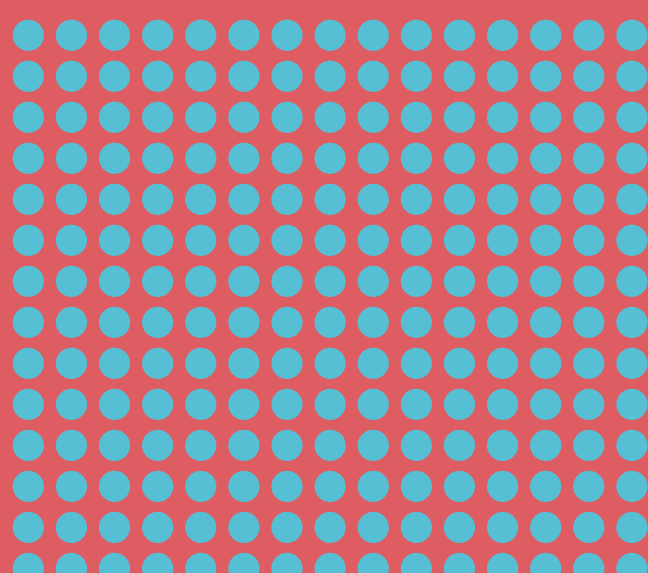
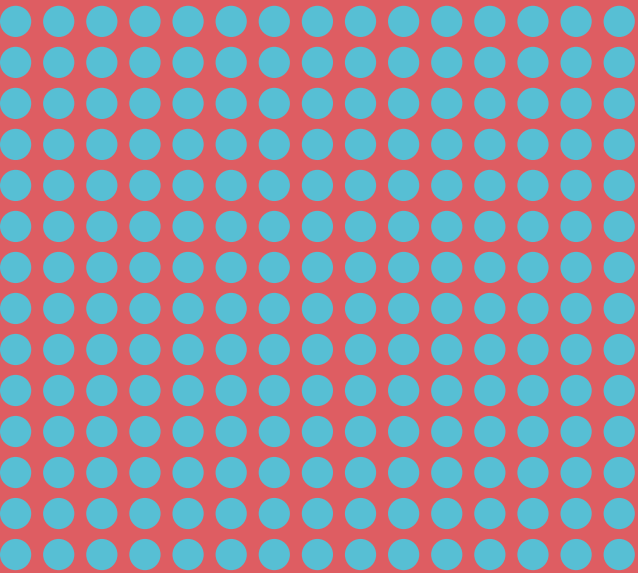
Resources

Co Dependency Mental Health America

<https://www.mhanational.org/issues/co-dependency>

Be Careful with each other

<https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/be-careful-with-each-other>



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