

Staying strong during the marriage equality debate

The recent marriage equality debate has already unleashed anti-LGBTI commentary and many people are feeling upset, distressed or angry. Here are some practical tips on staying strong and resilient during this time.

Acknowledge your feelings

Acknowledge that a particular issue has made you angry or distressed by admitting it to yourself and others. Telling someone that you feel angry about what is being said is more helpful than just acting out the anger and frustration.

Log off social media

If social media post become distressing for you consider curating your feeds to help stem or block the sometimes constant barrage of hateful or divisive posts. A Facebook holiday might be in order.

Look out for each other

Ask others if they are OK at work or at home. Check in with your friends. Talking helps. Look out for each other.

Stay social

It is common for LGBTI people to develop their own 'family of choice' as a support system for those who may have had similar experiences of their own. Reach out for support from your family of choice or friendship networks.

Clear your thinking

When you are upset, distressed or angry, your thinking can get exaggerated. Try replacing these kind of thoughts with more useful, constructive ones and you may find that this has an effect on the way you feel.

Say it to yourself

Develop a list of things to say to yourself before during and after situations that may make you angry or frustrated. It is more helpful if these things focus on how you are managing the situation rather than what other people should be doing.

Take care of you.

Anger and distress can leave you feeling drained and tired. Be sure you look after your body by getting sleep, eating well, staying hydrated and having plenty of fresh air. It is important to keep fuel in your tank.

Get busy

Channel your emotions into positive action! If you're passionate about an issue get involved and volunteer. It is a great way to meet other like-minded people and you'll feel good for knowing you are contributing to the cause.

Be creative

A familiar strategy for managing anger or distress is to distract your mind from the situation. Writing about such topics can sometimes help give you some distance and perspective and help you understand your feelings. Being creative can often help too such as painting or drawing, taking up yoga or meditation etc. Unleash your creativity.

Take time out

Get away for the weekend or have a break. Take a walk in the park, swim at the beach, see a movie, do whatever possible to help soothe your mind and heart. Engage your senses!

Remember

Our community is resilient; we have been subjected time and time again to different struggles. For younger people this may be new and hurtful but we need to remember our communities are strong and we can face the bigotry and hatred that comes with our way together.

For more info

ACON provides a range of counselling services for LGBTI people in need of support and assistance. Call us on (02) 9206 2000 or visit acon.org.au.

Get in contact with mental health organisations such as QLife (qlife.org.au), Beyond Blue, SANE Australia, headspace, lifeline and the Black Dog Institute.

You can also get advice, support and treatment for mental health issues from a range of sources including self-help books, online treatment programs or contacting your GP.