

## LGBTQI+ MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

# LGBTQI+ Onlyness

“Onlyness” applies to the LGBTQI+ community when a person is the only one with their gender identity or sexual orientation in a given group. Underrepresentation increases the likelihood that LGBTQI+ people will feel isolated in certain circumstances such as in the workplace. When someone has so little in common with others around them, they face added pressure to represent their entire group.

It is important to note the toll that this takes on the person. Stress increases when a person experiences “onlyness.” Feeling isolated from a group setting, including a workplace, can have devastating impacts including increases in depression and anxiety symptoms, reduced sleep, decreased job satisfaction and suicidal thoughts. This can also have a negative impact on productivity and morale in a workplace. Employees who face “onlyness” across multiple dimensions face even more pressure to perform.

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### To help reduce the impact of isolation, consider these options for connection:

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- Reach out to friends and family that you trust.
- Reach out to support groups for people in similar situations.
- Consider volunteering for an organization that you are passionate about.
- Contact your EAP counselor for non-judgmental support.

Also, if possible, flip the script. Some believe “onlyness” may also have some positive benefits. Nilofer Merchant, author and businesswoman, offers a different definition for “onlyness.” She defines only as the, “Source of ideas,” and goes on to express that, “New ideas come from centering that distinct spot in the world where only one stands.” She calls us to embrace our onlyness and use it as an asset, because you are the only person that can bring to the table what you have to offer. By finding power in our own unique voice and perspective, we can engage differently with the world and our environment. Experiencing “onlyness” can be isolating and lonely... but it can also allow you to shine.

**Creating a culture of inclusion reduces “onlyness.” If you are interested in helping to create a more inclusive workplace or embracing your “onlyness” an asset, reach out to your EAP. Visit [EAP4YOU.com](http://EAP4YOU.com) to learn more or call 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU).**