

not, because they feel uncomfortable doing so. Asking, "Does anyone object to bad language/dirty jokes, etc.?" is a good way of understanding what people are comfortable with. It is everyone's job to meet the needs of others, and it's their right to have their needs met.

Clear and open minds and heads.

This one needs no explanation. If an OPY member is under the influence of non-prescription drugs or alcohol, the youth will not be allowed to participate in the activity.

Certain things are absolutely NOT permitted at OPY.

These things include drugs, alcohol, violence of any kind, overtly offensive language, racist, sexist or homophobic comments, sexual activity and general disrespect for people's comfort. Even if you engage in these behaviours as a joke, it is not acceptable. Please try to remember that nobody benefits from disrespectful behaviour.

What you do here, who you see here, when you leave here, it will stay here. Many people are not yet out, or they want discretion for other reasons. Whatever someone's reasons may be, they deserve open minds and closed

mouths on the subject of OPY. Always ask people if you can tell your school friends or family about them, and if you are not comfortable with anyone disclosing, make sure they know.



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OPY

Out & Proud Youth



What is OPY (Out & Proud Youth)?

OPY is an acronym that stands for Out and Proud Youth. OPY is a group of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning and straight youth that meet for activities, discussion, support and fun.

Who is OPY?

Any youth between the ages of 12 and 19 are welcome at OPY meetings. If you want to bring your parents or guardians to meet the group and leaders, that's cool, too. If you want to bring friends, they're also welcome.

When and Where?

OPY generally meets at The Avenue Community Centre every Friday night at 7:00pm. Calling ahead is a good idea, because sometimes we meet at different places and at different times.

Why does OPY exist?

Many people need their peers, and many people have questions that need answers. Many people like to have a good time, feel welcome and have the respect and understanding of like-minded people.

Many queer youth and their friends need somewhere safe and accepting to be. OPY and its members offer all of the above to all youth, regardless of sex, gender identity, race, religion, ability, nationality, appearance or sexual orientation.

Take Heart You're Not Alone

All sorts of youth come to OPY from different kinds of backgrounds, households, schools and cities. Everyone is here for different reasons, but the main common reason is because they are, or know someone who is, queer. Everybody here hopes to get something different out of the group, but we don't want anyone here to feel like they are not getting what they need.

If you need friends, you can make friends. If you need support, people will lend you a hand or an ear. If you have questions, problems or time to kill while you're downtown, we'll sit down and talk to you. Everybody has access to Avenue Centre services and OPY is one of them.

OPY is specifically for youth because youth have different concerns than adults, just like gay men have different issues than lesbians. We can talk with you about sex, safer sex, school, friends, parents, relationships, teachers,

homophobia, bullies, drugs, alcohol, partying, suicide, books/movies/music, whatever.

What can I expect of OPY, and what do they expect of me?

Respect from others, and respect for the other group members and leaders. This means that everyone has a chance to speak, everyone's opinion and input is heard, everyone has their rights as people recognized and everyone is included in the activity.

Support from everyone for everyone. Coming out of the closet or staying in, making life decisions, facing homophobia and speaking up for oneself are difficult things to do. Because of this, everyone needs to pitch in and listen to one another if a group member needs words of encouragement, advice, a friend or just a listening ear, OPY members are encouraged to help out.

Understanding of your comfort zone, and to understand other people's comfort. For example, if you are accustomed to swearing like a sailor, making suggestive jokes, etc. please be aware that some people may not care for that. They may voice their concerns, or