

# ABSTRACT

**E**ncircle focuses on providing a safe place for kids and youth that are in a difficult situation of trying to accept a part of themselves they've been told most of their lives is unacceptable. Their aim is to reduce the suicides amongst young LGBTQ+ youth and provide them with resources that allow them to make connections with others who are going through the same experience. By making meaningful connections and relationships teen suicide, depression, drug use and self-harm statistics are lowered, and their chances of a happy successful life is increased. It also is there to help educate people who don't know how to respond when a child or grandchild shares this large aspect of their life.

According to (McDonald, K. 2018), in *Mental Health Nursing Journal*, LGBTQ adolescents experience higher rates of mental health disorders than their heterosexual peers. The purpose of this systematic review of the literature was to examine studies evaluating social support and its effects on mental health in the LGBTQ adolescent population. Higher levels of social support were associated with positive self-esteem. Lack of social support (or low social support) was associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, alcohol or drug misuse, risky sexual behaviors, shame, and low self-esteem. Some research has found that keeping friends after disclosure of sexual orientation was protective against poor psychosocial adjustment: One study found that lesbian and bisexual girls who disclosed their sexual orientation reported better psychosocial adjustment when they did not lose friends as a result of the disclosure (D'Augelli, 2003). Other studies have linked supportive and accepting friends to better psychosocial adjustment: In a study of 461 self-identified LGBTQ adolescents and young adults, (Shilo and Savaya, 2011) found that friend support was strongly associated with wellbeing and had a stronger positive effect on disclosure of sexual orientation compared with parent support and acceptance.

With the design of this new building for Encircle the hopes is that not only will the people who enter and become apart of the Encircle family will help these adolescents, but the design will also make an impact. Incorporating some of the elements and attributions of biophilic design, environmental features (color, water, air, sunlight, plants, natural materials), natural shapes and forms (columnar supports, arches, shapes resisting straight lines, biomimicry), and Light and Space (Natural light, warm light, light and shadow, spatial harmony) will not only help to create that sense of connection to nature but to compliment the environmental psychology and support people's need for "nature". Some theories clarify the process by which contact with "nature" triggers the development of physical and mental functions. Some of these theories include the Place attachment theory, Stress Recovery Theory, The Biophilia Theory, and the Attention Restoration Theory. (Zhong, Schroder, Bekkering, 2021).

Another element incorporated into the design of the project will be making a conscious effort into differentiating light levels in different spaces can help with working tasks, activities that require attention and mindfulness, resting and relaxation areas (especially for therapy sessions as well as individual residential rooms), mood lighting in the restaurant so that customers can feel comfortable and at ease, and brighter lights in shopping areas that can increase alertness, excitement, happiness, and interest. (Zeng, Sun, Yu, Un, 2022)

Lastly, ergonomics will play an important role. Ergonomic and anthropometric measurements can be applied so that users of a all ages can enjoy their surrounding space, leisure activities and the comfort of equipment and furniture. Proportion and spacial needs will be considered and implemented to create safe, manageable and improved quality of life. (Shamailegh, 2022)