

From My Tender Heart to Yours

Tips to and from LGBTQ+ Jewish Students of Color

Starting high school straight out of the pandemic, for me, brought up social anxiety and a search to belong among multiple groups of people, however, as a Queer, Mixed, Jewish Person of Color, of course, I had no “right fit” and I found myself wandering through multiple groups, trying to fit just one fragment of myself into each space.

As I enter my senior year, and as we all head back to school, I wanted to share some tips that have helped me get through high school:

Trust Yourself

TRUST that exactly who you are in this moment is the most sacred and beautiful thing. Remember that no one is exactly like you in this world. How you show up is a gift. You bring and share your unique and powerful essence into each space you enter. Remember, life is a journey, which means we are all a work in progress, finding what resonates with us every day.

Follow What Brings You Joy

This could be a specific hobby, a musical artist, your pet, or a certain subject that makes you want to talk for hours. Whatever this may be, try finding people who also enjoy it. This will help you find community with others. I recommend joining a club or affinity group to make it easier for you to connect with your people!

Take Breaks

Be sure to take breaks throughout the day to check in with yourself. Some of my favorite places to go are a teacher's classroom after class (typically they will just let you chill in there), a bathroom (especially gender-neutral ones if you have access at your school), the library (quiet and calm), or a counselor's office (also great if you want to talk to someone else).

I also usually go to the bathroom stall in between classes to just take a couple of deep breaths (breathing in for 4 seconds and out for 8 seconds) which helps calm my nervous system and clear my head. It can feel easy to get overwhelmed, and finding spaces to just breathe and recuperate throughout the day will help release stress and anxiety.

Listen to Music

Create a playlist full of music that makes you feel calm, happy, and like yourself! This is another great way to recenter yourself, and it activates another part of your senses. I like to play my own playlist while walking through the hallways, stepping to the beat of the song, and allowing my thoughts to be carried away by each rhythmic tune.

Create a Morning Routine

Creating and sticking to a morning routine has really helped me feel more calm and centered in myself throughout the day. My morning routine looks like stretching, meditation, deep breaths, and positive affirmations. It could also be taking a shower and visualizing the water revitalizing you and washing away anxiety or tense emotions. Doing something for yourself, helps you feel more like yourself, while providing you the energy you need to fully show up to school. Even just having an hour to yourself can truly make a difference when you're around so many people during the day!

Bring Snacks, Water, and a Lunch if Possible

Having your basic needs met will make being at school 1000 times better. When they say food is medicine, they mean it!

Use The Power Of Fragrances

Wear a smell that reminds you of a place you love, or just brings you comfort. This could be essential oils that have calming properties or a fragrance that smells amazing. Some of my favorite essential oils are lavender, jasmine, rose, vanilla, and bergamot.

Communicate Your Needs

Communicate with your teachers about your needs. Try to get to know them in order to figure out what kind of support you might be able to ask for. I've even gone to teachers that I've had from previous years, because they already understand me so well. So, just try reaching out and connecting with them and see what happens!

Reach out to people

Remember that a lot of people are scared to put themselves out there, and by taking that first step to say hi to a new person, you are embodying your power and you never know who you might meet!

Love Yourself Unconditionally

Definitely easier said than done, but letting go of what other people think of you and taking time to love yourself will save you so much time and energy. Especially since, as other people are still in the middle of figuring themselves out, they can occasionally project their own insecurities onto others. Staying true to yourself and loving yourself unconditionally is so important. For me, loving myself unconditionally looks like being sure to validate my emotions (i.e. when I have feelings of anxiety, stress, fear, or unworthiness). This means being in touch with what I need in each moment, and telling myself it's okay to take the time to recharge. It means reassuring myself that I always got my own back no matter what happens and I will be there for myself in each living experience I have.

As we start up school again, I hope some of these tips were helpful for you. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being here. School is already hard enough, and it can feel so overwhelming to navigate alone. I want to remind us that we don't have to be in isolation anymore, we truly do have each other, always. Just the thought of knowing that others experience similar ways of being brings me comfort and reminds me of the interconnected community. As I write these words, I want you to know how much I deeply care about and appreciate your existence. I wish you so much ease this upcoming school year, WE got this!!!

*With love,
Azu*