



**embodied
labs**

The Eden Lab: Trans Health & LGBT Aging

FACILITATION GUIDE

For Families & Care Professionals

INSTRUCTOR VERSION

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EMBODIED LABS VR SIMULATIONS FOR TRAINING



embodied labs immersive training



Uses & Goals

Knowledge & Training

To educate and provide information on the symptoms and unique challenges that older adults experience.

Insight & Transformation

To empower healthcare professionals and professional care partners to be able to provide more compassionate, person-centered care to persons living with chronic and progressive diseases.

Communication & Team Building

To have meaningful dialogue across your team about the shared experience of embodying older adults.

-
- 1 Prepare by taking a pre-assessment and discovering your existing knowledge.



PREPARE

- 2 Embody someone by putting on a VR headset and transporting yourself into their perspective.



EMBODY

- 3 Take a post-assessment, then use this facilitation guide to further reflect on how the VR experiences changed your views, mindset, and knowledge based on the insight you gained by embodying someone else.



REFLECT

BEST PRACTICES FOR USING EMBODIED LABS IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS

Depending on how you will be using Embodied Labs for individuals or a large group, your setup needs may differ to maximize the user experience. Here are suggested equipment and discussion formats for each mode.



Individual Mode

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computer, sensor, and headset from kit |
| Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quiet, separate area• Moderate amount of privacy while in the headset |
| Materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitation Guide for individual reflection while waiting for the headset or right after the experience |

Group Mode



Technology

- Computer, sensor, and headset from kit
- Big screen (if available). Use HDMI cord AND adapter that come with your VR kit to attach screen to back of computer
- Mirrored sound through both the computer speakers AND headset
- Set volume on audio set all the way up to 100



Note: The computer defaults to the headset's headphones when the headset is plugged in. To get audio through computer speakers so that the group can hear, click on sound icon at the bottom right-hand side of your screen and choose “Speakers”)

Environment

- Quieter area, separate from larger area where most people are congregating
- Space for people to gather around without crowding the person in the headset

Materials

- Facilitation Guide for partner and group reflection while waiting for the headset or right after the experience
- Adult learners often can use the guide themselves; younger learners may need more direction on which question to discuss

THE EDEN LAB

Introduction

From the Creators

Embodied Labs is excited to release our next embodied experience: "The Eden Lab: Trans Health & LGBT Aging." This lab focuses on the story of Eden, born Edward in 1948. In the first module, the learner will embody Eden, a transwoman, and experience a series of personal encounters throughout the lifespan that are typical, defining moments of many transgender older adults living today, such as trying to explain your identity to your family and partner, engaging with others in your local, transgender community, transitioning from male to female appearance, and exploring your new identity in a supportive environment

In the second module, learners will embody Eden as she engages with other members of the LGBT community, and also have the opportunity to jump into the perspectives of other LGBT older adults who identify as LGBT to explore the topics of homecare, healthcare, family, and housing. You will be able to converse with many people who identify as LGBT, understand more about the particular safety concerns that an LGBT person may have when bringing in a home care professionals, being discriminated against because of your gender identity in a clinical setting, understand the unique challenges living with dementia brings to someone LGBT, experience how having unaccepting family members makes life harder, less safe, and emotionally difficult for LGBT older adults in particular, and enjoy the feeling of an inclusive, LGBT affirming residential care community.

The script for this lab was written by Renee James, a trans woman, author, journalist, and grandparent living in the Chicago area. Much of Eden's story is based on the life of Stefanie Clark, Renee's good friend. The other stories in this lab are composites of stories told to Erin Washington, head of content, as she was developing the learning outcomes for this immersive training experience. We thank each of them for sharing their stories and lives with us.

Now, we invite you to step into the stories of LGBT older adults with open hearts and open minds, to discover a new perspectives you may never before have considered!

— The Embodied Labs Team

THE EDEN LAB

Introduction

Please Note

This Embodied Lab was created by documenting first hand accounts of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender older adults, partners, and family members. Embodied Labs does not endorse any particular practice, treatment, or care plan detailed in this lab; rather, this is meant to provide perspectives for informed discussions about the many facets of care for older adults who identify as LGBT*.

*For the purposes of this lab, any older adult who identifies as non-heterosexual or non-cisgender will be referred to as LGBT. We realize there are other letters that often go in this acronym, most often "Q", but found in our research that most older adults are not comfortable being referred to as "queer"; therefore, we've opted to use just four-letters. Please feel free to discuss this choice and any differences that your organization may have in terminology.

The EDEN LAB

Insight Statements

After experiencing The Eden Lab: Trans Health & LGBT Aging, learners will be able to identify:

Module 1: Trans Health

- Some of the biological and physical reasons why a person may identify as transgender
- Ways that transgender people have unique challenges in their romantic & family relationships
- Common experiences transgender older adults have had that involve decades of discrimination, stigma, negativity, and trauma

Module 2: LGBT Aging

- Verbal and visual cues can be used to help a person or environment feel safe and inclusive for LGBT older adults
- Affirming and inclusive procedures and practices can be used to ensure there is no assumption made that an older adult is heterosexual, OR to feel safe disclosing if they are LGBT
- Situations where LGBT older adults often have less support from their biological families and may have “family member(s) of choice” that are involved in decisions related to health and aging
- Ways they can provide compassionate, respectful care for an older adult by putting aside private/personal beliefs and/or judgements about a person’s identity

THE EDEN LAB

Module 1: Transhealth

Preparing to Embody Eden -- A transgender Woman

What are some of the perceptions you have of people who are transgender?

Many people believe that being transgender is a choice that people make. Other common perceptions/misconceptions include:

- the idea that transgender persons are sexually deviant or promiscuous
- the idea that transgender persons are mentally ill or mentally unstable
- that its dangerous for people who are transgender to use lockers rooms/restrooms that match their gender identity
- thinking that all transgender persons have "transitioned" medically and have had gender confirmation surgery
- confusing gender identity with sexual orientation (e.g. all people who are transgender are gay)
 - Gender identity statement: "I am female"
 - Sexual orientation statement: "I feel attracted to people who female."

What does or would life as a transgender person look or feel like to you?

As healthcare professionals, we talk a lot about "trauma-informed care". It's important to remember that older adults who identify as LGBT, especially those who are transgender, have most likely experienced discrimination and trauma in their lifetime. Understanding this perspective helps us provide better care.

Are you comfortable providing care or services for someone who is transgender?

Some people are truly uncomfortable about the idea of caring for someone who identifies as trans for various reasons. Others are simply unsure how to properly provide care, which questions to ask, and what terminology to use.

Regardless of what we think or feel, it's important to provide compassionate care to the best of your ability! This lab will help you do that better.

THE EDEN LAB

Module 1: Transhealth

Eden as a young child

What were some of the feelings you experienced when Eden/Edward's mother was talking/yelling? Do you think she was angry, scared, or both? Why?

The 1950s was a difficult time to be different, especially in the American suburbs. Playing dress up with a friend who is a girl or with clothes in a mother or sister's closet, and then getting shamed when found out is particularly common for transwomen of this generation. (and later ones)

How do you think an experience like this would have affected a young child who later understand that they are transgender?

Many transgender adults have one or more childhood experiences like this where they understood internally at a very young age that they were different, but had to hide it or suffer the consequences -- beginning an entire life of hiding this part of themselves even from their closest relationships.

Local Bar

Why do you think Eden was at a bar? What is different about exploring your identity in public as a trans person vs. a gay/lesbian person?

In the 1970s, the term "transgender" was not widely discussed, understood as an identity, or used even by trans people. Sometimes they were referred to as "queens" or "cross dressers". Many trans people went to "gay bars" because it was (and still sometimes is) one of the only places they could meet others like them with society at large being so unaccepting.

Eden experienced rejection from the two young men, who then left her alone, but many trans people experience far worse abuse or violence. In addition, transgender people are unable to "blend in" as easily as gay, lesbian, and/or bisexual people, making them even more likely to be targets -- which is still true today.

THE EDEN LAB

Module 1: Transhealth

Medical Animation

What did you learn from the medical animation that you didn't know or understand before about the transgender identity?

Brain development is very complex. New research shows that brain development can be a separate process from the development of sex organs that define people as male or female.

More research is needed in this area, but because we now know that the biology of gender is, as the animation stated, "not black and white, or pink and blue" -- we should always opt for compassion and understanding for people who don't fit into the neat gender categories to which most people identify and conform.

Another important point to note is that gender identity and sexuality are different and distinct. Eden is transgender and identifies as female, and she is attracted sexually to women. Sexuality -- who you are attracted to -- is another complex matter that deserves understanding when it differs from the expected norm.

Telling Jennifer

How did Jennifer's reaction feel to you in this scene? What emotions did you feel toward Jennifer? What would you have done in Eden's shoes in terms of revealing your identity?

Many transgender older adults in their 60s and up had or have relationships that look "normal", in that they look like cisgender, heterosexual relationships. For some partners, the non-transgender person in the relationship understands and accepts their partner's complex identity; for others, it's a more cautious understanding, or even a total rejection. In Jennifer's case, she was okay to co-exist with Eden at home, but far less comfortable with anyone else knowing about her partner's identity, meaning that Eden had to be Edward in public.

THE EDEN LAB

Module 1: Transhealth

The Transgender Society

Where was Eden in the scene with the other transwomen?

Eden was at a meeting of her local "transgender society." Before the internet, other than the bar scene, transgender people got to know others like them at their local transgender society, which met at hotels or other community spaces that were private enough to feel safe. These societies were much more common in big cities than in rural areas.

But after the internet connected people in the mid to late 1990s, it became easier for transgender people to communicate with each other regardless of location, which also helped everyone in the larger LGBT community feel less alone, and often provided a way for people to talk to each other and/or meet up, whether for friendship or romantic relationships.

Jennifer & Donald

How did you feel in the scene where Jennifer is dying of cancer? What would you have wanted to say to Jen? Have her say to you?

Jennifer obviously had a hard time with her partner's identity as Eden, though clearly they did stay together all these years. For these partners/spouses, navigating their relationship in private and out in public are often a balancing act, depending on the level of acceptance and understanding between the pair, their friends, family, and/or broader community. Many transgender adults, like Eden, do not fully transition to living in their true gender identity until after their partner's death.

How did it feel when your son was reacting to your new identity?

Transitioning to a new identity can cause estrangement and complications in relationships with adult children who were unaware of their parent's identity, like it did with Eden and her son. This can be a reason that trans people often do not have children involved in their lives and medical care decisions -- at higher numbers than LGBT people as a group.

THE EDEN LAB

Module 1: Transhealth

Transitioning

How did it feel to go from Donald's reaction to being with your affirming stylist a moment later?

Like Eden, many trans people must look outside their family to find people who affirm their identity. For many adults of Eden's generation, "transitioning" does not mean gender confirmation surgery. They may begin hormone therapy, as Eden did, and change their clothes, hair, and outward appearance to match their gender identity. Because surgery is expensive and historically coverage for it varies so widely or is simply nonexistent, only a small percentage of transpeople from older generations in particular have "top" or "bottom" surgery. It's important for people to inquire about this only when medically necessary, but also to be sure to ask about it if it's relevant to the type of care needed.

The Cafe

What did it feel like to be stereotyped and misgendered by the man in the cafe?

Being misgendered and stigmatized/discriminated against is probably THE most common public experience of trans people, because they can't "pass" like most cisgender homosexual or bisexual persons are able to do. The types of people we encounter as Eden in this café represent the three most common types of people: the man – openly and intentionally discriminatory; the Asian woman – uneducated about transpeople but open to learning; the barista – open and affirming and an active ally.

A note about the word "queer". This word, once derogatory, has been "taken back" by younger LGBT people and used largely as a positive descriptor. This positive connotation has largely been adopted now by mainstream media. But, it's important to note that older adults in their 60s to 90s experienced decades where "queer" was derogatory, and so using it as a descriptor for them can be inappropriate or problematic.

THE EDEN LAB

Module 1: Transhealth

Reflection Questions

How embodied did you feel as Eden during this lab? Was Eden someone who you could relate to?

What did you learn that you didn't know before embodying Eden?

After experiencing Eden's perspective, what does trauma informed care mean to you?

How will you use what you have learned about being transgender to provide better care to someone like Eden?

THE EDEN LAB

Module 1: Transhealth

Additional Reflection Questions for Specific Organization Types

Home Care/Home Health & Government Organizations:

- If Eden were an older adult in need of homecare, how would she know whether or not she could safely receive services from you?
- What training are you doing with your staff to ensure that Eden could safely receive services from your employees?
- What policies and procedures do you have in place that support the safety and dignity of LGBT people?

Senior Living/Residential Communities:

- If Eden were an older adult in need of a residential community, how would she know whether or not she would be welcome and safe in your community?
- What policies, procedures, and staff training are you doing with your staff to ensure that Eden would be a resident who would thrive in your community?

Customer Service:

- If Eden were to interact with an employee of your organization, what kind of customer service would she receive?
- What training do you have in place to ensure the experience of someone like Eden with your organization and employees would be a positive one?

THE EDEN LAB

Module 2: LGBT AGING

Home Care & Home Health

Why are gay couples like Kevin and Jesus, as well as other LGBT identifying older adults, more reluctant to engage with home care services and agencies that come into their homes?

LGBT people are often reluctant to invite people into their home when they are unsure whether they would be affirming of them and/or their partner. With their homes often being one of their only safe places to be themselves, they often lack the physical and/or mental energy to cover up signs that they are part of the LGBT community. They may fear that they will receive sub-par care or be subject to passive or active discrimination, even violence.

What were some of Jesus's suggestions for how homecare agencies, senior housing communities, and other organizations?

Jesus's suggestions about using inclusive language on forms and websites, having employees wear a rainbow pin, and clearly communicating the training staff receive about LGBT care -- are all become standard for organizations that want to be inclusive and assure LGBT people that they can safely utilize their services.

THE EDEN LAB

Module 2: LGBT AGING

Housing

How did your experience embodying John and hearing the man say that he didn't want to live around gay people feel? Who in that scene do you identify with the most?

- John – the gay man whose perspective you embody
- The man to John's right, who didn't want "that stuff" (e.g. gay people) in his face
- The woman who was silent
- The woman who tried to speak up in an attempt to be an ally

What would you do as a staff person who overheard the man talking about the movie in a derogatory way?

This is a good chance to re-evaluate and/or talk through what your organization's policies are in a situation like this.

What did you think about John's experience with staff telling him "well that would be fine, but we don't have that here" showing that "they don't know their own residents".

Think about the people you serve. Are any of them LGBT? Do you know?

How is being neutral about LGBT people and policies different than being obviously accepting or inclusive?

Think about whether your organization's policies are neutral or accepting/inclusive.

How did your experience embodying John in the inclusive care community feel? What did you learn from that experience?

THE EDEN LAB

Module 2: LGBT AGING

Healthcare

How did you feel when you were discriminated against as a trans person at the doctor's office? What should the different staff members have done differently to respond appropriately to Eden's requests and/or respect her privacy? (If non-medical, focusing on the nurse's response here is most productive.)

The doctor and nurse should not have discussed Eden's gender identity in/near the lobby, nor with each other.

Primary care physicians, nurses, physician's assistants, and other care professionals should be familiar with the basics of what a person who is transgender needs in an annual physical. (e.g. that transwomen may need to be screened for prostate cancer and transmen may need to be screened for breast cancer.)

Many transgender persons report being asked about their surgery related to their genitals and breasts, whether or not the reasons they have come in is related to those parts or not. Care professionals should not ask about this just because they are curious -- it should be medically relevant.

What were some of the best practices that Louisa's doctor used when interacting with Louisa and Wendy?

- Addressing both Luisa and Wendy in a warm and caring tone
- Recognizing that Wendy was Luisa's partner and also needed support
- Using language like "chosen family" to signal affirmation of Luisa and Wendy as a couple

What policies and procedures do you have in place to ensure that someone who is transgender would have a positive experience receiving care or services from your organization?

THE EDEN LAB

Module 2: LGBT AGING

Family

What are some of the particular challenges experienced by LGBT older adults and their families?

LGBT older adults are more likely to live alone, live in poverty, not have children to assist with care and/or care decisions, and be estranged from their biological family members.

How do you think advanced care planning might be more complicated for LGBT older adults? How did being LGBT impact Wendy as a care partner for Louisa?

Many LGBT older adults are estranged from their families, never had the right to be legally married to their partner, and/or do not have children. It is important that healthcare and aging care organizations understand the importance of family members of choice" and their involvement in end of life and advanced care decisions.

How do you think she felt as Louisa's unaffirmed care partner? What should families do to ensure their older adult who is LGBT is receiving the best care possible?

When families do not affirm their loved one's same-sex, non-cisgender, and/or transgender partner, it always makes care and care planning more difficult for the loved one, leading to poorer health outcomes and lower life expectancy. Open communication with and acceptance of your loved one's partner is the best way to ensure that your loved one gets the best care possible.

How did being LGBT impact Louisa as a person living with dementia?

People who are living with dementia and also identify as LGBT. but are unaffirmed by their loved ones and community, often become more paranoid about revealing their identity, as their memory begins to fail. LGBT people are also at statistically higher risk of developing dementia than other populations.

THE EDEN LAB

Module 2: LGBT AGING

All Organizations

Quick "Audit" of your organization for LGBT Inclusivity:

Website

- Does it have any LGBT friendly symbols visible?
- Does it use language that indicates inclusivity and affirmation of LGBT people?

Email signatures & Nametags

- Do you allow the option for people to include preferred pronouns?
- What percentage of people choose to use their preferred pronouns in their signature or on their nametag?

Digital and print forms

- Do they include ways for people to indicate their gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or preferred pronouns?
- What about more subtle language like including "partner" instead of spouse only?

Physical space

- Does the print literature available and/or pictures on the wall in your space include same-sex couples?

Policies

- Do you have clear policies on discrimination and/or accommodation of LGBT people?
- What policies and procedures do you have in place for LGBT people to report any discriminatory actions by staff, other residents/patients/clients, or other? Is there clear action that is taken when such an incident occurs?
- Would a trans person have the ability to have a roommate of the same gender identity, or have a single room if needed or request?

Programming

- If a residential community, do you have explicitly LGBT-friendly program options?
- Are you doing your best to promote education and tolerance among your residents who may themselves have discriminatory attitudes and viewpoints towards LGBT people?

Training

- What training is in place for staff to ensure that you are providing a non-discriminatory environment?

THE EDEN LAB

Resource List

Resources for Organizations Exploring Better Inclusivity Practices

SAGECare

SAGECare offers LGBT aging training, national credentialing, and consulting to service providers to foster a more welcoming community for LGBT older adults.

www.sageusa.care

Alzheimer's Associate & SAGECare Issues Brief: LGBT & Dementia

A joint special issue from the Alzheimer's Association and SAGECare on how having dementia impacts LGBT people uniquely.

<https://www.alz.org/media/documents/lgbt-dementia-issues-brief.pdf>

National Resource Center on LGBT Aging

The National Resource Center on LGBT Aging is the country's first and only technical assistance resource center aimed at improving the quality of services and supports offered to lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender older adults.

www.lgbtagingcenter.org/

LGBT Aging Issues Network (LAIN)

Associated with the American Society on Aging, The LGBT Aging Issues Network (LAIN) works to raise awareness about the concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) elders and about the unique barriers they encounter in gaining access to housing, healthcare, long-term care and other needed services.

<https://www.asaging.org/lain>

LGBTQ Aging: American Society on Aging (ASA)

Factual information that supports your informed policymaking strategy and in establishing best practices and models that "do the right thing" for LGBTQ communities nationwide.

<https://www.asaging.org/education/5>

Human Rights Campaign: Health and Aging

Explore resources for healthy aging from the HRC.

<https://www.hrc.org/explore/topic/health-and-aging>

THE EDEN LAB

Resource List

Resources for Organizations Exploring Better Inclusivity Practices (cont.)

Healthcare Equality Index (HEI)

The national LGBTQ benchmarking tool that evaluates healthcare facilities; policies and practices related to the equity and inclusion of their LGBTQ patients, visitors and employees.

<https://www.hrc.org/hei>

Long-Term Care Equality Index (LEI)

From the Human Rights Campaign, who created the Healthcare Equality Index, in partnership with SAGECare, an index that provides a scorecard for promoting equitable and inclusive care for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older people in long-term care communities.

www.thelei.org

GLAAD Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer Glossary of Terms

<https://www.glaad.org/reference/lgbtq>

GLAAD Transgender Glossary of Terms

<https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

GenSilent

A documentary about LGBT older adults who are going back into the closet to survive their interactions with healthcare systems, home care, and continuing care organizations.

<https://www.theclowdergroup.com/gensilent>

Before You Know It

Three gay seniors navigate the adventures, challenges and surprises of life and love in their golden years.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2473762/>

NOTES

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Embodied Labs Facilitation Guide

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