

Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice (QACP)

In-Person Course, Mumbai, October 2026

Mariwala Health Initiative (MHI) started the Queer-Affirmative Counselling Practice (QACP) Course in January 2019 with 22 participants, and now, as of July 2026, we have crossed 900+ MHPs who have completed the QACP course. Moreover, QACP has extended its reach beyond individual practitioners, engaging in collaborations with government and international educational institutions.

To be part of the upcoming Mumbai-based In-Person QACP Course, read below!

“An apology, in essence, has two dimensions, namely the acknowledgement of having done a wrong and the expression of a willingness to atone for it¹.”

Sec 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalised non-normative sexualities, was read down on September 6th 2018. The judgment went beyond the detached language of the law to uphold the Right to love for queer people. It acknowledged the oppression of a section of people pushed to the margins due to their genders and sexualities and stated that ‘History owes them an apology’.

The judgment also centres on collective responsibility. For too long, the mental health community has been complicit in upholding oppressive structures of gender binarism and heteronormativity by providing a "cure" for the non-normative. When we speak of being queer-affirming, we are beginning to challenge these structures that pathologise and discriminate against queer persons and participate in promoting their wellbeing in a deliberate and affirming manner.

How might we, as mental health practitioners, contribute, generate, and operationalise ways to make amends? This year, we are introducing a new 4-day format that covers all sections previously included in our 6-day program. The curriculum is delivered differently, which

¹Alternative Law Forum, (2018). Right To Love, Navtej Singh Johar v/s Union of India: A Transformative Constitution and the Rights of LGBT Persons, Available at: http://altlawforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/RightToLove_PDFVersion-1.pdf

provides us with an opportunity to reorient ourselves toward an anti-oppressive therapeutic practice. The training covers both perspective-building to recognise inequalities and their impact on mental health and also provides tools to address distress and promote the well-being of LGBTQIA+ persons. These perspectives and tools will support practitioners to modify their ongoing practice to make it queer-affirmative.

Eligibility:

This course is open to Mental Health Practitioners, viz. Psychologists, clinical psychologists, counselling psychologists, counsellors, social workers, and psychiatric social workers, preferably with experience of working with queer-identified clients/their families.

Course schedule: This year, we are conducting **two individual 4-day batches** (new format, same curriculum)

Dates

7th (Wed), 8th (Thurs), 9th (Fri) and 10th(Sat) **October 2026**

Kindly note:

- We have a few slots open for this batch
- Change in dates.
- We will be following a 4-day format with the same curriculum.

Timings

9 am to 5 pm every day.

Medium of Instruction: English

Curriculum:

1. Understanding gender & sexuality-related norms
2. Interrogating gender-sexuality as social structures
3. Exploring sexuality in the personal and professional/ clinical context
4. Paradigms informing Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice

5. Working with Queer individuals and queer-related distress
6. Working with Queer individuals and their interpersonal relationships, addressing issues with family, peers, and intimate relationships
7. Understanding the psy diagnostic frameworks from a queer affirmative lens
8. Operationalising Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice - queering some of the traditional approaches to clinical and counselling practice

***Please note:** This course will focus on both queer and trans mental health concerns; however, it will not cover specifics related to gender-affirming therapies (GAT) or medical transition services for trans persons. Participants will be provided with links to resource materials related to GAT.

Registration: Subsidised fee of INR 35,000/- (Includes breakfast and lunch on course days)

Venue: Mumbai (**Exact venue details for both batches will be shared upon selection.)

Last Date for Applications: Open till slots are filled

How to apply?

Apply for the course by filling out this [Google form](#).

For more information:

For further questions, please write to qacp@mariwalahealthinitiative.org with the subject line **QACP In-Person Mumbai, October 2026**

Selected applicants will be informed as soon as slots fill.

Faculty:

Shruti Chakravarty, PhD (cis woman; pronouns: she, her) has 20 years of experience in the non-profit sector as a mental health practitioner, researcher, trainer, and social worker. Her areas of engagement have been mental health, gender and sexuality, from a rights-based perspective. She has an independent therapeutic practice based in Mumbai, has in-depth experience working with LGBTQIA+ clients in the therapeutic space, and has co-authored Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice (QACP): A Resource Book for Mental Health Practitioners in India. She has completed her PhD on the subject of queer intimacies from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Shruti is Chief Advisor at Mariwala Health Initiative (MHI, and also faculty at the Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice course run by MHI. She also leads the training vertical at MHI. Additionally, Shruti has been an Assistant Professor of Psychology at KREA University.

Pooja Nair (ciswoman, pronoun: she) has been part of the non-profit sector for 15 years. She has an MPhil from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and has worked in the areas of life-skills training, curriculum development, gender, sexuality, and mental health. Pooja has an independent counselling practice and is a consultant therapist with Mariwala Health Initiative. She is a faculty member at their flagship Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice Course, as well as co-author of the QACP Resource Book for mental health practitioners in India. She is also the MHI Project Lead on their collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Government of Kerala, on the Queer Inclusive Health Systems initiative. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Psychology of Genders, Sexualities, and Relationships at IIT Palakkad.

Gauri Shringarpure (ciswoman, pronoun: she/her) is a queer mental health practitioner based in Thane, with a private practice. She is an experienced gender and sexuality trainer, having led sessions for colleges and the National Service Scheme (NSS). Gauri is a faculty member for the Queer Affirmative Counselling Practice Course run by Mariwala Health Initiative. She is also a positive psychology coach and regularly conducts workshops on mental health and self-care. In addition, Gauri works with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism, focusing on their mental health needs. With over 25 years of experience, she is also a seasoned consumer behaviour consultant and researcher.