

MAKING A COMING OUT PLAN



Coming out and living openly are not something you do once, or even for one year. It is a journey that we make every single day of our lives. Every coming out experience is unique and must be navigated in the way most comfortable for the individual. Coming Out helps LGBT, as well as straight-supportive people live openly and talk about their support for equality at home, at work and in their communities each and every day.

There is no one right or wrong way to come out.

It's a lifelong process of being ever more open and true with yourself and others — done in your own way and in your own time.

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When you're ready to tell that first person — or those first few people — give yourself time to prepare. Think through your options and make a deliberate plan of who to approach, when and how. You may want to ask yourself the following questions:

WHAT KIND OF SIGNALS ARE YOU GETTING?

You can get a sense of how accepting people will be by the things they say — or don't say — when LGBT-related issues come up. If a person's reactions are positive, chances are they will be more accepting of what you have to tell them.

ARE YOU WELL INFORMED ABOUT LGBT ISSUES?

The reactions of others will most likely be based on misinformation, and in some cases, even negative portrayals of LGBT people. If you've done some reading on the subject, you'll be prepared to answer their concerns and questions with reliable and accurate information.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS YOU WANT TO SAY?

Particularly at the beginning of the coming out process, many people are still answering tough questions for themselves and are not ready to identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. That's OK. Maybe you just want to tell someone that you're attracted to a person of the same sex, or that you feel your true gender does not align with cultural gender norms. Labels aren't important; your feelings are.

DO YOU HAVE SUPPORT

You don't have to do this alone. A support system is an invaluable place to turn for reassurance. Sources of support can be other LGBT people who are living openly, allies, friends, LGBT hot lines, therapists, a supportive member of the clergy, etc.

IS THIS A GOOD TIME?

Timing can be important. Be aware of the mood, priorities, stresses and problems of those to whom you would like to come out.

*Resources Cited: HRC Coming Out Guide



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CAN YOU BE PATIENT?

- Some people will need time to deal with this new information, just as it took time for many of us to come to terms with being LGBT. When you come out to others, be prepared to give them the time they need to adjust to what you've said. Rather than expect immediate understanding, try to establish an ongoing, caring dialogue.
- Remember, the whole reason you chose to be open with the person is because you care about them. If they react strongly, it's likely because they care about you as well. Keep that in mind as you navigate trying times.

LIVING OPENLY ON YOUR TERMS

As you continue to live openly, here are some other points to consider:

- It's important to remember that the journey from "Coming Out" to "Living Openly" is ongoing and unfolds at your own pace.
- Living openly is something that becomes easier with time. Even after you've been open for years, it will often take a little energy when you tell someone new — but it gets exponentially easier with each person you tell.
- Living openly as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or supportive straight person can help to make it easier for young LGBT people who will follow this generation.
- Living openly can be a passive expression of who you are — such as displaying a rainbow or equality sticker or a loved one's photograph — or it can be a deliberate process involving a planned conversation or the decision to always be ready to affirm your sexual orientation or gender identity should a situation arise.
- Living openly doesn't mean that the sole, or even primary, aspect of your identity is being LGBT. It means making this part of your life a natural piece of you — just like your age, height, hair color or personality.
- Living openly lets other people know, especially those who are judgmental or biased, that their attitudes are theirs alone.
- On a daily basis, you will face decisions about where, when and how to come out — or where, when and why not to. Always remember, this is your journey. You get to decide how to take it.

THINKING ABOUT COMING OUT? CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES...

<http://www.hrc.org/issues/coming-out>

<http://community.pflag.org/>

<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org>

*Resources Cited: HRC Coming Out Guide

