

COMING OUT

Coming out is the process by which someone accepts and identifies with their sexuality or gender identity and shares this with others. It is not a one-time thing, but a life-long process. Most people will spend their lives coming out in different ways because we live in a heteronormative society. People may be out in some spaces but 'in' in others- out to friends but not out to family. It is unhealthy to force someone to come out, or to out someone without their consent. It is up to the person who they tell, why and when they tell. This is why it is always important to ask the person who they want to tell and when.

If someone comes out to you, remember:

- It is not a lifestyle choice- nobody chooses what gender they identify with or who they are attracted to.
- Ask: how can I support you? how are you feeling? I'm glad you told me!
- It is a sign of trust- acknowledge this!
- Ask if other people know or do they want to keep it confidential.
- Remind them that it doesn't define them- much more to their identity and personality.
- Show interest- but ask non-invasive questions.
- Thank them for telling you and acknowledge it took confidence and bravery.
- Remind them they are not alone- 1 in 10 people are LGBT+!

Don't:

- Say 'I always knew' or minimise the significance of their sharing with you.
- Tell anyone unless the person coming out gives you consent.
- Forget other good things about them.
- Ask invasive questions.
- force someone to come out or out someone else.
- Tell them 'it's just a phase, you might be confused, you're too young, how can you know without trying the other gender?'
- Avoid or ignore the issue.



Ways to come out:



Coming out can happen in 3 stages:

1 Discovery -

Beginning to question you may be LGBT+

2 Acceptance -

Accepting you may be LGBT+,
for example telling someone for the first time.

3 Integration -

Feeling comfortable expressing your LGBT+ identity:
being in a same sex relationship for example.

Things to consider before coming out to someone:

Who:

Do I need to tell this particular person?

Timing:

Are you in a space where you will be able to answer questions/ discuss it further? Is it a stressful time for the other person? Are you at a family event or function? Will you have other person's full attention at this time?

Location:

Are you in a space with minimal interruptions? Are you in a place you feel safe in? Is there privacy? Are there other people around you do not want to know your sexuality/ gender identity?

Time to digest:

The other person may need time to let this sink in. They may also not give you a big 'surprised' or 'extreme' reaction - they may just be cool with it.

Research shows that regardless of how people react, the most stressful part of coming out is the period prior to it- it does get better and there is support available!

The average age a person realises their sexuality or gender identity is 12 and the average age someone tells a person for the first time is 16.