

THE **TREVOR** PROJECT  
Saving Young LGBTQ Lives



# COMING OUT

*A Handbook  
for LGBTQ  
Young People*



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**Exploring your sexual orientation and/or gender identity** can bring up a lot of feelings and questions. Inside this handbook, we will work together to explore your identity, what it might be like to share your identity with others, and provide you with tools and guiding questions to help you think about what coming out means to you.

The Trevor Project's **Coming Out: A Handbook for LGBTQ Young People** is here to help you navigate questions around your identity. You know yourself and what works for you better than anyone else. Each of us has the right to share or not share different aspects of ourselves with others. No one else is entitled to information around your identities, if you do not want them to know. If you choose not to share parts of your identity with others, it does not make you any less valid than those who may choose to share their identities with other people.

***"I've slowly been figuring out who I really am, and every step of the way I like who I find more and more."***

***—Hayley, 16 (Virginia)***

You may have heard people talking about "coming out" before in ways that are oversimplified, judgmental, or just plain scary. The truth is that there is no one way to "come out" or be "out." There may be certain people in our lives with whom we want to share our sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and there may be others with whom we know that we do not feel comfortable or safe sharing. This is more than okay!

Some people may share their identity with a few trusted friends online, some may choose to share with a counselor or a trusted family member, and others may want everyone in their life to know about their identity. An important thing to know is that for a lot of people, coming out doesn't just happen once. A lot of folks find themselves coming out at different times to different people.

It is all about what works for you, wherever you are at. The things you hear about coming out may make you feel pressured to take steps that don't feel right for you, or that you don't feel prepared for. Your experience is truly unique to you. You get to decide. This handbook is here to help you think through what might be best for you.

After thinking it through, you may decide to be out to yourself, but not to anyone else — and that's okay. Many people choose not to come out to others for different reasons. You are valid and deserve support no matter who you do or do not share your identities with. This resource is for you to explore how you feel and what choices are right and safe for you.



# IDENTITY

Gender identity and sexual orientation can be significant parts of who we are. And for many of us, there are lots of other aspects of ourselves that are meaningful and help make us the people we are. All of these identities help shape us into ourselves. Race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, national origin, the language(s) we speak, age, social class, religion/spirituality, and many other identity categories help us tell a larger picture about what it means to be us. Gender identity and sexual orientation can be just one piece of the puzzle. We are all complex human beings, and that is wonderful!

## THE BASICS

Questioning your identity is an experience that lots of people have many times throughout their life. Identity is complicated and if you aren't sure how you identify, that's ok! You are allowed to not have everything figured out right at this moment. Taking some time to think through how you feel can be helpful in better understanding your gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation.

Many people aren't sure of the difference between gender identity, gender expression, sex assigned at birth, and sexual orientation. It isn't something many of us are taught. Instead, lots of us end up figuring out what these categories mean on our own. Let's spend some time breaking down the difference between each of these terms and exploring what they mean together.

