

COMING OUT

Coming out to yourself or someone else is an incredibly personal decision. There's no right or wrong way to do it. It's completely up to you and your relationship with who you might share it with. For those who want to come out, taking stock of who in your life supports and encourages you, and helps you feel less alone can make a big difference.

There are lots of different ways to come out! Here are just a few examples:

- Calling someone on the phone
- Sending a text
- Sending an email
- Writing a letter
- Talking with someone in person

Planning Ahead

You might decide to take some time to prepare what you want to say. Writing out how you might want to come out to someone can be useful. Practicing with supportive people can also help in figuring out what you want to say and how you want to say it.

How do I want to come out to them?

What would I say to someone I want to come out to?

What would I expect them to say?

Is there a way I would want to prepare prior to coming out?

If you are thinking about coming out, it can be important to think about the range of reactions people may have, including the good ones and the bad ones. Here are some questions to think through how they might react:

What are some of the good responses I may hear?

What are some of the bad responses I may hear?

What do I expect their reactions will be, based on what I know about the person I'm sharing with?

How do I want them to react?

Keep in mind that other people's reactions can be quite varied.

Testing The Waters

Figuring out how people feel about LGBTQ people and topics can give you an idea about how they might possibly react (though not always).

Some ways that other people have tested the waters:

Asking how they feel about an LGBTQ celebrity

Asking how they feel about marriage equality

Listening to their words: Do they put down LGBTQ people? Do they invoke LGBTQ stereotypes?

Noticing how they handle difficult emotional events, which can help you guess what reactions to be ready for

Sometimes the people we come out to ask a lot of questions. It's okay to not have all the answers; it is not your job to be the expert on your identities. If you feel comfortable, you are always welcome to answer these potential questions, but you don't owe anyone any information that you aren't comfortable sharing.

Environment

Timing

There is no perfect time to come out. In fact, the best time will probably change depending on who you want to tell. Sometimes it is helpful to wait for a time when the person you tell feels relaxed, open, and willing to listen. Other times, you may need to share at a random moment. It is about whenever it feels right to you. Here are some questions to think through to explore timing that might work for you:

What time works best for me to come out?

What time of day feels like a good time to share? (before school, after work, during dinner, etc.)

What time of year feels like a good time to share? (school season, summer, holidays, etc.)

What time works best for the person I want to come out to?

Location

Like timing, there is also no perfect place to come out. Some places might be safer or more comfortable for you than others.

Would I rather be in a public or private space?

Does home feel like a safe place to talk?

Where would we both be comfortable talking?

Is there a location special to me and the person I'm talking with?

School

Coming out at school can be a great way for some to connect with other LGBTQ classmates. School can also be an unsafe space for many people. When thinking about coming out at school, make sure to keep your safety and wellness in mind. You may want to make a safety plan for school if you feel like you might face some tough times.

How would being out at school make me feel?

Who would I want to share with at school?

Are there supportive faculty members, counselors, teachers or adults at my school?

Is there a Gender & Sexuality Alliance (GSA) or similar club/community that I feel comfortable attending?

Are there anti-bullying rules that protect LGBTQ students that are enforced?

Will coming out put my safety at risk? If so, what steps can I take to stay safe?

Support

Think about people in your life who would support you no matter what.

Who do I feel safe with?

Who do I feel comfortable sharing about my life with?

Who in my life has my back no matter what?

Who in my life builds up my confidence?

These supportive people could be:

- Real-life and online friends, classmates
- Team members, school club members, online communities
- Teachers, counselors, doctors, co-workers
- Family members, caretakers, parents, siblings, cousins, neighbors
- Religious or spiritual leaders

Safety Around Coming Out

Unfortunately, coming out doesn't always go according to our hopes and plans. If people don't react the way we wish, it does not reflect on the realness of our identities, and it is not our fault. You deserve to be accepted with open arms, care, and love. In situations where things are feeling unsafe or you expect that they might be, it could make sense to prepare a back-up plan for housing, food, school, and/or transportation, just in case. Your safety and well-being are of the utmost priority. And The Trevor Project is always here for you and has your back.

Check out the Resources section in the back for local and/or online resources that can be a support before, during, and after coming out.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

As you explore your identity and coming out, a very important part of that process can be the consideration of dating and/or starting a relationship with special someone(s). With that can come a great deal of excitement and even a bit of anxiety as you get to know someone new.

While navigating this process, it is important to know the difference between a healthy relationship and one that might be unhealthy. Only you can define your expectations, boundaries, and needs. Remember, you reserve the right to express when something doesn't feel right, and we all deserve to feel safe and secure with people we are dating.

- Healthy relationships can be characterized by trust, honesty, mutual respect, open communication and most importantly feeling safe and secure.
- Unhealthy relationships may be characterized by elements of control, sometimes manifesting physically, emotionally, and/or sexually. Violence, coercion, or force of any kind is not healthy and does not create a safe, respectful space for all partners.
- Consent to engage in sexual, physical, and/or romantic intimacy is extremely important and must be enthusiastically and freely given by each person. You always have the right to say no or stop an intimate experience, no matter the reason, no matter if you've been intimate with that person before, and no matter if you consented to another behavior earlier. This goes for the person/people you are being intimate with as well. Everyone must consent.

