

Happy Coming Out



COMING OUT

Coming out can feel like a roller coaster, the anticipation of sharing a beautifully intimate part of you and also having no control of the reaction. Like once it comes out of your mouth and into the world there is no going back! So why do LGBTQ folks have to “come out” anyway? LGBTQ folks come out because we live in a society where it is assumed that people are straight and cisgender (Cisgender people are people who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth). Some individuals in our community hold more than LGBTQ identities such as people of color, people with disabilities, immigrants, undocumented folks, and people experiencing homelessness. Given that we hold multiple identities, we may face multiple oppressions that we must consider as we learn about ourselves. These experiences will help us decide how to navigate safety, confidentiality, and acceptance in different environments like at school with friends and faculty, at home with family, and work.

To help with your coming out process, here are some points to think about and consider as you begin to share your identities around sexuality and gender. Remember, no two coming out stories are exactly the same; there will be great experiences and not-so-great experiences. Check out the resources and ideas to build your safety net and support. Hang in there, you are valid in all the identities you hold no matter what anyone else says!

Navigating Safety is the most important thing to consider when deciding to come out. Always consider your physical safety, your housing safety, and your school safety. Being out in different spaces and with different people is perfectly fine, your safety is the priority.

Boundaries around confidentiality should be set by you and respected. Let people know that just because you’re out to them, doesn’t mean that you are out to everyone. By sharing your identity with

someone does not mean it is their story to tell or share without your consent. If someone does “out” you or share about your identity, relationship, or pronouns without your consent, it is ok to feel upset. You do not have to say that it is okay if it was not okay. You can tell them how it made you feel, remind them that your identity is your story, not theirs, and communicate what support and trust means to you.

Coming out to a friend is one of the most common first steps. Finding a friend whether in person or online who you trust can help make this experience less scary. If you have a friend who you know identifies at LGBTQ or is a supportive ally, there is a hopeful chance they will embrace you and help you process. You can even preface the conversation with something like “Hey, I have something I need to share with someone who will listen and not judge me. I really need some support right now. Are you willing to talk later?” If your friend is supportive, you can also strategize around your needs, identify areas that might be a struggle, and the outcome you are hoping for in sharing your identity.

Coming out at home should be assessed first. Have your parent(s) or guardian(s) ever said anything supportive of LGBTQ people? Have they attended a Pride event or watched an LGBTQ movie like *Love, Simon*? Look for the signs! Maybe they have dropped subtle hints that they are supportive in case you or your siblings decided to disclose your identity with them. If you are in a situation where you know the authorities in your home will not be supportive, you may want to lean on your friends and outside supports. Things to consider are whether your housing might be in jeopardy, physical or mental safety, in which it is a good idea to connect with a mental health professional or adult to assist with finding a safer living environment. Sometimes parents/guardians don’t know how to respond, they may need a little help with your guidance. It might be helpful to communicate with them that the immediate response you need most is that they love and care about you.

Coming out at school can be terrifying but it doesn’t have to be! Some steps to take when coming out at school is identifying a principal, teacher, counselor, or coach who identifies as LGBTQ or is known for being an ally. If you notice they have visible markers like a [Safe Space Kit](#) sticker or rainbow flag somewhere in their classroom or office, they might be a good person to talk to. Ask about [trans](#) and [LGBQ inclusive policies](#) so you can [know your rights](#) and protections. Having an adult advocate and inclusive policies at your school can help when advocating for name and gender marker changes in the school roster, using the correct pronouns, and support in PE or sports. If anyone at school is harassing or bullying you, find an adult who can intervene and support you.

Finding resources such as this one and others on the [GLSEN website](#) can help strategize your coming out journey. You can also do some research and find resources in your area such as an LGBTQ Center, libraries, youth discussion groups, and other LGBTQ supportive organizations. Google “LGBTQ and your city”, you’ll be surprised to find related options closest to you. If you happen to live in an area that is far from a physical supportive space or have some transportation restraints, try online resources. On social media, there are a ton of ways to connect with other LGBTQ youth through hashtags, youth spaces, and influencers on outlets like YouTube.

We hope that this list has some ideas that are helpful for you. Some last minute reminders, know that your coming out process and story is going to be different than anyone else's because it is yours. Sexuality and gender identity do not have to be set in stone and can change at any time! Coming out by sharing an identity or using certain pronouns doesn't mean you'll want to identify that way forever. Your identity is real and should be affirmed, not questioned. If you identify differently later, that is totally ok and just as valid! You know yourself best, what you need, when you need it, and how to tell your story. You've got this!

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS ACTIVITY? TELL US HOW IT WENT AND WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER!
EMAIL US AT **STUDENTS@GLSEN.ORG** OR **EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG**.