



Out & Proud Program

fact sheet

COMING OUT

Knowing what to expect before you tell your care providers/parents that you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or transsexual is important. You might want to talk about it to someone you can trust.

This pamphlet lists supportive and trustworthy places to call if you want help in coming out. It is strongly suggested that you use these resources in order to get support if things get difficult.

Some questions to consider:

1. Are you comfortable with your sexuality? If you are not sure and maybe experiencing guilt or periods of depression, have a trusted person to talk to after coming out in order to help deal with these feelings. Coming out can be tiring and can require a lot of energy. Having a positive feeling about being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered/transsexual can really help when you are faced with any negative reactions
2. Do you have support? If the reaction is horrible, are there others that you can confidently turn to for emotional support and strength?
3. Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality? If you've done your research, you will be able to help them by sharing information.
4. Is there room and time for your care providers to give attention to your coming out? Consider timing and if there is time to deal with such a serious matter. Are there too many other issues taking up time and emotions? Some families however, always seem to be in crisis. Only you can determine when may be the best time to come out.
5. Are you ready to be patient? Your care providers may require time to deal with this information. It can take two months or two years.
6. What is your reason for coming out at this time? Make sure you are not coming out as a way to punish your family. Using your sexuality to get back at your family will not be helpful; it will only make things more complicated.
7. Do you have available resources? Since most non-gay people know little about homosexuality, having a book, website or phone number available might help. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is an excellent place to start and their number is in the back of this pamphlet.

**Fostering Safe Spaces For People Of All Sexual And Gender Diversities:
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgendered, Intersex,
Queer, Questioning And Others**



8. Are you financially dependent on your care providers? If you suspect they may be capable of cutting you off financially, you may want to wait or have a backup plan.
9. Is this your decision? Do not be pressured into coming out if you are not ready.

Care providers and Children Switch Roles

When you come out you may find the parenting/child roles reverse. They may need to learn from your experience. As they deal with your coming out, you may be asked to allow them time to accept what you have told them. It will be easy for you to become impatient. They may need you to repeat many things you have already talked about. Their understanding will come slowly. Allow them time and space. Consider your own journey. You've been working on this issue for a long time. Although the issues your parents or care providers will work through are similar, the difference is that you are ahead of them. Be patient!

Reasons to come out

No more lies.

Keeping up all the complicated lies that you may have to tell in order to keep your sexuality a secret takes a lot of energy and wears away at your self-confidence. It can feel like a huge relief once the secret is out.

You find real support for who you are.

You will learn who can accept the real you, not some fictitious person you have had to invent. This will deepen your friendships. The people who cannot accept you will be replaced by those who do.

Possibility of acceptance.

Even though families have mixed reactions many come to a place of acceptance. Once this process starts many LGBT people say they feel a big sense of relief that they have stopped lying to the people they love. It also can begin a deeper sense of trust with others and with yourself.

You begin to feel like you fit in.

Although most LGBT people always feel some degree of being an outsider, when you are comfortable being out, it will help you be more genuine in your relationships. You begin to see that everyone is different, that it's the differences that make life interesting.

Stages Care providers Can Go Through

Stage 1: SURPRISE

If they had no idea, it can last a few minutes to weeks but it should wear off in a few days. Explain that it is important for you to be positive about your orientation or gender identity, as it is a part of who you are. You have been afraid to be completely honest and you don't like the barrier it creates.



Affirm your love for them and after some time alone they may remember how much they love you too. Remind them you are the same person today that you were yesterday. You will need to repeat this over and over!

Stage 2: DENIAL

Denial helps protect a person from a threatening or painful message. Denial takes many forms:

Hostility: “No one under this roof is going to be a faggot.”

Non-registering: “That’s nice; what do you want for dinner?”

Non-caring: “If you choose that lifestyle, I don’t want to hear about it.”

Rejection: “It’s just a phase, you will get over it.”

If their denial takes the form of “I don’t want to talk about it,” be patient. If this has not changed in about a week, raise the subject again. Answer only what they ask. They will get to other questions at another time. Remember that each person will react differently, so you’ll have to respond on an individual basis.

Stage 3: GUILT

Homosexuality is often seen as a “problem” and people ask, “What caused it?” They believe that if they can find a cause they can find a cure. Many care providers look for what they may have done wrong or what they should have done differently. When care providers feel guilty, they are self-centred and are not yet concerned with what you have been through. Often they are not able to admit their sense of guilt. Tell them it is not their fault. Assure them that you don’t believe they caused it, as there is no known cause for being gay. Provide resources and books. Be patient and understanding. Suggest your care providers call Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) whose number is in the resource section of this pamphlet.

Stage 4: FEELINGS EXPRESSED

Your care providers acknowledge their emotions.

When it is clear that guilt is not useful, they may be ready to ask questions, listen to answers and acknowledge their feelings. This is where some of the most helpful conversations between you and your care providers will take place. Expect a full range of feelings: disappointment about the future, shame, fear, not wanting you to tell others, hurt and sometimes relief. Since you may have experienced many of the same feelings (isolation, fear of rejection, hurt, confusion, relief), you can share similarities. Allow them time to express themselves. Remember to be patient.

Stage 5: MAKING DECISIONS

As the emotions subside, care providers will increasingly deal more rationally. It’s common for them to retreat a little and consider what lies ahead. Usually, the most important factor is their relationship with you. They may reach a point where they choose to go no further but this does not mean they do not accept you.

Some care providers may stay in a constant state of warfare. They blame everything you do on your sexuality: your grades, the hours you keep, what you eat, your friends, your language. By attending



a support group (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) or by talking to someone with more insight, the care provider may be able to see things in a more positive light. If all attempts fail, do not let it get you down. Find a friend or someone you trust whom you can turn to for support.

Stage 6: TRUE ACCEPTANCE

Some care providers can experience love without fully accepting the youth's life. Many reach a point where they can celebrate a child's/youth's uniqueness. At this stage they face up to their own guilt. They re-examine their behaviour over the years and begin to understand the problems they unknowingly created for their child. They can come to a point where they share in your pride in being who you are as an LGBT person.