

"I love you"

"Thank you for telling
and trusting me"

"Is there anything I
can do to help?"

"I support you!"

"I'm always here if you
want to talk more!"

"How can I improve?"

If someone is coming out to you, they likely trust you and know that you are someone who can be supportive and caring.

Do not behave differently around them - they are still the person you knew before. Continue to be a close and important person in their life.

CONTACT US

Please feel free to contact the Freedom team for more information.

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OUT OF THE CLOSET

A guide to supporting
LGBTIQA+ people coming out



WHAT IS COMING OUT?

Coming out is a term used by LGBTIQ+ people when self-disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Some LGBTIQ+ people may prefer the term 'inviting in' rather than 'coming out'.

This reflects that LGBTIQ+ people have a choice regarding to whom and when they share their gender identity or sexuality. It can shift the often overwhelming expectations around sharing.

IT CAN BE COMPLICATED

Although coming out is often a free and liberating experience, it can also be difficult and takes a lot of courage.

Once a person comes out they may change the way they express themselves, move into different interests and mix up their friendship groups. This can be difficult to understand as it seems like the person is changing so much.

However, this is the person beginning to express their true self and unlearn the behaviours and expressions they learned to keep themselves safe. This is exciting! You get to witness them flourish into who they want to be!

Hiding who you are can be exhausting and takes a lot of energy away from life's important things. People who are not out can have poorer mental health compared to those who are out.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE COMES OUT TO YOU

- Thank them for sharing themselves with you.
- Coming out is a journey and process. Support them as they continue to understand more about themselves.
- Respect their confidentiality - they may not be out to other people including family members. It is not your place to tell others if they are not out to everyone. They may change the way they express themselves in different situations as not all settings may be safe to express their whole true self.



- Offer support for when they come out to other people. Continue to check in with them to show that you are still close.
- Learn about the LGBTIQ+ community.
- Depending on how they identify, it may be appropriate to ask for their pronouns.
- Refer them to LGBTIQ+ services and groups, like Freedom, to support them if needed.
- Work to create a safe space where their identity and experiences are normalised.

TIPS TO BE AN ALLY

Allyship is not just about supporting the LGBTIQ+ people you know, but also creating a world where all LGBTIQ+ people can feel safe to be themselves.

Check out WAAC's 'How to be an LGBTIQ+ Ally' brochure for tips for being an ally.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Don't say "Are you sure?". It questions the validity of the person and the emotional journey they may have been on to reach this point.
- Don't say "I knew it!". It suggests their sexuality or gender identity has been thought about, discussed, or gossiped about based off stereotypical views.
- Don't say "You don't seem...". There is no 'right' way to express oneself and this statement is based off stereotypes. It is very harmful as it puts people in boxes.
- Don't ask probing questions or cross personal barriers you wouldn't normally cross.
- Don't tell other people.

REMEMBER

It's about doing what will make them comfortable, not what will make you comfortable.