

COMING OUT/

↑ INVITING IN ↓

What is “Coming Out”?

During adolescence most people think about who they are, who they want to be in the future and how they want others to see them. “Coming Out” can be part of that.

Like many words and terms, “Coming Out” means different things to different people. It generally means telling other people about your gender identity or sexuality. It can mean realising you are attracted to people of the same sex, perhaps calling yourself gay, lesbian or bisexual, and deciding to tell some people in your life. It can also mean that the concepts of gender, what it means to be a boy and girl are blurred or don’t fit for you.

People often decide to come out when they feel comfortable or mostly comfortable within themselves with their gender identity or sexuality. They may feel they now need to share it with others or that they want to share it with those closest to them, their family and friends.

Coming Out can be simple for some, while for others it can be challenging and confusing.

Inviting People In

The idea of “coming-out of the closet” might not fit or feel right for some people. For some people it feels like they have a dark secret that needs to be hidden away, or that they need to come out to everyone all at the same time.

Some people prefer to think of more like inviting people into their life. Who they “invite in” to that precious part of their life is up to them, a bit like if they were throwing a special party.

How will people respond?

Some people’s responses may be what you would expect and some people’s responses will not be what you would expect. Some people may respond in a bad way, but later become more supportive when they have had time to think about, while others will not be supportive at all.

Tips on Inviting In / Coming Out

If you or your friend are thinking about coming out / inviting in here are a few things to think about first:

- **Is it the right time for you?** Who you tell and when you tell them should be up to you. Deciding not to come out to people in your life is also okay or you may decide to only share with some people.
- **How much support do you have?** If you feel okay talk to someone you trust, they might be a friend or family member, a youth worker, school counsellor or someone else. They may be able to make suggestions or give you a different perspective.
- **How confident are you to answer their questions?** How would you answer if the person asks you “are you sure you are gay?” or “how do you know you are trans?”
- **What are the main steps for you?** Would you tell your whole family and friends all at once or one person at a time over several months? What are the pros and cons for telling each person? How do you think they are likely respond? Do the positives outweigh the negative?
- **Where and when would be an appropriate and safe place to tell them?** It can be good to avoid family events like birthdays and Christmas.
- **What will you do if things don’t go well?** Who can you ask for help if things don’t go the way you’d hoped? Remember people may react badly at first but be more supportive once they’ve had time to think. They may feel shocked, angry, sad but may still be supportive once they’ve had time to think about things.