

## About Coming Out

Coming out to yourself or to someone else is a bid and incredibly personal decision. It can also be as exhilarating as it can be stressful.

It should be noted that there is no requirement for you to come out or disclose your status as a transgender or nonbinary person and there is no right or wrong way to do it. But if you choose to disclose here are some things to consider.



## Self-Disclosure

The first step of coming out is coming to terms with your gender identity at a personal level.

Some transgender and non-binary people struggle for many years trying to understand their gender identity. They may also think that they have to conform to the expectations others place on them. On the other hand, some people come to recognize their gender identity suddenly and immediately begin to transition.

Whether you are a child, teen or a senior – whether you are married, single, with children or without - there is no wrong time in your life to be who you are. You should come out on the timeline that makes the most sense for you.

For those who want to come out, taking stock of who in your life supports and encourages you can make a big difference. Consulting with a therapist, a peer support group or someone who has navigated the process can be helpful.

## Making Your Plan

Prepare what you may want to say in advance. Writing a “coming out letter” (whether you use it or not) can be helpful in framing your thoughts. The same goes for practicing with supportive friend who can help you to figure out the best way to disclose. Questions to ask yourself might include:

- Who do I want to come out to?
- 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?

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?

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

## Preparing for Reactions

Figuring out how people feel about LGBTQ people and topics can give you an idea about how they might possibly react. Some ways that other people have tested the waters include:

- Asking how they feel about a transgender celebrity
- Listening to their words: Do they put down trans people or invoke transgender stereotypes?
- Noticing how they handle difficult emotional events, which can help you guess what reactions to be ready for

Sometimes people ask a lot of questions. If you feel comfortable, you can answer their questions, but you are not obligated to do so. You don't owe anyone any information that you aren't comfortable sharing. An alternative might be to provide them access to books, videos, or information like that on the [www.PATransEquity.org](http://www.PATransEquity.org) website.

## Time and Place

There is no perfect time or place to come out. In fact, these will likely change depending on who you want to tell. You may be able to plan your disclosure but other times it might happen spontaneously. It is about whenever it feels right to you. Here are some things to think about:

- What time works best for us to have a complicated conversation?
- Would I rather be in a public or private space?
- Where would we both be comfortable talking?

## School or Work

Coming out at school or work can be a challenge but also be amazingly affirming. Before coming out you may want to investigate the following:

- Does the school or workplace have an anti-harassment policy that protects LGBTQ people?
- Are there supportive faculty members or coworkers in your building?
- Does the school have a GSA Club or does your workplace have an LGBTQ Employee Resource Group?

## Telling Parents/Caregivers

You may be afraid your parents or caregivers will reject you if you come out to them. The good news is that many parents and caregivers are immediately accepting and supportive. For others, this can take some time and still others never quite get it. If you are under age 18 or financially dependent on your parents or caregivers, the decision to disclose should be made very carefully.

## What if Someone Reacts Badly?

Not everyone will react positively. Just like when you change careers, schools, hobbies or move to a different city, you may lose friends when you disclose — and they may not be the ones you expected. What's important is that you know your truth, and that you don't let other people's feelings impact your mental health. You know who you are, and that is enough. It will be hard, but many more people will accept you than you may expect. Focus your energy on them because they are the ones who are worth it.