

Considerations for Coming Out

Things to consider

- There is a difference between coming out to one's self and coming out to *others*.
- Coming out to others is a life-long process and is not described by a single event.
- Throughout the lifetime, due to the presumption of heterosexuality and gender in society, a GLBTQQI person will have to come out to a countless number of persons and the process never ends.
- The process involves many steps forward and many steps backward, but always more steps forward than back.
- Each person told potentially increases the loss of control over this information for the person coming out.
- People, because of prejudice, may abandon or even attack the person coming out.
- There is not a *normal* time in which a person should come out.
- This is a personal issue first and a political issue second, if at all.
- People coming out usually feel empowered.

Tips for persons considering coming out:

- Schedule the time to come out. Avoid sharing this information spontaneously in conversation; plan your time and location.
- Come out first to those individuals who you feel will be the most supportive.
- Consider the best time for yourself and the other person.
- Emphasize that you are the same person you were yesterday and that you have not become a different person now that you have shared this about yourself.
- Give the other person time to adjust. It took you how many years? Allow the other person reasonable time to process (could be days, weeks, months, years).
- Have someone lined up for debriefing with you to discuss your thoughts and feelings.
- Don't give up hope with an initially negative reaction to your sharing.
- Be careful not to let your self-esteem become reliant on positive outcomes of coming out.
- Do not come out to punish others or when you are feeling very emotional.
- Read! There are many good titles on coming out. Don't re-invent the wheel, much of this work has already been done.

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