

Other things to consider when thinking about coming out

When is the safest time to come out?

It is preferable to time coming out when other major events are not happening, such as someone's birthday.

It is not best to tell someone in the middle of an argument, as it is best to have the full attention of the person you want to tell.

What is the best way to come out?

It is important that you chose a way to come out that is safest for you, and that you feel most comfortable with. For example, you may choose to tell someone in person, write a letter/email, or tell them over the phone.

You can also organize to tell the person when you are with a support person (i.e. friend, family member, counsellor). Some people choose to have a support person nearby. For example, in a local café or in another room.

Its a good idea to start with a positive introduction.

Rehearsal can also be really useful. For example, practicing your responses to common questions with your support person. It can also help to write out what you are going to say if you are going to tell someone in person or over the phone. You can then get some practice by reading the letter out to yourself or your support person. This might help you to feel more confident.

What about after I've come out?

Allow time for the person you have told to readjust. Remember that you have had time to process this information, and they might also need time for this.

It might help to give them the PFLAG and Twenty10 brochure, *Keeping Families Together*, to help with this process.

Don't make promises about keeping your sexuality a secret.

Take opportunities to include the topic of your same-sex attraction in your day to day conversations with the person you have come out to, so that they get used to hearing that this is an important part of you.

What's this Tip Sheet for?

Coming out isn't a one-off event. We might come out to different people, at different times and for different reasons. Some people might be accepting of our news and others might not be. Whatever their reaction is, coming out should always be your own choice. It's important to take time to make a safe decision every time you come out. The aim of this Tip Sheet is to help you to work out how to come out safely and to plan for negative reactions.

How do I use it?

This Tip Sheet has been designed to be used in conjunction with Twenty10's Coming Out Safely Worksheet.

Is there someone I can talk to?

Sometimes its good to be able to talk things through with somebody else. It can be good to get things of your chest, clear your head, and to get another perspective.

There are free counselling services where you can have a safe and confidential space to talk about what's important to you.

Twenty10 is an organisation for young (under 26) gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people. Twenty10 offers case management; individual and family support; groups in Newtown & Hornsby; information, resources and referrals.

Contact us:

Hours: Monday to Friday, 10am—5:30pm
Street: 45 Bedford Street, Newtown
Mail: PO Box 553, Newtown NSW 2042
Metro Support: 02 8594 9555
Rural Free Call: 1800 65 2010
Administration: 02 8594 9550
E-mail: info@twenty10.org.au
Website: www.twenty10.org.au



Coming Out Safely Tip Sheet



coming out safely

contact twenty10



Coming out is not a one off event. It is a process that takes time and involves a number of stages, including acknowledging and accepting your same-sex attraction, as well as sharing this news with others. Always remember that you don't have to come out and that whether to come-out or not should always be your choice. Some people chose to come out selectively, to some people but not others. For example, they might be out to their family but not at school, or to friends but not at home.

Some people will be accepting of your news but others may be rejecting. For this reason the following questions may be important to consider each time you are thinking about coming out to someone, so that you can make the best decision for you.

Questions to ask yourself when thinking about coming out

1. How sure are you about your sexual attractions and identity?

It's good to be prepared for common questions like, 'are you sure?' and 'how do you know?' Being able to respond confidently to these questions may help you to convey your news to others. The more clear you are in understanding the message you want to communicate, the more clear your message will be to those you wish to communicate it to.

Another common question you may be asked is 'why are you telling me this?' By being confident and clear, the person you want to tell will also have a better idea about why it's important that they know. They will also have a better idea of what you need from them.

2. How comfortable are you in talking about your sexuality to other people?

If you appear to be uncomfortable in talking about your sexuality, this may be interpreted by others as not being confident or accepting of your sexuality. If this is what you want to convey then that's okay. However, if that's not what you want to convey it might be a good idea to explore your ideas with a counsellor, or get some more information about your sexuality.

Practicing what you're going to say and how you would respond to common questions with a counselor can be a great strategy towards feeling more confident and comfortable in the real situation.

3. What do you know about being same-sex attracted? How confident are you in answering some questions the person being told might have?

There are lots of stereotypes and myths about what it means to be same-sex attracted. These myths and stereotypes can affect not only how people may receive your news but also how you may feel about yourself, who you believe you are and what you believe you can be. For these reasons, checking out the reality can be not only a great preparation for answering the questions people may ask you, but also a great way to increase your feelings of pride in your identity. Check out anthologies of coming out stories, some positive queer movies and lists of famous same-sex attracted people across the ages. Twenty10 can provide you with recommendations.

4. How much support do you have?

Due to the stereotypes and myths about same-sex attracted people, some people may not be accepting of your news. Because of this, it is important to have support. It can be a good idea to plan to meet up with a supportive person after you come out so that you have someone to debrief with. There are a number of great services and groups that may be able to offer you support. Twenty10 can assist you to find the best support for you.

5. What seems to be the attitude of the people you want to tell, toward same-sex attracted people?

Take time to think about how the person has acted or responded to information about same-sex attracted people.

What comments have they made in the past?

6. How likely is it that the person will be rejecting?

Thinking about the attitude of the person you want to tell, towards same-sex attracted people may give you a good idea of whether the person will be rejecting or accepting. Even if you think that the person will act one way or another, it is safest to prepare for either option.

7. What will you do if the person takes it badly?

Some people may find your news difficult to accept. Whilst some may need some time to process your news, others may act in less than positive ways. For example, they may ask you to leave home. Because of this, it's important to think about **whether you are financially, physically or emotionally dependent on the person you want to tell**. If you are dependent in any of these ways it's important to have a back-up plan. For example, think about who can support you if you can't stay at home.

8. How important is it to you that the person be told now?

Timing is important. For example, if you are financially, physically and emotionally dependent on the person you want to tell, and you're near the end of your year 12 exams; you may decide to wait until after your exams, or, when you have more support, income or housing options.

Twenty10 can assist you with developing a back-up plan.

9. Is it your decision to tell someone or are you being forced?

Remember, you do not have to come out, and the decision to come out should always be yours.

10. Are the people you want to tell going to respect your privacy?

It's a good idea to plan what you want to tell the person about telling others. Is it okay for them to tell other people, or do you want them to keep this news to themselves? This can be a complex question to consider. For example, what would happen if you had an argument with this person later down the track?

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