

What to Do When a Friend Comes Out to You

"Coming Out" is when a person tells someone else that he or she is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Someone who is coming out feels close enough to you and trusts you enough to be honest & risk losing you as a friend. What can you do to support your friend? Here are some suggestions that you may wish to consider...

- Thank your friend for having the courage to tell you. Choosing to tell you means that your friend respects & trusts you.
- Respect your friend's confidentiality. S/he may not be ready to tell others right away and will want to tell them in his/her own way
- Tell your friend that you still care for him/her, no matter what. Be the friend you have always been. The main fear for people coming out is that they will be rejected by their friends & family.
- Do not say "Are you sure?" When people come out to you, it most likely means they have gone over this question thousands of times in their own mind, and are sure!
- Do what you have always done together. S/he might feel that coming out will change everything in his/her life and this is frightening. If you have something you almost always do together on one day of the week – like go to the movie - then continue to do that.
- Talk about other GLBT people you know. If s/he knows that you have accepted someone else, s/he will feel more confident that you will accept him/her.
- Learn about the GLBT community including organizations that might provide your friend with support. This will allow you to better support him/her, and knowing about his/her world will help prevent the two of you from drifting apart.
- It's never too late. If someone has come out to you before & you feel badly about how you handled it, you can always go back & try again
- Don't assume that your friend is attracted to you. It is a myth that GLBT people are attracted to everyone who is of the same sex.



Being an Ally:

"People always ask why I care about a movement that does not include me. My answer is that the gay rights movement should include me. Although I am straight, I know people affected by hate and prejudice – they are my friends. I believe that everyone who has seen the face of hatred, whether affected by it or not, should be involved in preventing it. That is why I am involved with my GSA. That is why I sit every week with other students not afraid to face prejudice. That is why I work with them to teach respect in our school."
(GLSEN's Students and GSA's Yearbook)