

# "COMING OUT" ... "of the closet." is the process by which someone...

1. Accepts and identifies with their gender identity and/or sexual orientation; and
2. Shares their identity willingly with others.

**Sometimes** We talk about coming out as if it were a one time thing. But for most folks coming out is a series of decisions – sometimes daily – that LGBTQ people navigate in every new setting they enter. (Most people aren't like Ellen, where they come out once and then the whole world knows.)

**People** may be **"OUT"** ⇔ in some spaces, and **"IN"** ⇔ in others.

⇒/⇔ to Family ⇒/⇔ to Friends ⇒/⇔ to Classmates/Coworkers ⇒/⇔ to Religious Community  
A decision to come out to a person or group is one of safety, comfort, trust, & readiness.

It's **dangerous, unhealthy, and unhelpful to force someone to come out, or to "out" someone else** (i.e., disclosing someone's gender identity or sexual orientation to others without the person's consent), **regardless of your intentions** (sometimes people think they're being helpful, or acting on the person's behalf to conquer their fears), but...

## IF SOMEONE COMES OUT TO YOU...

**DON'T:**

1. Say "I always knew," or downplay the significance of their sharing with you.
2. Go tell everyone, bragging about your "new trans friend."
3. Forget that they are still the person you knew, befriended, or loved before.
4. Ask probing questions, or cross personal barriers you wouldn't have crossed earlier.
5. Assume you know why they came out to you.

**DO:**

1. Know this is a sign of huge trust! (Yay!)
2. Check-in on how confidential this is (Do other people know? Is this a secret?)
3. Remember that their gender/sexuality is just one dimension (of many) of them.
4. Show interest and curiosity about this part of them that they are sharing with you.
5. Ask them how you can best support them.

