



## Understanding the Process of Coming Out

Coming out is a multiple stage process for individuals in the LGBTQ Community. The first part of that process is recognizing one's own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This often takes careful thought and reflection and can take individuals either minutes or years to come to terms with their identity or fully understand how they wish to identify to others. Every person's pace is unique and deserves to be accepted and respected.

The next part of the coming out process may involve sharing that identity with others. Coming out is frequently seen as a single declaration to the world that someone identifies as LGBTQ. However, the reality, is that coming out is a continual process throughout someone's life. Individuals may continually assess when, how, and if they should disclose their gender identity and/or sexual orientation to others in new or different environments.

Although coming out is often regarded as a celebration, the reactions of loved ones to an individual's identity as a member of the LGBTQ community may not be received well. It is important that individuals have the freedom to come out to others as they feel safe to do so - it is never acceptable to "out" someone else to others. To 'out' someone refers to disclosing another person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity to others without that person's approval.

### ***Things to Consider About Coming Out***

The coming out experience is different for every person, regardless of their identity, so there is no **one** way to come out. Not everyone is able to come out because of their environment or supports, so it is important to not rush yourself, or other people. Consider the following points as you consider making a decision to come out:

- Safety**—Are you emotionally, physically, financially, and/or spiritually safe?
- Privacy**—If you are not widely announcing your identifier to everyone, is the person you're telling trustworthy?
- Support**—What does your support system look like? Are there friends, family members, professionals, or peers who may be of assistance?
- Preparation**—Have you considered your own emotional or physical responses to how this person may react?
- Resources**—Do you have an idea of local, or national, resources that can potentially assist you in your coming out process?

Remember, each person's journey is different and only you can know when is the best time to come out.

