

Coming Out: Issues and Concerns

The prospect of coming out, of revealing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, can be a daunting one in any given situation. There is always a risk that the person one chooses to tell may react negatively. The following information may help people who are not lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender understand some of the concerns that people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender have.

What might people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender be afraid of when they come out?

- Rejection -- loss of relationships with friends or family
- Gossip
- Harassment or abuse
- Being thrown out of the family
- Being thrown out of the house
- Discrimination
- Being seen as sick, immoral, or perverted
- Loss of financial support
- Not being accepted in their religious community
- Losing their job
- Having their professional credibility questioned or undermined
- Physical violence

How might people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender feel about coming out to someone?

- Scared
- Vulnerable
- Unsure -- wondering how the person will react
- Relieved
- Proud

What might people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender want from the people they come out to?

- Acceptance
- Support
- Understanding
- Comfort
- Reassurance that their relationship won't be negatively affected
- Closer relationship
- Acknowledgement of their feelings
- Love

Safe Spaces: Adapted from "Coming Out," developed by Vernon Wall and Jamie Washington, 1989