

J.U.S.T. the Facts

Coming Out: For Youth

Should I Come Out Of The Closet?

When thinking about coming out to parents or friends, at school or at work, consider asking yourself the following questions:

Are you sure about your sexual orientation?

When you come out, this is likely to be one of the first questions many people will ask you. Confusion on your part may increase others' confusion. It is important to be able and willing to answer this question, possibly very often.

Are you comfortable with your sexuality?

If you're dealing with a lot of guilt or depression, it's important to consider who the most supportive people will be. It may be your parents or friends, and it may not. Coming out is an act of great courage; it will require a positive self-image, and support.

Can you be patient?

People are surrounded by heterosexism and homophobia* in today's society. Your parents and friends may have to deal with a lot of negative stereotypes and misinformation. Your parents may grieve for the future life they had always assumed you'd have—and that it would look a lot like their lives. They

may fear for your safety, both physically and emotionally. Allowing them the time and space to experience their own emotions is crucial.

What's your motive for coming out?

Hopefully it is because you love and care for your friends and family, and are uncomfortable with the distance you may feel. Don't come out in anger, or as retaliation. You don't want your sexual orientation used against you, so it's important not to use it as a weapon against others.

Is this your decision?

Not everyone should come out to their parents or friends—and only you can be the judge of that. If you have concerns for physical safety, or the loss of security, it's okay to wait. No one has the right to force, pressure, or coerce you to come out of the closet. Your identity belongs only to you.

* **Heterosexism:** the belief that everyone is heterosexual, and if not, they should be.
Homophobia: prejudice against homosexuals or homosexuality.



Coalition Members

- AIDS Delaware
- ACLU of DE
- American Lung Association
- American Psychological Association
- Brandywine Counseling
- Child, Inc.
- Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Delaware Council on Gambling Problems
- Delaware Dept. of Services to Children, Youth & Their Families
- Delaware Dept. of Education
- Division of Public Health, School-based Health Centers
- JUST for Youth
- Mental Health Association in Delaware
- National Conference for Community and Justice
- PFLAG of DE
- Planned Parenthood of Delaware
- Public Allies Delaware
- Seriviam Media
- Sussex County AIDS Council
- UD Center for Drug and Alcohol Studies
- YES Institute
- YWCA
- YMCA Resource Center

Resources When Coming Out



J.U.S.T. for Youth Hotline
[1-877-4DE-JUST]
For referrals and information.

Child, Inc. Runaway Hotline
[302-762-6373]
Short-term crisis shelter and aftercare, including counseling.

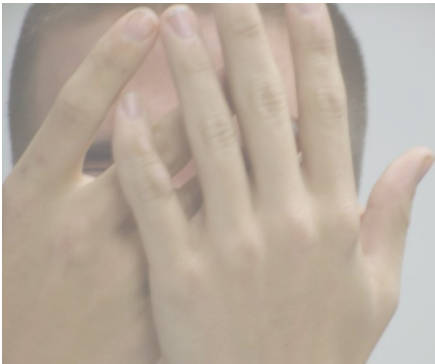
You're Not Alone
[302-547-6629]
An lgbt youth support group, provides counseling, education, and social time with other lgbt youth.

PFLAG
[302-654-2995]
Support group for parents and friends of lgbt people.

See Below for 22 Coming Out Tips!



22 Coming Out Tips

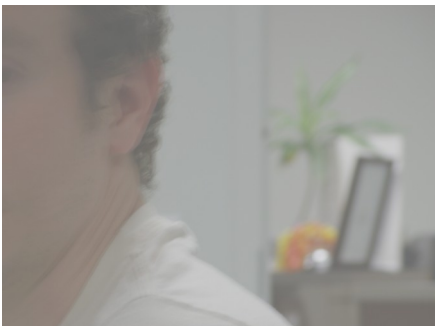


Just for Youth Coalition
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“When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak.”

-Audre Lorde

questions@justforyouthde.org
www.justforyouthde.org



Don't come out in anger or to intentionally hurt another.

Don't come out in a moving vehicle. Just trust us on this one.

Know that you're not alone. There are many, many lgbt people in this big world of ours, in every shape, size, and temperament.

Don't have your boyfriend/ girlfriend with you. This is not “Deal or No Deal,” or a good time to make introductions.

Be sober.

Be ready for people to drill you with questions that may or may not offend you.

Realize that some people will not be supportive no matter what.

Come out to people one at a time, somewhere private.

Forgive yourself for any fear, anger, guilt, or resentment. These are common feelings when we realize that we are not exactly who we or others assumed we'd turn out to be. Focus on resolving these feelings, because your self-worth is what coming out is all about.

Have resources available for when you're not around. A hotline, a book, a web-site. Somewhere your friends and family can do their own research in their own time.

Allow them the time and space to process this new information. They are not psychic, and haven't had nearly as much time or necessity as you to consider the reality of being gay.

Have a back-up plan. In hoping for the best, it's important to plan for the worst. Have a list of local help-lines, a friends couch to crash on, and some extra cash on hand. Just in case.

Accept that no two coming out experiences are the same.

Don't plan on doing anything else for the rest of the day/night.

Just because you come out to someone once, doesn't mean you won't have to again, and again, and again....

Accept that they may already know.

Don't try to answer questions about Rosie O'Donnel, Ellen, Richard Simmons, Tom Cruise, Keanu Reeves, Bert and Ernie, or Tinky Winky. You're not in charge of anyone's identity but your own.

If your audience looks like a deer in headlights, don't make any sudden moves. Seriously, don't overload them with too much information all at once. Don't make assumptions about how comfortable they should be, or where they're coming from.

Remember that above all, you deserve respect, and have the right to expect it.

People who are ignorant, even if they're well-intentioned, may say things initially that they don't realize are painful to hear. Remember that they are in a state of surprise.

Breathe. (Seriously.)

Hold on to your goals and dreams. Being gay doesn't mean your vision for the future should change. Your values and your hopes are unique to you, and coming out should only strengthen your character and resolve.