

Coming Out as You

Information for LGBTQ+
young people and those
who aren't quite sure...



Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland

Coming Out As You

How do I know if I am LGBTQ+?

Figuring out if you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBTQ+) can be confusing.

Some people fancy people of the same gender, a different gender or more than one gender. If you are discovering your gender identity, you may feel that your body does not always fit in with the sex you were assigned at birth.

It's ok to take time to figure out what feels right for you. You know yourself best and can choose how you want to identify or choose not to define yourself by any label.

Coming Out As You

LGB

Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual
About Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation

Our sexual and romantic attraction to other people.

Lesbian

A woman who is attracted to other women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

Gay

Someone who is attracted to people of the same gender.

Bisexual

Someone who is attracted to more than one gender e.g. both men and women.

Pansexual

Someone whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex assignment, gender identity, or gender expression.

Asexual (Ace)

Someone who experiences limited or no sexual attraction.

Gender Identity

Our personal sense of our own gender.

Transgender or Trans

A term describing a person's gender identity that does not match their assigned sex at birth. This word is also used as an umbrella term to describe some groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression.

Sex assigned at birth

The designation of a person at birth as male or female based on their anatomy (genitalia and/or reproductive organs) or biology (chromosomes and/or hormones).

Non-Binary

People whose gender identity is neither exclusively woman or man or is in between or beyond the gender binary.

Pronouns

The words used to refer to a person other than their name, e.g. he/she/they.

Coming Out As You

T

Trans
Continued

Cisgender

Someone whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Expression

How we show our gender through our clothes, hair etc. This is different to gender identity. Gender identity refers to how we feel inside, and gender expression is how we present ourselves outside.

Q

Queer

Queer

An umbrella term used to describe people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender. Queer was used as a slur against the LGBTQ+ community for many years and still can be. However, the word has been reclaimed by LGBTQ+ communities and many now embrace the term. Check if someone is comfortable with this term before referring to them as queer.

+

+

The 'plus' is used to signify all of the gender identities and sexual orientations that are not specifically covered by the other five initials.

All different



All together

Coming Out...

Coming out means sharing your sexual orientation and/or your gender identity with people in your life.

Because many people are brought up to believe everyone is straight and cisgender, when you are LGBTQ+, you can decide if you want to tell important people in your life about your sexual orientation/gender identity. Coming out is not just a single event. It is a process of sharing your identity with people in your life and you may decide to tell everyone at once, or over a longer time. It is about doing what feels right for you.

Coming out allows you to live an open life, and reduces some of the stress and anxiety many people feel when they are hiding part of themselves. Lots of people say that coming out to family and friends feels like lifting a massive weight off their shoulders. Coming out can make it easier to find other LGBTQ+ people and any support or information that you need.

Before coming out to others, it is important that you are ready to tell others, confident in yourself, and sure that you want to come out.

Some people find it easier to first come out to a close friend or to somebody who accepts them for who they are. This could be a teacher, a youth worker or another LGBTQ+ person. Others feel it's important to come out to family members before anyone else. Coming out is different for everyone. However you choose to do it, it's important that you are happy for this person to know. Remember, you do not need to come out to everyone at once.

Before deciding who you want to come out to, ask yourself:

- Does this person need to know?
 - Will they tell anyone else?
 - How might they react?
 - Will they be supportive?
 - Am I happy with other people knowing right now?
 - Do I feel safe sharing this?
-

Things to consider

There is no right or wrong way to come out. What's important is that you do it in a way that feels right for you.

Think about the following:

Timing

Find a time when you and the other person are relaxed and not under time pressure or feeling stressed out. Give yourself the space to discuss your coming out, and space for them to ask questions.

Safety

Remember that coming out is your choice. Consider whether you feel safe coming out and remember that you don't need to tell anyone until you are ready.

Where

Choose a location that will give you privacy and somewhere you feel comfortable. Think of a space where you are not likely to get interrupted. If you are worried about a negative reaction, choose somewhere public where you feel safe, for example a coffee shop or public park.

Talk to Others

Talking to other LGBTQ+ young people about their experiences of coming out can be reassuring. You may have some fears before coming out that you might want to put to rest. Joining a LGBTQ+ youth group is a great way to find new friends and learn from their experiences.

Information

Be prepared for questions! The person you tell may have a lot of questions about what being LGBTQ+ means. Having resources like this brochure at hand can be helpful. Check out our website www.belongto.org for helpful information for young people, parents and guardians.

Ready For Reactions

You don't know how someone is going to respond when you come out to them. Most people have a positive experience, and their family and friends are happy to learn more.

Sometimes you won't get the reaction that you expected or hoped for. Remember, you had time to think about who you are and what you wanted to say. Give people some time to get used to it. Their first reaction may not be how they actually feel.

The news may come as a surprise and this may be the first time they have thought of you in this way. They may look for a reason why or someone to blame. It is important that you help them understand that being LGBTQ+ is not a part of you that anyone can change, and that you are the same person as before you came out to them. Direct them to our website www.belongto.org where they can educate themselves about LGBTQ+ identities and read our resources for family members.

It is possible that you will be asked questions that may be insensitive. Answer the questions you are comfortable with, and if you don't know how to reply, then be honest about it. You don't need to know all the answers. It is OK to tell someone that a question is inappropriate, or that you don't feel comfortable answering it.

There are lots of ways you can choose to come out

Do what feels right for you.

Call



Email



Write



Speak



We Are Here For You

LGBTQ+ Youth Groups

One To One Support

Crisis Counselling with Pieta

Info about LGBTQ+ Identities

Drug & Alcohol Support Services

Get in touch with us:

www.belongto.org / info@belongto.org / 01 670 6223

Coming out can be scary, no matter how many times you do it! It is normal to have mixed emotions, for example anxiety or excitement.

You may feel sad and overwhelmed if your family or friends are not supportive, or you may be confused about how you feel after you come out – no matter what the response.

If someone reacts badly to you coming out, don't blame yourself. Give the person some space and consider talking to them at a later stage. If you find yourself in this situation, it can be very helpful to talk to others.

At Belong To, we offer support and advice for LGBTQ+ young people across Ireland. You don't have to do this alone.

Our youth workers can talk to you about coming out, help you come up with a plan that feels safe, chat through your concerns and provide you with resources that will help educate those you are coming out to

You can meet LGBTQ+ young people in one of the LGBTQ+ youth groups that we support nationwide, receive one-to-one support from a youth worker, or visit our professional crisis counselling service in partnership with Pieta. All services are confidential.




We are here for you.

“Belong To means the world to me. It’s a place to come where I won’t be judged for who I am.”

Kelly (she/her)

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