

HOW DO I TELL PEOPLE ABOUT MY SEXUALITY?

Being yourself and discovering who you are is an important part of your early life. Figuring out that you are or might be an LGBTQ* person and telling people about it can be both a freeing and nerve-racking experience.

Telling people that you're gay or lesbian is an ongoing process, but telling someone for the first time and being willing to continue to tell people is a big step. "Coming out" doesn't happen in one massive step but as a series of conversations with people who are important in your life.

Firstly, it is important to have a support network around you of key people who love and care about you. These are safe people like close friends or family members who you feel comfortable to tell first.

People don't always act the way you expect. And it might be harder telling some people than others. It can take time for people to process it - think how long it's taken for you to figure it out. But then some people, especially those close to you, may already know or suspect you are gay or lesbian.

Those in Christian homes or part of church communities may have their own set of barriers to telling people. Some people's faith and theological perspective may impact on your decision to tell them or your perception of how they may react.

Telling your family, friends and people in your church is a process. Expect people take time to work out how they feel and what they think. Let them be on their journey, just as you are on yours. Some people may accept your news straight away. Others may take a while to warm to the idea. Sadly, some people may never accept who you are.

TELLING FAMILY

All families are different and will react in different ways. Your home life may affect how and when you tell people. You know your family so find the best time that will work for you and them. Tell them when you are ready, and when you have time to talk about it without other stress getting in the way. Only do it if you feel safe or have support, not if you feel you may be kicked out of home or abused. If you don't feel safe seek help and support from other supportive family, friends or professionals.

It can be hard telling family members whether they are Christian, non-religious or of another faith. Some parents may not take the news well. It's important to tell them who you are and the journey you've been on. They may also want to know how this impacts on your faith if that is something you share with them. Tell them you are still you.

It takes time for people to process, particularly if they don't see it coming. Your parents are likely to have their own questions and their own 'coming out' process to face. (See 'For Parents: What do I do if my child is Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual or Queer, or I think they might be')

TELLING FRIENDS

Sometimes friends and peers are the people you feel closest too. If your friends know you well, sometimes they may already know or have an idea of your sexuality. Hopefully your friends will be there for you and being gay won't change that relationship. These friends may also need time to think about how they feel about your news. For some friends your sexuality won't really matter and won't change the way they act around you.

Some friends may be uncomfortable when they are told or discover you are LGBTQ. This could lead to jokes and bullying or rejection from friendships.

TELLING CHRISTIANS AND PEOPLE AT CHURCH

Telling people you are LGBTQ may also extend to those in your church community. People in churches, both friends and acquaintances, can have different reactions. Some people will be open and accepting, just as they have always been. Some church communities will accept you and your gifts regardless of your sexual preference.

Some people and churches however may not be so accepting. Some places may treat you differently if they know you are LGBTQ. You may be restricted from doing things you might have always done or might feel a sense of rejection or isolation. If this is the case you may want to consider finding another church once you are "out". For a list of 'gay friendly' churches check out: gaychurch.org/Find_a_Church/find_a_church.htm

You may also challenge some people in their faith. They may be encouraged to re-examine their understanding and views on issues around faith and sexuality.

SUMMARY

Be ready before you tell people.

Choose a supportive network of people to tell first.

Remember that people need time to process what you tell them, particularly if they didn't see it coming. You have had time coming to this point so give people time too.

SOME RESOURCES

Reach out:

reachout.com/find/articles/coming-out

ACON:

acon.org.au/youth/Coming-Out/coming-out

Not so straight:

notsostraight.com.au/faq/coming-out.php

Gay Church:

gaychurch.org/Find_a_Church/find_a_church.htm

Twenty10:

twenty10.org.au

Freedom 2b[e]:

freedom2b.org

*LGBQ = Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Queer

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