

Coming Out

A Process of Choices

To You:

Realize that despite the security and comfort of being "in the closet," you, in the end, are not helping yourself emotionally or mentally. Acknowledge that there are others like you, and that you should seek them out. Seek both the people and resources available on campus and in the community, who are willing to provide you with any information you may need. Now, what is "coming out"? What are the steps?

"Coming Out" refers to the process in which an individual begins accepting and/or sharing that they are identifying themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans., or questioning (LGBTQ). At times, this process is relatively quick; at other times, it may take years. This process may follow a time of questioning one's sexual orientation or gender identity. In many ways, a LGBTQ person will go through many "coming out" experiences throughout his/her lifetime. Coming out to yourself can help you feel free and allow you to find out more about who you are, which can aid you in reshaping your life.

Identifying yourself as LGBTQ is typically not discussed or expected in our society, and there will always be someone out there who does not know how to identify himself or herself. As a LGBTQ person, you will come to a time where you may choose to come out to others, such as family, friends, roommates, classmates, and teammates. Safety, comfort, and the reaction of others may affect your choices when coming out to others. However, sharing the knowledge of who you are and what you have experienced is often rewarding and quite often brings you closer to whomever you are sharing. Sometimes, however, people react with shock or disappointment. In many of these cases, however, time brings reconciliation and understanding.

Potential Challenges:

Here is a list of potential challenges you may confront as you come out (According to the American College Health Association):

- 1) Think about how, when, and where you choose to come out to someone. For instance, Thanksgiving dinner or during an intense argument may not be the best time to come out to your family.
- 2) As you come out to friends and family, people might not all react in the same way. Just as it may have taken you some time to adjust, it may take others some time as well.

- 3) As you decide whether to come out to a larger group (spiritual, social, local), think about the climate and cost. Some organizations as well as regions of the nation are more open than others to people who are LGBTQ.

If you are struggling with issues of coming out, or know someone who is struggling with coming out, please feel free to contact us. One mission of Penn State Capital Alliance is to educate and inform, and we will be able to point you in the direction of resources that can be of help. As individual members, too, many of us will be able to share our experiences and I hope it will give you a greater understanding of what you are experiencing. You need not be alone in the coming out process. Feel free to contact us if you would like more information or drop by at one of Capital Alliance's Community meetings, **Tuesdays at 5 p.m. in the Oliver LaGrone Lounge, Room W-132, Olmsted.**

If you are contemplating taking the next step, whether it be talking to a close confidant or coming out to your employer or simply accepting who you are to yourself, consider taking it on *National Coming Out Day, October 11*. You can be certain that thousands of men and women will be taking similar steps on this national day of encouragement and celebration.

I hope you find your way to a friend and lift any insecurity you may have, thereby yielding a stronger sense of confidence and respect for yourself. I wish you the best on this journey and ask you to remember that we have all been down this rigid road, at one time or other.

Kirk M. Allen, MPA
Founder
Penn State Capital Alliance

"To thine own self be true"
—Shakespeare