

Outlet

a program of

ADOLESCENT
COUNSELING SERVICES

Creating a Coming Out Plan

Adapted from "Making a Coming Out Plan" by the University of California-Riverside LGBT Resources Center

Coming out is often a big deal, and it may bring up a lot of emotions. Opening up to others about something so intimate may put you in a vulnerable situation. Sharing a deep part of your identity is a brave thing to do.

When you're ready to tell that first person - or those first few people - about your sexual or gender identity, take time to prepare.



Think through your options and make a plan of who, what, where, when, and how.

Remember: your personal safety is most important. If you decide not to come out now, or ever, your identity is still legitimate and valuable. Only you know what's best for you.

As you create your plan, ask yourself the following questions:

WHAT ARE YOUR SIGNALS?



The things people say, or don't say, when LGBTQ+ issues come up may tell you something about how they'll respond to you.



Try bringing up an LGBTQ+ movie, TV character, celebrity, or news event. If someone reacts positively, chances are they'll be more accepting of what you tell them.

DO YOU HAVE THE FACTS?



Reactions of others may come from misinformation, and in some cases, even negative beliefs or stereotypes of LGBTQ people and communities.

Do your own reading and research to understand the “fake news” that exists about LGBTQ people. This will help you address false info or answer questions that come up.



There are many books and websites, such as the HRC or PFLAG, that you could refer parents/adults to.

WHERE IS YOUR SUPPORT?



You are not alone; support is vital and it is there. Support may include: other LGBTQ people, hotlines, school staff, spiritual communities, mental health professionals, or perhaps the first person you came out to.

Take time to create your own list of supports. List both people and phone/text hotlines. Consider whether you can include people you aren't out to and how you might ask for support without outing yourself.



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY?



You may still be answering your own questions and might not be ready to identify with a certain label. That's ok. Your feelings are what matter, not a label.

Think through/write down what you might say to organize yourself and to help express things clearly.



Consider what is most important for you to say, and think about how you might respond to questions.

If talking in-person is too much, consider writing a letter. Remember that you don't have to have all the answers.

WHAT'S YOUR BEST/WORST CASE?



Thinking through what may happen when you come out will help you be prepared, especially if there are things you might lose, like money or housing.

Think about the things you might lose, as well as what your ideal situation would look like. Consider your alternatives, such as a place to go, in case it doesn't go well. Also think about steps you could take to make your ideal a reality.



WHY NOW?



Timing is critical. The attitudes and experiences of others will impact their response. If someone's dealing with their own "stuff" they may not respond well to you.



Take time to assess what's going on in the life of that person/people you want to tell. Consider if there is anything major that is affecting them. If something is going on right now, consider whether you can wait until things calm down.

CAN YOU BE PATIENT?



People may need time to process this information. We shouldn't expect immediate understanding but should try to establish ongoing dialogue.



Consider how you can create ongoing dialogue that allows both parties a chance to ask question. Think about how you can create space for that other person. Also consider what your limits are in terms of the space you can give and the amount of time you can wait.

For more information or questions about the coming out process, please contact us.

Outlet

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Outlet provides the following services to LGBTQ+ youth ages 10-25 throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara County:

Drop-in social support groups for youth

- All groups are free and confidential
- Groups are held in Redwood City, San Mateo, and Mountain View

School support

- GSA/QSA/SAGA support
- Consultation and policy assistance to teachers and administration

Educational Training

- Workshops on sexual orientation, gender identity, & LGBTQ+ experiences
- Speaker's bureau with panels
- Trainings can be tailored to the needs of each audience

Consultation, Referrals, & Clinical Services

- Free consultations and resource referrals to youth and families in our service area
- Clinical services for youth and families (fee based)