



What to Do When a Teen Comes Out to You

"Coming Out" is when a person tells someone else that he or she is gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Someone who is coming out feels close enough to you and trusts you enough to be honest & risk losing you as a friend and ally. What can you do to support a teen, who comes out? **Here are some suggestions that you may wish to consider...**

- Thank them for having the courage to tell you. Choosing to tell you means that this teen respects & trusts you.
- Respect the teen's confidentiality. You may be the only person the teen is ready to tell. Telling others, friends or family must be done on the teen's time schedule.
- Recognize that this is not something that needs to be reported to parents, clergy, or your superiors. You can provide the teen with support and ask about who else they have told, but it is neither your responsibility nor your right to tell others.
- Let the teen know that you still care for him or her. Be the support you have always been. The main fear for people coming out is that they will be rejected by their friends & family.
- Do not say "Are you sure?" When people come out to you, it most likely means they have gone over this question thousands of times in their own mind, and are sure!
- It's okay if you feel uncomfortable or upset. It is important to separate your own feelings of discomfort from what you convey to the teen. Do your best to convey that the teen is a valuable and important member of the community.
- Learn about organizations and publications— either GLBT and/or Jewish – that might help provide support to the teen. It might be important for the teen to know that such support exists. (Keshet, GLSEN, and PFLAG all have resources and links on their websites.)
- It's never too late. If someone has come out to you before and you feel badly about how you handled it, you can always go back & try again



Being an Ally:

"People always ask why I care about a movement that does not include me. My answer is that the gay rights movement should include me. Although I am straight, I know people affected by hate and prejudice – they are my friends. I believe that everyone who has seen the face of hatred, whether affected by it or not, should be involved in preventing it. That is why I am involved with my GSA. That is why I sit every week with other students not afraid to face prejudice. That is why I work with them to teach respect in our school." (From [The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network's Students and GSAs Yearbook](#))

Adapted from a flyer by the Youth Services Bureau of Wellington, Ottawa