

COMING OUT ^{1 2}

- **What is coming out?** Telling people about your sexual orientation or gender identity is called coming out.
- **Why come out?** It can be difficult dealing with your sexuality and/or gender identity or questioning your sexuality and/or gender/identity alone. At some point, you may want to talk about it with someone, to get support or simply get it off your chest.
- **When is it the right time? Don't feel under pressure to come out – take your time. Only you will know when you feel comfortable and ready to do it.** When you do feel ready, you should take time to think about what you want to say. You should also prepare yourself for different reactions people may have, especially if you think someone will have a bad/negative reaction. It may be helpful to ask ‘*Why do I want to come out to this person right now?*’ and it’s okay if you decide not to come out to someone yet. At first, choose to come out to someone you both trust and who you think will be accepting/supportive. Also, it’s best to come out to someone when they’re in a good mood, relaxed, open, and willing to listen to you.
- **How to come out to friends/family?** While on the inside, you may or may not be able to come out to some friends or family members in-person. A common way of coming out to family is to write a letter, which can give you time to think about what you want to say, allow you stay in control of the situation, and give your family time to digest what you’re telling them. Your friends/family might be shocked, worried or find it difficult to accept at first. Remember, their first reaction isn’t necessarily how they’ll feel forever.
- **What should I say?** There’s no right or wrong way to come out to your friends or family. If you are struggling to figure out what you want to say, you may want to read about others’ coming out experiences – hearing their story may help you understand what you want to say to your family. One way to approach deciding what to say is to be honest about how important this is to you, how you feel, and who you are.
- **Coming out while on the inside.** Living openly as an LGBTQ individual while on the inside is a choice every individual has to make based on their comfortability doing so and whether they feel it is safe to do so. Generally, LGBTQ people are more likely than straight people to be physically and sexually abused in prison by both other people in prison and prison employees.

QUOTES ON COMING OUT

“I’ve endured years of misery and gone to enormous lengths to live a lie. I was certain that my world would fall apart if anyone new. And yet when I acknowledged my sexuality I felt whole for the first time.”

Jason Collins, first out NBA player



“I hadn’t been happy in so long. I’ve been sad again since, but it’s a different sad. There’s just some magic in truth and honesty and openness.”

Frank Ocean, R&B singer



“Everybody’s journey is individual. You don’t know with whom you’re going to fall in love. ... If you fall in love with a boy, you fall in love with a boy. The fact that many Americans consider it a disease says more about them than it does about homosexuality.”

James Baldwin, Writer



¹Information from <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/coming-out/coming-out-adult-1>

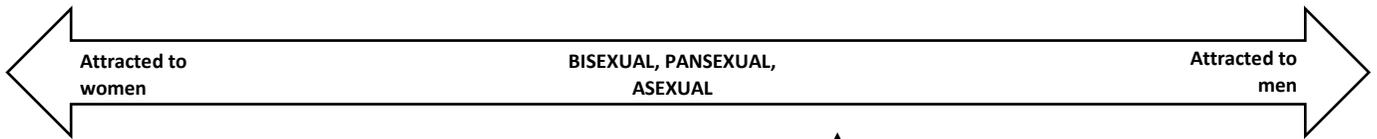
²Information from <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ComingOutAsYou.pdf>

UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF³

Who you are attracted to sexually and/or your gender are not permanent or set in stone. It's okay if one day you feel a certain way about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity one day and feel differently another day. Both sexual orientation and gender identity are considered spectrums, meaning that sexuality isn't as simple as gay/straight and gender identity isn't as simple as male/female, and, for each individual, it may evolve/change over time.

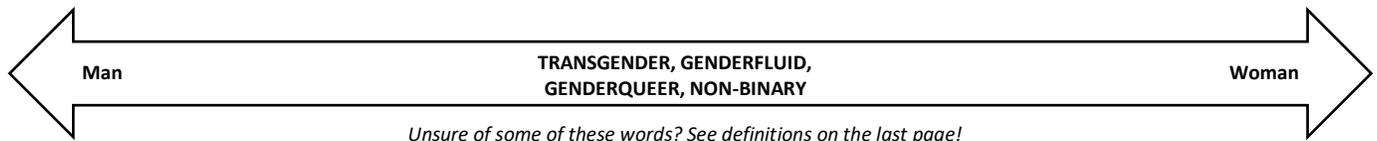
SEXUAL ORIENTATION SPECTRUM

Who you like



GENDER IDENTITY SPECTRUM

Who you feel you are on the inside



You can land anywhere on either spectrum that you feel fits you

Unsure of some of these words? See definitions on the last page!

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION – Write your thoughts in the boxes below.

Who are you attracted to or who do you imagine yourself being with?

How do people of the same sex make you feel? How do people of the opposite sex make you feel?

When you imagine the future, who are you with?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY – Work through your thoughts in the boxes below.

How do you feel about your birth gender?

What gender (if any) do you wish people saw you as?

When you imagine the future, what gender (if any) are you?

³ Adapted from the Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ComingOutAsYou.pdf>