

# Questions to Consider Before Coming Out

- 1) Are you **comfortable** about your sexual orientation or gender identity? If you feel confused or uncertain (which is normal, especially in the beginning of your exploration about who you are), reach out to people that you know will be supportive and affirming – people who won't push you to label yourself, people who will give you room to think, question, wonder and explore – people who will give you time to figure it out, are neutral, or who don't have an investment in the specific outcome (that is, someone who will support you regardless of your ultimate conclusion about your orientation or gender). Then, when you are ready, begin planning to come out to families and friends whose reaction feels less certain to you. Don't raise the issues unless you are sure you are able to respond with confidence to the question "Are You Sure?!" Confusion on your part will increase your family or friends confusion and decrease their confidence in your judgment. If you are wrestling with guilt and periods of depression, you'll be better off waiting to tell your family or friends. Coming out to them may require tremendous energy on your part. It may require a reserve of positive self-image – and supportive allies and friends.
- 2) Do you have **support**? In the event your parent's, family member or friend's reaction devastates you, there should be an individual or a group that you can confidentially turn to for emotional support and strength. Maintaining your sense of self-worth is critical. Here are some places that are open in case you need support or help at any time: In Connecticut, call InfoLine at 211 – they have 24/7 emergency, hotline and crisis support and are open and affirming to LGBT issues. For crisis intervention, you can also call the Trevor Project Hotline at 1-800-850-8078 (24 hour LGBT youth suicide prevention hotline) Most of all, be safe, and remember that the moment — whatever it is — passes. You just gotta hang on...
- 3) Are you **knowledgeable** about sexual orientation and gender identity? Your family or friends may respond based on a lifetime of information from a homophobic, bi-phobic, gender-phobic, queer-phobic society. Part of your job in coming out to yourself was to educate yourself – now part of your job may be to educate them... Are you prepared to do that? If not, reach out to organizations like Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). They have brochures made just for parents and family members that could really help!

## More Tips, tidbits and considerations before you come out

- 4) Don't assume you will know how somebody will respond – you may be pleasantly surprised by their affirming response.
- 5) Timing counts! Realize that your family's response during holidays may be different than they would be under other less hectic, stressful conditions. Are the holidays the best time or not? Think about your own family or friends and decide.
- 6) Remember that coming out is a continuous process – you may have to come out many times and in a variety of ways
- 7) Recognize that family or friends need time to acknowledge and accept that they have an LGBT child. It took you time to come to terms with who you are, now it is your family's turn.
- 8) Let your family's judgment be theirs to work on, not yours to take on, as long as they are kind to you
- 9) Have alternate plans if the situation becomes difficult at home. A school social worker or other helping professional may be able to help you develop a safety net. Also remember that if the situation turns violent, get out and get help from friends, police or DCF. The DCF Number to report abuse is: **800-842-2288**.

## If you are coming home for a visit or a holiday and plan to come out then:

- 10) See # 6 and # 9 above
- 11) If you are bringing a partner home with you, don't wait until the holiday evening to raise the issue of sleeping arrangements – make plans in advance. Also consider: "Would your parents let you share a room with an opposite sex partner?" If not, don't expect the rules to be different just because your partner is same gender.
- 12) Also, discuss in advance with your partner how you will talk about your relationship, how you will or won't show affection with each other, etc
- 13) Focus on common interests, remind and reassure family members that you are the same person you always were — they just know more about you.

- 14) Be wary about the possible desire to shock your family.
- 15) Remember to affirm, love and respect yourself and who you are. Remember that who you are is a gift to the world. Remember that the world would be a lesser place without the contribution that you bring to it! Remember, most fundamentally, that you are loved, loving, and lovable.