



Coming Out

Coming out is a process that happens again and again; it is not just a one-time deal and it does not follow a linear course. It occurs initially when one acknowledges to oneself (most important and difficult aspect of coming out) and to others that one is gay, lesbian or bisexual. One claims that orientation as his/her own and begins to be more or less public with it.

Coming out to themselves is one of the hardest steps in developing a positive gay/lesbian/bisexual identity for gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals. It involves much soul searching and introspection and a good healthy sense of self-appreciation and acceptance. Coming out to others involves other risks and difficulties depending on who that person is coming out to, how engaged they are with them, how much power they have in the relationship, and how accepting they are.

Why come out? It is a necessary part of developing a healthy and positive identity as a gay/lesbian/bisexual individual. It is more honest and real, and ends the stress of hiding or keeping a secret and living a double life. It reduces isolation and alienation and allows for increased support from other gay/lesbian/bisexual people. It allows LGBT people to live a fuller life.

What are people afraid of? Rejection and loss of relationship, especially family and friends who do not understand or approve. The real possibility of harassment and abuse from others, ranging from verbal insults to physical violence against them or their possessions. Real possibility of institutionalized discrimination and prejudice. For example, losing a job, not being hired for a career, being denied housing and other equal opportunity rights.