

## Coming Out

### What is "coming out?"

Coming out (of the closet) refers to the lifelong process of someone developing a positive gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT) identity. It's often a long and difficult struggle, particularly in the initial step - admitting/recognizing to oneself that he/she is GLBT. This is often the most important and difficult aspect of coming out because it involves much soul searching and introspection as well as a healthy sense of self-appreciation and acceptance.

When the person is comfortable, he/she will often disclose his/her orientation to others (family, friends, coworkers, etc.). Yet, coming out to others isn't easy, as it often involves risks, especially if the other person has, or is perceived to have, homophobic attitudes.

### What might GLBT people be afraid of when coming out?

- ▼ Rejection (loss of friendships)
- ▼ Gossip
- ▼ Harassment/abuse
- ▼ Being disowned by their families
- ▼ Loss of financial support
- ▼ Being forced to undergo psychotherapy
- ▼ Losing their job
- ▼ Physical violence
- ▼ Losing their children
- ▼ Being thrown out of their home

### Why come out?

Coming out is a necessary part of developing a healthy and positive identity as a GLBT person. It enables one to live without hiding, lying or living a double life. Coming out reduces isolation and alienation and allows for increased support from other GLBT people. Essentially, coming out allows GLBT people to live a fuller life.

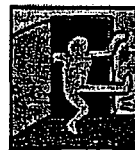
### Why might GLBT people want to come out to others?

- ▼ End the hiding games and lying
- ▼ Feel closer to friends/family
- ▼ Fully share their lives with friends/family
- ▼ Boost their self-image/self-esteem
- ▼ Show positive example that being GLBT is okay

### An ongoing process

Coming out is not just a one-time event and does not follow a linear course. For example, each time a person meets new people or starts a new job he/she must decide whether it is safe come out. In addition, a person might be out to some people (i.e., friends) but closeted around others.

Sources: Texas A&M Women's and Gender  
Equity Resource Center & PFLAG



National Coming Out Image  
By Keith Haring