

# COMING OUT AS YOU

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Information for  
LGBT+ young people,  
and those who aren't  
quite sure...

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Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual &  
Trans Young People in Ireland



# HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M LGBT?

Figuring out if you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT+) can be confusing.

Some people fancy people of the same gender, a different gender or more than one gender. If you are discovering your gender identity, you may feel that your body does not always fit in with the gender you were given at birth.

It's ok to take time to figure out what feels right for you. You know yourself best and can choose how you want to identify or choose not to define yourself by any label.

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# HELPFUL TERMS

**Lesbian:** a woman who is attracted to other women.

**Gay:** someone who is mainly attracted to people of the same gender.

**Bisexual:** someone who is attracted to more than one gender.

**Transgender:** someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were given at birth.

**Non-binary/genderqueer:** someone who does not see gender in a binary way, and may identify as a combination of male and female, or as being beyond gender.

**+**: you will often see a + after LGBT, this stands for inclusion of all sexual orientations and gender identities. It's important to respect whatever label you choose to identify with, or if you have no label.

**Sexual orientation:** sexual and romantic attraction.

**Gender identity:** our deeply felt internal experience of our own gender.

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# COMING OUT...

Coming out means sharing your sexual orientation and/or your gender identity with people in your life.

Because many people are brought up to believe everyone is straight and cisgender, when you are LGBT+, you can decide if you want to tell important people in your life about your sexual/gender identity.

Coming out allows you to live an open life, and reduces some of the stress and anxiety many people feel when they are hiding part of themselves. Lots of people say that coming out to family and friends feels like lifting a massive weight off their shoulders. Coming out can make it easier to find other LGBT+ people and any support or information that you need.

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Before coming out to others, it is important that you are ready to tell others, confident in yourself, and sure that you want to come out.

Some people find it easier to first come out to a close friend or to somebody who accepts them for who they are. This could be a Teacher, a Youth Worker or another LGBT+ person. Others feel it's important to come out to family members before anyone else. Coming out is different for everyone. However you choose to do it, it's important that you are happy for this person to know. Remember, you do not need to come out to everyone at once.

**Before deciding who you want to come out to, ask yourself:**

- Does this person need to know?
  - Will they tell anyone else?
  - How might they react?
  - Will they be supportive?
  - Am I happy with other people knowing right now?
  - Do I feel safe sharing this?
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# THINGS TO CONSIDER

There is no right or wrong way to come out. What's important is that you do it in a way that feels right for you. Think about the following:

## **Timing**

**Find a time when you and the other person are relaxed** and not under time pressure or feeling stressed out. Give yourself the space to discuss your coming out, and space for them to ask questions.

## **Safety**

**Remember that coming out is your choice.** Consider whether you feel safe coming out and remember that you don't need to tell anyone until you are ready.

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## **Where**

**Choose a location that will give you privacy and somewhere you feel comfortable.** Think of a space where you are not likely to get interrupted. If are worried about a negative reaction, choose somewhere public where you feel safe, for example a coffee shop or public park.

## **Talk to Others**

**Talking to other LGBT+ young people about their experiences of coming out can be reassuring.** You may have some fears before coming out that you might want to put to rest. Joining a LGBT+ youth group is a great way to find new friends and learn from their experiences.

## **Information**

**Be prepared for questions!** The person you tell may have a lot of questions about what being LGBT+ means. Having resources like this brochure at hand can be helpful. Check out our website [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org) for helpful information for Young People and Parents/Guardians.

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There are lots of ways  
you can choose to  
come out:



Do what feels right for you.

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You don't know how someone is going to respond when you come out to them. Most people have a positive experience, and their family and friends are happy to learn more.

## READY FOR REACTIONS

Sometimes you won't get the reaction that you expected or hoped for. Remember, you had time to think about who you are and what you wanted to say. Give people some time to get used to it. Their first reaction may not be how they actually feel.

The news may come as a surprise and this may be the first time they have thought of you in this way. They may look for a reason why or someone to blame. It is important that you help them understand that being LGBT+ is not a part of you that anyone can change, and that you are the same person as before you came out to them.

It is possible that you will be asked questions that may be insensitive. Answer the questions you are comfortable with, and if you don't know how to reply, then be honest about it. You don't need to know all the answers.

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**WE ARE HERE  
FOR YOU**

Youth Groups Support Services LGBT+ Counselling  
[www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org) | [info@belongto.org](mailto:info@belongto.org) | 01 670 6223

Coming out can be scary, no matter how many times you do it! It is normal to have mixed emotions, for example anxiety or excitement.

You may feel sad and overwhelmed if your family or friends are not supportive, or you may be confused about how you feel after you come out – no matter what the response.

If someone reacts badly to you coming out, don't blame yourself. Give the person some space and consider talking to them at a later stage. If you find yourself in this situation, it can be very helpful to talk to others.

At BeLonG To, we offer support and advice for LGBT+ young people across Ireland. You don't have to do this alone. You can meet LGBT+ young people in one of our Youth Groups nationwide, receive one-to-one support or visit our professional counselling service. We are here for you.

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**BeLonG To** means  
the world to me.

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It's a place to come  
where I won't  
be judged for  
**who I am.**

-Kelly



**BeLonG To Youth Services**

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