

Coming Out With Care

A Guide for Your Well-Being

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Acknowledgements

This guide is the result of the wisdom and generosity of a community that understands, deeply and personally, the journey of coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, and queer (LGBTQ+). We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many contributors with lived experience who shared their stories, insights, and truths to shape this resource.

Created by people from diverse backgrounds, identities, and communities, this guide reflects a rich tapestry of perspectives and honors the many ways that coming out is experienced. Your voices not only made this guide possible- our workgroup made it real, relevant, and rooted in compassion.

We are profoundly grateful for your willingness to be vulnerable, your commitment to supporting others, and your belief in a world where everyone can be fully seen and affirmed. Your contributions will help countless others navigate their own paths with greater understanding, self-love, and hope.

Thank you for showing up for yourselves, for each other, and for the future.

With deep appreciation,

The National SOGIE Center



Coming Out with Care

Workgroup

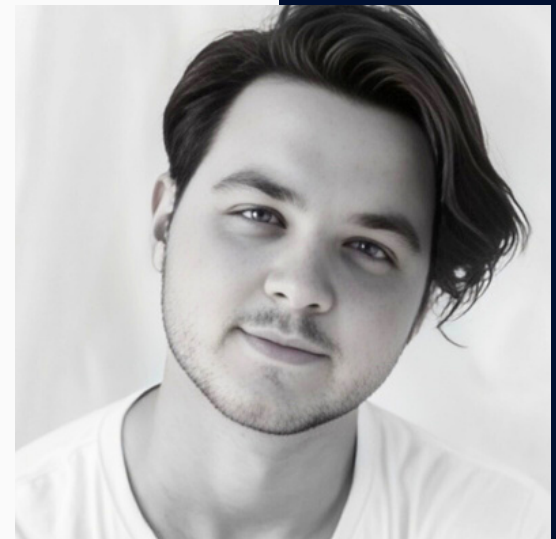
AjahRain Yellowhair (they/them)

is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and grew up in the canyons of Wolf Creek, Arizona. They are currently in their third year at the University of Portland where they study Elementary Education and philosophy. They work closely in community-led projects using their lived and living experience to advocate for change/awareness. "This guide is the safe space I wish I had when I was navigating my own bisexual/pansexual and genderfluid identity."



Shane Read (he/him)

27 years of age. Shane identifies as a bisexual transgender male, who has endured the horrors of the foster care system. "I was in care 10 years, aging out at 21. I am now an advocate for not only for young people in foster care, but LGBTQ+ young people in care, to have a voice and feel in control. I'm proud to be able to put together this guide in hopes of providing guidance and support for years to come."



Izzy Cabral (they/he)

I am nonbinary and pansexual. I just got my AA in Psychology. I am now transferring to UC Riverside to study Developmental Psychology. "This is my first time working on a project like this and I was very grateful I was able to. I hope this guide will be helpful to many."



Elliott Orrin Hinkle (they/them)

is a skilled consultant, facilitator, trainer, speaker, advisor, and national expert focused on elevating lived experience and expertise in systems that serve children, youth, and families. As Principal and Founder of Unicorn Solutions LLC, they are an advocate and professional that brings 13+ years' experience on topics such as child welfare, youth mental health, and the LGBTQIA2S+ community through training, advising, and facilitating culture change efforts. "Having grown up in Wyoming and moved to Oregon to transition safely as an adult, it was critical I had access to safe adults and resources like this guide to become my full authentic self. I hope this helps you, too!"



Avery Irons (she/her)

has worked to increase supports and funding streams for community-based prevention and alternative programs, reducing racial and ethnic disparities, and strengthening protections for vulnerable children, youth, and young adults.



Angela Weeks (she/her)

has worked to build resources and programs that help LGBTQ+ people, their families, and communities for over 15 years. She identifies as an Arab American queer person, is a parent of two, and a veteran of the U.S. Army. "When I was younger, and particularly when I was serving under 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' I could have used a guide like this. It would have prevented some of the stress of figuring it out alone, without anyone to turn to for advice."





Purpose

The purpose of *Coming Out with Care: A Guide for Your Well-Being* is to provide LGBTQIA2S+ individuals with a compassionate, empowering, and practical resource to navigate the coming-out process with confidence and self-respect. This guide aims to foster personal growth and resilience by offering structured tools for developing thoughtful, individualized plans; practicing self-care; honoring one's authentic identity; and seeking support when needed. Through each step, *Coming Out with Care* encourages readers to prioritize their emotional and mental well-being, creating a journey toward self-love.

Take Care of Yourself as You Work Through This Guide

As you work through Coming Out with Care, remember that it's okay to take things at your own pace. The process of coming out can be emotionally intense, and it's important to prioritize your mental and physical well-being. If you ever feel overwhelmed, take breaks—step away, breathe, and give yourself permission to pause when needed. You might also find it helpful to skip ahead to some of the fun and lighthearted activities in the guide for a brain break, offering yourself moments of joy or relaxation. Above all, if you ever feel like you need support or someone to talk to, don't hesitate to reach out for help. Crisis support services or counselors are available to listen, guide, and support you through difficult moments. Taking care of yourself throughout this journey is crucial, and remember, your well-being comes first. Below are some crisis services that are LGBTQIA2S+-affirming. **Coming out is your journey: You get to decide the right way and right time.**

The Trevor Project

Provides 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention for LGBTQIA2S+ youth.



1-866-488-7386



Text "START" to 678-678



thetrevorproject.org

Trans Lifeline

A peer support service for the transgender community offering crisis intervention, emotional support, and resources. The hours for this hotline are 1:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. ET.



1-877-565-8860



Text "START" to 678-678



translifeline.org

LGBT National Help Center

Provides hotline and chat support for the LGBT community. The center also provides a youth talkline. The hotline is available Monday to Friday from 4 p.m. to 12 a.m. ET and Saturday from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. ET.



1-888-843-4564 (General)



1-800-246-7743 (Youth)



lgbthotline.org

SAGE LGBTQ+ Elder Hotline

Provides 24/7 support for LGBTQIA2S+ older adults, offering a confidential helpline for assistance with issues related to aging, isolation, and crisis intervention.



1-877-360-5428



sageusa.org



We're so glad you found this guide! If no one has told you yet, coming out is a powerful personal moment in one's life. As you figure out who you are, you get to explore, try things on, and figure out what does or doesn't suit you. You know you best, and that is what the journey of coming out is all about—getting to know the most authentic version of yourself. This experience can be full of joy, creativity, and excitement, as well as new relationships, interests, and adventures. We hope this guide helps you navigate coming out in ways that keep you safe, happy, and healthy.

We also know that coming out is not always a positive or easy process. Unfortunately, it can be a challenging experience and journey when the people around us don't understand, don't feel like we know ourselves best, or may even have harmful reactions to our identities. Let us be clear, **the fact that this process can be hard is not because of you.** There is actually nothing wrong with you. In fact, you are doing something for yourself that is healthy and part of human development, that is proven to improve your overall mental health and well-being.

Coming out can be hard because of generations of misinformation, discriminatory policies (some of which have exploded in prevalence since 2022), and people's own personal struggles with conscious and unconscious shame. When people have negative reactions and responses to others being authentic, it is their own stuff they are dealing with; it does not mean that there is something wrong with you. Sometimes the people who love us most may have these negative reactions and that can be hurtful and confusing. For them, at least sometimes, the environments they have grown up in, the people and information they are surrounded by, and even that shame and peer pressure mentioned before can overshadow the love they have for you. For generations, the media (TV, news, music, etc.) have largely put forward narratives that erase the very real existence of LGBTQIA2S+ people. In recent years, our representation has grown and backlash has followed. A lot of education is still needed to help people understand that we have always been here and that nothing is wrong with us, but that will take time.

With all of this in mind, we wanted to create a guide to help you think about the process of coming out—both the joys and the challenges—so you could be as prepared as possible to make this leap into being the most you that you can be. You will find questions to assess who is in your support network now and what risks there might be, whether in relationships, resources, or future goals and dreams. Then we'll cover questions you may want to reflect on, responses to help protect your joy and peace as you navigate conversations, and how to take care of yourself throughout this journey. There are likely resources in your community and, if not, online. We'll share those as well.



Prepare for Coming Out to Others

When coming out to friends, family, and community, LGBTQIA2S+ people should keep several key concerns in mind. By keeping these concerns in mind, LGBTQIA2S+ people can approach the coming out process with greater awareness, resilience, and empowerment.

Safety & Future Planning

Think through your safety and long-term needs—emotionally, physically, & financially. Consider where you'll turn for support, housing, or space to process if things don't go as planned.

Acceptance

Consider the level of acceptance or support you may receive from the people you plan to come out to. It's important to have realistic expectations while also hoping for positive reactions.

Emotional Preparedness

Coming out can elicit a range of emotions from both those you come out to and yourself. Prepare yourself for a variety of reactions, including acceptance, rejection, confusion, or silence.

Support System

Identify individuals or support networks who you can turn to for guidance, emotional support, and encouragement before, during, and after coming out.

Timing

Choose a time to come out that feels comfortable and safe for you. Consider factors such as family events, holidays, and other stressors that may affect the reception of your news.

Education

Be prepared to answer questions about LGBTQIA2S+ identities, as some people may have misconceptions. Share what feels right for you, and remember—it's okay to set limits.

Boundaries

Set boundaries for yourself regarding what you are comfortable sharing and how you want to be treated. It's okay to establish boundaries with individuals who may not react positively.

Self Care

Prioritize self-care before, during, and after coming out. Practice mindfulness, engage in activities that bring you joy, and seek professional support if needed.

Legal Considerations

Familiarize yourself with local laws and regulations regarding LGBTQIA2S+ rights, especially if you anticipate potential discrimination or legal challenges.

Reflection Questions

Coming out is a significant and personal decision for any LGBTQIA2S+ person, and it involves careful consideration of several factors to ensure safety and readiness. Here are some important things to think about and questions to ask oneself:

Reflecting on Personal Readiness

Preparing to come out as LGBTQIA2S+ involves careful reflection and planning to ensure your safety, well-being, and support. Start by assessing your support system: Identify friends, family members, or trusted adults who might react positively and support you through this process. Consider how LGBTQIA2S+ issues are viewed in your home, school, and community to gauge the environment you'll be navigating. Online safety is also crucial—think about your digital footprint and whether you're ready for potential consequences. Also consider making your social media profiles private.

Is this the right time for me to come out? Are there upcoming events or stressors that may make it more difficult? You might want to think about avoiding other big stressors, like if you have a big test coming up.

Mental and Emotional Preparedness

How ready are you emotionally to handle different types of reactions from others, including potentially negative ones? What are three things you do when you feel yourself getting worked up or overwhelmed?	Not at all	A little	Neutral	A lot	Completely
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Understanding Identity

How sure and secure are you in your understanding of your own identity? What would help you feel more confident?

Not at all A little Neutral A lot Completely

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Motivation for Coming Out

How much do you want to come out right now? Write down what is affecting your answer.

Not at all A little Neutral A lot Completely

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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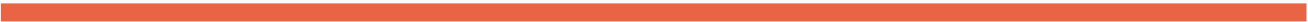
Did You Know?

the first openly gay comic book character appeared all the way back in 1979? His name was Extrano, a bold, joyful sorcerer introduced in DC Comics' Millennium series. At the time, positive LGBTQ+ representation in mainstream media was extremely rare, and Extrano broke barriers simply by existing as an openly gay character. Though early portrayals were imperfect and sometimes steeped in stereotypes, Extrano paved the way for the complex, diverse LGBTQ+ characters we see in comics today. His creation opened important conversations about visibility, inclusion, and who gets to be a hero.

Potential Consequences

How ready are you for the possible consequences, both positive and negative, of coming out? What is on your mind that you should plan for?

Not at all	A little	Neutral	A lot	Completely
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Timing: Is this the right time for me to come out? Are there upcoming events or stressors that may make it more difficult? You might want to think about avoiding other big stressors, like if you have a big test coming up.



Planning and Strategy

Reflect on your personal readiness by evaluating your emotional preparedness and motivation for coming out. It might be helpful to build your understanding around your feelings, keeping in mind that how you feel can be fluid and change over time. Consider the potential consequences, both positive and negative, and determine if this is the right time for you. Plan how you'll communicate your decision, whether face-to-face, through a letter, or another method, and ensure you have support resources available, such as LGBTQIA2S+ organizations or hotlines. It's essential to have a response plan for various reactions and self-care strategies to maintain your mental and emotional health. Practical considerations, like financial independence and understanding legal protections, are also vital in case you face rejection or need to leave home.



Communication

How will you communicate coming out? Do you prefer a face-to-face conversation, a letter, a text message, or another method?



Support Resources

Do you know where to find support if you need it? This can include LGBTQIA2S+ organizations, hotlines, online forums, or local community centers.



Response Plan

How will you respond to different reactions? Have you thought about how to handle supportive, neutral, or negative responses?



Self-Care

What self-care strategies do you have in place? How will you take care of your mental and emotional health before, during, and after coming out?



Practical Considerations

When assessing safety, think about potential outcomes, from worst-case scenarios, like losing family support or housing, to best-case scenarios, where you receive immediate acceptance. Understand the risks of coming out to professionals like doctors or teachers and know your rights regarding confidentiality and consent. Remember, these reflections can be hard. Take time as you need it.



To find resources near you, visit LGBT National Help Center or LGBTQ Centers which will let you search for local resources by zip code.

Scan or click the QR code to view.

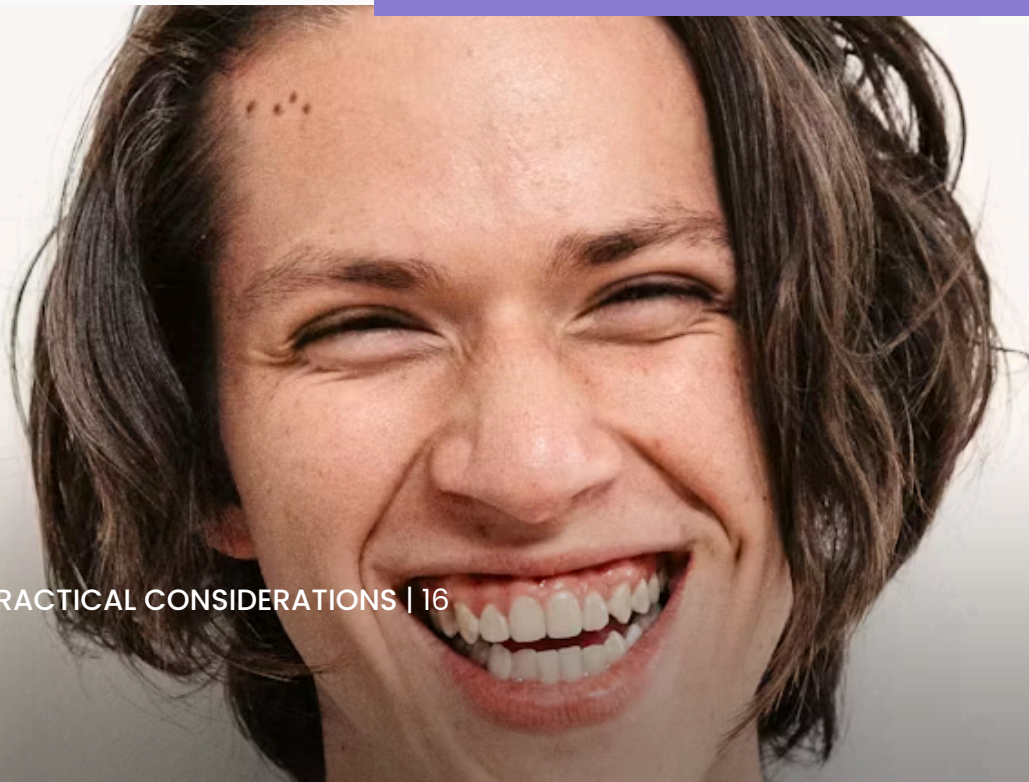
LGBT National Help Center



LGBTQ Centers



By reflecting on these questions and considering these factors, LGBTQIA2S+ people can better prepare themselves for the process of coming out and can make informed decisions that prioritize their safety and well-being. When considering coming out to professionals, like doctors or teachers, ask them whether they are able to keep personal information confidential or not.



Self Care

Self-care is especially important during this process. Engaging in self-care helps us to manage stress, build resilience, and protect our mental and physical health. Taking care of ourselves can empower us to navigate our identities and experiences with greater confidence and self-acceptance. Self-care practices also provide a sense of control and stability in environments that may feel hostile or unsupportive. By prioritizing our well-being, we can build a stronger sense of self-worth and connection with supportive communities.

As You Move Forward

Embrace your journey—you can come out now or continue processing, deciding when and how is best for you to share these parts of yourself with others. Try things on, see what feels good, and know that it is absolutely normal to have questions and curiosity about yourself as you figure out who you are.

Consider setting some goals for the future if that feels helpful to you! These could be thinking about when and who to tell about your identity or if you are considering medical steps. When might you talk to the adults in your life? How can you connect with medical and mental health professionals? Which of your friends can offer you support through this process? Other goals could be taking a trip to a city that has a large and vibrant queer community or even a Pride celebration so you can experience what that is like and see other people similar and different from yourself.

This journey to figuring out who you are is just beginning. The rest of your life you will be discovering different parts of yourself, new interests, and areas that change over time. Staying open to the possibilities and curious about what anything means for you will only help you navigate the journey of becoming the next best you.



You Are Not Alone

Remember, your journey is yours to navigate, and there's no right or wrong way to do it. Coming out is a deeply personal experience, and it's okay to take it one step at a time. Whether you're ready to share who you are with the world or just starting to understand it yourself, know that your identity is valid and valuable.

It may not always feel like it, but you are a part of a vibrant, supportive community that celebrates you for who you are. There are people out there who will love and accept you just as you are. Reach out and connect. Know that you're never alone on this path.

Take care of yourself, trust in your journey, and always remember: You are enough, just as you are.

Some affirmations to remind yourself:



I'm worthy of taking up space.



I'm allowed to be who I want to be.



I'm fabulous, and people are lucky to get to know the real me.

Brain Break

Brain Breaks are spaces throughout the guide that provide a moment to pause and do something fun! Feel free to skip them—or skip to them—depending on how you feel.

Affirmation Word Search



Fabulous
Love
Empowerment

Pride
Solidarity
Identity

Resilience
Freedom
Equality

Authenticity
Visibility



Preparing for What May Happen When You Come Out

Coming out as LGBTQIA2S+ to your family can lead to a wide range of reactions. This experience is deeply personal and unique to you. You may find that your family responds with love and support, creating a safe space for open conversation and understanding. This can strengthen your relationships and help you feel accepted for who you are. However, it's also possible that you could face negative reactions, such as rejection or confusion, which may make you feel isolated or anxious. Remember, it's normal for families to need time to process this new information. Regardless of the response you receive, it's important to seek support from friends, allies, or community resources to help you navigate any challenges that come your way during this significant moment in your life.

Understanding Your Parents' or Family's Reactions When You Come Out

When you come out as LGBTQIA2S+, your family may go through several stages as they process this news. These stages often include:

1

Shock

Initially, they may be surprised or in disbelief. This is a normal reaction that can last from a few minutes to several days.

2

Denial

They may struggle to accept the reality of your sexual orientation/gender identity, sometimes responding with confusion or anger. This phase can vary widely in expression.

3

Guilt

Some parents may blame themselves, wondering what they did wrong. This can be difficult for them to navigate and may take time for them to overcome.

4

Expression of Feelings

They will likely need to talk about their emotions and concerns. Be patient as they process these feelings.

5

Decision-Making

As they come to terms with your identity, they will start making personal decisions about how to support you moving forward.

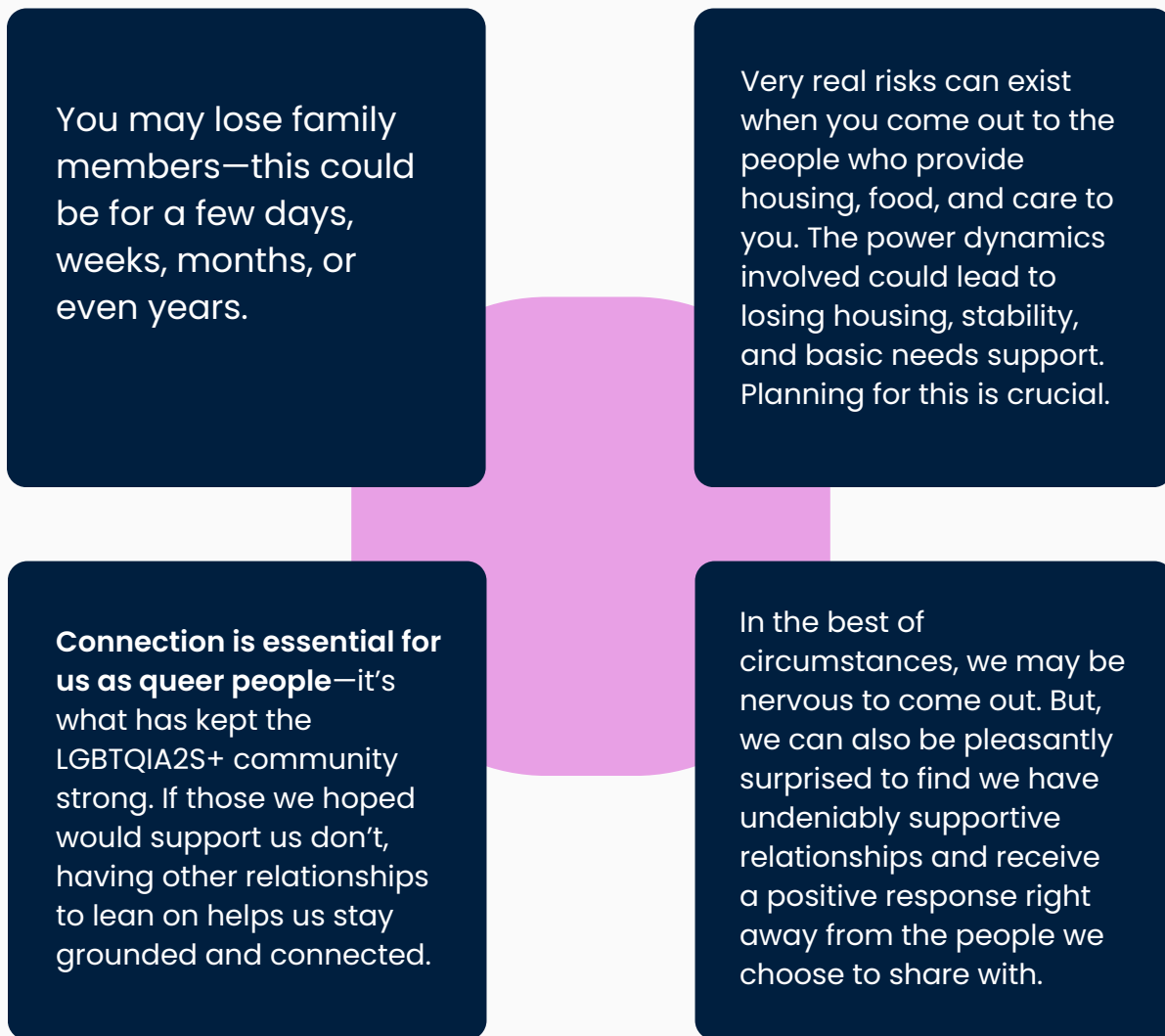
6

True Acceptance

Over time, many family members reach a place of acceptance, often leading to a stronger relationship with you.

Some of these reactions, like shock, denial, and guilt, can feel very hurtful. Try to remind yourself that your parents and other family members may have been exposed to a lot of misinformation about sexual orientation and gender identity. In fact, most people have been shamed for stepping out of “traditional gender roles” by others, and they may even be carrying some of their own confusion or trauma due to those experiences. Remember, there is nothing wrong with you. You deserve to be in the world exactly as you are.

No matter how someone responds, please know that their response is a reflection of their feelings and knowledge on the subject—not a reflection of how valid you are as a person.



There are positive experiences that can happen when you come out as well. You may find support and understanding. You may experience joy, relief, and other positive emotions. The purpose of the next few sections is to make sure you are prepared for whatever you may experience. The next sections will walk you through developing your coming-out plan, and we will provide you with some script ideas on how you can address different situations.

Remember, you decide what feels right, when's the right time, and who are the right people to come out to. It's your journey! You got this! If you need some inspiration, skip to the section [Benefits to Coming Out—Yes, Really! There Are Many!](#)

Developing a Coming-Out Plan

Tips Before Coming Out

Building allies and finding LGBTQIA2S+ resources, both locally and online, can provide you with essential support. Consider professional support options like therapy, support groups, or affirming spiritual guides. Having a support system can make such a big difference!

What are the good things about coming out that you look forward to?

What are some things that worry you about coming out?

How will you take care of yourself if you experience rejection from others?

Who can you call if you need support?

Support person 1: _____

Support person 2: _____

Where can you spend time that helps you feel affirmed and safe:

- LGBTQIA2S+ support group
- Gender and Sexuality Alliance
- With supportive friends
- Another space

Emergency Resources:

Hotline #1: _____

Hotline #2: _____

**Hotlines are listed on page 3, but this is a space you can add the hotlines you prefer. Perhaps you want to add your therapist's phone number or to a local crisis center.*

A Deeper Script for Coming-Out Conversations

Thinking about how to respond to various scenarios can help you feel less stressed before, during, and after coming out to someone.

Ideas on Starting the Conversation

Coming out can be a daunting experience, even when it's exciting, but it's important to express yourself honestly when you are ready. Here are some things you might consider saying to your family:

- "Mom/Dad/Grandma/Grandpa, there's something important I want to share with you. I've realized that I'm **[insert sexual orientation or gender identity]**. I hope you can accept me for who I am."
- "I've been feeling this way for a while, and I wanted to talk to you about it. I'm **[insert sexual orientation or gender identity]**. I hope you can support me through this journey."
- "I love you, and I want to be open with you about who I am. I've come to understand that I'm **[insert sexual orientation or gender identity]**. Can we talk about this together?"
- "I've been struggling with something, and I think it's time I told you. I'm **[insert sexual orientation or gender identity]**. I hope you can still love and accept me."
- "I've been keeping something inside for a long time, and it's been really hard for me. I'm **[insert sexual orientation or gender identity]**. I hope you can listen and understand."
- "I know this might come as a surprise, but I've realized I'm **[insert sexual orientation or gender identity]**. I hope we can talk about it and support each other."
- "I've been afraid to tell you this, but I need to be honest. I'm **[insert sexual orientation or gender identity]**. Can we talk about what this means for our family?"

Encouraging open communication and expressing feelings of love and vulnerability can help facilitate understanding and acceptance from parents and caregivers.

i Coming out doesn't always go well, however. Use the link below or QR code to read powerful words by Naomi Kanakia, a trans author, speaking to the balance needed in sharing hopeful stories and perspectives while also being real about the challenges of coming out and living as a trans teen.

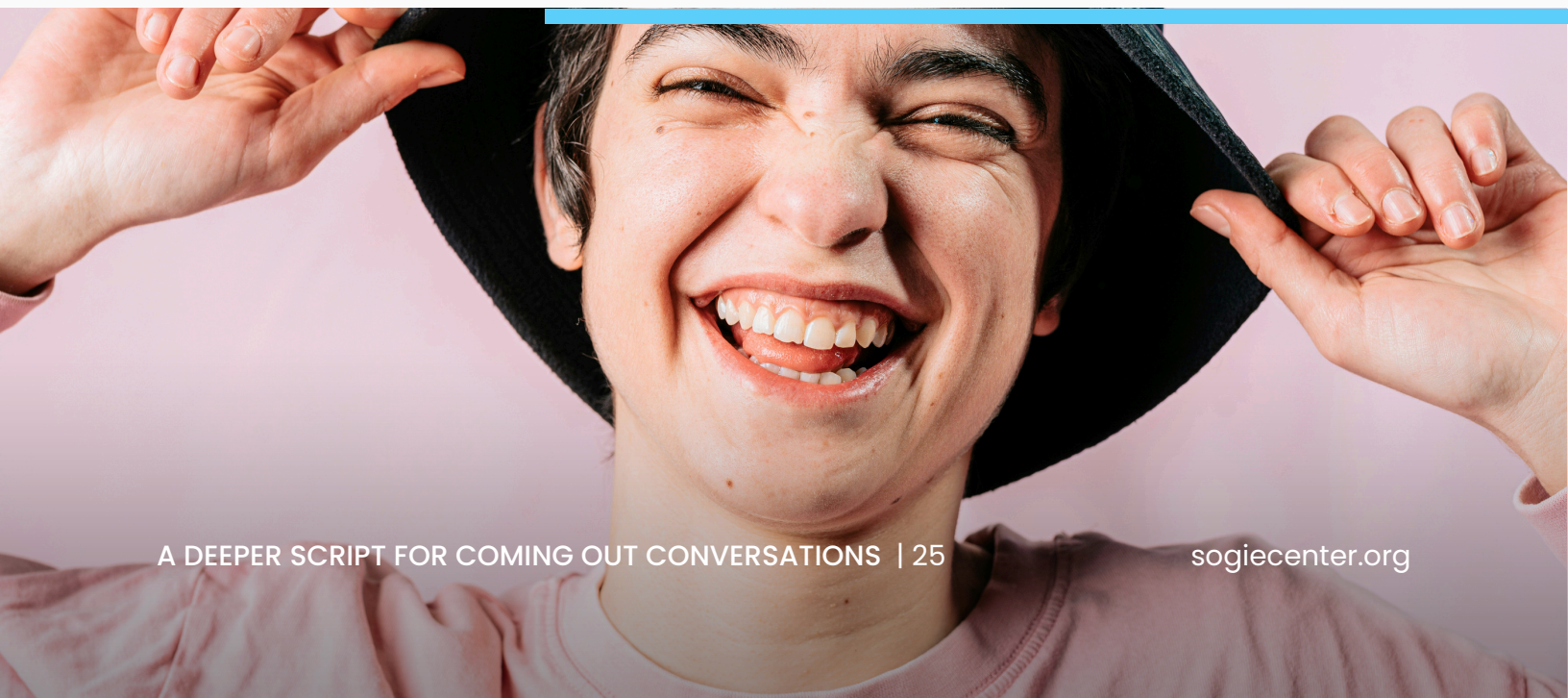
Being trans isn't all "queer joy," a guest post by Naomi Kanakia



Scan or click the QR code to view.

Did You Know?

that an LGBTQ+ icon helped invent the technology behind Wi-Fi? Hedy Lamarr, a glamorous Hollywood actress of the 1930s and 40s, and a queer woman, was also a brilliant inventor. During World War II, she co-created a "frequency-hopping" system designed to prevent enemy forces from jamming radio signals. Even though it wasn't fully recognized at the time, her invention eventually became a key part of the wireless technology we use today, like Bluetooth, GPS, and Wi-Fi. So next time you're scrolling your phone or streaming music, you can thank a pioneering queer woman for making it possible!



Responses for When Things Don't Go Well

Coming out can be a very vulnerable experience, even more so when you don't know what to say. For example, parents may react with silence when you come out, so what can you say to get out of this situation? You could say: "You may need time. I'm going to my room." And then you leave. This way you don't have to sit there and feel harmed in the silence.

If parents are unsupportive when a LGBTQIA2S+ child (at any age) comes out, saying things like "I can never accept you like this," it can be incredibly challenging. Here are some things you may consider saying to your parents or caregivers in such a situation. You can reword these so that they feel authentic to your own voice, comfort, and needs.

- "I understand this might be difficult for you to accept, but this is who I am. I need your love and support more than ever right now."
- "My sexual orientation/gender identity is not a choice, but your acceptance of me is. I hope you can choose to love me for who I am."
- "I'm not asking you to understand everything right away, but I am asking you to respect and accept me as your child."
- "Your reaction is hurting me deeply. I need you to understand that I am still the same person you raised and loved."
- "I'm scared and vulnerable right now, and I need my parents to be there for me. Can we talk about how we can move forward together?"
- "I know this might go against your beliefs, but please try to see things from my perspective. I just want to live authentically and be happy."
- "I'm not asking you to change your beliefs, but I am asking you to love and support your child unconditionally."
- "I love you, and I want you to be a part of my life, but I can't continue to hide who I am just to please you."
- "I hope that with time you'll come to see that my happiness and well-being are what truly matter. I'll be waiting for you to come around."
- "I wonder if you can connect with other parents or relatives to process your reaction to this news before we talk more about it, so to protect our connection."

In difficult situations like this, it's important for you to prioritize your own well-being and seek support from friends, other family members, or supportive communities if needed.



The Painful Experience of Being Outed

If someone outs you without your permission, it can feel incredibly violating and stressful. There are several ways someone might out you, both intentionally and unintentionally, and the impact can vary depending on the situation and the people involved. Here are some examples of how outing can occur.

Possible Scenarios

Direct Disclosure to Others

Intentional: A person shares your sexual orientation or gender identity with others without your consent, usually to friends, family, or acquaintances.

Unintentional: A well-meaning person might accidentally mention your identity in a conversation, without realizing you haven't told others yet.

Conversations in Public or Group Settings

Intentional: A person might bring up your identity in a public or group conversation without your permission, thinking it's okay.

Unintentional: During a casual conversation in front of others, they might mention something about your relationship, past experiences, or preferences in a way that outs you.

Being Tagged or Mentioned in Online Communities

Intentional: Someone might tag you or share a post in a way that reveals something about your identity, either for support or to raise awareness, without your consent.

Unintentional: Someone might mention or tag you in an online thread or post about LGBTQIA2S+ topics, inadvertently sharing more than you're comfortable with.

Referring to a Partner or Ex in Conversation

Intentional: A person might refer to your partner in a way that reveals your identity without asking for your approval (for example, by talking about your girlfriend/boyfriend, your spouse, etc.).

Unintentional: Someone might refer to an ex or mention the gender of a partner in a conversation without recognizing that it would out you.

Using Gendered Language or Assumptions

Intentional: A person might insist on using labels or gendered language that you're not comfortable with, even though you haven't explicitly shared your gender identity or sexuality.

Unintentional: Someone might assume your gender identity or sexuality based on something you've said or done and unthinkingly share their assumption with others.

Sharing Photos or Videos

Intentional: Someone might post or share a picture or video that includes a LGBTQIA2S+ pride flag, a moment with your partner, or a scene at an LGBTQIA2S+ event, revealing your identity.

Unintentional: A photo taken at a public LGBTQIA2S+ event, a pride march, or a similar setting may be publicly shared, and in doing so, your identity might be exposed.

Deadnaming

Intentional: Someone who knows you are transgender deliberately uses your old name (the name you no longer identify with) in conversation, despite knowing you prefer your current name. They may do this to undermine your identity, mock you, or assert control over how you are perceived.

Unintentional: A person who may not be up to date with your name change accidentally uses your old name during a conversation. They likely don't realize they've done it, or they may slip up because they haven't had time to adjust to your transition.

Reacting to Being Outed

Here are some tips on how to navigate the situation, protect yourself, and reclaim your power:

- Allow yourself time to process the emotions you may be feeling. It's okay to feel upset, angry, or hurt. Give yourself space to sort through your thoughts before responding.
- If you feel safe to do so, calmly let the person know how their actions affected you. You might say, "I wasn't ready for others to know this about me, and I feel hurt that you shared it without my permission." Setting clear boundaries is important for protecting your privacy in the future.
- Consider whether you want to discuss the situation with other people who may now know. You may want to clear up misunderstandings or simply affirm your right to control your own narrative.
- If you haven't already, decide how you want to come out to others—if at all. You can always reclaim the narrative by telling people on your own terms when you're ready.
- Reach out to your support system. Sharing your experience with others who affirm and understand can give you the opportunity to brainstorm ways to approach the situation in the future.
- Remember that being outed is not your fault. You did nothing wrong by trusting someone with your identity. The person who outed you is the one who crossed your boundaries. Be kind to yourself and remember that your journey is yours to navigate.
- Reflect on how you want to approach your relationships and your own coming out process after this experience. Whether you decide to educate the person who outed you, or you simply move forward with your life, trust that you have the strength to handle this.
- Remember that you control your narrative. Even if someone has shared your identity without your consent, you still get to decide how you want to express and live your truth moving forward.



How to Assess Safety When Seeking Outside Services

- Look for therapists who have specific training or certifications in LGBTQIA2S+ issues. This can indicate that they have a deeper understanding of your experiences.
- Review websites, profiles, or promotional materials for inclusive language and imagery. Terms like “LGBTQ+-friendly” or “LGBTQ+-affirming” can signal a welcoming environment.
- Look for feedback from other clients, especially those from the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Positive experiences can provide insight into the therapist’s approach and attitude.
- When contacting potential therapists, don’t hesitate to ask about their experience with LGBTQIA2S+ clients. A good therapist will welcome your questions and provide clear answers.
- If possible, visit the office. Look for signs of inclusivity, such as pride flags or LGBTQIA2S+ resources. A welcoming physical space can enhance your comfort.
- Make sure the therapist has clear policies on confidentiality, especially regarding LGBTQIA2S+ identities. Feeling safe about your privacy is crucial.
- Check if the therapist participates in local LGBTQIA2S+ events or organizations. Active engagement in the community can indicate a commitment to support.
- Assess whether the services are easily accessible for you. This includes location, availability, and whether they offer virtual sessions.
- Pay attention to your feelings during initial interactions. If something feels off or uncomfortable, it’s okay to look for another therapy provider.
- Ask trusted friends, family, or community members for recommendations. Personal referrals can often lead you to affirming and safe spaces.
- Use directories from LGBTQIA2S+ organizations that list affirming therapists and services, ensuring you’re finding supports that specifically cater to your needs.

- If they ask you about your sexual orientation or gender identity, be sure to ask them how they are using the information, where the information gets documented, who has access to the information, and how to change the information down the line. Remember, you are the owner of your information and are in charge of who has access to it.
- Research if there is an age of consent law that lets youth (in some states, this may be between ages 12 to 18) make certain medical decisions without parental consent.
- You may be able to confidentially speak with your regular doctor one-on-one to ask questions, without them telling parent your questions are gender- or sexuality-related.



A Few Practical Things You Might Explore to Affirm Your Gender Identity

When considering a name change, many people start off sharing their new pronouns, name, and identity piece with close friends and family. Some people try different names depending on how they feel; some might “try a name on” to see what sticks and feels right. Whatever your journey is, you may eventually have questions about formal name changes. Here are a few things to consider when considering a legal name change:

It's worth looking into the steps to get started with the process. Remember things take time and can be frustrating when it doesn't happen as fast as you like.

- There is a legal process in courts to formally and legally change your first, middle, and last name (one or all of these)
- There are multiple places to update when changing a name:
 1. Driver's license, state ID, or identification cards
 2. Birth certificate: name and gender marker (depending on circumstance)
 3. Social security card with the same number but with the changed name
 4. Passport
 5. School records, health insurance, banks, formal policies of any kind, and bills.
- Most contracts (getting an apartment, setting up a bank account, applying to collage, car loans, etc.) require legal and accurate identification, so if any of the above steps need to be completed, it is worth starting that process as soon as possible.

i The laws and policies around these steps change often and vary state to state. Advocates for Trans Equality (www.transequality.org) has developed a wonderful document that provides an overview of the name and gender marker change process through the United States: For state-specific instructions, visit TransEquality resources.

Identification Documents and Transgender People:



Transequality.org



Brain Break

Brain Breaks are spaces throughout the guide that provide a moment to pause and do something fun! Feel free to skip them—or skip to them—depending on how you feel.

Writing Prompt

Imagine your life as an epic movie. What type of movie is it, what is the title of your movie, what's the plot, what's the soundtrack for your most epic scene, and who is playing you?

Benefits to Coming Out—Yes, Really! There Are Many!

There are some really good and important things that coming out can do for your life, even amidst challenges. So before you get too worried about those challenges, consider that when LGBTQIA2S+ people come out to their friends, family, and community, they can look forward to several positive outcomes:

Authenticity	Acceptance & Support	Emotional Preparedness
Coming out allows LGBTQIA2S+ people to live authentically and openly, embracing their true selves without fear of hiding or suppressing their identity.	Many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals find acceptance & support from friends, family members, & community members after coming out. This support can lead to stronger & more fulfilling relationships.	Coming out provides an opportunity for education & increased understanding among friends, family, & community who may have had limited knowledge about LGBTQIA2S+ identities.
Community	Personal Growth	Advocacy Opportunities
Coming out often leads to a sense of belonging within the LGBTQIA2S+ community, providing opportunities for connection, friendship, & shared experiences with others who are understanding & affirming.	The process of coming out can be transformative, fostering personal growth, self-acceptance, and resilience as LGBTQIA2S+ individuals navigate their identity and relationships.	Coming out may inspire LGBTQIA2S+ people to become advocates for LGBTQIA2S+ rights and visibility, contributing to positive social change within their communities and beyond.
Love and Relationships	Emotional Liberation	Celebrating Diversity
Coming out opens possibilities of forming romantic and intimate relationships with individuals who share similar identities and experiences.	For many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, coming out is a liberating experience that alleviates the burden of secrecy and shame, leading to greater emotional well-being and self-confidence.	Coming out contributes to the celebration and recognition of diversity within families, communities, and society at large, fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect for all identities.

Overall, coming out can be a transformative and empowering experience that leads to greater self-acceptance, connection, and fulfillment for LGBTQIA2S+ people.

Did You Know?

The 2024 Paris Olympics were a huge moment for LGBTQIA2S+ athletes, with more openly out athletes competing at the highest level globally than ever before. Not only did these athletes show up, but many of them also won medals, proving that being true to yourself doesn't stop you from being amazing at your sport. It was a big win for LGBTQIA2S+ visibility in sports, showing how far we've come in making the world of athletics more inclusive. The success of these athletes is a powerful reminder that when LGBTQIA2S+ people are supported and celebrated, they can do incredible things—whether it's winning medals or breaking barriers.



Centering Queer and Trans Joy

As you start, or continue, your journey, it is important to surround yourself with stories of joy, of LGBTQIA2S+ history, of civil rights milestones, of positive coming out stories, and examples of out and proud queer folks.

As you read about queer and trans joy, remember to make sure to celebrate who you are. This might be hard if things aren't going well, but it's important that you find ways to celebrate that you are being yourself. There is nothing wrong with that.



When I Came Out

You are not alone. As this website shares, every coming out story is unique.



Gay soccer, lacrosse player comes out playing Hangman

College soccer player Lindsey Farrell came out to her whole team via a game of hangman, with the blank spaces spelling "C-O-A-C-H, I-M G-A-Y."



What is Trans Joy? - Trans Positive Documentary



Coming Out: The Experiences of GenderGP Team Members

Advice from the GenderGP team: "I spent so much time denying it and repressing it ... and it only got better when I embraced it. I wish I had done it sooner. I am happier since I came out and a lot more comfortable in myself."



Trans Stories with It Gets Better

A collection of video and written stories from trans people about their lives, including celebrations of joy.



Book: All the Things They Said We Couldn't Have: Stories of Trans Joy, by T. C. Oakes Monger

Know Your History

You know what else increases joy? Knowing about LGBTQIA2S+ history and trailblazers.



James Baldwin

Baldwin was a renowned writer who resisted being confined by labels and the identity categories that others imposed on him. If you're looking to explore the complexities of the human experience—how our differences shape us and where our struggles intersect—his works offer profound insight.

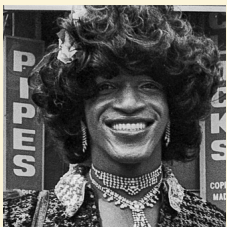
Barbara Gittings

"In the early 1970s, shortly after the Stonewall riots, Gittings played a pivotal role in petitioning the American Psychiatric Association to change its stance on homosexuality. In 1973, the APA officially removed its classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder..." - [The Legacy of Pride: Barbara Gittings](#)



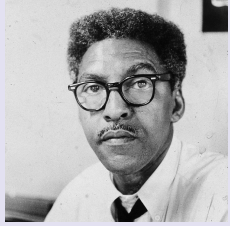
Lily and Lana Wachowski

If you're a fan of The Matrix films, you owe them to these incredible trans women filmmakers. Beyond their iconic work in that franchise, they've created numerous influential pieces that incorporate themes related to their personal identities and experiences.



Marsha P. Johnson

Marsha P. Johnson was a pioneering Black trans activist and drag queen who played a key role in the early LGBTQIA2S+ rights movement. Co-founder of STAR with Sylvia Rivera, she advocated for trans and homeless queer communities and is remembered for her role in the 1969 Stonewall Uprising.



Bayard Rustin

A gifted organizer, strategist, and leader who often worked behind the scenes, Rustin was instrumental in guiding Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in embracing nonviolence as a core principle and he played a key role in organizing the historic 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Sylvia Rivera

Rivera was a courageous and groundbreaking queer Latina drag queen and a tireless advocate for LGBTQIA2S+ rights, particularly for trans and gender-nonconforming individuals. As one of the co-founders of the Gay Liberation Front and the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), Rivera fought for the rights of the most marginalized in the queer community,

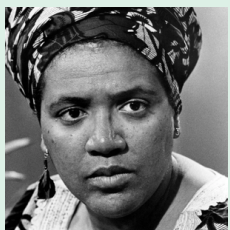
challenging both mainstream LGBTQIA2S+ activism and societal norms. Her legacy as a fierce, unapologetic activist continues to inspire generations in the struggle for equality and justice.



Audre Lorde

A brilliant Black lesbian poet, essayist, and activist, Lorde's work fiercely addressed the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class. Known as the "Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet," she used her writing as a tool for social change, advocating for the rights of marginalized communities. Her poetry and prose challenged the status quo, highlighting the importance of

embracing difference and the power of self-expression. Lorde's legacy as a radical thinker and unapologetic voice for justice continues to resonate today, inspiring movements for liberation and equality across generations. Check out [Audre Lorde | The Poetry Foundation](#) to read more!



Did You Know?

Before colonization, many Native American and Indigenous cultures across North America recognized a broad spectrum of gender identities beyond the male-female binary. Two-Spirit individuals—those embodying both masculine and feminine traits—often held important cultural, social, or spiritual roles. Colonization and European gender norms disrupted these traditions, marginalizing Two-Spirit people. Today, there's a growing movement to reclaim and honor these identities, with many Indigenous people embracing the term Two-Spirit and reaffirming their gender-diverse traditions.

The Data Proves It

The data show that LGBTQIA2S+ people can live positive, happy lives. You can too.

50%

LGBTQ People in the United States (Williams Institute, 2021):

More than 50% of LGBTQ people said that their life was excellent and that they felt satisfied with life.

94%

US Trans Survey 2022 Early Insights:

"Nearly all respondents (94%) who lived at least some of the time in a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth ('gender transition') reported that they were either 'a lot more satisfied' (79%) or 'a little more satisfied' (15%) with their life.

61%

LGBTQ+ Youth and Mental Health Support:

A study by The Trevor Project (2020) found that LGBTQ+ youth who have access to affirming spaces and supportive adults report significantly better mental health outcomes, with 61% of LGBTQ+ youth who are able to access gender-affirming care feeling happier and more confident.

71%

LGBTQ+ Individuals and Resilience:

Research from Gallup (2021) indicates that LGBTQ+ individuals who are open about their identities report higher levels of life satisfaction. They also show greater resilience, with 71% of openly LGBTQ+ individuals expressing positive feelings about their lives.

68%

LGBTQ+ Individuals and Resilience:

According to a study published by Pew Research Center (2021), 68% of LGBTQ+ people in the United States report feeling a sense of belonging within LGBTQ+ communities, which contributes significantly to their overall happiness and mental well-being. This sense of connection and support has been linked to higher levels of happiness and reduced levels of loneliness.

Did You Know?

Did you know that the first Pride parade was held in 1970, exactly one year after the Stonewall Uprising? The Stonewall Uprising in New York City was a pivotal moment in LGBTQIA2S+ history, where people fought back against police harassment. To honor the anniversary and continue the fight for equality, LGBTQIA2S+ activists organized the first Pride marches in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. What started as a small demonstration has since turned into Pride events hosted around the world every June to celebrate and honor LGBTQIA2S+ rights and progress. It's a reminder that the fight for equality has always been about standing up for who you are!

-  To learn more about the Stonewall history and about 50 years of the LGBTQIA2S+ civil rights movement, visit: [The Stonewall uprising: 50 years of LGBT history | Stonewall](#).

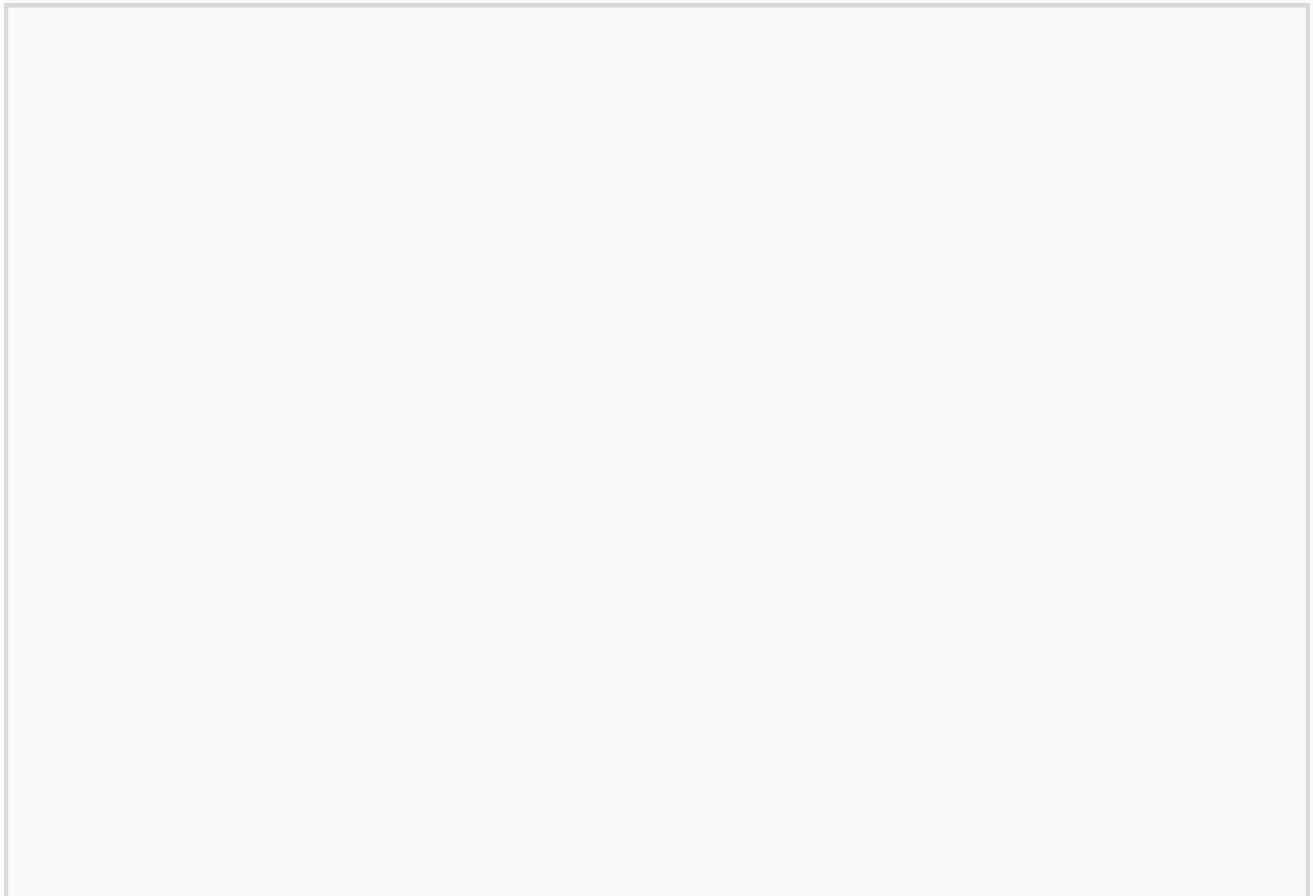


Final Brain Break

Brain Breaks are spaces throughout the guide that provide a moment to pause and do something fun! Feel free to skip them—or skip to them—depending on how you feel.

Drawing Prompt

Draw a self-portrait but make it as unique and bold as you are! Use colors, symbols, and patterns that represent your personality, dreams, and everything that makes you, you. Include things that bring you joy, strength, and pride—whether it's something about your identity, your passions, or the things that make you feel confident. Let your art be a celebration of who you are!



Examples of Existing Guides and Resources for LGBTQIA2S+ People on Coming Out



The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is a leading organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQIA2S+ youth. They offer a comprehensive guide called *Coming Out: A Handbook for LGBTQ Young People*, which covers various aspects of the coming out process, including self-acceptance, safety considerations, and seeking support. Visit [The Coming Out Handbook - The Trevor Project](#).



GLAAD

GLAAD is a media advocacy organization focused on promoting LGBTQIA2S+ acceptance and representation in media and society. They offer resources and tips for coming out, including guidance on crafting a coming out story, addressing common concerns, and navigating reactions.

[Visit GLAAD](#)



PFLAG

PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is a national organization that provides support, education, and advocacy for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and their families. They offer guides for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and their loved ones, including *Our Trans Loved Ones* and *Faith in Our Families*, which provide support for coming out within religious and faith-based communities.

[Visit PFLAG](#)



Human Rights Campaign (HRC)

HRC is the largest LGBTQIA2S+ civil rights organization in the United States. They offer resources and guides for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, including A Resource Guide to Coming Out, which covers topics such as safety, self-care, and finding support.

[Visit HRC](#)



Local LGBTQIA2S+ Centers

Many local LGBTQIA2S+ community centers and organizations offer support groups, workshops, and resources specifically tailored to LGBTQIA2S+ youth coming out. These centers may provide one-on-one support, peer mentoring, and community events to help youth navigate their coming out journey.

[Find Local LGBTQ Centers](#)

These resources can be extremely helpful to you during your coming-out process and in finding community and support.



References

Crisis Support Services:

- The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org>
- Trans Lifeline: <https://www.translifeline.org>
- LGBT National Help Center: <https://lgbthotline.org>
- SAGE LGBTQ+ Elder Hotline: <https://www.sageusa.org>

Finding Local LGBTQ+ Resources:

- LGBT Near Me: <https://www.lgbtnearme.org>
- CenterLink: LGBTQ Community Centers: <https://www.lgbtqcenters.org/LGBTCenters>
- Local LGBTQ+ Centers: <https://www.lgbtqcenters.org>

Guides & Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth:

- The Trevor Project Coming Out Handbook: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/coming-out-handbook>
- GLAAD Coming Out Resources: <https://www.glaad.org>
- PFLAG Resources: <https://www.pflag.org>
- Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Coming Out Guide: <https://www.hrc.org>

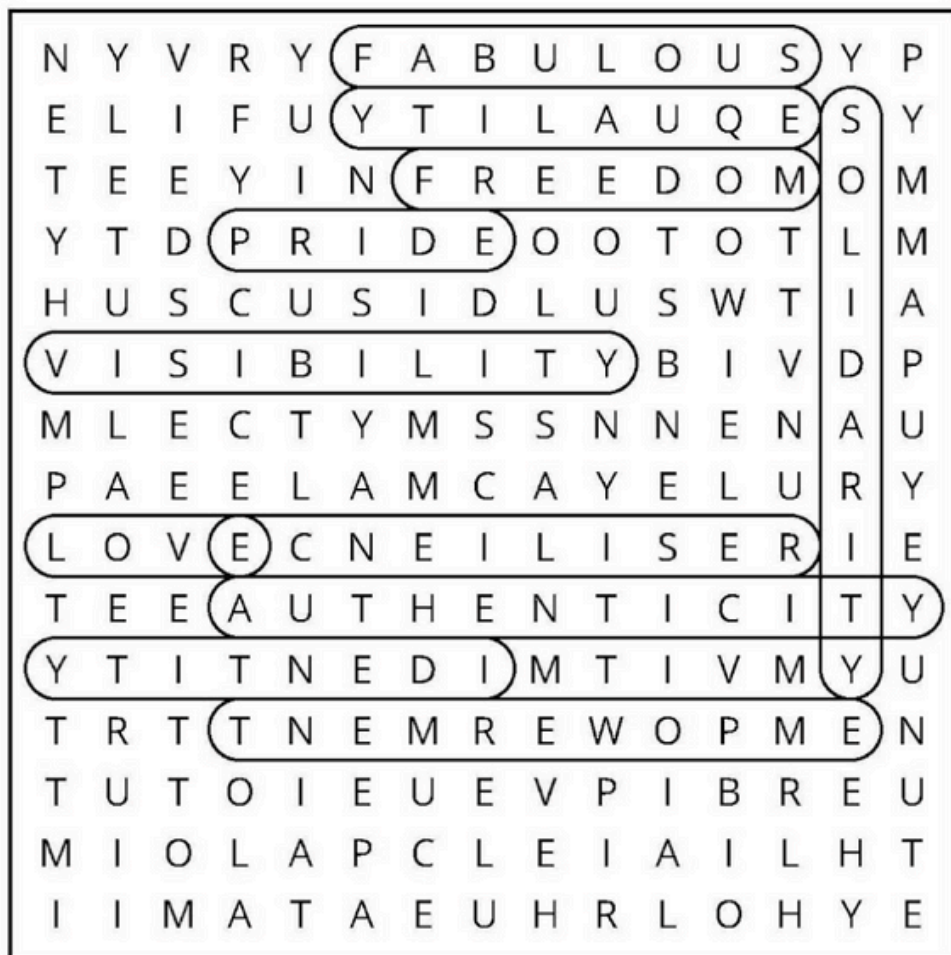
Trans Identity & Legal Documentation:

- National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) – Name & Gender Marker Change Guide: <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/ID-Documents-Overview.pdf>
- State-Specific Name & Gender Change Guide: <https://www.transequality.org/documents>

Stories & Media on Queer and Trans Joy and LGBTQIA2S+ History:

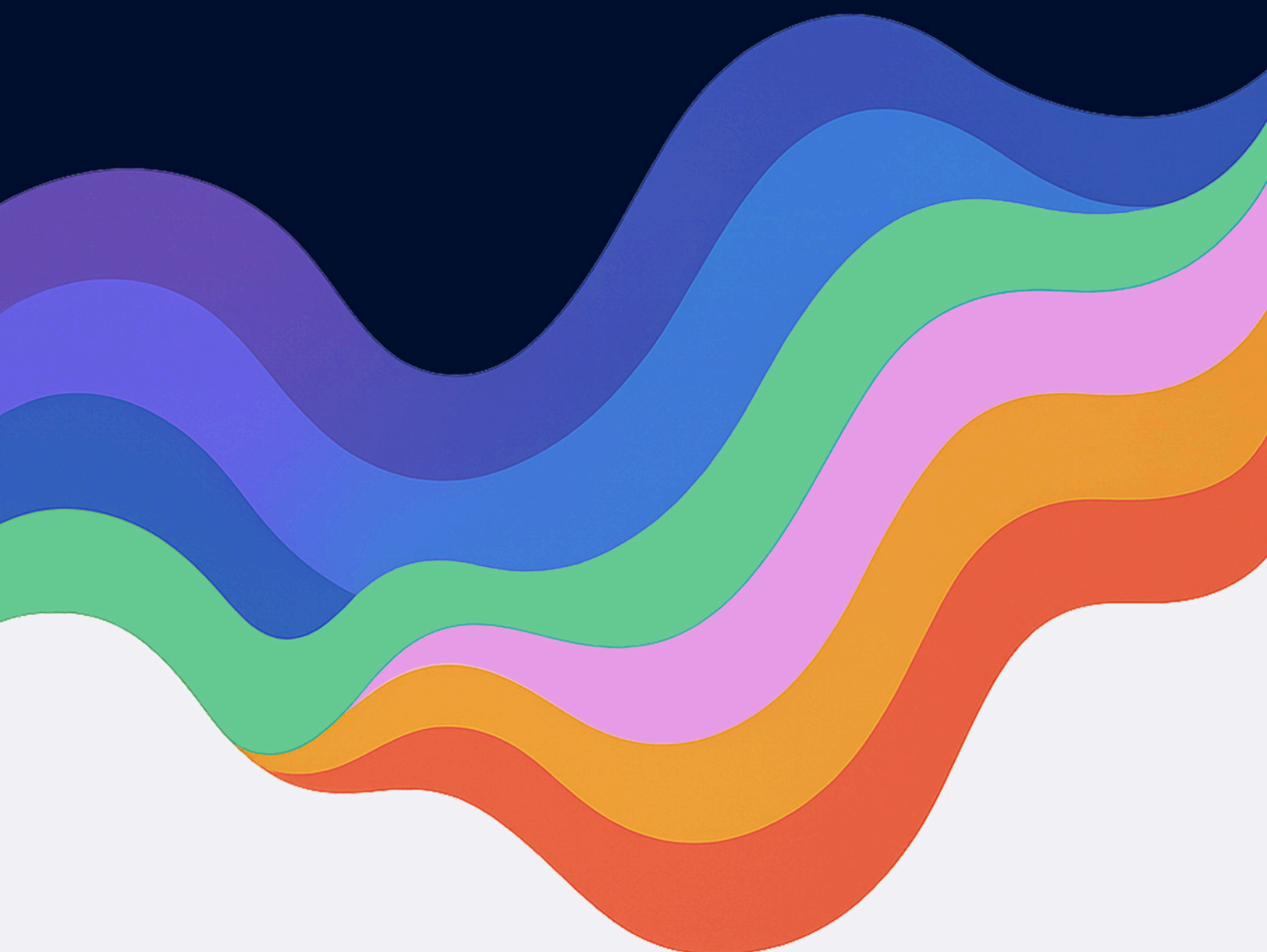
- Stonewall Uprising & LGBTQ+ History: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk>
- When I Came Out: <https://whenicameout.com>
- It Gets Better Project – Trans Stories: <https://itgetsbetter.org/celebrate-trans-stories-with-us-2/>
- Queer Development – Queer Joy National Survey: <https://www.queerdevelopment.com/queer-joy.html>
- Book – "All the Things They Said We Couldn't Have: Stories of Trans Joy" by T.C. Oaks Monger: <https://spectrumoutfitters.com>
- Teen Librarian Toolbox – Article by Naomi Kanakia: <https://teenlibrariantoolbox.com/2024/01/02/being-trans-isnt-all-queer-joy-a-guest-post-by-naomi-kanakia/>

Crossword Answers





Unicorn
Solutions



sogiecenter.org