

## Dating and Relationships

You may have come across many lessons regarding dating, love, and relationships in your time. Things like, “Love is about give and take,” or that “It takes two to tango.” If you had to do an assignment and breakdown these phrases, you might interpret them to mean that intimate relationships are about compromise and coming to decisions together.

### COMING OUT or DISCLOSING

For gender-expansive young people, there are some unique conversations that may take place before the relationship actually develops. For some, there is a process of coming out. It may be coming out as transgender, or telling someone you like that you don't really have a gender, or that you have more than one gender. If you're ready to take this step, here are some tips:

- (a) Do your homework. The person you're telling might have a bunch of questions. It'll be helpful if you're the one who can answer some of their initial questions. You don't have to have all the answers, but providing some basic definitions is a good start.
- (b) Don't freak out. In an ideal situation, you might disclose something about yourself, and the person might accept you wholeheartedly. Or they might have some reservations. But you should try to take some time to prepare for any scenario – the good, the bad, and the ugly. Not only should you always be careful to take care of your physical safety; it's equally important that you take care of yourself emotionally. If you're starting to feel put down, it's better to walk away from the situation to recollect your thoughts and emotions. If you're both willing to talk things out further, do so after you've both had some time to let things settle down.

A few final words of advice – be patient. Someone you like may be dealing with their own understandings of gender and struggling with some internal confusion. Try to reassure them that you're willing to travel down this road by learning together. It's important not to pressure them in anyway, and it's also important not to get upset at yourself if things aren't moving forward as quickly as you'd like. Love and relationship building is a difficult thing for any person and couple. If this single person isn't able to accept you completely for who you are, have faith that you'll meet the right person for you down the line.



## NOT COMING OUT

When it comes to your gender identity, your gender journey, or anything else related to your gender, you don't have to say or do anything you don't want to. No one has the right to make you feel ashamed about your gender or your body.

## NEGOTIATING SEX

A lot of people think that talking about sex is hard, but it's not! Here are some frequently asked questions:

- (a) How do I talk to my partner about using protection?
- (b) How do I tell my partner that I want to wait a while longer before having sex?
- (c) How do I tell my partner that I like to be kissed on my neck?

When it comes to discussions about sharing what you like and don't like, or about your own comfort levels, you don't have to create a PowerPoint presentation. In fact, when it comes to negotiating sex, all you have to do to get the conversation started is to literally just bring it up. There's a high probability that your partner may have something to share with you as well!

Keep in mind that a relationship may be romantic without being sexual, and a relationship can also be sexual without being romantic. Which is more important for you at the end of the day?