

The WHY, WHEN, and HOW of Coming Out

Why Disclose?

Why does a person “come out?” There actually isn’t any one answer. People may choose to disclose things all the time about themselves, whether its about something that happened in their past, their sexuality, or in some instances, that they are transgender. A person has a right to privacy, and no one should take that right away from a person. However, you might find yourself in a position of wanting to share something about yourself to a new friend, a long time close friend, or even to someone you like. We just want it to be your choice.

When to tell?

The timing of when to come out or disclose something like your trans status will vary from person to person. In fact, some may never disclose that they are transgender because they do not feel the need to. And there can also be times where you might find that you’re in a position where you feel pressured to come out. If protecting the story behind your gender identity is important to you, there are some steps you can take to avoid uncomfortable situations that may force you to come out sooner than when you are ready to.

- (a) Choose your circle wisely. It’s okay if you need to keep your transgender status hidden. Just be careful if and when you choose to disclose something to a friend. If the person ends up betraying your trust, you may find yourself having to deal with potentially losing a friend while coping with your gender status being revealed (in school or possibly at home as well).
- (b) You know your family situation best. If coming out might mean that you won’t have a place to sleep or might otherwise put you in harm’s way, talk to a school counselor about your situation. Sometimes, waiting until you have some established independence is a better time to come out. If you need help finding support, you can contact Gender Spectrum at info@genderspectrum.org.

How do I tell someone?

There are many tips and resources online about how to tell someone you’re transgender. Many teens have found it useful to write a letter. Writing a letter gives you time to sort out your thoughts, find the right words, and most importantly, to make edits if you don’t like the first few drafts.



If you're telling someone you've only recently met (whether that's someone you have romantic feelings for or it's the start of a new friendship), we recommend meeting in a public place where there's enough people in case something goes wrong, but loud enough so that you can have a private conversation and not have to worry about unwanted listeners.

If you find yourself going to someone's house, especially if you're not out, it's good to let a friend know where you're going. You can arrange to have a friend call you at a certain time as a safety measure (and if you don't pick up the phone, this must send a signal to your friend that you need help).