

Answers to Commonly Asked Ally Questions

Q: How can I tell if someone I know is LGBTQ+?

A: You can't. The only way to know how someone sexually identifies is if they tell you.

Q: What should I do if I think someone is LGBTQ+, but they have not told me?

A: Nothing. Most importantly, remember any assumption made about a person may be inaccurate. You can, however, create and maintain a safe atmosphere where anyone can feel comfortable coming to you. You can do this by making sure you are open and approachable, by giving them indications you are comfortable with this topic and supportive of LGBTQ+ concerns. If the person is already 'out' to themselves and they feel you are worthy of their trust, they may tell you.

Q: How do I make myself more approachable to people who are LGBTQ+?

A: Be sensitive to the assumptions you make about people-try not to assume everybody you interact with is heterosexual, they have opposite-sex partners, etc. try to use inclusive language, for example, avoid the use of specific pronouns that assume the sex of someone's partner or friends, or use inclusive examples that specifically use LGBTQ+ topics. Be a role model by letting others know you don't appreciate homophobic jokes or remarks; when you hear these kinds of jokes or remarks, confront them. Make yourself knowledgeable about LGBTQ+ concerns by reading books, keeping up on current events, and attending events sponsored by LGBTQ+ organizations.

Q: What kind of things might a person who is LGBTQ+ go through when 'coming out'?

A: Because of the difficulty of growing up in a largely homophobic society, people who are LGBTQ+ may experience guilt, isolation, depression, suicidal feelings, and low self-esteem. As people who are LGBTQ+ become more in touch with their sexual orientation, they may experience any number of these thoughts and feelings to any degree. Coming out often has many stages, including coming out to oneself before coming out to friends and family. Coming out to others can be an anxious process, as the individual worries about possibilities of rejection, ridicule, and loss of family, friends, and jobs. Coming out can be a liberating process as well, as LGBTQ+ people learn more about who they are, gain more respect for themselves, and find more friends to whom they can relate.

Q: If someone wants advice on what to tell their roommate, friends, or family about being LGBTQ+, how can I help?

A: Remember it must be the individual's decision when and to whom to come out to. Don't tell the person to do one thing or another; they could hold you responsible if it doesn't go well. Do listen carefully, reflect back the concerns and feelings you hear expressed, and suggest available resources for support. Help the person think through

the possible outcomes of coming out. Support the person's decision even if you don't agree with it, and ask about the outcome of any action taken.

Q: How should I respond to rumors that someone is LGBTQ+?

A: Regardless of if you know the answer or not, let others know the sexual orientation of any individual is irrelevant unless that person wishes to share that information. If you can, address any myths or stereotypes that may be fueling such speculation.