Making a Coming Out Plan

When you’re ready to tell that first person about your sexual or gender identity – or even those first few people – give yourself time to prepare. Think through your options and make a deliberate plan of who, what, why, and how.

Remember that if you don’t choose to come out now, or ever, your identity and experiences are still legitimate and valuable. You get to decide what is right for you.

Try asking yourself the following questions:

What signals are you getting?
You can get a sense of how accepting people will be by the things they say – or don’t say – when LGBTQ-related issues come up. Try to bring them up yourself by talking about an LGBTQ-themed movie, TV character or news event. If a person’s reactions are positive, chances are they will be more accepting of what you have to tell them.

What are your best- and worst-case scenarios?
Thinking through what might happen when you come out to different people can help you be prepared. Could your housing or financial situations be affected? Make sure you have alternatives in place. What is the ideal reaction you’re hoping for? Think about specific steps or actions that could help make it a reality.

Why now?
Timing can be very important. Be aware of the mood, priorities, stresses and problems of those to whom you would like to come out. Be aware that if they’re dealing with their own major life concerns, they may not be able to respond constructively to yours.

Can you be patient?
Some people will need time to deal with this new information, just as it took time for many of us to come to terms with being LGBTQ. When you come out to others, be prepared to give them the time they need to adjust to what you’ve said. Rather than expect immediate understanding, try to establish an ongoing, caring dialogue.