

If Someone Comes Out To You

Adapted from: <https://lgbtq.unc.edu/programs/education/safe-zone-training/guidelines-safe-zone-allies/if-someone-comes-out-you>

Someone who is coming out feels close enough to you and trusts you sufficiently to be honest. It can be difficult to know what to say and what to do to be a supportive friend to someone who has “come out” to you. Below are some suggestions you may wish to follow:

- Thank your friend for having the courage to tell you. Choosing to tell you means that they have a great deal of respect and trust for you.
- Don't judge your friend. If you have strong religious or other beliefs about LGBTIQ communities, keep them to yourself for now. There will be plenty of time in the future for you to think and talk about your beliefs in light of your friend's identity.
- Know that it is okay to feel whatever you do. Consider talking to a therapist or another trusted friend to work through your reactions so you can best support your friend.
- Respect your friend's privacy. Allow them the integrity to share what they want, when, and how they want to.
- Tell your friend that you still care about them, no matter what. Be the friend you have always been. The main fear for people coming out is that their friends and family will reject them.
- Ask questions you may have, but understand that your friend may not have all the answers. You can save some questions for later or, better yet, you can find some of the answers together.
- Include your friend's partner in plans as much as you would with any other friend.
- Consider including your friend in more of your plans. They may have lost the support of other friends and family, and your time and friendship will be even more precious to them.
- Offer and be available to support your friend as they come out to others.
- Understand that coming out can be overwhelming. Anger and depression are common, especially if friends or family have trouble accepting your friend. Don't take a fluctuating mood personally.
- Do what you have always done together. Your friend may feel that coming out will change everything in their life, and this can be frightening. If you always go to the movies on Friday, then continue that.
- Learn about the LGBTIQ community. This will allow you to better support your friend, and knowing about their world will help prevent you from drifting apart.
- Let your friend know about organizations and places where they can meet other supportive folks to prevent isolation.
- Refer your friend to resources if you notice that they are struggling. You don't have to be their “therapist” – just be their friend.