

How to support a friend who 'comes out' to you

If a friend tells you they're gay, lesbian, transgender or bisexual don't act as if this is wrong or strange. It's not and you should accept their sexuality without prejudice.

How to Support an LGBT Friend

- Be conscious of the fact that many LGBT people live in environments which are homophobic and transphobic and in which they constantly hear negative messages about LGBT people. This can make people quite fearful of how people may react to them coming out and fearful of potential rejection by friends and family.
- You could make it easier for friends to come out to you by making it clear to all your friends that you are positive and respectful about LGBT people. For example, if they have heard you challenge homophobic comments or talk comfortably about LGBT issues and people, this could help to reduce any anxiety they have about coming out to you.
- If a friend comes out to you, remember that the person has not changed. They are still the same person you knew before; you just have more information about them than you did before. They are still the same friend they have always been.
- The fact that they have come out to you shows that you are important to them and that they trust you. Thank them for their trust and reassure them of your continued friendship and support. This is important as they may have been afraid that you might have rejected them and that they would lose you as a friend. Be the friend you have always been.
- Try not to react badly, even if you have strong feelings about LGBT issues. If you judge your friend, or express disapproval, you will do nothing to change your friend's identity but you will hurt them and make them feel rejected and uncared for. It is also important to remember the potential impact rejection by friends and family can have on the mental health and well-being of LGBT people.
- Offer your friend a hug – it would mean a lot to them.
- You might feel hurt that they haven't told you before, but try to remember the challenges and fears LGBT people often face in being able to be open about their identity.
- Respect your friend's privacy – it is up to them to decide if, when and how they tell other people.
- Just because a friend has told you that they are LGB or T, don't assume that this means that they fancy you.

- Just because your friend is LGBT doesn't mean that everyone will think you are.
- You may be curious but be sensitive when asking questions. Don't ask questions that would have been considered rude or inappropriate within your friendship before they came out to you.
- Your friend may not want you to do anything. They may just need someone to listen and be positive.
- Offer to support your friend in whatever way they need, for example support them in coming out to others or to their families. Help them to find information on local LGBT groups and offer to accompany them if they want to have a friend with them.
- Learn more about LGBT issues and the LGBT community. This will help you to better understand and support your friend. But remember that everyone's experience is different.
- Continue to do what you have always done together. LGBT people often fear that coming out will change everything in their lives and this can be frightening. If you have always played football with your friend on Saturday, continue to do this.
- Be a LGBT Ally. Challenge homophobic comments and attitudes and help to create LGBT friendly environments.
- It's never too late. If someone has come out to you before and you reacted badly, you can always contact them and try again.