

WHEN SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU COMES OUT: FOR FRIENDS

When a LGBT person tells you he/she/ze is LGBT, try to be aware and or remember that:

The LGBT person is apt to have spent many hours in thoughtful preparation and shares the information with a keen awareness of the possible risks.

There is no way for the LGBT person to predict your reaction accurately. You have spent your entire life in a society that teaches you to despise LGBT people. The LGBT person has no way of knowing in advance how able you will feel to throw off those years of training and respond spontaneously and gratefully to such an intimate offering of self.

It is important to understand that the LGBT person has not changed. You may be shocked by their revelation, but remember that this is still the same person from before. Don't let the shock lead you to view the LGBT person as suddenly different or bad. You now know that this person can love someone of the same gender completely; you have no reason to believe suddenly that this person is morally depraved or emotionally unbalanced.

Don't ask questions that would have been considered rude within the relationship before this disclosure. This person has the same sensibilities as before. However, you may well need to do some "catching up." Some common questions are:

- How long have you known you were LGBT?
- Is there someone special in your life?
- Has it been hard for you carrying this secret?
- Is there some way I can help you?
- Have I ever offended you unknowingly?

Be honest and open about your feelings. It makes the sharing more complete and makes change possible. If you find it hard to believe, say so. If you find you are reacting with emotional repugnance but you want to learn more so that you can throw off your own prejudice, say so. If your feelings are totally negative, you can say that too. It is a possibility that the LGBT person has certainly considered and risked. But in fairness to yourself, admit aloud that negative feelings may change, so the LGBT person will leave the door open for you to return if you are able to get past your training. We LGBT people are accustomed to hurt, but with someone close, the rejection may hurt too much, and we may have to get away.

Source: unknown

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