

## 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 LGB T 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 L GBT 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



Parents, Families & Friends  
of Lesbians and Gay

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## WHEN SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU COMES OUT: FOR PARENTS

Some of you may be feeling homophobic now or may have to deal with people that are homophobic. To help your parents or a friend's parents, the following list, by Dr. Charles Silverstein, donates dos and don'ts to help them come to grips with the reality of their children's homosexuality. This list may also be helpful to you as well.

- Don't rush the process of trying to understand your child's homosexuality. Do take the time to seek information about the lives of LGBT people from other parents of LGBTs, friends of your LGBT child, literature and, most of all, from your own son or daughter.
- Don't criticize your son or daughter for being different. Do listen to what your son's or daughter's life is like and what kind of experiences he or she has had in the world.
- Don't blame your own feelings on your child. Do accept that you are responsible for your negative reactions.
- Don't expect your children to make up for your own failures in life. Do help your child to set his or her individual goals, even though these may differ drastically from your own.
- Don't try to force your child to conform to your ideas of proper sexual behavior. Do try to develop trust and openness by allowing your child to make his or her own decisions.
- Don't blame yourself that your son or daughter is gay, lesbian or bisexual. Do be proud of your child's capacity to having loving relationships.
- Don't respond to anger with anger. Do look for the injured feelings underneath the anger and respond to them.
- Don't discriminate against your own child. Do defend him or her against discrimination.
- Don't demand that your son or daughter live up to your idea of what a man or woman should be. Do allow your child to develop his or her own personality.
- Don't try to break up love relationships. Do respect your child's right to find out how to choose the right person to love and how to make relationships last. Don't insist that your morality is the only right one. Do say "love you."
- Don't assume that your child should see a professional psychotherapist. Do get professional help for anyone in the family, including yourself, who becomes severely depressed over your child's homosexuality.

Source: Dr. Charles Silverstein



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