

Where can I find more information?

For more information on LGBT issues; questions regarding OHIO SafeZone, SpeakOUT!, and campus organizations; or to check-out a book, magazine, or video from our Resource Library; visit the LGBT Center.



The OHIO SafeZone project is a voluntary, educational effort to support LGBT & Questioning students, faculty, and staff at Ohio University by attending a two hour workshop and by displaying a SafeZone card. If you are an LGBT supporter, it is time to act!

SpeakOUT!

Speaker's Bureau & Education Project

SpeakOUT! is a dynamic speaker's bureau and education project that has been assisting class instructors, student organizations, and resident assistants with their speaker/education needs for years. Formats include a panel presentation, Coming Out 101, or tailor-made presentations.

Resource Library

Our Resource Library is a collection of books, magazines, and videos on a variety of topics including LGBT history, legislation, biographies, fiction, and religion in relation to LGBT concerns, as well as coming out resources. Check it out today!

Campus Resources

If you, or a friend, are struggling with issues surrounding one's sexuality, stop by the LGBT Center and schedule a meeting with Mickey Hart. This will allow for the opportunity to discuss issues you are facing in terms of questioning your sexual orientation or coming out as a bisexual or transgender person. You are not alone! You do not have to face this alone! Check the LGBT Center's website for more resources at www.ohio.edu/lgbt.

Hudson Health Center:

Counseling and Psychological Services

A great service that is sometimes overlooked is that Counseling and Psychological Services on the third floor of the Hudson Health Center. Their services are free to students and they have a great staff of counselors who are queer-friendly. Appointments can be made on the third floor during office hours. Phone: 740.593.1616. Website: <http://www.ohiou.edu/counseling/>



OHIO
UNIVERSITY

COMING OUT: THE BASICS

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Center

354 Baker Center
Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701

740.593.0239
www.ohio.edu/lgbt

Are you in the process of coming out as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person? Has someone that you love recently come out to you? Do you need some basic information about the coming out process? This brochure was written with you in mind.

Coming out of the closet

Many people have closets—safe, comfortable places—where they hide some aspect of their lives. Because our society allows discriminatory practices like homophobia (fear of homosexuals) and transphobia (fear of transgender individuals), many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people believe that they need to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity.

What is even more painful is that many internalize the negative attitudes and end up hating themselves and others who are LGBT. Often these people think that they are somehow less of a person. “Coming out of the closet” for LGBT people is letting go of the negative stereotypes and beginning the process of discovering, accepting, and celebrating their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The coming out process can be an exciting and liberating experience while at the same time being a long, difficult process. LGBT individuals first have to come out to themselves, which means that they must deal with negative stereotypes and homophobic/transphobic attitudes that they learned while growing up, then develop a positive sexual or gender identity.

Some researchers look at coming out as a process and have identified stages that many people go through while coming out. This process might include stages of confusion, comparison, and/or mere tolerance of LGBT people at first. Finally, LGBT people are able to integrate their identities and move to the stage of self-acceptance, pride, and even celebration.

Who to come out to?

LGBT people, at some stage of the coming out process, will start making decisions about which friends and family members they will tell about their sexual orientation or gender identity. There are many reasons for coming out, such as honesty (not “hiding”) and wholeness (not feeling disconnected from a part of oneself or living a “double life”). Some people come out dramatically in a public setting. Others carefully select whom they privately come out to.

Being LGBT is not a “lifestyle;” it’s life

It is sometimes said that LGBT individuals live an LGBT “lifestyle,” a word chosen to trivialize and to imply that all LGBT people subscribe to the same values, characteristics, and dreams. The fact is, LGBT individuals are not all the same any more than heterosexuals are. Some have lifelong relationships, and some do not. Some wear distinctive clothing, and some do not. Some are liberal, and some are conservative. Some are affluent, and others are poor.

Some top LGBT talent

If anyone ever suggests that your life will not add up to anything if you are LGBT, remind them that Sappho, Plato, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci were not straight. Bayard Rustin, a leader of the black civil rights movement was also gay, and so were Oscar Wilde, Gertrude Stein, Marcel Proust and James Baldwin. Famous jazz musician Billy Tipton was a transgender individual. Shakespeare wrote about a man’s love for a man. Poet Emily Dickinson wrote about her love for a woman.

Edited from materials from:

- <http://www.yffn.org/ncod/facts.html>
- *The staff of LGBT Student Services at Iowa State University, lgbtss@iastate.edu, www.public.iastate.edu/~deanstdt_info/lgbss_home.html*

When someone comes out

When an LGBT individual comes out to someone, that person may feel shocked, flattered, uncomfortable, angry, disgusted, confused, honored, supportive, or unsure of what to say. Some people have no idea what it means to be a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person. If you are in the process of coming out, you may need to fill them in on what it means to you.

When someone comes out to you, they are probably looking for an acknowledgement of their feelings, acceptance, support, and understanding. Many LGBT people come out to others hoping for affirmation that the friendship or family relationship will not be negatively affected. One of the best ways that you can react is to hug this person and smile. Realize that the person may have spent a lot of time deciding how to share this information with you and that this person is all too aware of the risk being taken. If you don’t know what to say, say so! If you need some time to let the news sink in, say so! If you have no idea what being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender means to them, ask!

There are many resources for those who are coming out and for those who have had a friend or family member come out to them. An important thing to do is to locate people who are likely to be supportive of you. Friends and family members can call their local P-FLAG (Parents, Friends, and Families of Lesbians and Gays) chapter. Ohio University students who are just coming out may want to join a support group to talk about the issues that surround the coming out process.

If you or someone you know is in the process of coming out, there is a group specifically for discussing those issues: “Out & About.” More details about group are on the back of this brochure. Also, check the LGBT Center’s website for more information: <http://www.ohio.edu/lgbt>.