

SUPPORT SOMEONE COMING OUT

10 ways to support someone coming out as LGBTQI+

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE




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The Safe Space Alliance is a LGBTQI+ led nonprofit organisation that aims to help people identify, navigate, and create safe spaces for LGBTQI+ communities worldwide. Being part of the Safe Space Alliance is being part of a global and collaborative safe space community.

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Supporting someone who is coming out as LGBTQI+ is a sensitive and important process. Coming out is a personal decision and the individual should have full agency over their own journey.

OVERVIEW

This guide covers ten ways you can support someone coming out:

- ① Provide reassurance
- ② Be patient
- ③ Create a safe environment
- ④ Listen and validate
- ⑤ Share resources
- ⑥ Be mindful of privacy
- ⑦ Educate yourself
- ⑧ Offer emotional support
- ⑨ Celebrate courage
- ⑩ Continue to be an ally

1. PROVIDE REASSURANCE

Assure them you accept and support them unconditionally. Reaffirm that they are not alone and that you will be there to support them throughout their coming out process.

SUGGESTIONS



Engage in active listening by giving the person your full attention.



Regularly check-in with the person to see how they are doing and if they need any further support.





2. BE PATIENT

Coming out is a personal journey that takes time and self-reflection. Be patient and understanding, allowing them to proceed at their own pace. Let them know that you are there for them regardless of when or how they choose to come out.

SUGGESTIONS



When you feel impatience rising, take a moment to pause and reflect.



Instead of jumping to judgement strive to understand the reasons behind their behaviour.

3. CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Foster a safe, non-judgmental, and supportive environment where the person feels comfortable discussing the coming out process. Assure them that they can trust you with their feelings and experiences.

SUGGESTIONS



Listen attentively and with an open mind when they are speaking.



Seek to understand their perspective and emotions. Put yourself in their shoes and validate their experiences.



Be mindful of your language and use inclusive terminology that respects and affirms their identity/identities.



Foster an environment where open communication and feedback is encouraged. Create opportunities for them to express their thoughts, ideas, and concerns without fear of reprisal.

4. LISTEN AND VALIDATE



Be an attentive and non-judgmental listener. Allow them to express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns without interruption or pressure. Validate their experiences, emotions, and identity, emphasising that you accept them for who they are.

SUGGESTIONS



Keep an open mind and be receptive to different ideas, beliefs, and experiences.



Maintain eye contact, nod, and use facial expressions that show you are engaged and interested in what the person is saying.



5. SHARE RESOURCES

Provide them with reliable and relevant resources such as books, articles, websites, or support groups that can offer additional guidance, information, and community. This can help them feel connected and better informed about LGBTQI+ communities.

6. BE MINDFUL OF PRIVACY

Respect the individual's privacy and confidentiality. Do not share their personal information without their explicit consent. Ensure that any discussions or support you provide are done in a confidential and secure environment.

SUGGESTIONS



Whether in-person or online, respect the boundaries they establish.



If you have concerns about privacy or boundaries, communicate openly and respectfully with them.





7. EDUCATE YOURSELF

Educate yourself about different aspects of LGBTQI+ identities, experiences, and challenges. This knowledge will help you provide informed support, answer questions, and address concerns effectively.

SUGGESTIONS



Explore books, articles, and literature on the coming out experience by LGBTQI+ authors.



Join online forums where LGBTQI+ people and allies come together to share experiences and insights.

8. OFFER EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Provide emotional support throughout their coming out process. Reassure them that you are there for them, and remind them of your unconditional support. Offer encouragement, understanding, and reassurance during both challenging and celebratory moments.

SUGGESTIONS




Acknowledge and validate their emotions and experiences.



Encourage them to express themselves by asking open-ended questions that invite them to share more about their experiences.

9. CELEBRATE COURAGE



Once they come out, celebrate their identity/identities and the courage it took for them to share them with you. Express your support, pride, and happiness for their journey of self-discovery and authenticity.

SUGGESTIONS



Write a heartfelt message or create a collage of positive affirmations to remind them of their strength and resilience.



Plan an outing that celebrates their coming out. It could be a day trip, a fun activity, or attending an LGBTQI+ event together.



10. CONTINUE TO BE AN ALLY

Offer ongoing support beyond the initial coming out process. Check in with them regularly, be available to discuss their experiences, and continue advocating for LGBTQI+ rights and inclusivity.

Remember, every individual's coming out process is unique, and they should have agency over their own journey. Respect their decisions, be patient, and continue to offer support even after their initial disclosure.

Being an affirming and understanding presence can make a tremendous difference in someone's coming out experience.





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