

Questions LGBT Youth and Young Adults Need to Consider Before Coming Out to Parents

Are you sure about your sexual orientation?

Don't raise the issue unless you're able to respond with confidence to the question "Are you sure?" Confusion on your part will increase your parents' confusion and decrease their confidence in your conclusions.

Are you comfortable with your gay identity?

If you're wrestling with guilt and periods of depression, you'll be better off waiting to tell your parents. Coming out to them may require tremendous energy on your part; it will require a reserve of positive self-image.

Do you have support?

In the event that your parents' reaction devastates you, there should be someone or a group that you can confidently turn to for emotional support and strength. Maintaining your sense of self-worth is critical.

Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality?

Your parents will probably respond based on a lifetime of information from a homophobic society. If you've done some serious reading on the subject, you'll be able to assist them by sharing reliable information and research.

What's the emotional climate at home?

If you have the choice of when to tell, consider the timing. Choose a time when they're not dealing with such matters as the death of a close friend, pending surgery, or the loss of a job.

Can you be patient?

Your parents will require time to deal with this information if they haven't considered it prior to your sharing. The process may last from six months to two years.

What's your motive for coming out now?

Hopefully, it is because you love them and are uncomfortable with the distance you feel. Never come out in anger or during an argument, using your sexuality as a weapon.

Do you have available resources?

Homosexuality is a subject most non-gay people know little about. Have available at least one of the following: a book addressed to parents, a contact for the local or national Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gays (PFLAG), or the name of a non-gay counselor who can deal fairly with the issue.

Are you financially dependent on your parents?

If you suspect they are capable of withdrawing college finances or forcing you out of the house, you may choose to wait until they do not have this weapon to hold over you.

What is your general relationship with your parents?

If you've gotten along well and have always known their love and shared your love for them in return, chances are they'll be able to deal with the issue in a positive way.

What is their moral societal view?

If they tend to see social issues in clear terms of good/bad or holy/sinful, you may anticipate that they will have serious problems dealing with your sexuality. If, however, they've evidenced a degree of flexibility when dealing with other changing societal matters, you may be able to anticipate a willingness to work this through with you.

Is this your decision?

Not everyone should come out to her/his parents. Don't be pressured into it if you're not sure you'll be better off by doing so, no matter what their response.

-- Texas A&M University, Gay and Lesbian Student Services Speaker's Bureau Manual