

Do's and Don'ts – How to respond to someone Coming Out

Some people may find it a challenge knowing how to react when someone comes out to them. One thing to keep in mind is that it may have taken a lot of internal anxiety and preparation to take the decision to tell you. Take your time, listen to them and show that you are supportive of them.

- Do listen to what they are saying without interrupting
- Do respect confidentiality
- Do thank them for telling you
- Do offer opportunities to talk about it, without being forceful
- Do make sure that they know where to get support and help them if they don't
- Do use gender neutral language
- Do ask about preferred name and pronouns if appropriate
- Do get informed and knowledgeable
- Do challenge homo/trans phobia
- Don't minimise their coming out e.g. by saying you 'already knew' or that 'it's no big deal' or by changing the subject without acknowledging what they've said
- Don't ask invasive or personal questions, unless you previously had the kind of relationship where you discussed personal or private details
- Don't make assumptions about lifestyle and choices e.g. because they have a same-sex partner they will not have a family or children at some point
- Don't discuss their identity with people they haven't come out to
- Don't misgender people, by using the wrong pronouns or name



Guide to being a good LGBTQ+ ally

Display a Friends of Out@UCL sticker

- On your office door, laptop, lab entrance, work station etc.
- For many LGBTQ+ people, a visible sign that you are an ally can be reassuring

Include the Friends of Out@UCL logo in your email signature

- Anyone you send an email to will know you are an ally
- This is particularly beneficial for people who can't travel in to the University

Use inclusive language

- Inclusive language helps everyone to feel they belong and raises awareness for those who routinely assume everyone is straight
- Use 'everyone' instead of ladies and gentlemen
- Use 'people' instead of men and women
- When discussing people's relationships use 'partner' instead of 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'
- Don't presume everyone has/wants a significant other

Make pronouns a part of your introduction

- When introducing yourself to someone try saying 'my name is (xxxxxxx), and my pronouns are (she/her, he/him, they/them, xe/xir etc.)'
- This normalises language for people who may use gender-neutral pronouns, or for people who may use pronouns that don't match what we expect based on their appearance

Don't make assumptions

- Unless someone tells you, don't assume you know what they identify as or with
- They may be looking for support in coming out, and not making assumptions gives them space to take things at their own pace

Call out harassment

- If anyone is using discriminatory language whether or not it is directed at someone specific, call them out
- Jokes can count as harassment if they mock or otherwise belittle a person with a protected characteristic

Encourage people to learn more

- Promote training courses where people can learn more about the LGBTQ+ community e.g. the Friends of Out@UCL ally course (via UCL training booking system) or Trans Awareness: The Basics (via Arena Essentials)
- Encourage people to attend events such as those held during LGBT History Month, and Pride Week
- By reading books, novels or watching films with LGBTQ+ characters or themes

Offer support in coming out

- If an LGBTQ+ person expresses an interest in coming out to other people offer support if they want it

Attend networking events

- Go along to events for LGBTQ+ people and allies. It will allow people to recognise you as an ally

Offer support to other allies

- Some people may want to be a good ally, but not know where to start
- Be available to help them out, and give them any tips

Be Up-To-Date on resources

- Keep yourself up-to-date regarding policy and resources for LGBTQ+ individuals
- If possible keep fliers or leaflets somewhere that you can give out when relevant

Confront your own bias

- Many of us have been exposed to negative stereotypes and misrepresentations of the LGBTQ+ community through the media, and our own family and friends
- It is important to continually be aware of and confront our prejudices, by checking our own actions and thought