

Coming Out at Work

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Being open at work can be a daunting challenge. But it can also relieve the daily stress of hiding who you are. At the same time, however, no one wants to put their job security or opportunity for advancement in jeopardy. So here are some things to think about as you consider whether or not to come out at work:

Questions to Ask

- Does your employer have a written non-discrimination policy? Does it specifically cover sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression? Does insurance cover domestic partner benefits? Does health coverage cover transitioning costs?
- Is there a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employee resource group at your workplace?
- What's the overall climate in your workplace? Do people tend to make derogatory comments or jokes? Are any of your co-workers openly LGBTQ+?
- What are your work relationships like? Do people discuss their personal lives? Are they asking questions about yours? Is the atmosphere friendly or guarded?
- Does your state or locality have a [non-discrimination law](#) including sexual orientation and gender identity/expression?
- Is your company ranked on the Human Rights Campaign [Corporate Equality Index](#)? If so, what rating has it earned?

Moving Forward

Once you've assessed your workplace atmosphere, here are some practical steps to take:

- Identify someone who is LGBTQ+ or LGBTQ+-supportive, and talk to them first.
- Take a breath. People will often take their cues from you on how to talk and feel about LGBTQ+ issues. The more casual you are, the more likely they are to follow your lead.
- Make a plan.
- Talk about LGBTQ+-related news stories, movies, TV shows or other topics as a way to signal your views or start the conversation.
- Bring a partner or date to company functions, or have them meet you at work one day.
- Put an HRC sticker and/or a picture of your partner on your desk.

Benefits of Being Open at Work

- Eliminates the need to hide or mislead.
- Makes deeper friendships possible.
- Breaks down barriers to understanding.
- Builds trusting working relationships.
- Let us bring our "whole selves" to work.
- Being open can make you more productive, and can even benefit your career and can even benefit your career because your peers will see you in new, perhaps even courageous light.