



LGBTQ+ COMING OUT

“WHAT IF...” SAFETY PLAN

This is not an exhaustive list. Each person is going to have unique barriers and situations that need to be addressed.

If you're interested in confidential advocacy, emotional support, or resource referral, please fill out our [Connect with The Care Center](#) form or call the Care Line at 702-895-0602 for immediate assistance. If you are looking for support with navigating UNLV systems, you can contact the [Office of Student Diversity & Social Justice](#).

BEFORE

- ☐ Remember that you are never obligated to disclose your identity. You can do so when and if you feel comfortable.
- ☐ There is no right or wrong way to come out, it can be a quick process, a long process or a lifelong process.
- ☐ Your identity is valid and regardless of what reactions your family or community has, they don't have a say in **your** identity.
 - ☐ It's also okay to take time to explore your identity. If you're not feeling confident, that doesn't take away from who you identify as. It may just mean you need more time. Talk to others with shared identities and experiences, research, follow LGTBQ+ folks online, etc.
- ☐ Take a moment to think about what reactions may appear. It may be scary—which is why we hope you don't do this alone—but thinking about the worst case scenario can help prepare you for anything.
- ☐ Decide by what means do you want to come out
 - ☐ In person may carry physical risks
 - ☐ Over the phone may carry emotional and psychological risks
 - ☐ Via email or a handwritten letter can carry the same as over the phone, however, those emails or letters can also be shared which may not be the best if fear of being outed to others is present
- ☐ Timing
 - ☐ Choose a time of day and year that is safest and easiest for you
 - ☐ Holidays can be stressful
 - ☐ Disclosing before school or work can impact the rest of your day and limit your time frame
- ☐ Maybe you're worried that you will be kicked out, physical violence will occur, or shaming and emotional abuse will be present. All of these are valid fears.
 - ☐ If this is a concern, please contact an advocate as soon as possible.
 - ☐ Identify these fears and possible reactions and write them down
 - ☐ If you identify getting kicked out as a possibility, work with someone to identify an alternative housing situation (another family member, a friend's place, a shelter, a hotel, etc.).
**It's important that the alternative housing situation is safe and inclusive as well.*

- ☐ The best way to predict a reaction is based on history. Has this person/people acted violently before or done things to suggest they would react in a hostile manner? If so, it is likely that they're reaction will be just that.
 - ☐ Based on this, you may want to create affirmations to address the emotionally violent reactions. Affirmations are reminders of the truth. For example, "I am worthy of love and respect."
- ☐ If you decide to disclose your identity, it may be helpful to practice the conversation with someone else.
 - ☐ In the practice conversation, try to navigate all possible reactions.
 - ☐ Having a script may ease anxiety or discomfort (slightly or a lot)
- ☐ Identify risks
 - ☐ Are you disclosing to your place of work or will they find out?
 - ☐ Are you protected by policy and procedure? If not, you may want to identify a legal advocate to assist you.
 - ☐ A legal advocate or attorney may be found by working with the LGBTQ & Gender Program Coordinator, a Care Advocate, possibly your own HR department or you may visit [Gender Justice](#) or the [Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada](#).
 - ☐ If you are worried about your workplace responding in a hostile manner, and you're able to, you may want to search for other LGBTQ+ affirming workplaces.
 - ☐ What is the office culture like? Have you already experienced racism, sexism or other oppression?
 - ☐ The way you navigate that, can be applied when coming out.
 - ☐ Do you live on your own or is your name on a lease?
 - ☐ Is there concern that your landlord may react violently? (This is an especially common risk for QTIPOC.)
 - ☐ If you can, a legal advocate may help in addressing your rights.
 - ☐ A legal advocate or attorney may be found by working with the LGBTQ & Gender Program Coordinator, a Care Advocate, possibly your own HR department or you may visit [Gender Justice](#) or the [Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada](#).
 - ☐ If risk of being kicked out is high, plan for alternative housing.
 - *Not always accessible
 - ☐ Is it possible you could lose your financial aid because the person you're disclosing to holds vital information or is required to sign off?
 - ☐ If so, you can decide if disclosing is the option you want right now, or if identifying an outside support group may be helpful.
 - ☐ If possible, you may plan a move so that you are no longer considered a "dependent".
 - ☐ Research scholarship opportunities to substitute Financial Aid
- ☐ Identify your boundaries
 - ☐ What are you willing to answer or share, and what are you not? Again you don't have to share or say anything that you don't want to.
 - ☐ If you want to answer questions or educate (not your job), researching beforehand can provide tangible resources that others can utilize to educate themselves.

DURING

- ☐ If you have decided to disclose and the person/people you are disclosing to have demonstrated bigotry in the past, here are a few things to think about for harm reduction:
 - ☐ Identify an ally that you can trust to be with you when you disclose.
 - ☐ It may be most helpful to pick an ally that has a relationship to the person you are disclosing to. They may be able to pick up on escalation or have the ability to calm the other person down.
 - ☐ If you don't have an available ally, identify someone who can check in on you before and after the conversation. Give them a deadline to expect to hear from you and share what you would like them to do if they don't hear from you by that time.
 - ☐ If disclosing at your place or your shared place, pick a room that has an accessible exit for you.
 - ☐ If there are multiple floors, the first floor usually offers an easier exit.
 - ☐ Keep in mind how long it may take you to get to the exit and what devices you may need to get there.
 - ☐ Identify where, once you leave, you will go and how you will get there.
 - ☐ If disclosing at your place or your shared place, avoid rooms with weapons.
 - ☐ Kitchens are usually more dangerous due to knives and other potentially dangerous weapons.
 - ☐ If there are any firearms there and you know where they are, avoid those rooms.
 - ☐ Have a bag with your important belongings ready to go so you can exit quickly
 - ☐ Phone and charger
 - ☐ Birth Certificate or other Documentation
 - ☐ Medical Records
 - ☐ Prescriptions
 - ☐ School documents
 - ☐ Clothes
 - ☐ Money and or cards
 - ☐ Textbooks, homework, laptop/tablet
 - ☐ Car keys, bus passes
 - ☐ If the person you are disclosing to has drug or alcohol addictions, try to identify a time where they are either not under the influence or not as severely under the influence.
 - ☐ Drugs and alcohol are not causes of violence but they are accelerators.

AFTER

- ☐ Coming out can be physically, emotionally and psychologically taxing.
 - ☐ If you have access to a counselor, therapist or other healing provider, you may want to make an appointment for later that day or soon after.
 - ☐ If you do not have access, you may want to schedule a meetup or phone conversation with a friend.
- ☐ Engage in self-soothing activities like eating your favorite food, listening to your favorite music, reading your favorite book, playing your favorite video game, watching your favorite show, etc.
- ☐ If you can surround yourself with people who share your identity(ies) this can be extremely reaffirming.