

# COMING OUT

## TELLING OTHERS - FACT SHEET



BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY'S  
HEALTH & WELLBEING

### Telling Others

Once you have decided to tell others about your sexuality and have considered the possible consequences (see Coming Out), it is important to think about how you are going to tell someone.

There are many different ways to do this and the best method for your situation will depend on your preferences and how you think the other person may react. How you approach telling someone will also be different depending on the context, for example telling your doctor is likely to be a very different experience to telling your parents.

Over time telling people that you are same-sex attracted will become easier and you will discover the methods that suit you best.

### Methods of Telling People

#### Face to face

Telling someone in person is probably the most common way of coming out and it has a lot of benefits while also presenting some challenges.

It will allow you to gauge their reaction better as well as being able to provide information and comfort if needed.

At least initially it can be quite stressful to tell someone face to face. It is possible that the person you are telling may become upset or angry and it is important to consider this before you tell them. Even if their reaction isn't entirely negative they may still be shocked and it is important that you are prepared for these responses.

It is also important to think about where you are going to tell the person. For instance if you believe the person may have a strong negative reaction then it might be good to tell them in a public place so that you can leave easily if necessary. Telling someone while they are driving a car should also be avoided!

#### By email or a letter

This method has the benefit of allowing you to spend time working out exactly what you want to say and how. It also gives the person you're telling time to think about their response.

#### Over the telephone

Telling someone over the phone can be a good balance as it allows you to express yourself in your own words in real time and answer any questions the other person may have while also allowing you to be in a safe place to have the discussion. Some issues to be aware of: make sure the person is in a good position to be having this type of conversation (eg. not doing the shopping), make sure you have credit on your phone if calling from a mobile (you don't want to be cut off half way through) and be in a quiet place so you can hear each other properly.

#### Having somebody else tell them

This can be useful if you are expecting a bad reaction, however some people may be offended if you don't tell them yourself (particularly if they have a positive reaction). It also means putting a friend or family member in the position of dealing with any emotional fallout that person has, so it is important that they be comfortable doing this and are able to answer some of the common questions that arise.

#### In front of a group of people like at a dinner party

If you would like to tell a group of people at the same time you could organise a dinner or barbeque and make the announcement during this time. This has the benefit of telling a whole lot of people at one time. However it might be hard to gauge everyone's reaction and see how they are dealing with it. You need to think very carefully about how you think everyone is going to react and if you have doubts about a particular person this may not be the best method. If someone does have a bad reaction you may be quite exposed as the centre of attention and it may even cause conflict between the guests.

It would be wise to avoid doing this at big family events such as Christmas or birthday parties. If you do choose this method, it should be at a time you have specifically arranged.

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### Some situations you may want to avoid:

#### **During a fight**

If you are having an argument with someone it is likely that emotions are running high and each of you may say something you regret. The other person may not be in the frame of mind to deal with what you are telling them, which will increase the likelihood of a negative reaction. Also you don't want to use your sexuality as a weapon to attack other people.

#### **Not being able to get away**

It is important that you are able to have some space after you tell someone, which means it might be best to avoid doing while on a holiday.

#### **What do if you do get a negative reaction**

If you do get a negative reaction speak to someone who can support you like a counsellor or a friend or family member who already knows.

Also give the person that you've come out to some time and space to deal with their own emotions before speaking to them about it again.

If you have experienced a negative reaction you can talk to someone about it over the phone by calling the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service on (02) 8594 9596. If you would like to speak to someone in person you can organise to speak to a counselor at ACON by calling (02) 9206 2000.

