

COMING OUT GUIDE, CHECKLIST & CONSIDERATIONS

Safety & Wellness Guides for Queer Zimbabweans

Coming out is about embracing your authentic self and deciding how to share your identity with others. It's a choice that belongs entirely to you. Many people don't feel the need to come out, and that's okay too. Whether you choose to come out or not, your identity is valid, and the decision is yours to make. There's no single way to do it, and the process is as unique as you are. This guide is here to help you think through your options, plan ahead, and prioritize your safety and well-being.

KEY POINTS

- There's no right or wrong way to come out.
- You decide when, where, and how.
- It's okay to take your time or change your mind.
- It's okay to not see the need to come out or share your identity with people

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Your safety and well-being should always come first. Sometimes, coming out doesn't go as planned, and people's reactions may not align with your hopes. Negative reactions are not your fault, and you deserve acceptance and love.

PREPARING FOR SAFETY

- Identify trusted people who can support you.
- Make a backup plan for housing, food, school, or transportation, if necessary.
- Know your local and online LGBTQ+ resources for help before, during, and after coming out.
- Remember that you don't owe anyone more information than you're comfortable sharing.



CONSIDERATIONS

Coming out can happen in many ways:

- Calling someone on the phone.
- Sending a text or email.
- Writing a letter.
- Talking in person.

PLANNING AHEAD

Taking time to think about what you want to say and practicing with someone supportive can make the process smoother. Here are some reflective questions to merge safety and planning:

- How do I want to come out?
- What would I say to someone?
- What are the potential risks, and how can I mitigate them?
- How can I prepare emotionally and practically?

DRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE

Your approach may vary depending on the person you're coming out to. For example:

- Christian families: Frame the conversation in terms of love, authenticity, and God's acceptance.
- Traditional or cultural families: Highlight values of honesty, family strength, or community resilience.
- Close friends or peers: Use a casual, straightforward tone, focusing on trust and friendship.

REACTIONS FROM FRIENDS & FAMILY

Everyone's circumstances and reasons for coming out are different. It's helpful to think about the range of possible reactions, both positive and negative:

- What are some encouraging responses I might hear?
- How might someone react negatively?
- What do I know about the person's views on LGBTQ+ topics?
- How do I want them to respond, ideally?

TESTING THE WATERS

Before coming out, you might want to gauge someone's attitude toward LGBTQ+ issues. Here are a few ways to "test the waters":

- Bring up an LGBTQ+ celebrity or news story and note their reaction.
- Ask how they feel about marriage equality.
- Listen to their comments about LGBTQ+ topics in general.

TIMING AND LOCATION

Choosing the right moment and place can make a big difference. Consider these questions:

- What time of day feels best? (e.g., after school, during dinner)
- Does this season or event feel appropriate? (e.g., holidays, casual hangouts)
- Would I prefer a public or private space?
- Is there a special location for us to talk?

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Think about who in your life can offer support. These could be:

- Friends (in person or online), classmates, teammates.
- Teachers, counselors, doctors, coworkers.
- Family members, caretakers, or neighbors.
- Spiritual or community leaders.

PRACTICING SELF-CARE

Coming out can be an emotional experience. Prioritize self-care to stay grounded. Here are some ideas:

- Spend time in nature or with pets.
- Express yourself through art, music, or journaling.
- Try meditation, yoga, or other mindfulness practices.
- Lean on trusted friends, family, or support groups.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Part of coming out might involve exploring relationships. Healthy connections are built on trust, mutual respect, and open communication. Remember:

- You deserve to feel safe and valued.
- Boundaries and consent are essential in any relationship.
- If something feels wrong, it's okay to step back and reassess.

RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

If you feel overwhelmed or need support, reach out to:

- GALZ
- Pakasipiti.

AFFIRMATIONS

- "I am worthy of love and acceptance."
- "My identity is valid, no matter what."
- "I have the right to share my truth in my own time."
- "I am not alone; support is available."