



**COMING
OUT!**

ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE
QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE

***I THINK I MIGHT BE
GAY OR BI. HOW CAN
I BE SURE?***

If you fancy someone of the same sex it may mean that you are lesbian, gay or bisexual. It's not unusual to be attracted to someone of the same sex at some point in your life. Being lesbian, or gay or bisexual means that these feelings go beyond a one off crush.

You shouldn't feel under any pressure to decide if you are gay or bi, or to attach a label to your feelings if it makes you feel uncomfortable. The important thing is to allow yourself time and space to explore how you feel. Coming out (telling other people you're gay or bisexual) is different for everyone and you'll know when it's the right time for you.

COULD IT JUST BE A PHASE?

Growing up can be a confusing time, particularly where feelings are concerned. Sometimes people fancy someone of the same sex but may not be sure that they are gay or bi. Some people know that they are gay from an early age and others at a much later stage.

Some people are bisexual – this means being attracted to people of more than one gender.

Being bisexual isn't a phase on the way to becoming 'fully gay' like some people think.

At the end of the day, no one knows you better than you know yourself.

Don't let people tell you it's a phase when you know it's not!

WHAT WILL MY FRIENDS SAY?

Most lesbian, gay and bisexual people worry about how their friends will react when they come out. Your friends might be surprised, have lots of questions, not know what to say or even have guessed already! At first, choose a friend you trust and who you think will be supportive. Think about how you'll answer some of the things they might ask like, 'how do you know?'

If one of your mates reacts badly, remember they might just need some time to absorb what you've told them. If they don't change their mind they're probably not a friend worth having anyway.

Although you can't predict what people will say or do, when you tell a close friend that you trust, the chances are they'll be pleased you've shared something so personal with them.

HOW DO I TELL MY FAMILY?

There's no right or wrong way or time to tell your family that you're lesbian, gay or bisexual. However, it's a good idea to take time to think about what you want to say. Coming out when you're arguing or angry isn't a good idea!

Some people tell their parents face to face while others prefer to write a letter or send an email. Whichever way you choose, you'll probably be a bit nervous. You might want to talk to a friend about it or think about what you'll actually say. Whatever way you decide it's not usually a good idea to tell your family during a row or when you're angry.

Remember, millions of people have gone through this before. **Your parents might be shocked, worried or find it difficult to accept at first. Remember, their first reaction isn't necessarily how they'll feel forever. They might just need a bit of time to process what you've told them. The thing most parents worry about is that their children are happy!**

Just in case things don't go as well as you hoped, there are people and organisations (like Stonewall and FFLAG) that you can talk to.

DOES THIS MEAN I WON'T BE ABLE TO GET MARRIED OR HAVE CHILDREN?

Same-sex couples can get married just like opposite-sex couples. When it comes to getting married in church or other places of worship, it may be slightly trickier but rest assured, you have lots of options!

These days it's much easier for same-sex couples to have children than ever before. Like most things in life, you'll need to do some planning, but same-sex couples can now adopt and use fertility services (which help people have children naturally).

Stonewall has produced guides to explain the different ways lesbian, gay and bisexual people can have children.

The bottom line is that being lesbian, gay or bisexual won't stop you from marrying the person you love or raising a family just like anyone else!

WHAT WILL MY RELIGION SAY?

In all religions there are specific groups for people who are lesbian, gay and bisexual. This means that, with a little bit of research, you can find a place of worship where you will feel welcome and you don't have to worship anywhere that you don't.

Some places of worship might hold anti-gay views but that doesn't mean the whole of your religion is anti-gay.

Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but being religious is never an excuse for being a bully.

Most people of faith won't care whether you're lesbian, gay or bisexual. After all, religion is all about love and acceptance!

WON'T LIFE BE TOUGHER FOR ME?

Most lesbian, gay and bisexual people actually feel happier after coming out. It means that they can focus on the things they enjoy such as their friends, family and career without having to hide who they are.

New laws mean that our country is a much better place for lesbian, gay and bisexual people than ever before. It's actually against the law to discriminate against gay and bi people at school, in university, at work and when delivering

services. Hotels for instance are not allowed to turn same-sex couples away if they want to book a room together.

You've probably noticed there are more openly lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the arts, politics, sports, on TV and in all areas of life than ever before too! **A minority of people still don't accept lesbian, gay and bisexual people but this number is getting smaller and smaller all the time.**

WHAT IF I'M BEING BULLIED AT SCHOOL?

Schools and colleges have transformed over the past few years and they're now better places to be gay and bi than ever before. Lots of schools have their own LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) societies or groups that you can join and share experiences with other people.

Some schools have GSAs (gay-straight alliances) where students, regardless of their sexuality, come together to support one another

and champion equality and diversity in the school community.

Schools have a legal responsibility to make sure you aren't being bullied and so if you do experience it make sure you tell a member of staff and make sure something happens about it.

Stonewall trains staff from hundreds of schools and colleges on how to tackle homophobic and biphobic behaviour and so schools know that they have to do something about it!

HOW DO I MEET OTHER PEOPLE LIKE ME?

You might not know anyone else gay in school, but lots of areas now have LGBT youth groups. The *What's In My Area?* section of Stonewall's website is a great place to start looking for one!

The internet can be a great place to socialise, find information, support and people who are going through similar thoughts and feelings to you. But the thing is, unless you know them in real life, you never really know who you're talking to so it's important you know how to stay safe. This means not giving out personal details, making sure a friend knows if

you're meeting up with someone and reporting any dodgy behaviour you encounter online.

There can be a lot of pressure on young people to have a girlfriend or boyfriend and this is no different for gay and bi people! You may decide that you want a relationship but you should never feel pressured into doing anything that you're not comfortable with. There are lots of other places where you can meet other LGBT people who just want to make friends and chat and organisations and resources who can offer support around relationships.

WHAT NOW?

Take your time.

Don't rush.

Think about what's best for you.

Ask for support – there's lots out there.

Trust those close to you.

For further support and advice visit
www.youngstonewall.org.uk

Good luck!

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