



THE COMPLEXITIES OF COMING OUT



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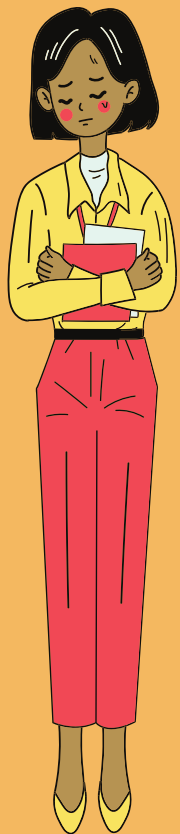
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WHAT IS THE "COMING OUT" NARRATIVE?

The "coming out" narrative is a **common storyline** used in the telling of **queer stories**. *It can look something like this:*

1 This person is "**closeted**," meaning they haven't **expressed** their **queer identity** to anyone. They are assumed to be **hiding** or otherwise **disempowered**.

2 In an act of bravery (or, often, **non-consensual** "outing"), they boldly and **publicly announce** their queer identity.



3 After "coming out," they are suddenly **happier** and more **confident**. (Also, their "coming out" event also tends to be a **learning experience** for **non-queer** people in the story.)

QUEERNESS AS A NON-LINEAR EXPERIENCE.

This narrative assumes a **linear experience** of queerness, which is often not the case.



Queerness is a fluid, ongoing, **lifelong experience.**



Coming out is a **complex, multi-layered** process. Coming out in *one space does not mean you're out in "all spaces."*

You can come out **multiple times** in your life, to different degrees, in different ways - or never!

THE "COMING OUT" NARRATIVE TENDS TO:

- **perpetuate** the notion that *there is a single way to be out and queer.*
- **assume** that one *hides*, and then "comes clean."
- **force** queer folks to *choose between safety and being themselves.*
- **perpetuate** the "othering" of queer folks.
 - (Straight people don't need to come out as straight, why do we need to "come out?")
- **tell** folks who don't want to or can't come out for whatever reason that their *queerness is lesser than folks who are "out and proud."*
- **create** *fear and self-doubt* among people questioning their identity, or folks wanting to shift identity labels from what they originally "came out as."

CONSEQUENCES OF "QUEER BRAVERY"

1

An example of **queer bravery** is the classic story of a queer student **bravely** coming out, or **bravely** dealing with the results of being outed (*think plotlines like "Love, Simon" or "Glee"*).

2

The only reason "coming out" is **brave** is because we live in a world where **being queer is often not safe.**

3

Safety for queer folks is situational at best. In a safer world, queerness would not be *brave* it would be the *norm*, meaning **"coming out" would not even exist.**

4

While "coming out" in reality *is* brave (*because we live in an objectively transphobic, homophobic world*) **being queer is not an act of bravery** in itself. Being queer is who we are.

SELECTIVE COMING OUT

An intentional choice to **only come out in spaces where you feel safe and respected** in your identity.

For example, being "out" **at home or with friends**



but not at your **place of work or with strangers.**



Often times this choice is born out of a **need for safety and security** (such as *employment or housing, for example*).

Typically, "coming out" requires being selective, because many spaces are **implicitly** or **explicitly** anti-queer and transphobic.

HOW CAN WE AVOID OUTING PEOPLE?

It is never, ever okay to out anyone "for them."

Accidents are no excuse to defy someone's wishes regarding their identity.

1. **If a friend comes out to you, first** and foremost *thank them for their trust and vulnerability.*
2. **If you have questions,** ask your friend *if they have space and capacity* for questions.
3. **If your friend has space for questions,** ask them *what you can do for them* in terms of not outing them.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD YOU ASK?



- **Are you out at *work/home/school*?** (In what contexts are you out or not out?)
- **Are there any *names* or *pronouns* that you aren't comfortable with?** (Are there any names or pronouns I should start using for you?)

RESPECT THE PROCESSES!



Coming out (or not)
on your own terms is
a **privilege** everyone
should be entitled to.

**RESPECT EVERYONE'S UNIQUE QUEER IDENTITY
AND PROCESS OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION.**