

Why Come Out? : Benefits and Risks

Coming out allows the person to develop as a whole individual, allows for greater empowerment, and makes it easier for an individual to develop a positive self-image. By coming out, the person is able to share with others who they are and what is important to them, rather than having to hide or lie about their identity. Coming out frees the person of the fear of being “found out” and helps them avoid living a double life, which can be extremely stressful and demoralizing. Finally, coming out makes it easier to connect with people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender, which creates a sense of community.

Outlining some of the benefits and risks of coming out is not meant to convince anyone to choose to come out or not come out in any given situation. Rather, thinking about some of the possible outcomes of such a choice can clarify an individual’s decision by helping them determine the appropriate time for coming out and preparing them for possible reactions.

Some Benefits of Coming Out

- Ability to live one’s life honestly.
- Building self-esteem by being honest about oneself.
- Developing closer, more genuine relationships with friends and family.
- Alleviating the stress of hiding one’s identity.
- Connecting with other people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender.
- Being part of a community with others with whom you have something in common.
- Helping to dispel myths and stereotypes by speaking about one’s own experience and educating others.
- Being a role model for others.

Some Risks of Coming Out

- Not everyone will be understanding or accepting.
- Family, friends, or coworkers may be shocked or confused, or even hostile.
- Some relationships may be permanently changed.
- People under the age of 18 may be thrown out of their homes or lose financial support from their parents.