

# 9 Ways to Support Your Friend Who's Planning to Come Out Over the Holidays

Coming out is easier when you have the support of good friends!

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You never know what to expect when you come out, especially if you're coming out to a large group of people you love—like family—during Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas Eve, or another holiday this time of year. You may know your cool uncle and siblings will respond with support, but it's impossible to anticipate exactly what your family will say. That's where the importance of friends comes in.

Here are 8 ideas for ways to support friends (near and far) whose coming out experience may not go as well as hoped during "the most wonderful time of the year."

## 1. Educate yourself

Before you can support your friend and their mission to come out this holiday season, you need to take the time to educate yourself. Recognize that your identity may be different than your friend's, and that your struggles may be different. Google is fabulous. Spare your friend. Any uncomfortable questions that you have right away can almost always be answered via a quick Google search.

## 2. Ask the right questions

*"When did you know?" "Why didn't you tell me sooner?"*

Questions like this can be more harmful than helpful. Better questions to ask your friend include, *"What can I do to be the best support system possible?" "How do you prefer to identify, if at all?"* or *"Are there any events I can attend to show support/allyship?"*

## 3. Celebrate and encourage them

Recognize that they're still the same person that they were before they came out, and that it takes A LOT of courage to come out. This is likely something that they've wanted to tell their family before now, but have struggled with. Personally, it took me over two years to come out to my closest family members and friends, and even longer to share with others—and the holidays would've made it even scarier. People suck, and there's always a chance that they'll respond negatively, but there's also a chance their family will celebrate them.

#### **4. Offer a safe space to escape to**

Whether you're near or far, offer to let your friend crash with you over the holidays if necessary. Be their safe haven where they can unapologetically be themselves without any repercussions. During my coming out process, my cousin and my partner were my safe spaces. They were both on board with coming to my rescue or offering refuge in their homes if things went awry or I simply felt uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unloved. It didn't make things easy, but it did make it easier for me to come out knowing I had people in my corner no matter what.

#### **5. Don't make it about yourself**

The holidays can be overwhelming. Coming out can be a really overwhelming and confusing time. Your friend trusting you enough to confide in you is a big deal. Find the balance between needing a friend and being a friend. While you may have your own family drama or mishaps occurring over the holidays, try to be a good listener and support system. Make sure your friend knows they aren't alone.

#### **6. Give them with a gay conversation starter**

Get the conversation rolling with a gift that'll spark the right question or help them to come out without saying a word. Nothing says *"I might not be quite straight."* like a rainbow flag or a sweater that says *"Merry Christmas, I'm gay."*

#### **7. Be their wingperson**

If you're nearby, be down to accompany them to the big family dinners and parties over the holidays. Be there for the difficult conversations. Help them challenge any disrespectful and ignorant responses. Make sure to confirm with your friend how much or how little they want you to say or do, as family can be the most hurtful of all. There's no greater feeling of support and protection than having someone who will go to bat for you.

#### **8. Help them find and access resources if need be**

If things don't go as planned at home, there are other options. Many cities have LGBT-friendly holiday dinners and events. Help your friend connect with their local LGBTQ+ center or similar organizations to find support, advice, and a home. If nothing else, they'll have a few back-ups and a new sense of community.

#### **9. Validate their choice to come out over the holidays**

Assure your friend that they aren't making a mistake and they're not going to ruin the holidays by choosing this time to come out. While I didn't come out to my family over the holidays, I did choose to do so at a pretty major event. I brought my girlfriend as my date to my cousin's rehearsal dinner and wedding. Then over the years, I brought her over for holidays. There's never a wrong time to come out.