

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Think You May Be Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual?

If you are reading this, it's possible that you're feeling confused, isolated, and very vulnerable. Although these are all completely natural emotions, it's important to recognize that you don't have to feel this way forever—and you are certainly not alone.

Many people struggle with their sexual orientation at some point in their lives, particularly when young, and end up confident in their sexuality, be it straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual. All these forms of sexuality are entirely normal and healthy.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

The term "sexual orientation" is used to identify whether we are attracted romantically or sexually to the opposite gender (heterosexual), the same gender (homosexual), or both genders (bisexual).

Recognize that this is not something we can choose or change. We are who we are and need to be proud of our own sexual orientation and respectful of others' orientation as well. Here are some other tips and strategies that we hope you will find helpful:

Plain Facts

- One in 10 people is gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- There are gay, lesbian and bisexual people in every country, in every job, in every school, and in every neighborhood.
- Some people fear that being gay, lesbian or bisexual will lead to a life of inevitable loneliness and unhappiness. This is not the case. Although the gay, lesbian and bisexual community is still a minority and—like all minorities—faces some unique challenges, the community has reached an exciting point and is gaining increasing clout in life. There are homosexual communities in almost every area of the country and no one needs to travel the road alone.

Accepting Your Orientation

- Recognize that you are, at the core, the same person you have always been, whether you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual. Like and respect yourself for who you are.
- Build a support network. Join the gay or lesbian community in your area and talk to someone who has walked in your shoes. Check your phone book for support groups, or call your local hotline and ask for the gay or lesbian groups in your area.
- Avoid the use of drugs or alcohol to cover pain and confusion. Instead, reach out to the many support hotlines and centres that have been set up across the country for gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

Coming Out

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If you are thinking of "coming out," here are some points to consider:

- You need to feel comfortable with who you are before you can "come out" and expect others to feel comfortable with you.
- The choice to "come out" should be yours alone.
- You don't have to "come out" to the whole world at once. Many people prefer to begin by telling just a few close friends and family members.
- Find someone to talk to who you can count on for support when you "come out." In school, college or university, you may want to talk to a counselor. In work, you may want to confide in a mentor or close friend.
- If you are "coming out" to your parents, consider enlisting the support of a counselor or community member to plan an appropriate "coming out" strategy. Have information and materials available for parents to read. Give them time to absorb the information and adjust to the news.
- "Coming out" is a lifelong process. You may want to "come out" to some people but not others. Over time you may feel more comfortable "coming out" to more people in your life. It is important to find a pace that feels comfortable for you.

Though you may or may not be convinced of this right now, your sexual orientation is an integral part of who you are. Great things can come out of your decision to get more in touch with—and be more open about—your sexual orientation. Important relationships may change; some may grow and strengthen, others might fall by the wayside. The more you’re able to be honest about your sexuality, the better your chance at a healthy, happy life. The road won’t always be easy, but it’s yours to enjoy!