

PRIDE 2016

Making it easier to come out to friends and family

Five tips to assist in the disclosure process

by Dr. Carmen Harra :: guest contributor

With LGBT Pride month in full-swing, Dr. Carmen Harra, a psychologist and relationship expert, shares her tips on making it easier to come out to friends and family. Perhaps, one of these suggestions might help those who are facing this challenge.

Prepare your audience.

I believe it's much easier to make an announcement of this magnitude to your loved ones if you approach them individually. If needed, write out what you'll say to each person, as you may have to put it in different words for the different people in your life. Or, you can practice your speech in front of the mirror. No one knows your friends and family as well as you do, so you can predict just how each one will react. Plan your words wisely so that your big announcement goes smoothly.

Be proud. Announce your sexuality with conviction. Don't be shy and don't be afraid — your future happiness is at stake here! Nothing matters more than that. Remind your loved ones that just as they have a right to seek personal joy, so do you. Reiterate that this is something you've felt for a long time and that (if they're against it) nothing they say can change what you feel inside of you. This way, you cut off the "ifs, ands, or buts" before they can even begin.

Explain with examples. The best way to make someone understand what you're feeling is to relate it in terms they can apply to their own lives. Remind your loved one of a time they did something that maybe not everyone agreed with, but they had to do it for their own wellbeing.

Keep emotions under control. If you're an emotional mess, no one will take you seriously. Keep the tears at bay when making your announcement. This way your loved ones will know you're being serious and honest. If it comforts you, hold an object in the palm of your hand that signifies your strength. It can be an empowering letter you've written to yourself, a photo of your partner or even your wedding band if you're already married. Know that this token is offering you emotional stability as you speak. This is an undoubtedly sentimental time for you, but you must take a deep breath and take control of your demeanor.

Give them time. If your friends and family don't accept your lifestyle yet, give them time. Not everyone understands what you're feeling inside. Many people allow close-minded thinking to dominate or downright ruin their relationships with others. In reality, they love the people around them dearly, but they just

can't release old opinions of what's "right and wrong." So don't take it personally — they're simply stuck in false beliefs. If they love you

surely they will come around. Give them their space and time while still extending unconditional love to them. Contact them often and ask how they're feeling, if they need anything, etc. Help them understand that your sexuality doesn't change you one bit

from the incredible person you are and always have been. Do your part even if they're temporarily not responsive.

— Carmen Harra is an intuitive psychologist, best-selling author of seven books, WABC radio show host, relationship expert and TV personality.



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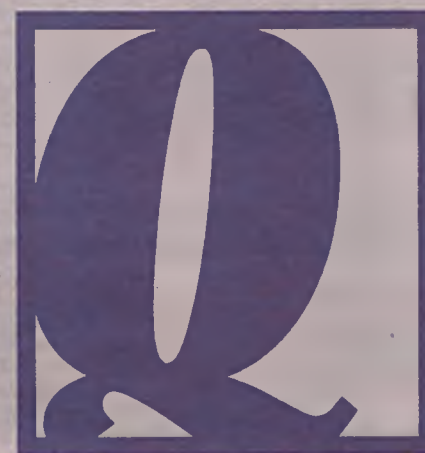
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