



# What Does it Mean to be Out?

GSA Network Meeting  
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## What Does it Mean to be Out

**Topic:** Coming out

**Goal:** To get students to think meaningfully about important controversies surrounding the coming out issue: What does it mean to be out? Are people morally obligated to come out? What are the reasons for people to come out? Are there good reasons not to come out? Also, to get them to think about their own identities and whether or not they themselves should come out, or if they already are out, what, exactly, that means to them.

**Implementation:**

1. Cards containing the attached statements about coming out are spread around the room.
2. Each student has a sheet of stickers, and each sticker has a price written on it, ranging from \$0.25, to \$10.00.
3. Students participate in a silent auction, placing their stickers as bids on the cards they most agree with. They also initial the stickers they place. They are instructed to spend all and only their “change,” (i.e., no full dollars).
4. After all of the students have spent all of their change, each student is instructed to pick up a few cards and return them to the people who bid the most on them. Cards with no bids are removed from the game.
5. Each card is now worth the total amount of money that has been bid on it. For example, if card A received a \$0.25 bid and a \$0.75 bid, it is now worth \$1.00.
6. Students must now spend the rest of their money by placing more stickers on the cards they agree with. They *cannot* place more stickers on the cards they hold.
7. Students want to increase the value of the cards they hold as much as possible by convincing others to place their stickers on them.
8. Optional: At the end of the game, students may order the cards by which accrued the most money.

**Discussion:**

1. What values did you most agree with and why?
2. Was it difficult to decide how to distribute the money? Why?
3. Which values did you disagree with and why?
4. What does it mean to be out?
5. Is being out about labels or not?
6. Is being out just a gay thing?
7. What does coming out have to do with being yourself?
8. Are there any statements that you would add to the pool?

## Coming out statements:

Coming out means being able to say “I’m gay” or “I’m a lesbian” or “I’m bi” without shame or fear.

When you’re out, you realize that labels don’t do you justice.

Coming out is not about what label you choose to give yourself. Instead, it’s about being comfortable being yourself and being honest about who you are, even if you’re still questioning and even if no label fits you.

Being out is being your own person / individual / being / man / woman.

Visibility is the most important thing for the queer community to strive towards. As participants in that struggle, we have an obligation to be out about our sexuality, unless being out is a risk to our physical safety.

Being out is being compassionate.

Being out is thinking for yourself.

Being out is being pro-you.

Being out is empathizing with others.

Everyone is free to choose whether or not they will come out, but since being in the closet is hypocritical, dishonest, and deceitful, it’s wrong.

Being out is all or nothing. You’re either okay with yourself or you’re not.

Being out is degreed. It’s about gradually getting to know truer and truer parts of yourself.

Coming out is not important. Sexual identity is a personal thing, and people should keep it to themselves.

Being out is being open.

Being out is being unafraid to change your mind.

If you’re truly out, and you truly like yourself, then you reject social norms that make other people feel insecure. If you’re okay with yourself, then your behavior will make other people feel good about themselves, too.

Being out allows you to empathize with others.

Nobody is 100% straight or gay. Being out means being honest with yourself about that.

Coming out is a life-long process. It’s about getting to know more and more truthful parts of yourself.

If you’re out, you’ll understand what makes others awesome.

If you’re out, you’ll understand what makes others beautiful.

Being out means being real, whether you’re queer or straight.

Coming out, even when it's safe physically, may be too difficult. Anyone who thinks all queer people should be out just doesn't realize how hard coming out is.

Being out is being awesome.

Being out is being whoever you want to be.

Being out is being passionate about being alive.

It is hypocritical to work towards getting people to feel comfortable being out, and not be out yourself.

Being out is being feminine.

Being out is being masculine.

It is not hypocritical to work towards getting people to feel comfortable being out, and not be out yourself.

Being out is being free.

Being out is being self-expressed.

A lot of people are out to their friends, but not to their families. Coming out to our families is especially difficult, but especially important. For many people, their families are the most valuable people in their lives, and it is crucial that the people who matter to you most know the truth about who you are.

Being out means not being defined by your race, gender, or class...or the role you play in your high school.

Being out means playing a role: as a lesbian, a gay man, etc.

Being out is being sexy.

Coming out takes real guts, but that's no reason not to do it.

You cannot be for queer liberation if you are not out yourself.

Being out is knowing how you are beautiful.

Being out is living in accord with what you value.

Being out is living in accord with what genuinely fulfills you.

You can be for queer liberation even if you are not out yourself.

It's okay for me to be out to my friends but not to my family. My family just wouldn't get it. My parents, especially, would flip.

Coming out is the single most important thing a queer person can do for queer liberation.

Coming out is really scary, but the ability to be scared and do something anyway is what makes some people extraordinary.

I can't come out. I don't know what I am.

Coming out is the best thing I've ever done. It made all the fear go away.

Being out is essential if you want to set a personal example to your peers.

In order to take pride in who you are, you have to be out about who you are.

The most important reason to be out is that it allows queer people to form a community. Without people who are out, we wouldn't be able to find each other.

Coming out is not always the right thing to do. Some people are better off in the closet.

You should not come out if your physical safety is at risk.

Getting people to feel okay coming out should be a primary goal of GSAs.

Coming out is a step in the process of figuring out who you are. It's not something you do after you already know who you are.

## The Poetry of Coming Out

**Topic:** Queer Poetry

**Goal:** To give participants a creative outlet for thinking about their own sexual identities and sexual identity in general. To expose them to literature on the subject.

**Implementation:**

1. Literature (especially poetry) on themes of queerness, coming out, liberation, etc. is printed in large print and scattered around the floor.
2. Participants cut up the original poems, and paste passages, phrases, and words from the literature onto a clean sheet of paper, creating their own poems.
3. Participants who wish may share their poems with the group.

**Discussion:**

1. How did this activity make you feel?
2. What does coming out mean to you?
3. Do you identify with the authors whose poetry you've read? Who in particular?
4. Is it valuable to use poetry as a means for thinking about yourself and your identity?

## **My Coming Out Story**

**Topic:** Coming Out Stories

**Goal:** To teach skills required for public speaking, to share coming out stories.

**Implementation:**

All students spend several minutes preparing to share their coming out stories, or if they are not queer or out, some other important story about personal identity. Then those students who wish stand in front of the group and share their stories.