



## Coming out at work

For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people (LGBTQ), “coming out” is the term we use to refer to the process of revealing our sexual orientation or gender identity for the first time. Far from being a one-time rite of passage or overnight change, coming out is something LGBTQ people must do over and over again; to their friends, their families and indeed almost every time they encounter a new person, group, or situation. It is a process that is different for everyone - some people come out to everyone in their lives immediately, others take their time and still others choose never to come out to certain people or groups. One thing that coming out has in common for most LGBTQ people is that it is not always easy and is indeed often laced with anxiety and fear of being ostracized and/or excluded.

The workplace is a particularly public and challenging environment in which to come out because it is quite literally the place where our livelihoods are on the line. It is also difficult to avoid, as the divide between our “work lives” and “personal lives” is, in many ways, a fiction. At work we discuss our families and even bring our partners to holiday parties.

If coming out at work feels stressful or scary for you or someone you know, here are some strategies to consider and ideas to keep in mind to make coming out a bit easier.

### **Look for your workplace’s discrimination policy**

Most workplaces have an anti-discrimination policy in place that should cover sexual orientation and gender identity. Familiarizing yourself with this can take some of the stress away, not necessarily all of it, unfortunately, as official policies don’t necessarily prevent day-to-day discrimination.

### **Are other people out in your workplace?**

Listen to your colleagues talk about their personal lives and you may notice that there are other LGBTQ people who speak openly about their identities already. This is a great opener and you can start by speaking to one of them about coming out and how they experienced it. It’s also a good indicator that you will be met with acceptance should you choose to come out.

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**Test the waters**

If you are worried about how people will react or if you don't want to immediately put your personal life on display, start by talking about LGBTQ movies, current events and news items. This is a great way to gauge peoples' reactions and get a sense of how tolerant your workplace is.

**Start small by telling one trusted person**

Even if you cannot identify other LGBTQ people right away, perhaps you have made a friend at work who you feel comfortable enough with to divulge your identity to. Starting with one person is likely to be less frightening than telling everyone at once.

**There are many ways to come out**

You need not make a big announcement - you can do things like place a picture of you and your partner on your desk put a gay-pride related sticker or sign in your office, have your partner pick you up or casually mention them in conversation.

Though the visibility of LGBTQ people has increased and has gained more formal rights, discrimination still exists and it is possible that you will meet some people who unfortunately are prejudiced against your identity. If this becomes a problem, speak to a counsellor and/or to management about your concerns.

Though coming out may seem daunting at times, being open about who you are can be rewarding and it can also ease the stress and extra energy you're expending hiding it, which will allow you to focus on your work as well as your friendships at work.

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## Time management strategies that really work

Stress is inevitable, it can even be healthy and manageable but too much negative stress can be detrimental to our physical and mental health. Stress reduction techniques are important, and developing your own toolkit for managing stressors is of vital importance. Another aspect of stress management is **prevention** and one of the most important ways to prevent stress is to have effective time-management strategies. Time management, as we all know too well, is one of those things that may sound easy but can be really difficult to implement; procrastination, blurry priorities and inaccurate estimates of how long things take can be significant obstacles to a well-managed schedule. Below you will find some tips that really do work to help you manage your very valuable time.

### Prioritize

Take a look at the tasks ahead of you and rate them according to these four categories:

- Important and urgent
- Important but not urgent
- Urgent but not important
- Neither urgent nor important

People with optimal time management spend most of their time on tasks that are important but not urgent, decreasing the chances that an important task will become urgent and thus more stressful.

### Start your day by scheduling your day

At the beginning of the day, take notice of what needs to get done and take a guess at how long it will take. Then, make a schedule for the day according to this list. Stick to your schedule. Taking 30 minutes to do this will actually save you time in the long run.

### Learn how long things take

Record how long tasks take. You may find things you thought took a long time actually can be accomplished quite quickly, while tasks you thought you would breeze through indeed take longer than anticipated.

### Break correspondence into the four D's

Emails tend to be overwhelming and suck up a lot of time. When you look at your inbox, apply the four D's:

- Delete: Many emails can be deleted immediately, so get rid of them
- Do: Emails that are urgent and/or have a simple answer can be responded to immediately
- Delegate: If you are not the right person to field the email, forward it to the person who is
- Defer: For emails that require more attention and further thought, flag them for later

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### **Work in short time chunks**

When overload hits, it's important to prioritize tasks and manage your time wisely. Rather than working "non-stop" until something is finished, work in short 25 minute chunks with 5-minute breaks in between.

The challenge lies in internalizing the habits of monitoring time and regularly analyzing and revising your time management plan until it works for you. [Find out more about this technique here.](#)

### **Schedule "time-wasters"**

It is unrealistic to completely eliminate so called "time wasters" like social media and browsing. Instead, work them into your schedule and stick to that schedule.

### **Leave buffer time**

Things won't take exactly how long you think they will. When you schedule your day, leave room for the unexpected by adding five to ten minutes to either side of each task.

Time management requires diligent effort because for most of us, it does not come naturally. These tips are proven to work but only if you actually implement and adhere to them. "It only works if you do it" may seem like an overstatement of simplicity but it is all too easy to do these things for a week and then let them fall away and return to old habits. Move through the growing pains and keep at it, eventually these techniques will replace old habits with new ones and get you ahead of the curve on stress.

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