GUIDE SHEET

Coming Out and Inviting In

For some young people, *coming out* (or as some reframe as *inviting others in*) about their sexuality or gender identity is a strong element in their journey of self-discovery and identity formation. If a young person decides to invite you in to this wonderful part of their life, it is likely you have built a space where they feel comfortable enough to disclose, and confident that you will be supportive.

Coming out

This phrase invariably means something different for everyone, but most associate it with the process of an individual recognising and acknowledging, both privately and publically, their sexuality or gender identity.

VS

Inviting in

This phrase turns the table on coming out, and reflects the choice that a person has regarding who and when they share their sexuality or gender identity with.
It shifts the sometimes overwhelming connotations of coming out, and supports the idea that sexuality and gender identity are yours to share if and when you want to.

Tips for how you respond to young people

- ✓ Ensure you respect their privacy and confidentiality.
- ✓ It is likely they will just want a supportive adult to listen, but be open and responsive to what the young person has to say about how they feel and what they want from you.
- ✗ Don't assume they are having negative experiences and feelings related to their sexuality or gender identity.

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Tips for supporting young people

In the case that the young person *does* want to talk more about how they can invite others in about their sexuality or gender identity, here are some pointers that may be useful:

1 Articulating supports

Talking about what support the young person has is important when thinking about going forward. Supports will include people they know and trust (a close friend, family member, teacher etc).

2 When and who to invite in

When and who the young person tells is completely up to them. Deciding not to invite others in is completely normal, too. They may also only want to invite a select few people in.

3 Preparing for different responses

Preparing for the different reactions the young person may encounter when they invite others in is a useful strategy to consider. Some people will react positively, while others may be more challenged. Being aware of this and planning how the young person will manage different reactions is important.

4 Discussing the process

Some LGBT people say their journey of coming out is a life-long process. People come out at different stages, to different people, within different contexts. Having a conversation about coming out in different spaces, at different points of life is an important acknowledgement.

5 Providing information and resources

Provide the young person with information and resources regarding additional areas of support, i.e. Minus18 and Rainbow Network. If you don't feel you have that information at hand, show the young person you are genuinely interested in their experience by sharing their journey and going online together.

6 Providing a supportive environment

Most importantly, validating whatever feelings the young person is having, and providing a space that is genuinely supportive and void of judgment will insure they have someone and somewhere in their life to talk through their feelings.

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