

# Coming Out Story

Reflective – 101 – Medium Trust – 10 mins – [szp.guide/comingoutstory](http://szp.guide/comingoutstory)

## Materials

- Scrap paper
- Writing implement

## Setup

- Pass out scrap paper to participants.

## Facilitator Framing

- Giving directions for this activity in steps will help ensure that participants don't miss any part of the instructions.
- Privilege for sale is an activity that can have a lot of different outcomes and goals, many of which can be focused on in the debrief. If you want to use the activity to achieve certain goals/learning outcomes be sure to steer the debrief towards that end.
- The coming out handout flows nicely from privilege for sale but can be used/referenced anywhere in the curriculum.

## Goals & Learning Outcomes

- Walk participants through a possible coming out experience of an LGBT person
- Demonstrate that coming out is not a one-time event
- Highlight a few of the possible social and legal ramifications of coming out

## Process Steps

1. Frame the activity: In a moment we are going to be doing an activity now about coming out. Before we jump into the activity on your scrap paper there are a few things I'd like you to write down.
2. Ask participants to write down:
  1. Person (friend / loved one)
  2. Family Member / Relative
  3. Hobby / Passion
  4. Material possession that they wouldn't want to lose
  5. A dream job

Encourage them not to stress about the choices too much, as long as they fit that category that is all that matters.

3. Explain the directions:

“Explain for the remainder of the activity, I’m going to ask you to imagine you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or pansexual. Pick one of those identities and imagine you have that identity. If you already identify with one of these identities you have a choice. You can chose a different identity and follow along with the story, imagine following along in this queer peron’s shoes with your own identity, or you can choose to follow along to whatever degree you’d like.”

4. Check to see if the group has any questions on the directions. And to ensure everyone has something written categories 1-5.
5. Tell participants you’re going to read through a coming out story now and to ask them to follow along.

### Coming Out Story:

Imagine you’re a little boy and you’re hanging out with that Number 1 person on your list. You’re watching cartoons and you say that you love Batman. Your number 1 person asks you what you mean by that. You try to explain that you are really in love with Batman. Then your friend calls you a fag and tells you he can’t hang out with you anymore. Mark that person off your list.

Fast forward to high school. Your feelings of attraction to people of the same sex haven’t gone away, and you’ve started to explore them secretly in relationships. You think, “It’s the 21st century, my family loves me, I should be myself.” You decide to tell one of your closest family members that you are dating someone, and that you are gay. They tell you that you’re going through a phase and say you to break up with that person. You say it’s not a phase, and they refuse to talk to you any longer. You worry you might even have to leave home. Cross number 2 off your list.

A little further down the road, you’re in college now and life has gotten a little better. You’ve found a community of people to hang out with who support and care for you. They accept you for who you are. One day, you see a sign for a student organization meeting for that Number 3 thing on your list. You decide to check it out and go to a meeting. Afterwards, the president comes up to you and introduces himself. You start talking and he asks if he saw you in the gay pride parade on campus recently. You say yes and excitedly describe the event that you were involved with. He tells you that he respects your right to do what you want, but that members of the group wouldn’t feel comfortable around you. He asks you not to come back. Mark Number 3 off your list.

After you leave the meeting, you come back to your room to find that “Die Fag!” has been written on your door and your room has been broken into. That Number 4 thing has been destroyed. Mark that off your list.

Finally, later in life, you’ve managed to get your ideal job and life is good. You’re at work one day and have a picture of your partner and your child on your desk. Your boss walks by and asks about them. You tell them who they are and she says great and goes on her way. The

next morning, you get called to a meeting where your boss tells you that the company is downsizing and they'll have to let you go. Mark that off your list.

6. Bring the group back. Share that "this story is not meant to be a picture of every LGBTQ+ person's story, or even most LGBTQ+ people's story. This is a particularly tragic coming out story, but it is not overly dramatic. These things do happen to people and it's important for us to recognize that they happen."

## Debrief questions

**What was this activity like?**

**How did this activity make you feel?**

**What are your big takeaways from this activity?**

- Coming out isn't a one-time thing (unless you're Ellen) -- it's a lifelong process, and a decision people have to make again and again in new situations
- There is a lot of risk in coming out, which is why many people choose not to (so don't be mad at a friend/family member when they come out because "why didn't you tell me before?")
- It's hard to predict how people will respond to someone coming out, and sometimes the results can be extremely damaging, or surprisingly positive

## Wrap-up

Clarify any points above that you didn't land with your participants that you feel are particularly relevant and important for the group. Summarize the main learning points that they shared. If you want to transition into more information about coming out — you can segue into the [Coming Out Handout](#).

## Make it Your Own

You can change the story as you like, by doing things like making the reactions more or less severe, highlighting different experiences, or even changing the list of important things. You can also rewrite the story to switch between illustrations of homophobia to transphobia by making the story about a trans\* person's coming out experiences. Think about what you believe would be more beneficial for the group you're working with, and modify the story to suit their needs.