

Coming out to mom ^[1]

Dear Alice,

How do you think I should go about coming out of the closet to my mother?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Bravo to you for the desire to be honest with your mother and true to yourself. Coming out is a personal choice that may be both intimidating and rewarding, and by considering all of your options and garnering support from others in advance, you can be well prepared for the conversation.

Coming out is also a highly individualized process — but, no matter how you do it or say it, doing a bit of work to set the stage for your discussion can help ensure you have all the resources and support you need in the process. Here are a few tips and strategies as you plan for your conversation:

- **Ask yourself why you'd like to come out to your mother.** Thinking through your reasoning might help you determine your best strategy and how you'll share it with her.
- **Test the waters.** To see how receptive your mother might be to your news, you might see how she feels about a certain celebrity who identifies as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) or her thoughts about marriage equality. Listening to how she responds might give you some insight as to how she may respond to your coming out.
- **Plan what you want to say before initiating the conversation.** It might be helpful to have a few points in mind that you want to cover — particularly about why you feel compelled to share this about yourself — in case you get stuck or nervous. Also, it's a great idea to come to the discussion with reliable resources. [Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays](#) ^[2] (PFLAG) is a fantastic resource, as well as the Human Rights Campaign's [Coming Out Center](#) ^[3].
- **Find the right time.** Choosing a time when you and your mother are able to have a calm, private, and thoughtful discussion free of time constraints and interruptions may help you have a more dedicated conversation. Alternatively, if you feel you can express yourself better on paper, writing a letter is a great option.

- **Consider how she might react.** Anticipating how your mother might take to your news can help you prepare for how to respond in the moment. It may be helpful to keep in mind that in the same way that it may have taken you some time to fully realize your identity, it might take her some time to come to terms with it, too.

There are a few additional ways to prepare that relate to you, your safety, and your well-being. As much as you're able to prepare for a conversation with your mom, it may be difficult to predict how she may react to the news. If you're worried that her reaction may jeopardize your living or financial situation, you might want to consider waiting until you're able to financially support yourself or have a safe space to stay. It's also wise to round up some support — especially if you're concerned that coming out to your mom might not go over well. These folks may be trusted friends, family members, or even a mental health professional with whom you may be able to check-in and debrief with about your coming out process. These might also be the same people you reach out to prior to your discussion with your mom to practice what you'd like to say. Beyond supportive people, you may find it helpful to plan on some self-care as well, such as journaling, practicing yoga, going for a hike, listening to music, working on an art project — whatever it is that you're into and helps you relax. The coming out process is full of ups and downs and having a few healthy coping strategies up your sleeve could come in handy.

If you need more specific advice about your particular situation, you may consider reaching out to a mental health professional or if you're a student, your campus may have an LGBTQ+ resource office where you can seek out additional resources. The [Trevor Project](#) ^[4] also has a great [Coming Out Guide](#) ^[5] to help you think and work through the coming out process.

All in all, there's really no one right way to come out. People choose to come out in their own way and that way may vary with each individual person to which they come out. The key is to be honest and to trust yourself. Regardless of how you choose to come out, it may a worthwhile stop-off on your journey to allow for a moment of reflection and to give yourself credit for the strength it takes to reach out and connect with your family in a new way. You might even go so far as to celebrate — this is a huge step!

Good luck and congrats,

Alice!

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Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [13]

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[2] <https://pflag.org/comingoutbooks>

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[4] <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

[5] http://b.3cdn.net/trevor/a84184c56d0fb6f6c1_gj5m69v9p.pdf

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[11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/human-sexuality-5>

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[13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/counseling-and-psychological-services-cps-morningside>

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