

**THE IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY OFFER GUIDANCE TO LGBTQI+ PEOPLE
COMING TO TERMS WITH THEIR SEXUAL IDENTITY**

Counsellor Offers Coming Out Tips to LGBTQI+ People

The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) recognises that it can be a very difficult process for someone who may be struggling with coming to terms with their sexual identity. While acceptance of LGBTQI+ people has come a long way, LGBTQI+ people still face a great deal of stigma and discrimination in Ireland. The IACP are committed to providing counselling and psychotherapy that understands the needs of this community.

IACP Member and author of “The Complete Guide to Gay Life for New Explorers”, Michael Ryan, would like to offer some advice to LGBTQI+ people who may be struggling with coming to terms with their sexual identity. Mr Ryan offers the following tips:

1. The person you come out to first should be someone you trust. Ideally an adult who can keep the news in confidence. Good examples are Parents, Teachers, Doctors, Friends, Relatives, Counsellors, Team Coaches, Youth Workers and Neighbours.
2. You may tell them in person, by phone or by writing it on a piece of paper and handing it to them. You will benefit from getting some instant feedback and re-assurance so try to avoid texting it or sending it in an email or through social media.
3. If you don't have a trusted adult in your life that you can tell – then look up the nearest LGBTI+ Helpline in your area and speak to them. They are trained to listen without judgement and will be able to advise you and let you know what other supports are available in your area..... www.lgbt.ie - www.belongto.org... 1890 929 539
4. If you decide to come out fully and tell everyone that you are LGBTI+ - try to avoid coming out to your friends and family through social media. People will prefer to hear the news first hand from you personally and support you better that way.
5. Try to tell your closest friends in person before the rest of the world knows. They deserve to hear it from you before they hear it from others. This allows them to show that they are OK with it and allow you to answer any questions or deal with any concerns that they might have.
6. When you tell your parents – give them time to take in the news. They may be in shock, confused, annoyed, angry, upset, delighted, anxious or indifferent. Either way, they all need time to take it in and will probably have a lot of things to discuss. Just take it slowly and if you don't know the answers to their questions, just tell them so in a calm manner. You are probably new to all this also and won't have all the answers, even for your own questions.
7. In relation to School – If you have come out to your family and friends, it is easier to be in control of the news by coming out in school before someone outs you (even by accident). Once you declare that you are LGBTI+ – this disarms the bullies as they see you are proud and in charge of your life and they have nothing to hold over you.
8. When you come out, you don't necessarily need to change anything about yourself just because you have come out as LGBTI+. You can dress, walk, talk, act and behave just as you did before. You are the same you and you don't have to fit into any stereotypes. That said – don't be afraid to show some of your creative flamboyance if that's your thing.
9. If anybody bullies you for coming out LGBTI+, report them to the school authorities or the police. Bullying is a

serious matter and you deserve to live a peaceful happy life, free of bullies.

10. If there is a youth group for LGBTI+ people in your area, it is useful to join up as you get to meet other young LGBTI+ people who

are also going through similar experiences as you are, and this can be a supportive environment. If there is none in your locality you should join recognised LGBTI+ online forums which offer similar support.

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Established in 1981, the IACP identifies, develops and maintains professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy. IACP aims to protect the public by promoting best practice and the professional development of its members. IACP is the largest professional body of counsellors and psychotherapists in the Republic of Ireland with over 4,200 members nationwide. IACP provides a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor / psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615).

For further information, or to arrange an interview with Michael Ryan, please contact him directly on 0872371295

+353 (0) 12147933

+353 (0)877806033

hugh@iacp.ie

iacp.ie