

“HOW-TO” AND “HOW-NOT TO”

Do you get into a fluster or feel awkward when talking to or about LGBTQ+ people?

If so, you're not alone. A lot of people are allies, but still feel unsure about what words to use and then worry about offending someone.



#1 Mirror word choice

If talking with an LGBTQ+ person, listen to how they refer to themselves and their important relationships. If they say 'partner' use the word partner. If they say 'wife' or 'husband', use those words. Listen too to what pronouns they use. Use the pronouns they use.

#2 Introduce yourself and ask

If you're unsure about what pronouns to use with someone, a great way to find is to just ask them. "I use the pronouns, she/her, what about you?" or "My name is Cath. I use she/they. What are your pronouns?" Keep it simple and ask in the same way you'd just about someone's name.

#3 Never assume

When any person refers to their 'partner' never assume that the partner is of the opposite sex. This means that an LGBTQ+ person has to decide whether to 'out' themselves to you without knowing if you are a safe person or not. This can be stressful and put the LGBTQ+ on the back foot. By not assuming you keep everyone on an equal footing.

#4 Validate what they say

If someone comes 'out' to you for the first time, respond positively, celebrate the news and then affirm that it will not affect your relationship negatively. Good examples are, "That's great. Congratulations. I'm here if you ever need me" or "I'm really proud of you. Thanks for trusting me. You know you're always still my best friend right?". Do NOT say, "Really, are you sure?" or "It doesn't matter to me who you are or who you sleep with". Both these answers instantly devalue their news and show how little you understand.

#5 Never 'out' someone

Never 'out' someone without their permission. It is not your story to tell and you do not know the details of their situation, nor whether it is safe or not safe for them to be out. There is a lot of emotional processing in coming out and the person needs to be left to do it in their own time.