Is this a good time?
Timing can be very important. Be aware of the mood, priorities, stresses, and problems of those with whom you would like to share your identity. Choose a time when they’re not dealing with major life concerns. What people are dealing with in their own lives may affect their receptivity to your news.

Can you be patient?
Others will require time to deal with this new information. Remember that it took many of us a very long time to come to terms with our sexuality. When you come out to heterosexual people, be prepared to give them time to adjust and to comprehend what they learned. Don’t expect immediate acceptance, but try instead to establish an on-going, caring dialogue. Sometimes people may even need some space to reflect upon what you have told them. Be prepared for that as well.

Consider this your decision?
Remember that the decision to come out is yours — you can decide when, where, how, and to whom you wish to come out. Don’t be guilt tripped or pressured into it before you’re ready. This decision must be made carefully, and only you can weigh the potential benefits and the potential consequences.

Do you have support?
In the event you get a negative reaction, there should be someone or a group that you can turn to for emotional support and strength. Maintaining your sense of self-worth is critical.

Are you knowledgeable about LGBTQ issues?
The reactions of others will most likely be based on a lifetime of information from a homophobic, biphobic, Transphobic, heterosexist and binary-sex-gender-thinking society. If you’ve done some serious reading on the subject, you’ll be prepared to answer their concerns and questions with reliable and accurate information.
What's your motivation for coming out now?
Hopefully, it is because you care about the people you intend to come out to, and you are uncomfortable with the type of relationship you have with that person. Never come out in anger or during an argument, using your sexuality as a weapon.

Have you tried to anticipate others’ reaction?
Consider your general relationship with those to whom you intend to come out. What might their concerns be? How can you address those concerns? What message do you want to send? For example, try to affirm mutual caring and love before disclosing your news. Emphasize that you are still the same person. (An excellent book to help you consider these questions is Coming Out: An Act of Love by Rob Eichberg.)

How will you respond to negative reactions?
- Be prepared that your revelation may surprise, anger, or upset others at first.
- Try not to react angrily or defensively.
- Try to let others be honest about their initial feelings, even if they are negative.
- Remember that the initial reaction may not be the long-term one.
- Keep the lines of communication open with people to whom you come out.
- Respond to their questions and remember that they are probably in the process of re-examining the myths and stereotypes which we all have been exposed to. If you are rejected by someone, do not lose sight of your own self-worth.
- Remember that your coming out is a gift of sharing an important part of yourself which that person has chosen to reject.

When to come out?
- When you are financially independent.
- When you are well prepared for others’ reactions and have a support network and resources to cope with the stress and problems that may arise.

For gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, it can also have positive influence on your romantic relationship if your partner is also out. It can also create havoc in your relationship if your partner is deeply in the closet and fears guilt by association. Vice-versa, if your partner is out and gave you the ultimatum to come out, you must weigh carefully what is most safe and secure for you to do. If you are not ready to come out to your family, coming out to them to save your relationship can also end miserably with you losing both because of rejection from family and resentment from your partner.

For transgender individuals, to transition creates a challenge to your gender relationship with your partner and loved ones. For parents, they may feel loss of a son or daughter; for siblings, a loss of a brother or sister. Even with those who are accepting, it may take a while to get used to the new pronoun and name change. For your romantic partner, this can create a huge strain in the relationship and could end it because your partner now has to re-evaluate his/her gender and sexual identity. For trans people with children, the price of transitioning might be losing their children if their partner is not supportive.

Coming out is an on-going process, not a single event. All people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual have to make decisions about when and to whom to come out almost every day. Remember that you have the right to ask anyone to whom you come out not to share your disclosure with others. You may want to role-play and practice before you tell someone. Although coming out gets a little easier the more you do it, it’s important that your words and thoughts be well chosen. Whenever you come out, reflect upon the experience and learn from it, because there will always be a next time.

Transitioning is a process of coming home to oneself – to live the life as the gender that one is most comfortable with. The gender expression varies from individual to individual. One person may choose to transition from one sex to another by altering his/her body chemically and surgically. Another person may only want hormonal change. Many transgender people choose to “go stealth” or go under the radar and pass as the men and women that they wanted to be. Others choose to be trans activists to bring awareness about the plights that trans people face with the legal and health establishments.

Source: Northern Illinois University Safe Zone Program Ally Handbook, Modified by CSUN Pride Center 8/05/2013