Developmental Stages

In the Coming Out Process

The Cass Theory, developed by Vivian Cass (1979) is a six stage model that describes the developmental process individuals go through as they consider and then acquire an LGB identity. This model includes lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities.

Identity Confusion
You begin to wonder whether you may be lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Along with other thoughts and feelings, you may experience denial and confusion.

Identity Comparison
You accept the possibility that you may be lesbian, gay, or bisexual and face the social isolation that can occur with this new identity.

Identity Tolerance
Your acceptance of your homosexuality increases, and you begin to tolerate this identity. Although confusion and distress concerning your sexual orientation decreases, you may feel increased isolation and alienation as your self-concept becomes increasingly different from society’s expectation of you. In this stage, you often begin to make contact with members of the LGB community.

Identity Acceptance
You have resolved most of the questions concerning your sexual identity and have accepted yourself as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. You have increasing contact with the LGB community.

Identity Pride
You begin to feel pride in being part of the LGBT community and immerse yourself into LGBT culture. In turn, you have less contact with the heterosexual community and may sometimes actually feel angry with or reject the heterosexual community.

Identity Synthesis
You integrate your sexual identity with other aspects of yourself so that it is just one part of your whole identity. The anger you may have felt toward the heterosexual community or the intense pride you may have felt in being lesbian, gay, or bisexual decreases, and you can be your whole self with others from both groups. You feel more congruence between your public self and your private self.