

The jump from high school to university for some students is a drastic one – new friends, bigger classes, and more people everywhere – it is easy to feel overwhelmed by it all. Despite the difference in size and in social circles, most students soon realize that university campus life is much more diverse and accepting than their high school. They may feel that they finally have a safe place to better understand what their own sexuality means to them. This, for some, can be an exciting time of discovery, but for others, it can be a challenging time. Individuals questioning their sexuality sometimes fear facing challenges such as rejection from friends or family, or stigma from society as a whole.

Many students question whether there is a need to be “out.” The simple answer is that it depends on each individual and how they feel. There are many things that may need to be in place before someone is ready to be out.

**So how does one know when it is the right time?**

**Here are some things to consider:**

- **Be true to yourself** - do you feel ready to talk about your sexuality with someone else? If you are experiencing feelings of guilt, anger or fear, then this may not be the right time to come out.
- **Recognize your support networks and those in your life that may not be as supportive.**  
Do you have a trusted friend or relative that you can speak to about your sexuality? If so, consider approaching them first.
- **Ensure that if you do tell someone, you consider your personal safety.**  
Food, shelter and physical safety are critical.

On campus, McMaster offers a wide variety of peer and professional support services that can help individuals who are questioning better understand their experience. It can also provide a space for students to meet other students who may share similar experiences. Here are **campus resources** students can access:

- **Queer Students Community Centre (QSCC) – MUSC 221** – provides a contact point for McMaster students that may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or queer, and their allies. They also offer a newcomers discussion group for those wanting to explore their sexuality in a smaller forum.
- **Centre for Student Development (CSD) (MUSC B107)** and the **Campus Health Centre (MUSC B101)** offer personal counseling support options for students.
- **Campus Health - Health & Wellness Centre (MUSC B106)** and **Student Health Education Centre (SHEC) (MUSC 202)** offer resources for students on sexuality.

**Be there for a friend!**

When you find out that your friend is questioning their sexuality, you may feel surprised or shocked. You may be upset that they had not told you before, or you may feel that your friendship has changed without you even knowing it. These are all very common feelings. However, it is important to remember that your friend has approached you

because they trust you, and need your support now. Here are some ways you can be supportive friend:

- **Respect your friend's confidentiality.** If they have not talked to other friends, it is not your role to share that information with others.
- **Be there for them,** listen empathetically, and offer your support, without judgment, as they work through their feelings.
- **Learn more** about the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer (GLBTQ) community and resources that are available for your friend to access.

**Community Resources:**

The Well - LGBTQ Community Wellness Centre of Hamilton

[www.thewellhamilton.ca](http://www.thewellhamilton.ca)

Centenary United Church of Hamilton - (GLBT-supportive church)

[www.centenaryunited.com/](http://www.centenaryunited.com/)

**Web Links:**

[www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

[www.youthline.ca](http://www.youthline.ca)

November'08