

## Have an Empowered Identity

An empowered identity reconciles all aspects of who a person is. This is including culture, gender, sexual orientation, romantic orientation, political aspects, social connections, character traits, and so forth. Coming out lets others know but “coming in”, becoming self-aware and accepting of ones own sexual identity, is arguably the most empowering awakening someone can have (Harper & Swanson, 2019).

## References

- Goodrich, K. M., & Kathryn Brammer, M. (2019). D’Augelli’s model of LGB identity development: A critical analysis. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling, 13*(2), 152–171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15538605.2019.1597820>
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- Scherrer, K. S. (2008). Coming to an asexual identity: Negotiating identity, negotiating desire. *Sexualities, 11*(5), 621–641. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460708094269>

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# Discovering Your Sexual Identity





## It's a Fluid Process

Developing a sexual identity allows a person to categorize themselves in relation to someone else or a group (Scherrer, 2008).

Coming to this understanding takes time looking inward, connecting with other's experiences, and finding self-love and acceptance (Goodrich & Kathryn Brammer, 2019).

## Forming a Same-Sex Identity

Developing an attachment to a sexual identity label may be a process that is impacted by discrimination, family acceptance, friendship acceptance, one's own feelings about sexuality, and social policies affecting relationship freedoms (Goodrich & Kathryn Brammer, 2019). It is completely normal to go back and forth, in and out of the identity formation-acceptance process. In fact, some researchers found it to be a fluid process that involves six areas that a person could experience as they come to understand their sexual orientation.

People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other sexual orientations defined with same-sex intimacy desire or are same-sex romantic relationship orientated, generally go through something akin to an awakening at first (Goodrich & Kathryn Brammer, 2019). From here, it depends on if this is acknowledged and explored or ignored. Have you experienced an awakening? Perhaps then you've "exited" a heterosexual identity with an internally or outwardly expressed "coming out"?

## What Now?

Are you questioning your sexual attractions? Do you think you might not be heterosexual (straight)? That's completely okay! Whatever comes out of your exploration, know that you're not alone in what you're feeling and experiencing. Here's what you can do next:

- Discover and explore various sexual orientation/identity labels
- Go to LGBTQ+ community meet-ups and listen to their experiences
- Assess your safety level with coming out to family, work, and other interpersonal relationships and learn how oppression/stigma may be managed safely
- Journal, or explore in a support group what it might be like to date or have an intimate relationship with the same-sex, and assess how that feels
- Reflect and decide what you are comfortable doing next!
- (Goodrich & Kathryn Brammer, 2019; Harper & Swanson, 2019)

There is no rush, you are on your own timeline. Continue to explore what this means to you and find community for support (Harper & Swanson, 2019).

