

Two Ways to "Come Out"

Even when meaningful distinctions exist, it's common in current U.S. society for one particular view of important concepts or ideas to be presented as absolute and unquestioned. As a way to further open the public conversation on LGBT issues, the following parallel contrast in meanings are offered - based on narrative analysis of hundreds of accounts and feedback from a socio-politically diverse array of colleagues. Rather than insinuating only 'two paths' available, the aim is to clarify and juxtapose differences in how this important phrase is generally being used across progressive and conservative communities. While some may integrate different meanings in unique combinations (e.g., adopting the label of gay while largely following the right column), generally speaking these clusters of meaning are proposed as representing legitimate differences in how America's socio-politically diverse communities respond to LGBT/SSA issues.

Declaring a new view of your identity to others

Enlarging others' view of your identity

Now describing yourself as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer

Now describing yourself as experiencing same-sex attraction – or taking no label

Confirming this as *who you are*

Confirming this as *part of who you are*

Or a more complete reflection of your core identity

Or a more complete reflection of your current experience

And certainly more than simply something you are experiencing

And not necessarily a reflection of your core identity

Overall, emphasizing your sexual orientation over other aspects of self

Overall, emphasizing various aspects of self – alongside your sexual orientation

And beginning to see gay rights as a new centrally defining life cause

And continuing to see other things as centrally defining life causes

Laying aside further attempts to grow and develop in relation to sexuality

Continuing to seek further growth and development in relation to sexuality

Accepting that your original life plan may need to be drastically revised

Accepting that your original life plan is still possible

Letting go of those dreams

Holding on to those dreams

And beginning to seek other dreams

And continuing to seek those dreams

Ultimately re-thinking your original life philosophy or faith as something that may need to be left behind or significantly revised

Retaining your original life philosophy or faith as something most likely still worth preserving and trusting