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Many people who are out as gay, lesbian or bisexual to their families, friends and neighbors are still not out at work. Coming out at work can be scary. And with good reason. In most states it is still legal to fire an employee simply because they are gay or lesbian. We have no Federal Law to protect against employment discrimination in the United States, so in many instances you can be fired just for being gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Before you come out at work, consider the pros and cons

Pros of Coming Out at Work

- You no longer have to lie about what you did over the weekend and who you did it with.
- It may end rude jokes or comments about gays and lesbians from co-workers.
- You may become closer to co-workers now that you are more open about yourself.
- The stress of living a double life may go away. Your confidence and job performance could improve.
- The stress of having to hide a part of yourself may go away.

Cons of Coming Out at Your Job

- You may be fired, or let-go.
- Some co-workers may treat you differently now that they know you are gay.
- Just because you are out at work does not mean your co-workers will treat your partner as they do partners of straight co-workers.

Before You Come Out at Work

Before you come out at work make sure that you are ready. Once you come out, you cannot go back in the closet. You should always hope for the best, but you must be ready to receive negative reactions from bosses or co-workers.

Assess the situation. If you work in a hostile or homophobic environment, coming out is probably not going to make that go away.

Are there other gay or lesbian employees at your job? If so, try to connect with them and see how different bosses and co-workers have reacted to their coming out.

Find out if your company has a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation.

If you think someone who has power over you may react negatively, you may want to consider whether or not coming out is the right decision.