

Advice for young gay and bisexual men



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and about

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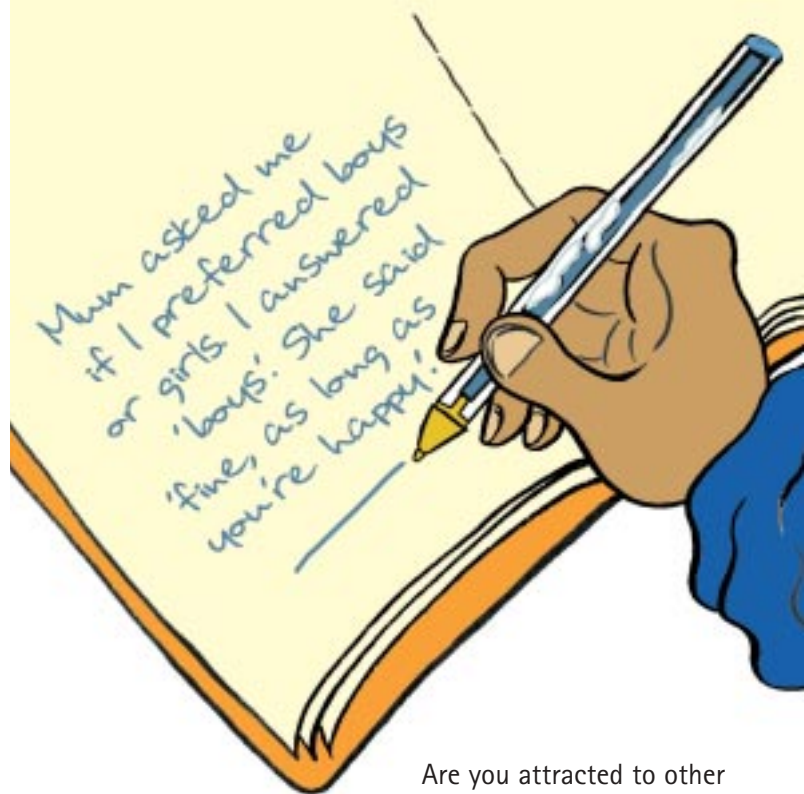
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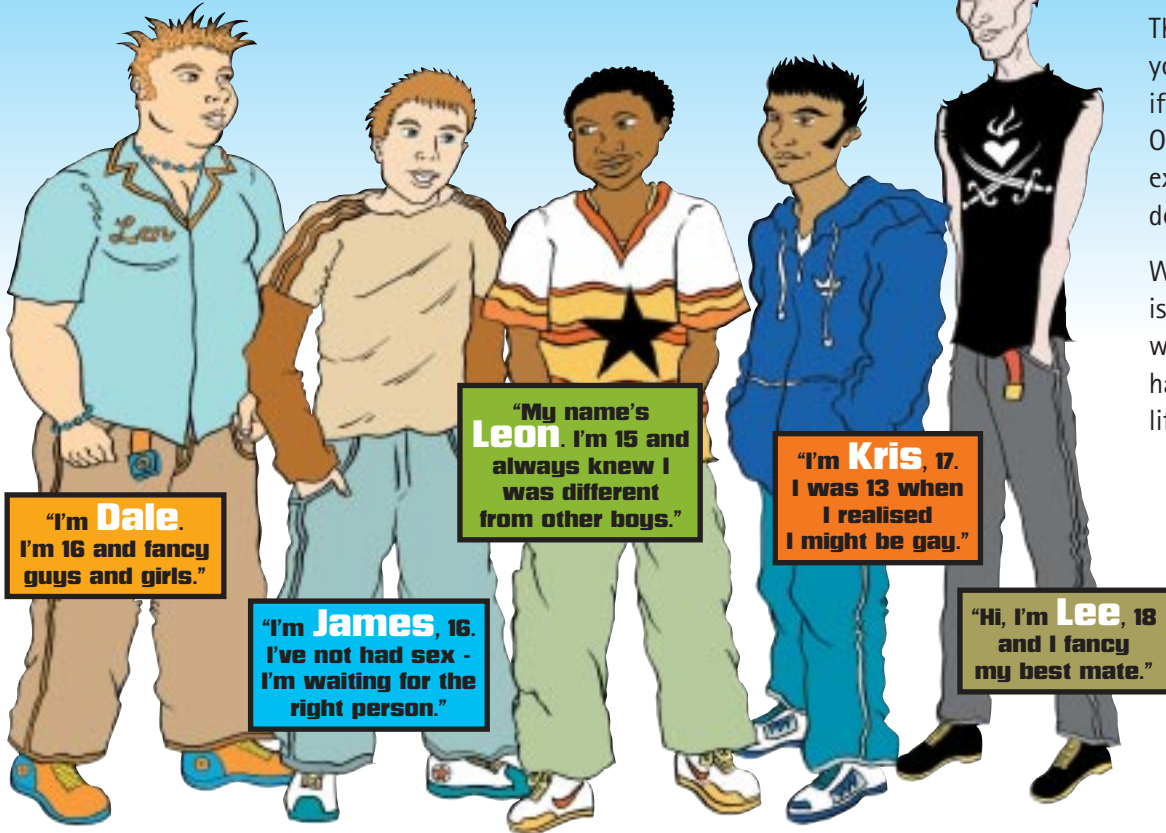
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Are you attracted to other guys? Thinking you could be gay or bisexual? There might be many questions you'd like answers to.

Young men who feel like you have helped put this booklet together. You can use it to get information and support.

**“Everyone thinks you’re into glitter and girly things. But I’m just a regular lad into the same things as everyone else.”**



**“I’m Dale.**  
I’m 16 and fancy  
guys and girls.”

**“I’m James, 16.**  
I’ve not had sex -  
I’m waiting for the  
right person.”

**“My name’s Leon.** I’m 15 and  
always knew I  
was different  
from other boys.”

**“I’m Kris, 17.**  
I was 13 when  
I realised  
I might be gay.”

**“Hi, I’m Lee, 18**  
and I fancy  
my best mate.”

No matter what some people say, feeling like these guys is OK. It doesn’t have to be a problem. And although you might think you’re the only one who feels this way, you’re not.

There’s no hurry to label yourself ‘gay’ (or ‘bisexual’ if you fancy women too). Over time your feelings and experiences will help you decide what’s right for you.

Who you are attracted to is a very important part of who you are. Learning to be happy about it will make life a lot easier.

# SHOULD I SAY SOMETHING?



If you've accepted to yourself you're attracted to other guys, it's up to you whether you tell people - or 'come out' as it's called. You don't have to. And once you do, you can't 'untell' people. Talking to other young gay and bisexual people before 'coming out' is a good idea. Here are some things to think about ...

## TELLING SOMEONE

### Good things

- \* Less stress because you don't have to hide things.
- \* You can be yourself - more honest.
- \* It might bring you closer to family or friends.
- \* It can bring you new friends that you can be relaxed with.

### Not so good things

- \* More stress if people react badly.
- \* Some people might not like you being honest.
- \* Some people might not want to be so close to you.
- \* You can't be sure how friends or family might react.



# WHO TO TELL

What people have said in the past about gay people gives you an idea of how they might react. Ask yourself 'do I trust this person not to gossip?' You can ask them not to tell others - but people often gossip all the same.

Page 24 has ideas for people you can talk to about your feelings.

**"It's a great relief when you get it off your shoulders."**

**"I wrote a letter to my mum and we talked for hours and it's been fine since."**

**"Be aware if you tell one person it can get passed around very fast."**

# SUM 1 U TRUST



I told my  
best mate

I told this girl  
I'm close to

The first person I told  
was on a telephone helpline

IT WAS SOMEONE IN  
THE FAMILY THAT I TOLD

It was  
easier to  
tell my  
Mum first

Unless you're at risk of  
serious harm or abuse, you  
can talk to these people  
and it won't go any further:

Youth counsellors or Youth workers  
Young people's health workers  
Someone on a telephone helpline

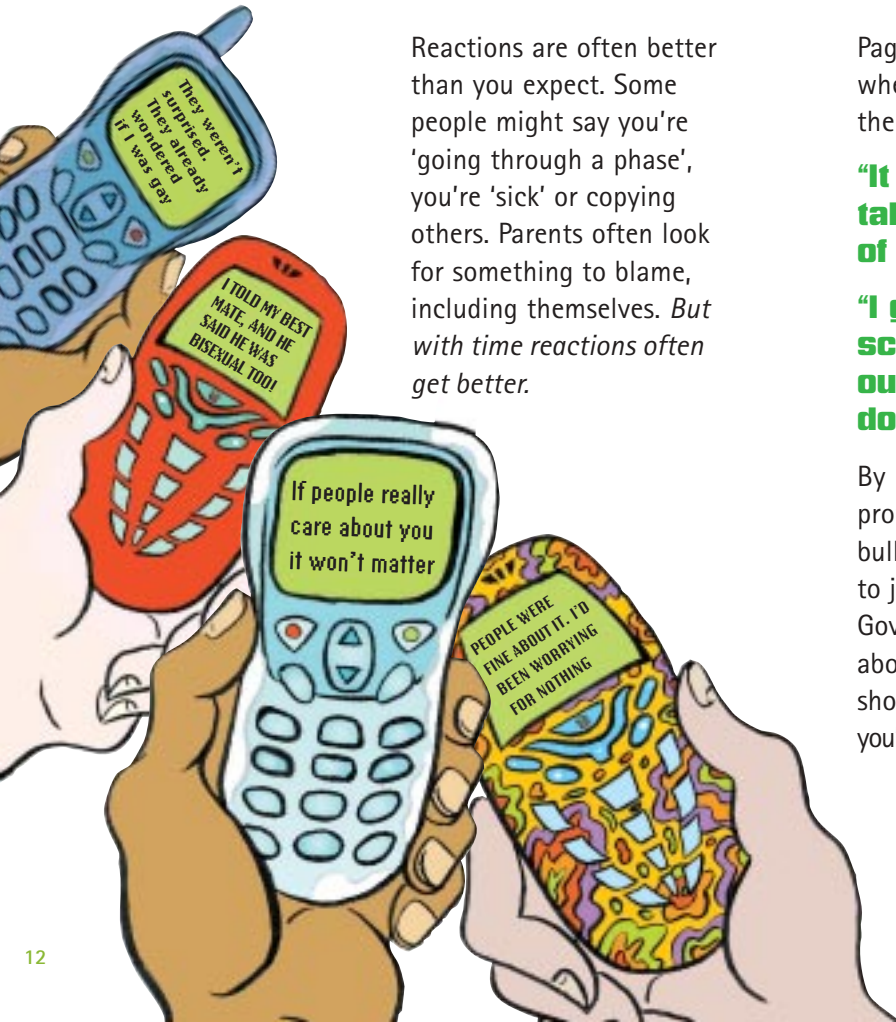
# WHEN TO TELL



There's never an easy time but try not to tell people when you're angry or upset. If there's a good chance your family will hear it from someone else, it's usually best if you tell them first. Try thinking about what might happen if you tell - or if people ask you.



# HOW WILL PEOPLE REACT



Reactions are often better than you expect. Some people might say you're 'going through a phase', you're 'sick' or copying others. Parents often look for something to blame, including themselves. *But with time reactions often get better.*

Page 24 lists places where you can talk about the reactions you get.

**“It helped my mum talking to parents of other gay kids.”**

**“I got bullied at school but I found out what I could do about it.”**

By law schools have to protect you if you get bullied. You shouldn't have to just 'live with it'. And the Government says lessons about sex and relationships should include you whether you're gay, bisexual or straight.

## Things to do if you're bullied:

- \* Let somebody know it's happening.
- \* Write down what happened to you.
- \* Write down who you've told about the bullying and what they do about it.
- \* If you're still not getting help, tell a gay and bisexual youth group, an adult you trust or an advice agency (see page 24).

# Meeting People

Perhaps you'd like to meet people in the same boat but feel things are stopping you. Maybe you don't know where they are. Or you're nervous about meeting people you don't know.

Perhaps you're put off by how you think gay and bisexual people will be. It might help to know there are lots of gay and bisexual people out there - but usually you can't spot them because they're just like everyone else.

**“I was nervous about what gay people would be like But I checked out a gay youth group and bumped into loads of lads just like me.”**



## Gay & bisexual youth groups

This is one of the best ways to meet people because ...

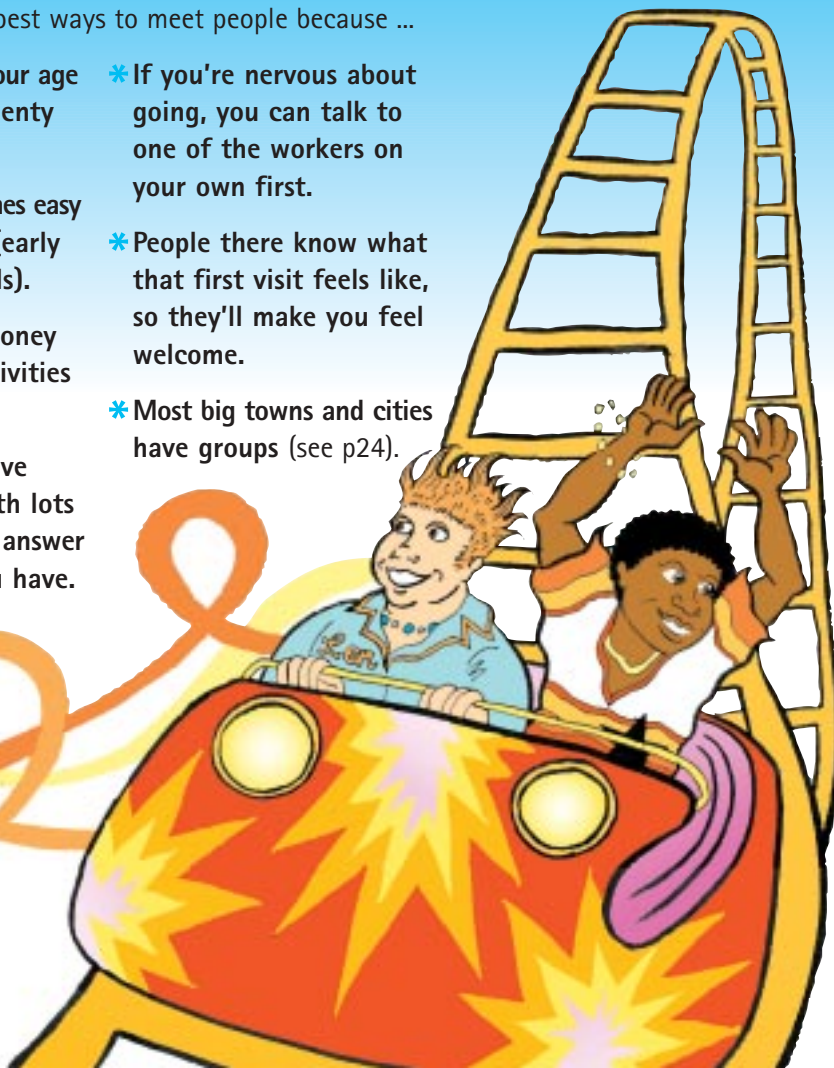
- \* People there are your age and you'll have plenty in common.
- \* Groups meet at times easy for you to make (early evenings/weekends).
- \* You don't need money to go and the activities are mostly free.
- \* Groups usually have youth workers with lots of information to answer any questions you have.
- \* If you're nervous about going, you can talk to one of the workers on your own first.
- \* People there know what that first visit feels like, so they'll make you feel welcome.
- \* Most big towns and cities have groups (see p24).

## The Internet

There's lots of gay and bisexual stuff on the Web, some very helpful, some not. A good idea is to search for 'gay youth groups uk'. You'll find lots of groups with their own sites and email addresses. Until you feel like going to a group you can email them or talk in chat rooms. Useful sites are listed on p24.

## Friends

Good friends make life a lot easier. If you 'come out' you might lose some friends (although real friends will stick by you) but you'll soon make new ones. For most people finding friends you can be yourself with is what comes first. Boyfriends and sex happens later when you're ready for it.



# Getting closer

## Sex

You can have a boyfriend at any age but for you to have sex the law says you must both be 16 or over. Only you'll know when you feel ready for sex. Your first time is a big thing in your life so it's best to make sure it feels right and you really want it. Don't do it because you feel pressure to. You have the right to say yes or no to sex.

Only do sexual things you feel okay doing. It's very common to have questions or worries about anal sex. It's important to know that lots of young gay and bisexual men don't have anal sex - they like doing other things instead. You can talk about sex with people at a youth group or on a helpline (see p24).

## Love & boyfriends

Most of us would like to find someone special. It can feel awkward if you like someone but don't know if they feel the same or how to let them know. It really helps to have people to ask questions, get advice and hear what they did. Gay and bisexual youth groups are a good place to learn all this.



## Sexual health

There are infections you can get from sex - 'sexually transmitted infections' ('STIs' for short). They're getting more common among young people (gay, straight or bisexual).

### Good news about STIs

- \* When you think of how much sex goes on, STIs aren't that common.
- \* Most can be treated.
- \* You can reduce the chances of getting one by using condoms.
- \* You can get free vaccinations at sexual health clinics against two STIs (hepatitis A and hepatitis B).

There's one STI you really need to know about - HIV (the virus that can lead to AIDS).

### Bad news about HIV

- \* There's no cure.
- \* It can make you seriously ill and people can die from it.
- \* Quite a lot of gay and bisexual men have HIV.
- \* There's a lot of prejudice against people with HIV.



### Good news about HIV

- \* It's not very easy to pick up compared to other STIs - although you could have unsafe sex just once and get HIV.
- \* Most gay and bisexual men avoid getting or passing on HIV by having 'safer sex'.
- \* Most sexual acts are low risk for HIV (anal sex without a condom is the highest risk).
- \* If someone gets HIV there are treatments that can help a lot.

### Other things to remember

- \* Quite a lot of people with HIV don't realise they have it.
- \* Whether they know they have it or not, people with HIV don't always tell - even before sex. So it's best not to expect to be told.
- \* You can't tell by looking. Someone with HIV usually doesn't look ill.
- \* Even with boyfriends you still need to talk about safer sex. Unless you're **TOTALLY** sure there's no risk, you need to think about condoms.

## Safer sex

In men with HIV the virus is in their blood and semen. So safer sex means sex that doesn't let blood or semen get inside someone else's body.

The two most common things to do to make sex safer are:

- 1 using a condom for anal sex *and*
- 2 not getting semen in the mouth.

There's no risk from kissing and wanking.

## Condoms

Condoms can sometimes slip off or rip but used properly they're very good at reducing the risk of STIs (including HIV) being passed on.

### Condom tips:

- \* Get used to putting them on when you're alone.
- \* Once the condom's on put lots of lubricant on it and around his bum.
- \* Water-based lubricant makes condoms less likely to break – but oil-based lubricants (hand lotion, Vaseline, baby oil etc.) will make condoms break.
- \* Carrying condoms and lubricant means you're always prepared.
- \* Chemists and super-markets sell condoms and lubricant – gay youth groups have free ones.

For more information on STIs, safer sex and sexual health clinics, you can talk to a youth worker at a gay and bisexual group or check out what's listed on pages 24 – 25.

These booklets (*ManSexMan*, *Bottom Line*, *The Manual*) have lots more information on sex. You can get them free from a youth group, from [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk) or by calling **THT Direct National Helpline on 0845 12 21 200** (they'll be sent in a plain envelope).



# A helping hand

## Helplines

Numbers can show up on itemised phone bills - using a mobile or phone box gets round this.

### **THT Direct Helpline** **0845 12 21 200**

(10am-10pm weekdays, midday til 6pm weekends). Good for information on HIV, safer sex and sexual health. They can also send you the free booklets on p 23.

### **16-25 Counselling** **0207 835 1495**

A London service for 16 to 25 year olds wanting to talk about sex, sexual health or relationships.  
[www.tht.org.uk/16.25](http://www.tht.org.uk/16.25)

### **Sexwise** **0800 28 29 30**

For confidential answers about sex and relationships.

### **Lesbian and Gay** **Switchboards**

There's one in most towns and cities. For the number look in your local phone book under 'lesbian and gay' or 'gay'. Good for someone to talk to and details of youth groups or anything to do with being gay or bisexual.

### **FFLAG Helpline** **01454 852 418**

Help for families and friends of gay and bisexual people.

### **Childline** **0800 11 11**

Good for help with bullying.

### **Survivors** **020 7357 6677**

(Tues-Thursday 7pm-10pm)  
For men and boys who've been sexually abused or assaulted.

## Websites

### **[www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)**

Good for sexual health and HIV info - search for 'gay men' or 'young gay men'.

### **[www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)**

Click on 'young people' or 'gay and lesbian' for info and 'coming out' stories.

### **[www.fflag.org.uk](http://www.fflag.org.uk)**

For parents with gay/bisexual children.

### **[www.gayyouthuk.co.uk](http://www.gayyouthuk.co.uk)**

For details of gay youth groups.

### **[www.ruthinking.co.uk](http://www.ruthinking.co.uk)**

Info on sex, relationships and gay youth groups - click on 'local help' and search for 'gay youth' and 'where you live'.

## Magazines

### **Gay Times**

### **Attitude**

Both on sale at WH Smith and many other newsagents. Some libraries have gay magazines like the **Pink Paper**.

