

Vocabulary

Trans/Transgender - (adj) (1) a person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on assigned sex at birth. (2) An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans* with an * is often used to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term.

Cisgender - (adj; pronounced "siss-jendur") a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and male-assigned). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not trans, they are cisgender.

Biological Sex - (noun) a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used separately or in conjunction to classify and assign an individual as female or male or intersex.

Gender Identity - (noun) the internal perception of one's gender. How one chooses to identify largely based on what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans, and more.

Microaggression (noun)- everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership¹.

Ally - (noun) a (typically straight- or cis-identified) person who supports, and respects members of the LGBTQ community.

Asexual - (adj) having a lack of (or low level of) sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest or desire for sex or sexual partners. *Asexuality* exists on a spectrum and many of these different places on the spectrum have their own identity labels.

Gender Expression - (noun) the external display of one's gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally measured on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as "gender presentation."

Gender non-conforming (adj) (1) a gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (ex: masculine woman or feminine man) (2) a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary.

Genderqueer (adj): an identity category for people who transgress the male/female gender binary. It is similar and often used synonymously with gender non-conforming and often serves as an umbrella term for identities that exist beyond male or female. People who identify as genderqueer may identify as a) having

¹ from Diversity in the Classroom, UCLA Diversity & Faculty Development, 2014



two or more genders, b) having no gender, c) moving fluidly between genders (genderfluid), d) being a third gender.

Intersex - (adj) someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. Formerly known as hermaphrodite but this term is now considered outdated and derogatory.

LGBTQ - (adj) initialisms used as shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality. LGBTQ is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (sometimes people at a + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive)

Pansexual - (adj) a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions.

Queer - (adj) used as an umbrella term to describe individuals who don't identify as straight. Also used to describe people who have non-normative gender identity or as a political affiliation. Can often be used interchangeably with LGBTQ when referring to a group of people, though due to its historical usage as derogatory, some members of the LGBT community do not claim this word as an identifier for themselves.

Sexual Orientation - (noun) the type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one feels for others, often labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to.

They/Them/Theirs - A common gender neutral pronoun. Used in the same way you would use he/him/his or she/her/hers.

Transphobia - (noun) the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans* people, the trans* community, or gender ambiguity. *Transphobia* can be seen within the queer community, as well as in general society.

For a more expansive list of definitions check out - bit.ly/SZP_VocabFull

Resources

Janet Mock Flips the Script: How Not to Talk to a Trans Person - youtu.be/ISsdSvjhniQ

GLAAD: Being a Good Ally - glaad.org/transgender/allies

GLSEN Educator Resources: Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network - bit.ly/1POP8wc

Everyday Feminism: How to be an ally to a trans friend - bit.ly/1LlSdqA

Guide to Gender: A Social Justice Advocate's Handbook - guidetogender.com

Venture Out Project - www.ventureoutproject.com

TheSafeZoneProject.com - www.thesafezoneproject.com



Top 5 Trans Ally Principles

Affirm the trans people in your life by using their correct name and pronouns. It is important to use their correct name and pronouns whether they are around or not and when referring to them in the past, present, or future. It is a powerful indicator that you believe they are who they say they are. Introducing yourself to other people with your name and pronouns can also send a message and helps remind people that we should never assume we know how someone wants to be identified.

Apologize but don't dwell when you make a mistake with names, gender, or pronouns. Always correct yourself when you make a mistake with someone's name or pronoun. Apologizing briefly in the moment is important, but dwelling on the moment and over-apologizing or making scene of your mistake makes the moment about you instead of it being about that trans person and your apology.

Engage with that person about their identity. If someone has shared their identity with you, you can talk with them about it. Identities and experiences aren't to be treated like elephants in the room. Being unwilling to engage with someone around their experience/identity can send a message that their identity isn't something that should be talked about. If you struggle for something to say you can always ask, "Hey, how are you doing?"

Respect privacy and steer clear of body-centric questions. A trans person has a right to privacy around their body just like the rest of us do, so steer clear of questions about surgery, body history, genitalia, etc. Another way to think about it, always talk about a trans person as if they are present in the room.

Volunteer to educate others about ways they can continue to do the above. We can all help each other when it comes to being a good trans ally. We will mess up sometimes and holding each other accountable, helping each other practice correcting names/pronouns/gender is a powerful and important action. Volunteer to educate others. Put yourself out there as an ally and as a fellow learner and help create more safe, affirming, and inclusive environments around you.

Quick Tips

Don't ask what someone's "real name" is. The name they use now is their real name and what is all you need to know. Asking for their old name is an invasion of privacy.

Don't ask someone how they knew they were transgender. No one asks you how you knew you were cisgender; you just know. Asking someone how they knew they are trans is similar to asking them to justify their identity.

Don't out someone as trans in any way. It is important to always allow someone the ability to discern and decide who to come out to and when. It is never your place to do so. This is a matter of privacy, respect and also personal safety.

Try to identify when you are using gender as a means of categorization when you could use another term or group identity (ladies and gentlemen vs. parents/students/friends)

Explore and get to understand your cisgender privilege. Take time to consider the ways that you've never thought about it before.

Some questions are better to Google. If you're asking out of care for that person, ask away (ex. How are things going in your office now that you've transitioned?) If you're asking for personal curiosity better to Google (ex. What kind of surgeries would a person have if they are transitioning from female to male?)

www.ventureoutproject.com

For more resources on how to be a trans affirming ally & LGBTQ+ identities check out www.thesafezoneproject.com

Trans Ally Worksheet

Reflecting on what you learned, try to answer the following questions

1. You are walking by a group of students and you hear one of them say, "That was super weird when Mr. Snow came out to all of us, that must have been so awkward for him." You want to correct the person's misgendering of Ms. Snow. How could you do that with this group of students? What might you say?
2. You walk into the common room of your dorm and hear a group of students saying, "Dude, transgender people can do whatever they want I just can't imagine how weird it'd be if he, she, whatever, used the women's bathroom? Why not just have a transgender bathroom?"
3. You walk into an empty classroom and find a group of students watching *Orange is the New Black* on a laptop while they wait for class to begin. You overhear one of the students say, "Laverne Cox is hot. Do you think her breasts are real? And what about down there? Think she still has her junk? Do all trans people have sex changes?"



Trans Ally Worksheet - Sample Answers

(1) You are walking by a group of students and you hear one of them say, “That was super weird when Mr. Snow came out to all of us, that must have been so awkward for him.” You want to correct the person’s misgendering of Ms. Snow. How could you do that with this group of students? What might you say?

- **Simply address the misgendering:** “Ms. Snow.”
- **Address the misgendering:** “Hey, I heard you all talking about Ms. Snow, just wanted to offer a gender reminder that it really is important that we refer to Ms. Snow as she identifies, so please practice calling her Ms. Snow.”
- **Address the misgendering and mention it is a community effort to hold each other accountable:** “Hey, I heard you all talking about Ms. Snow and I wanted to remind you that it is Ms. Snow. I realize you may have just misspoken and this does take some practice, but it is important that as a community we help each other remember as we transition our language.”

(2) You walk into the common room of your dorm and hear a group of students saying, “Dude, transgender people can do whatever they want I just can’t imagine how weird it’d be if he, she, whatever, used the women’s bathroom? Why not just have a transgender bathroom?”

- **Open the conversation in a non-threatening way:** “Hey, I heard you speaking about trans people and I was wondering if I could offer my two cents.” OR “I appreciate that you said that person can be who they want to be, and that is really important.”
- **Relate in and correct:** “I heard you struggling to remember how to refer to that person you were talking about, I know this might be new information and is a lot to take in, but if someone identifies as a woman, they are a woman. And if they’ve asked us to refer to them with she/her pronouns we need to respect that. So if we are talking about Ms. Snow then we need to say, “What if *she* was in the bathroom?”
- **Expand on the info if you feel they will accept more info:** “It would be pretty discriminatory if we said that trans people had to use a particular “transgender bathroom”. That would basically amount to outing anyone who is transgender every time they need to use the bathroom. We need to respect all people’s right to use the bathroom that fits their identity. And, in an ideal world we’d have lots of “all gender bathrooms” that people of all gender identities - cis, trans, queer, etc.. could all feel good about using. Just like with anyone, there is big range of wants/needs for trans people. Some people do feel more comfortable being around people of their same gender identity in a restroom so as a trans man they may feel safest in the men’s restroom. In other cases, some trans people may prefer using an all gender or gender-neutral bathroom. But sometimes that option isn’t available. So it is important that if someone identifies as a man we make him feel safe being in a men’s room and if someone identifies as a woman, we make her feel that it is safe for her to be in the women’s restroom.”



3. You walk into an empty classroom and find a group of students watching *Orange is the New Black* on a laptop while they wait for class to begin. You overhear one of the students say, “Laverne Cox is hot. Do you think her breasts are real? And what about down there? Think she still has her junk? Do all trans people have sex changes? ”

- **Open the conversation in a non-judgemental, but serious way:** “Hi. It sounds like you all are doing some research. I understand you have questions and are curious, but before you start talking about someone’s body think about what it would feel like to you if someone was making comments about your body or asking about your genitals. Ask yourself, why do you want to know the answer to those questions? Does it really matter?”
- **Address the questions and correct the invasive nature of them :** “That being said, I can share some thoughts with you. Rather than speaking about a specific person or specific body parts, we can talk in more general terms. When someone identifies as transgender it means that their gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Some people who identify as transgender transition. This can mean any number of things. People who transition socially typically change their name and/or pronouns and ask that you recognize their identity as a gender other than what they were assigned at birth. So for example, someone may have been assigned female at birth but now uses the pronouns he/him or they/them. And, they may have changed their name. They can transition without taking hormones or having gender affirming surgery. Others transition with surgeries and/or hormones. Though you may want to know how a person has transitioned, what their body looks like, what changes they have gone through, this is private and is not appropriate for you to ask about or speculate about. Imagine if someone was asking you about your genitals, body hair, voice pitch, etc...
- **A good ally thinks about why they want to ask a question.** If it is simply curiosity, try Google or YouTube. There are tons of resources out there to teach you about the physical changes that occur and you shouldn’t expect a trans person to share their personal body narrative with you unless they volunteer it. It is great though if you engage with people about their lives just as you would any other person But before you ask any question, it’s really important to get consent to ask about a person’s life or transition. For example, you can ask, “Is it okay to ask you a question about your transition?” If they say yes, a great one is, “How’s it going with your co-workers now that you’re transitioning?” Or, “How are you doing?”, Or, “Is there anything I can do to support you?”
- **Talk about the limits of what we know and should talk about:** So for example, “Laverne Cox was assigned male at birth. We know now that Laverne did not identify as male and transitioned to female. That’s actually all we know. And really that’s all it means to be transgender. Surgery and hormones are options that some people have but not all people who identify as transgender undergo surgery or take hormones. Some don’t because they do not want to or feel it is right for them, others face barriers such as cost, parental consent, legal, etc... Are there other questions about Laverne Cox or trans issues in general that you want to talk about? I am really excited that you want to engage on this stuff, I’d just rather we talk about issues other than a person’s body.”

