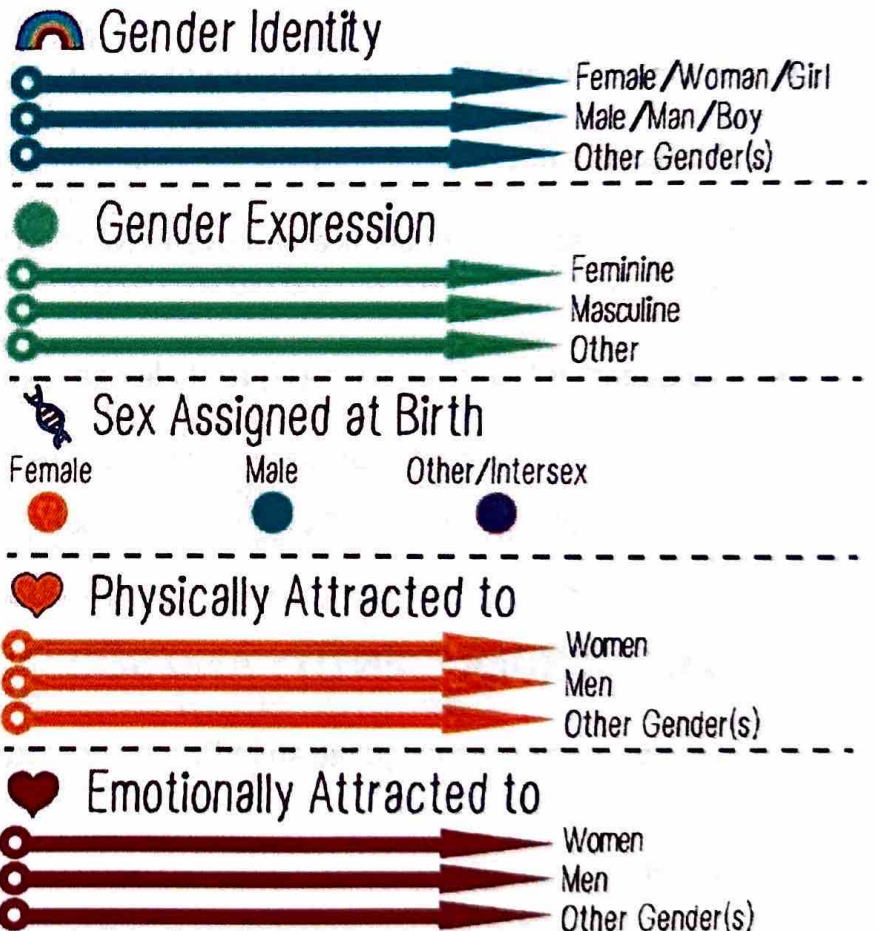
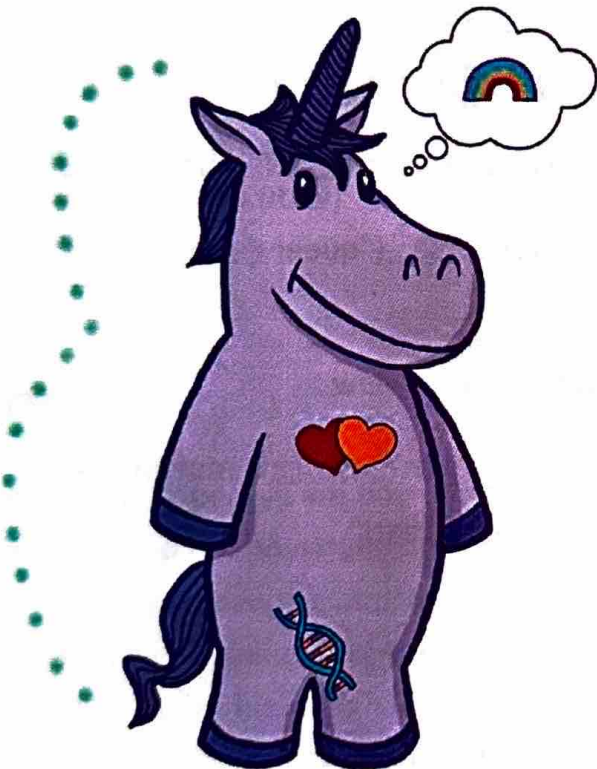


LGBTQIA+ 101:

Finding common language and understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

GENDER:

- Related to a certain set of traits and self-understandings in alignment with particular cultural and historic norms identified as “masculine,” “feminine” or something else, or some combination
- Gender = who we are

SEX:

- Refers to an assignment based on biology and anatomy

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

- Refers to attraction – romantically, emotionally, sexually, physically
- Sexual orientation = who we want to be with

According to the most recent research, a person's sense of sexual orientation usually emerges between ages 6-13, while kids may be aware of gender identity earlier.

QUEER:

- An umbrella term for those with identities outside cultural gender/sexual norms.
- This word is not without controversy: "queer" has been and sometimes still is used as a slur.
- Queer is also the primary academic term for LGBTQIA+ discourse. ("queer theory", "queer theology")
- "To queer" is "to make strange", to challenge dominant points of view
- This is different than the primary way most of us know about the "gay rights movement".
 - "We're just like you" vs. "we're not like you and that's great!"

BASICS OF GENDER IDENTITY AND SEX:

When in doubt: mirror the language an individual uses to describe themselves.

- Pronouns
- Identity

If you mess up, a quick apology goes a long way. *You do not have to understand to be respectful.*

GENDER IDENTITY:

Cisgender: born, assigned a gender, identified as that gender.

Transgender: born, assigned a gender, identifies as a different gender.

- "Transgender", not "transgendered"
- "Transsexual" is generally out of favor

Binary-identified transgender people: born, assigned a gender, live as “the opposite” gender (with perhaps some physical transition).

- Trans man: born, assigned female at birth, but identifies as a man.
- Trans woman: born, assigned male at birth, but identifies as a woman.

Nonbinary: born, assigned a gender, living as a gender outside the binary.

- Other words you may hear: genderqueer, enby, agender, genderfluid.

NOTE: Gender has always been more complicated than a binary. Other cultures have terms for those with have a gender outside the binary.

- Two Spirit (Native America)
- Bissu (Indonesia)
- Femminiello (Italy)
- Mino (Benin)

INTERSEX:

- Intersex people are born with ambiguous or atypical reproductive or sexual anatomy.
- They do not physically fit into the binary definition of “male” or “female”.
- We have seen the murkiness of biological definitions of male and female in sports debates.
- Many intersex children have surgeries as babies to conform their anatomy to “male” or “female”, which can have severe emotional consequences later in life.

BASICS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

- Describes to whom a person is sexually, emotionally, and romantically attracted
- Results from a variety of factors but is not a matter of individual choice
- Does not describe specific practices or behavior
- On a spectrum, not binary

COMMON LANGUAGE FOR DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

- Lesbian: Women who are attracted to women.

- **Gay:** Men who are attracted to men, or anyone attracted to people of the same sex.
- **Bisexual:** A person who is capable of attraction to others regardless of sex or gender.
- **Asexual:** People who experience little or no sexual attraction.
- **Pansexual:** A person who is capable of attraction to others regardless of sex or gender.
- **Queer:** A person whose sexual orientation or gender identity falls outside the heterosexual mainstream or the gender binary. *Take care with this word.*

HOSPITABLE LANGUAGE PRACTICES

- Take time to ask how individuals and families prefer to be referred to (“partner,” “spouse,” etc.)
- “Pass off” new visitors to other church members with this language
 - Ex: “This is Gene and their partner, John...”
- Avoid assumptions about family roles (“Are you sisters?”)
- Acknowledge transgender and non-binary attendees’ needs (i.e., bathrooms)
- Tone and body language are important
- Train church leaders (ministers, elders, liturgists, Sunday School teachers, greeters, etc.) with these practices

LANGUAGE TO AVOID:

- **Sexual preference and/or lifestyle:** Anti-gay activists popularized the term “sexual preference” to suggest that people choose their sexual identities. The word “lifestyle” reduces the totality of a gay person's life to sexuality.
- **Same-sex attraction:** Like “lifestyle,” this phrase limits people and relationships to sexual characteristics alone.

What if I say the wrong thing?

- “I’m sorry, I meant (correct pronoun/identifier)”
- Resist the urge to seek comfort or repeat apologies
- Practice makes progress

What if someone else says the wrong thing?

- To speaker: “Gene uses the pronouns they/them....”
- To recipient: “I noticed that you were referred to with the wrong pronoun earlier, and I know that that can be hurtful. Would you be okay with me taking them aside and reminding them about your pronouns?”

RECOGNIZE THAT IDENTITY IS A PROCESS:

Many people follow different timelines to determine their sexual orientation. A woman may be married to someone of the opposite sex only to realize later in life that she is a lesbian.

The APA states that discrimination and prejudice can make it difficult for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to accept their sexual orientation identities, much less come out to others.

A person's sexual or relationship history does not determine their orientation. People who practice celibacy or abstinence from sex are still aware of their sexual orientation.

CAN THERAPY CHANGE SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

All major national mental health organizationsⁱ consider conversion or "reparative" therapies to be fraudulent at best and harmful at worst. Many former leaders of "ex-gay" organizations have recanted and apologized for harming others.

RECOGNIZING HETEROSEXUAL PRIVILEGE:

- Receiving public recognition and support for relationship milestones
- Expressing affection and not expecting hostile or violent reactions from others.
- Expressing pain when a relationship ends and receiving support from others.
- Being around others of your sexuality most of the time.
- Acting, dressing, or talking as you choose without others making assumptions about people of your sexuality.
- Easily finding a religious community eager to welcome you.

Gender Pronouns

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/ Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

 transstudent.tumblr.com
 facebook.com/transstudent
 twitter.com/transstudent

Design by Landyn Pan

For more information,
go to transstudent.org/graphics

TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources

¹ Sexual Orientation, Homosexuality, and Bisexuality, "American Psychological Association. August 8, 2013