

Importance of Respecting Gender Identity and Pronouns

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Disclaimer

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Before We Get Started:
Share your pronouns!

Disclosures

- The speaker has nothing to disclose.
- This is an introductory session – gender identity and pronoun usage cannot be covered in an hour.

Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of respecting every person's gender identity and pronouns.
- Discuss how to address accidental misgendering and the use of incorrect pronouns.
- Identify strategies to practice and develop competency around proper use of pronouns.

Sex versus Gender

Sex

- Refers to the biological status
 - Genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormones, and secondary sex traits (e.g. breasts, facial hair)
- Typically categorized as male, female, or intersex
 - Intersex: persons born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy
- Usually assigned at birth based on appearance of external genitalia

Gender

- Refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's sex
- May or may not align with one's sex assigned at birth
- Cannot be determined at birth but a person is likely to be categorized based on sex

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Impact of Gender on Health and Safety

Mistreatment at School



Physically Attacked / Verbally Harassed / Denied Equal Treatment



Mistreatment at Work



STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION



THE MAJORITY OF
TRANSGENDER PEOPLE
EXPERIENCE VARIOUS
FORMS OF HARASSMENT,
VICTIMIZATION, AND
DISCRIMINATION IN
THEIR DAILY LIVES

Impact of Gender on Health and Safety



HEALTH CONCERNS

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**COMPARED TO THE
GENERAL POPULATION,
TRANSGENDER PEOPLE
EXPERIENCE HIGHER
RATES OF THESE
HEALTH CONCERNS**

Impact of Gender on Health and Safety

- Transgender people are more likely than the general population to be unhoused, un- or underemployed, and living below the federal poverty level
- African American transgender women may face racism, stigma, and sexism in daily life, with negative or deadly consequences for health
- In one study, 50% of transgender people reported they felt the need to teach their doctors about transgender care
- Many transgender people lack health insurance, have been denied insurance coverage of transition-related care, or denied coverage of preventive care that is not consistent with the gender their insurer has listed
- Transgender and non-binary youth were 2 to 2.5 times as likely to experience depressive symptoms, seriously consider suicide, and attempt suicide

Self-Reflection:

How knowledgeable do you think you are about gender diversity?

The Gender Binary System

- **Gender Binary:** a system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female
 - Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations
- **Cisgender:** a term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth

The Non-Binary Spectrum

- **Transgender:** an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth
- **Two-Spirit:** a term used within some American Indian and Alaska Native communities to refer to a person who identifies as having both a male and female essence or spirit
- **Non-Binary:** an adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman
 - May identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories.
 - Many also identify as transgender, but not all
 - Can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing other gender identities

Beyond Non-Binary

- **Gender-Expansive:** a person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system
- **Gender-Fluid:** a person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity
- **Gender Non-Conforming:** a broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category
- **Genderqueer:** genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation

Beyond Non-Binary, cont.

- AFAB/AMAB
- Agender
- Androgynous/androgynous
- Bigender
- Demiboy
- Demigirl
- Questioning
- Queer*
- Transfeminine/transfemme/transfem
- Transmasculine/transmasc
- Transsexual*

*Self-identifying term

Gender Identity vs Expression

- **Gender Identity:** one's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves
- **Gender Expression:** external appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine

Identity = What I Feel

Expression = What I Show

Gender Expression vs Transitioning

- **Transitioning:** a series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender
 - Social Transition: changing name and pronouns
 - Medical Transition: hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries
 - Legal Transition: changing legal name and sex on government identity documents
 - Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all, or none of these processes

Expression = What I Show

Transitioning = What I Do to Match What I See to What I Feel



Gender Identity and Expression: Important Notes

- Gender expression may not match gender identity – but that doesn't invalidate gender identity
 - Internalized stigma
 - Fear of violence
 - Lack of resources/money
- Style and personality may not match with the preconceived notion of how someone should express their gender identity
- Hyperfemininity, hypermasculinity, and “passing” should not be the expectation or requirement from others to respect someone's gender identity and expression

REMEMBER:

You don't get to decide someone else's gender identity or judge their expression of that identity.

Your job is to respect and affirm their gender identity regardless of expression.

Self-Reflection:

How comfortable are you with using gender-neutral pronouns?

Respecting Someone's Gender Pronouns

- **Gender Pronoun:** a word used to refer to the gender identity of a person
- Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show respect for someone's gender identity
- Referring to someone by the wrong pronouns can make them feel invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or dysphoric
- You can't always know someone's pronouns by looking at them
- It's a privilege to not have to worry about which pronoun someone is going to use for you based on how they perceive your gender

What are Common Gender Pronouns?

1	2	3	4	5
(f)ae	(f)aer	(f)aer	(f)aers	(f)aerself
e/ey	em	eir	eirs	eirself
he	him	his	his	himself
per	per	pers	pers	perself
she	her	her	hers	herself
they	them	their	theirs	themselves
ve	ver	vis	vis	verself
xe	xem	xyr	xyrs	xemself
ze/zie	hir	hir	hirs	hirsself

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(f)ae	(f)aer	(f)aer	(f)aers	(f)aerself
e/ey	em	eir	eirs	eirself
he	him	his	his	himself
per	per	pers	pers	perself
she	her	her	hers	herself
they	them	their	theirs	themselves
ve	ver	vis	vis	verself
xe	xem	xyr	xyrs	xemself
ze/zie	hir	hir	hirs	hirsself

Pronouns: A How-To Guide

Pronouns-- A How To Guide

Subject: ____¹ laughed at the notion of a gender binary.

Object: They tried to convince ____² that asexuality does not exist.

Possessive: ____³ favorite color is unknown.

Possessive Pronoun: The pronoun card is ____⁴.

Reflexive: ____¹ think(s) highly of ____⁵.

The pronoun list on the reverse is not an exhaustive list.
It is good practice to ask which pronouns a person uses.

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Using He/Him Pronouns

Pronouns-- A How To Guide

Subject: He laughed at the notion of a gender binary.

Object: They tried to convince him that asexuality does not exist.

Possessive: His favorite color is unknown.

Possessive Pronoun: The pronoun card is his.

Reflexive: He think(s) highly of himself.

The pronoun list on the reverse is not an exhaustive list.
It is good practice to ask which pronouns a person uses.

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Using She/Her Pronouns

Pronouns-- A How To Guide

Subject: She laughed at the notion of a gender binary.

Object: They tried to convince her that asexuality does not exist.

Possessive: Her favorite color is unknown.

Possessive Pronoun: The pronoun card is hers.

Reflexive: She think(s) highly of herself.

The pronoun list on the reverse is not an exhaustive list.
It is good practice to ask which pronouns a person uses.

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Using They/Them Pronouns

Pronouns-- A How To Guide

Subject: They laughed at the notion of a gender binary.

Object: They tried to convince them that asexuality does not exist.

Possessive: Their favorite color is unknown.

Possessive Pronoun: The pronoun card is theirs.

Reflexive: They think(s) highly of themselves.

The pronoun list on the reverse is not an exhaustive list.
It is good practice to ask which pronouns a person uses.

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Self-Reflection:

How concerned are you about the consequences of accidentally misgendering someone?

Terminology: Misgender

- **Misgender:** to refer to someone using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, which does not correctly reflect their gender
 - **Mispronoun:** to refer to a person with the incorrect pronouns
- May be unintentional and without ill intent – **IT HAPPENS!**
- May be a malicious expression of bias

Why Gender Pronouns Matter



<https://youtu.be/9iKHjl5xAaA>

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Examples of Misgendering

- Using the wrong pronouns
- Using gendered language to refer to someone which doesn't align with their gender identity
- Using gendered language to refer to a group of people which doesn't align with the group's gender identity
- Indicating that one doesn't believe someone is the gender they say they are
- Assigning someone to a gendered category which does not align with their gender identity
- Not affording someone the same opportunities as others who share their gender identity

Addressing Accidental Misgendering with Others

- Politely remind them about the person's pronouns or gender
 - *“Hey, just as a reminder, Terry goes by they/them pronouns.”*
- Respond back in the conversation with the correct pronouns
 - *“She told me it was okay to give you a call.” “Yes, I did tell Terry that they could give you my number.”*

A WORD OF CAUTION:

Someone being out to you about their gender identity and pronouns may not be out to everyone.

If someone has asked you to use a different name or pronouns in public for them, respect that.

Addressing Accidental Misgendering in the Moment

- Acknowledge that it happened and apologize briefly and succinctly
 - *“She said – I’m sorry, they said...”*
- Correct yourself and move on
 - *“He told – they told me...”*
- Stop, rethink your sentence, start again
 - *“I told Sam that he was – they was...I told Sam they were welcome to attend.”*

Self-Reflection After an Accident

- Did you forget to ask their pronouns?
- Did you know them by other pronouns and you're still transitioning to using their "new" pronouns?
- Do they not look or act how you expect someone with that gender identity to look/act?
- Have you not practiced using gender-neutral pronouns?

Tips for Reducing Misgendering at Work

- Print out the pronoun chart and place it at your desk
- Switch gendered identifiers to gender-neutral
 - Folks; friends; esteemed colleagues
- Include your pronouns and ask about pronouns
 - Do not use the term “preferred pronouns”
- Practice using gender-neutral pronouns
- Wear a pronoun pin when interacting with clients

Addressing Intentional Misgendering

- Accidental becomes intentional when a person:
 - Refuses to acknowledge another person's gender or pronouns because that person does not express their gender identity in a way that they deem appropriate
 - Refuses to use another person's pronouns because they don't recognize those pronouns as valid or "grammatically correct"
 - Refuses to correct their behavior even after being told that they are misgendering someone
- Assess if it's safe for you and/or the other person to speak up in the moment
- Firmly remind and offer assistance
 - "You know Lane uses he/him pronouns. Please stop misgendering him."
 - "I've noticed that you continue misgendering Lane. Is there a way I can help you to get his pronouns right?"
- Report/document intentional misgendering

REMEMBER:

Accidentally misgendering someone happens! Correct your behavior and try again.

Intentionally misgendering someone is disrespectful, potentially dangerous, and could result in disciplinary action at work.

Additional Resources

- Minus18 Pronouns Exercise: <https://pronouns.minus18.org.au/>
- National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center: <https://www.lgbtqiahealtheducation.org/>
- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Modules on HealthStream

Questions?