

How to Be an Ally to Transgender and Intersex People

- Validate people's gender expression. It is important to refer to a transgender person by the pronoun appropriate to their gender identity. In other words, if someone identifies as a woman, then refer to the person as "she"; if someone identifies as a man, refer to the person as "he." If you are not sure, ask them. Never use the word "it" when referring to someone who is transgendered. To do so is incredibly insulting and disrespectful. Some transgender people prefer to use gender-neutral pronouns: "hir" instead of "her" and "his," and "sie" or "ze" instead of "she" and "he." They/them are often used as gender neutral pronouns as well to describe and individual.
- Use non-gender specific language. Ask "Are you seeing someone?" or "Are you in a committed relationship?" instead of "Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" or "Are you married?" Use the word "partner" or "significant other" instead of "boyfriend/girlfriend" or "husband/wife."
- Challenge your own conceptions about gender-appropriate roles and behaviors. Do not expect people to conform to society's beliefs about "women" and "men."
- Do not assume that someone who is trans is lesbian, gay, or bisexual, or that the person will seek to transition. A person's transition process is unique to each person and isn't linked to one's sexuality.
- Do not automatically include intersex people in "transgender" and "queer" categories. Many intersex people do not feel included or represented by the trans and queer movements.
- Use the words "crossdresser" and "intersex" instead of "transvestite" and "hermaphrodite," respectively. The latter terms are often considered pejorative.
- Never ask someone who is trans or intersex about how they have sex or what their genitals look like. This is inappropriate in every situation.
- Do not share the gender identity of individuals without their permission. Do not assume that everyone knows. The decision to tell someone about their gender should be left to the person. As directed by the individual, you can role model preferred names, pronouns, relationship status, etc. for other's to not make mistakes.
- When you learn about someone's transgender identity, do not assume that it is a fad or trend. While public discussions are a relatively recent phenomenon, most transgender people have dealt with their gender identity for many years, often at great personal and professional costs. It is important to trust that someone's decision to present themselves as gender variant is not made lightly or without due consideration.
- Educate yourself and others about transgender and intersex histories and concerns. Introduce trainings, readings, and other resources to your colleagues to continue educational efforts to deconstruct social norms around gender, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Work to change organizational policies in areas such as benefits, employment, records and forms, and health care that discriminate against transgender people and seek to include gender identity/expression in your organization's non-discrimination policy.

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