

UNDERSTANDING GENDER



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following information has been designed as a starting point for those who wish to know more about and understand the diversity of gender. It has been gathered from a variety of different resources.

Gender is a highly individual experience, and the information presented here is intended simply as a guide.

Gender identity is constantly expanding and being explored from different theories and points of view. As such, this information may not fully conceptualise the depth or true nature of certain areas of gender identity and expression. Instead, it is designed to stimulate and motivate others into finding out more about the diversity of gender identities and expression.

GENDER: ASSIGNED AT BIRTH

Sex is assigned to us at birth, based off identifiable anatomy characteristics (genitalia). Social expectations about gender roles start from this moment, although our understanding about our own gender develops gradually through childhood.

Gender roles are characteristics in presentation, behaviour, interests and societal roles that are frequently associated with a particular gender. This could include boys playing with cars and liking blue; girls playing with dolls and liking pink.

THE PROBLEM WITH ASSIGNING GENDER AT BIRTH

Assigning a legal sex to someone at birth, and imposing social expectations of gender roles on them reduces gender to external genitalia. This is

not true. In fact, someone's genitals can tell you nothing about their gender identity.

Gender identity is your private sense of your own gender. It is distinct from gender roles, which are what society thinks that the genders ought to do.

Some people find that the sex they were assigned at birth does not match their gender.

This is more than feeling uncomfortable about gender norms and roles. Transgender people don't (just) want to defy gender norms and roles, they have a gender identity that is different to their sex assigned at birth.

WHAT IS TRANSITIONING?

Transitioning describes the physical, spiritual,

emotional, and/or legal changes that may be involved in being recognised as your correct gender identity.

Physical changes may involve taking hormones, changes in the way they dress and style their hair as well as any gender affirming surgeries. Not everyone who is or has transitioned has had, or wants, surgery and there are many different types of surgeries to meet the needs of the individual.

They may also seek to change official documents and records to reflect their true name and gender. Depending on the legal system and the financial means of the individual you may not always be able to change those documents. Regardless, your true name and gender should always be recognised.

THANK YOU

SHOC would like to acknowledge and thank the work of the UQU Queer Collective in helping produce this and other resources found on the Gender & Sexuality page.

MOVING BEYOND THE BINARY

The gender binary is the classification of sex and gender into two distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of male and female. This view of gender fails to comprehend the diversity of human experience.

Non-binary is a term used for people who do not identify as either a man or woman. If you're non-binary, you may consider yourself to be neither male nor female, both male and female, or somewhere along a spectrum of gender.

Other people are intersex. Being intersex means that your chromosomes, hormone levels or genitalia don't fall neatly into the categories of male or female. For more information about people with intersex conditions, see Organisation Intersex International Australia www.oii.org.au

DEFINING GENDER IDENTITIES

There are many different words used to conceptualised and speak about gender. Below are some examples of words that are used when talking about gender.

Cisgender –

Someone whose gender identity matches the legal sex they were assigned at birth.

Cis is a Latin word meaning “on the side of.” It can be used as an adjective to signal that the person identifies “on the side of” the gender they were assigned at birth.

Examples: Cis man, cis woman.

A cisgender person may be a man or a woman.

Transgender –

Someone whose gender identity does not match the legal sex they were assigned at birth.

Trans is a Latin word meaning “across; on the far side; beyond.” The word *trans* may be added as an adjective to indicate that they do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Examples: trans man, trans woman, non-binary person.

A trans man is a man while a trans woman is a woman. A non-binary person may be neither or both male and female, or may describe their gender as something that changes day to day.

Non-Binary –

Someone who does not identify as either male or female. They may consider themselves as neither, both or somewhere along a spectrum of gender.

Multigender –

Someone whose gender identity is made up of multiple gender identities. This could be a combination of male, female, non-binary, or genderless.

IMPORTANT

In understanding gender, it is important to be aware that labels do not define someone; each of us is free to be ourselves and express our gender differently.

Be aware of stereotypes and the influence that they have on yourself and others around. By choosing not to treat others based off stereotypes, you will find that you get to know some amazing individuals who will add a lot of meaning to your life.

Polygender/ Pangender –

Someone whose gender identity is made up of all genders, either at the same time or at different times throughout their life.

Neutrois/ Agender/ Genderless –

These can be interchangeable terms for someone who does not have a strong feeling of having a gender. This is different for each individual and as such, is something which cannot be accurately described.

Genderqueer –

This is generally an umbrella term that could be used for someone whose gender identity is non-binary.

A genderqueer person may embrace both traditionally viewed presentations or masculinity and femininity at the same time.

Genderfluid –

This individual may feel that they have no set gender, or that it slides between different genders. They may also feel genderless.

Example: A gender fluid individual may change their gender expression on a daily basis to better match how they feel for that day.

Demigender –

This can be used by someone whose gender identity is partially aligned with that they were assigned at birth, but not 100%. They may feel that they are a mix of genders that all make up their identity.

Demi may be used as a prefix in the following ways: Demigirl, demiboy, demigender.

Example: A demiboy identifies closely with men, but not entirely.

FAQs

Q: I've never met anyone who is transgender. What if I stuff up? Can you give me some rules about how to be respectful?

A: First up, how do you know you've never met anyone who's trans? You may have met someone who is trans and never known it.

Second, good job asking. Try these tips:

- Use their correct name and pronouns
- If you don't know what pronouns to use, ask
- Treat trans women as women
- Treat trans men as men
- Don't ask about their personal medical information or what's in their pants (or skirt). They're still private, not public.

Q: Have you had the surgery?

A: Are you circumcised? Have you had your appendix removed? Have you ever had an STI?

Our society considers both medical information and information about our genitals to be private and sensitive information. It is rude to ask anyone about their medical history or their genitals.

In any event, there isn't any one surgery. Someone who is trans may have many surgeries or none. In both cases, their gender identity should be respected.

Q: What does cisgender mean?

A: Someone who is cisgender finds that their gender matches their sex assigned at birth. A doctor seeing a cis man, knows what physical tests to do, which may be different to those required for a trans man.

Q: Isn't being cisgender normal?

A: It's important to remember that human diversity is normal. 'Common' and 'normal' are not synonyms.

It is more common to be cisgender, but that's not to say that it's any more 'normal' than being transgender.

Q: Are all trans men gay?

A: No. Although some trans men are attracted to men, others are attracted to women, or to non-binary people. Trans men (just like cis men) can be straight, gay, bi or pan (to name a few).

Q: How do you talk about someone's past, before they transitioned?

A: One great idea is to ask them for advice. If you can't do this, always refer to them using their current name and pronouns and avoid mentioning anything that might out them to others. It is not your right to talk about someone's past in a way which may affect them negatively in the present.

Q: Can we use the words tranny and shemale ?

A: No. These are very serious insults that have been used to abuse trans women. If you hear someone using these words, politely but assertively inform them that those words are unacceptable.

Q: What should I do if I stuff up in regards to someone's gender?

A: Apologise, correct yourself, or accept being corrected. Don't make a big deal of it, just move on with the flow of the conversation, being careful to use the right pronouns.

We are all human and we constantly make mistakes, the important thing is to learn from them and treat others with respect.

REFERENCES

The information presented in this resource has been accumulated from a variety of different sources. SHOC claims no copy right or ownership of the material in this resource. Additionally, information has been gained from various personal blogs on Tumblr, Reddit and Youtube, which we do not have to space to acknowledge here.

neutrois.com/what-is-neutrois

www.asexuality.org

minus18.org.au

lgbtihealth.org.au

www.glaad.org

www.transstudent.org

www.oii.org.au



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