

Gender Identity & Gender Pronouns Guide

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What to expect in this presentation?

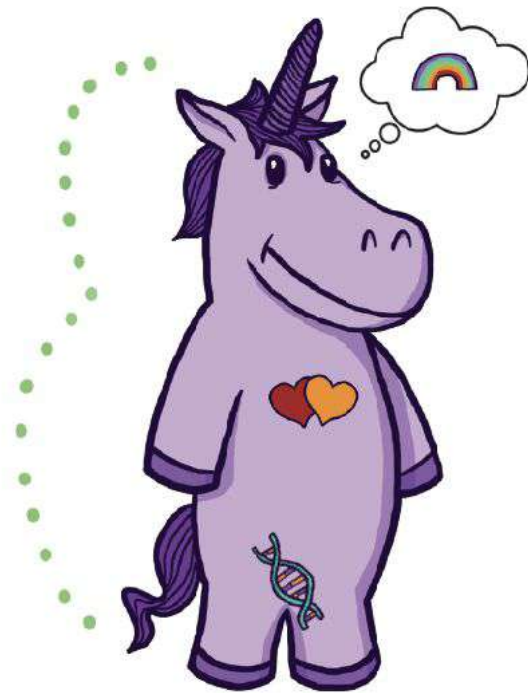
- **Extend respect and build trust with colleagues and patients by normalizing gender pronouns**
- **Don't assume**
- **Think about the overlapping of race and gender identity**
- **Gender is a spectrum: there are more than two ways to be**



Understanding Identity

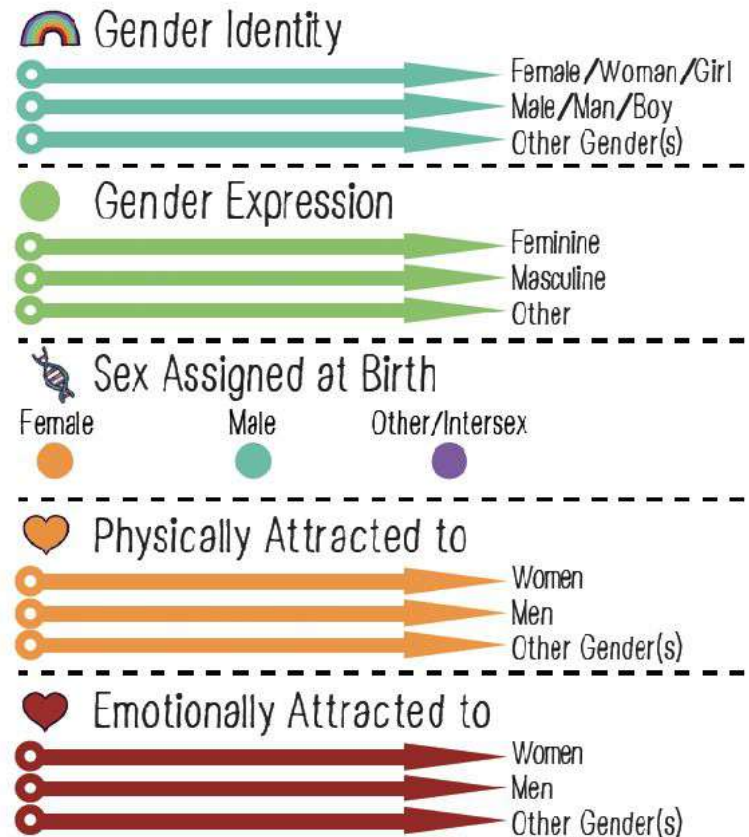
The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



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

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore



Sources: Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services; The Ontario Human Rights Commission





MY GENDER LIVES HERE.

NOT HERE.

#RedefiningGender

Trans youth of colour are part of Toronto.
Transphobia is not.

TORONTO

torontoforall.ca

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Sources: CBC, MarshaP.org; TorontoForAll.ca



What are your Pronouns?





“ You can’t use a plural pronoun in English to refer to one person! ”

ACTUALLY...

Actually, plural pronouns have already been used this way in English. Singular you was resisted at first just like singular they is today. But it’s been centuries since anybody objected to singular you!

EXPLANATION

Some say he and she are the only grammatically correct singular personal pronouns, and that you can’t change grammar just because it doesn’t work for a few people. But languages are living tools created by and for the people who speak them, and when the needs of those speakers change, so do languages. English pronouns have already changed several times in history. From Old to Middle English, people said thou (singular) and ye (plural) instead of our modern you. After the Norman Conquest of England brought a French influence into English, plural ye became singular and was used to indicate someone’s higher status, kind of like plural vous conveys respect in French. However, because social class boundaries were becoming more fluid in England, thou started to feel like an insult as it implied a lower status, so you gradually took over despite facing initial resistance.

Source: No Big Deal Campaign





“ If we agree to use zie/hir or singular they, soon we’ll have to memorize a different pronoun for everybody! ”

ACTUALLY...

Respecting a few peoples’ gender-neutral pronouns isn’t the same thing as agreeing to use a different pronoun for everyone you know. That doesn’t make any sense.

EXPLANATION

It’s true that there is more than one gender-neutral pronoun, like singular they/them, or zie/hir (instead of she/her). But agreeing to use someone’s gender-neutral pronoun today doesn’t mean agreeing to memorize an endless list of pronouns down the road. This is what philosophers call a ‘slippery slope’ argument. In a slippery slope argument, there’s no evidence for the big bad outcome people fear, just like there’s no evidence that people everywhere are beginning to make up their own pronouns. Without evidence, people try to prevent the first step by making the outcome sound as scary as possible. But a major problem with slippery slope arguments is that most situations aren’t slippery. They’re more like staircases, where each ‘stair’ is a different decision, and each decision is made separately based on its own unique issues and evidence. The slippery slope just isn’t a good reason not to use someone’s preferred pronoun.

Source: No Big Deal Campaign





“ I support transgender people, but I won't use someone's pronoun if it's political.”

ACTUALLY...

Everyone has a gender pronoun preference. Saying another person's preference is 'political' is basically telling them they should look more 'like a man' or 'like a woman.' That is extremely unsupportive of transgender people.

EXPLANATION

How do you know whether someone's gender pronoun preference is 'political' or not? Some people's preferences are obvious and others aren't. When something isn't obvious it stands out because it takes more thought. Some transgender people stand out because they don't look like what we think a man or a woman should look like. Maybe they don't identify that way, or maybe they don't have the money or support to access hormones, surgeries, or new clothes. Some pronoun sceptics feel like it's too much to ask that they expend a little extra effort because 'it should be easy' to know which pronoun someone uses. But it's only 'easy to know' when someone looks exactly like what you want them to look like in the gender department. Needing a transgender person to look a certain way in order to use their pronoun isn't being supportive of transgender people.

Source: No Big Deal Campaign





ACTUALLY...

Unless you've also committed a crime like assault or vandalism while intentionally calling someone the wrong pronoun, a mistake can't send you to jail. So keep on not doing those things and you should be fine.

“ Under Bill C-16, I could be charged with a hate crime if I get someone's pronoun wrong! ”

EXPLANATION

Bill C-16 adds “gender identity” and “gender expression” to the hate crimes provisions of the Criminal Code (sections 318 – advocating genocide, and 319 – public incitement of hatred). These provisions already set out identifiable groups based on things like national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and mental or physical disability. They are rarely used and are carefully written to only apply in extreme cases, like where someone calls for the destruction of an entire group. The third provision changed by Bill C-16 (section 718.2) only applies when someone is being sentenced; it instructs judges to treat hate-motivation as a factor that may lead to a more severe sentence for an offence like assault or vandalism. Even with Bill C-16's changes, you can't be ‘charged with a hate crime’ just for using the wrong pronoun.

Source: No Big Deal Campaign



STARTING CONVERSATIONS

AVOID ASSUMED USE OF GENDERED TITLES



USE THESE TITLES ONLY AFTER YOU HAVE CONFIRMED HOW SOMEONE WISHES TO BE ADDRESSED.

EMAIL CONVERSATION

TO OPEN AN EMAIL DIALOGUE, CONSIDER STARTING IT WITH...

WHEN WRITING AN EMAIL,

it is not required to use a gender-specific title (i.e., Mr., Ms., Miss., Mrs.), consider just using the person's first and last name. Along with gender-neutral pronouns, you can use Mx. as a gender-neutral title.



SAMPLE CONVERSATIONS THAT REMOVE GENDERED TITLES



Hi there, how are you today?

How can I help you today? What would you like support with?



I would just like to confirm what name you go by. [. . .] Great, thanks so much for giving me that information. I will make a note with your account to ensure that other folks know that this is your name.



Is there anything else you would like to tell me to help us better meet your needs?

#TRANSINCLUSION

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GENDER-SPECIFIC & GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

GENDER-SPECIFIC PRONOUNS

are the ways we refer to each other in the third person. People who are transitioning in some way might choose to change their pronouns.



GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

THEY THEM THEIR



I saw Lauren come to work today and they seemed really happy. I wonder if it has anything to do with their weekend. I hope I see them soon to hear all about it!

ZE (ZEE) SIE (SEE) ZIE (ZEE) HIR (HEAR)



I saw Lauren come to work today and ze seemed really happy. I wonder if it has anything to do with hir weekend. I hope I see hir soon to hear all about it!

ASK



You cannot tell someone's name or pronoun just by looking at them.

RESPECT



If someone takes the time to let you know their name and pronoun, use and respect it. It is not up to you to decide someone else's identity.

PRACTICE



If you have difficulty using someone's pronoun and name, practice. Ask co-workers, peers, and friends to point out when you've made a mistake.

Hi everyone, my name is Lauren. My pronouns are she and her.



Start meetings with everyone introducing themselves and stating their pronoun.

ASK! If you find yourself unsure of someone's pronoun, be attentive to how others refer to this person. If you are still unclear or concerned that people might be using the incorrect pronoun, politely and privately ask that person what pronoun they use.

All name tags and name plates can also have a spot to show someone's pronouns.



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