TIPS FOR USING GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Glossary of Terms for Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities

GENDER IDENTITY

Gender Identity: Refers to a person’s internal sense of self as a woman, man, non-binary, genderqueer, etc.

Cisgender: A term for a person whose gender identity is what society considers to “match” their sex assigned at birth. The Latin prefix cis-means “not across.” For example, a person who was assigned female at birth (meaning that the baby was assumed to be a girl based on physical characteristics) and who self-identifies as a woman is cisgender.

Transgender: A term for a person whose gender identity is different than what society considers to “match” their sex assigned at birth. For example, a person who was assigned female at birth who self-identifies as a man is transgender.

Genderqueer: A term for people who do not feel they fit within a two-gender or binary gender system.

Non-binary: An inclusive term for people who do not identify as exclusively male or female.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual Orientation: An identity based on who we primarily develop romantic, emotional, and sexual attractions for and connections with. This identity is about who we fall in love with.

Common Sexual Orientations

Asexual: Refers to people who form meaningful connections with others but who don’t experience these feelings as sexual attraction.

Bisexual: Refers to people whose romantic, emotional, and sexual attractions and connections can be with people whose gender identities are similar or different from their own.

Gay: Refers to people (primarily used for men) whose primary romantic, emotional, and sexual attractions and connections are with people whose gender identity is similar to their own.

Lesbian: Refers to women whose primary romantic, emotional, and sexual attractions and connections are with other women.

Pansexual: Refers to people whose romantic, emotional, and sexual attractions and connections are with people of any gender identity.

Straight or Heterosexual: Refers to people whose primary romantic, emotional, and sexual attractions and connections are with people of a different gender identity than their own.

LGBTQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Plus. An inclusive term that seeks to include all people who do not identify as heterosexual and cisgender.

Queer: Originally a derogatory label for LGBTQ+ people. The LGBTQ+ community has reclaimed this word as an inclusive and positive way to identify all people who do not identify as heterosexual and cisgender.

Questioning: Refers to a person who is uncertain about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and who is actively trying to figure it out.

How can you use gender-inclusive language when speaking with community members?

1. Ask people about their gender pronouns, meaning if they want others to refer to them as “she,” “he,” “they,” etc. Do your best to use people’s correct pronouns; apologize concisely and correct yourself if you make a mistake.

2. In English, you can use the gender-neutral singular “they” instead of “he” or “she” to refer to people when you don’t know how they self-identify. Example: “Do you have a spouse or partner and, if so, what is their name?”

3. In Spanish, you can:
   a. Use alternative words or phrasing that don’t require using gendered words. Examples:
      - “Cónyuge” instead of “esposo” or “esposa”
      - “Menores de edad” instead of “niños” or “niñas”
      - “Colegas” instead of “compañeros” or “compañeras”
   b. Use gender-inclusive Spanish by replacing the “o” and “a” in gendered words that refer to people with “x.” Pronounce the “x” as “e.” Examples:
      - “Ellas” instead of “ellos” or “ellas”
      - “Amigues” instead of “amigos” or “amigas”
      - “Compañerges” instead of “compañeros” or “compañeras”

Glossary adapted from “Social Justice Glossary of Terms” by Just Communities: https://www.just-communities.org/

Revised: 12/17/19