



Pride in the City Transgender Awareness Event

Tips for Effective and Respectful Interactions

Don't assume you can tell if someone is transgender. Transgender and transsexual people don't all look a certain way or come from the same background, and many may not appear "visibly trans." Indeed, many trans people live most of their lives with very few people knowing their trans status.

Don't make assumptions about a trans person's sexual orientation. Gender identity is different than sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is about who we're attracted to. Gender identity is about how we know our own gender. Trans people can identify as gay, straight, bisexual, or asexual.

Be careful about confidentiality, disclosure, and "outing." Some trans people feel comfortable disclosing their trans status to others, and some do not. Knowing a trans person's status is personal information and it is up to them to share it with others. Do not casually share this information, or "gossip" about a person you know or think is trans. Not only is this an invasion of privacy, it also can have negative consequences in a world that is very intolerant of gender difference—trans people can lose jobs, housing, friends, and sadly have even been killed upon revelation of their trans status.

If you don't know what pronouns to use, ask. Be polite and respectful when you ask a person which pronoun they prefer. Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so.

Be patient with a person who is questioning their gender identity. A person who is questioning their gender identity might shift back and forth as they find out what identity and/or gender presentation is best for them. They might, for example, choose a new name or pronoun, and then decide at a later time to change the name or pronoun again. Do your best to be respectful and use the name and/or pronoun requested.

Don't assume what path a trans person is on regarding surgery or hormones. Affirm the many ways all of us can and do transcend gender boundaries, including the choices some of us make to use medical technology to change our bodies. Some trans people wish to be recognized as their gender of choice without surgery or hormones; some need support and advocacy to get respectful medical care, hormones, and/or surgery. And: don't privilege one path over another.

Don't ask a trans person what their "real name" is. For some trans people, being associated with their birth name is a tremendous source of anxiety, or it is simply a part of their life they wish to leave behind. Respect the name a trans person is currently using.

Don't ask about a trans person's genitals or surgical status. Think about it—it wouldn't be considered appropriate to ask a non-trans person about the appearance or status of their genitalia, so it isn't appropriate to ask a trans person that question either. Likewise, don't ask if a trans person has had "the surgery." If a trans person wants to talk to you about such matters, let them bring it up.

Listen to trans voices. The best way to be an ally is to listen with an open mind to trans people themselves. They are the experts on their own lives.

Adapted from www.tapartnership.org/docs/TipsForInteractions.pdf

Resources for further information:

- Technical Assistance Partnership - www.tapartnership.org/docs/TipsForInteractions.pdf
- Center of Excellence for Transgender Health - transhealth.ucsf.edu/
- Gender Spectrum - www.genderspectrum.org/
- GLAAD - www.glaad.org/reference/transgender
- National Center for Transgender Equality - transequality.org/
- PFLAG - www.pflag.org/resource/transgender-reading-list-adults
- Transgender Law and Policy Institute – www.transgenderlaw.org/
- The Trevor Project - www.thetrevorproject.org/
- World Professional Association for Transgender Health - www.wpath.org

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<http://www.cityofhopepride.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/prideinthecity>

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