



**Developmental
Disabilities
Planning Council**

Plain Language Edition

Proud and Supported:

Definitions and Beyond

Proud and Supported: Definitions and Beyond

To Start:

There are many ways to identify. Everyone is different and that's good! Sometimes that is confusing. This guide will explain some of the ways people identify. This guide will talk about things like:

- The different ways people identify
- What being LGBTQ+ is
- The different ways people can present themselves
- What different kinds of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people there are
- What coming out is and how to come out
- What stereotypes are and why they are bad
- What to do if you feel bad about being different
- Why having LGBTQ+ pride is like being a self-advocate
- How to find community

Definitions

There are a lot of words about gender and sexuality. Some of them can be hard to understand. We want to define them for you. Some of these words can mean multiple things. We've written down what we think is the best definition for each word. But other people might have other definitions. That's okay.

Gender

How you feel and see yourself and what you call yourself. For example, "man," "woman," "non-binary," and "genderqueer" are all genders.

Sexuality

Who you are attracted to. Some people are attracted to men. Some people are attracted to women. Some people are attracted to non-binary people. Some people are attracted to more than one gender. Some people aren't attracted to anyone at all.

Sex assigned at birth

When a baby is born, the doctors look at its body. Then the doctors say if the baby is a boy or a girl. Someone who the doctors say is a boy is assigned male at birth. Someone who the doctors say is a girl is assigned female at birth.

Binary

A set of two groups.

Sexual binary

The set of only male and female. The sexual binary is wrong. There are more sexes than only male and female.

Gender binary

The set of only man and woman. The gender binary is wrong. There are more genders than only man and woman.

Genitals

Your sexual body parts. Some examples of genitals are:

- Penis
- Vagina
- Testicles

Hormones

The chemicals in your body. There are many different types of hormones. The two most common sexual hormones are testosterone and estrogen.

Sexual attraction

Liking someone in a way where you want to have sex with them.

Romantic attraction

Liking someone in a way where you want to do romantic things with them, like kiss them or cuddle with them.

Pride

When you have pride, you feel good about yourself. You can have pride in your gender. You can have pride in your sexuality. Pride is important. It is important to be proud of who you are. Pride helps people make friends. Pride helps people work together.

LGBTQ+

An acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and more. We will define all those words.

We also wanted to define some of the ways people can identify. This is not a list of all the ways. There are too many ways to list all of them!

Straight

Someone who is attracted to people of different genders from their gender. Men who only like women are straight. Women who only like men are straight.

Gay

Someone who likes people of the same gender they are. For example, a man who only likes men is gay.

Sometimes, the word “gay” gets used to mean the whole LGBTQ+ community. For example, someone might say they’re going to a gay pride parade. They don’t mean it’s a pride parade only for people who like the same gender that they are. They mean it is a pride parade for the whole LGBTQ+ community.

Lesbian

A women who likes other women

Bisexual

Someone who likes people of multiple genders. For example, somebody who likes men and women.

Pansexual

Someone who likes people of many or all genders.

The meanings of bisexual and pansexual overlap. That's okay. Some people identify as both pansexual and bisexual.

Cisgender

Someone whose gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. A cisgender woman is a woman who was assigned female at birth. A cisgender man is a man who was assigned male at birth.

Transgender

Someone whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender woman is a woman who was assigned male at birth. A transgender man is a man who was assigned female at birth. Nonbinary people can be assigned either sex at birth.

Queer

Someone who isn't straight and cisgender. Queer can mean many things. Some people identify as queer and another sexuality, like gay. Some people only identify as queer.

Some people say queer is a slur. A slur is a word that gets used to hurt people because those people are different. Some people say that queer isn't a slur. It is okay that people disagree. If someone doesn't want to be called queer, don't call them queer.

Questioning

Someone who doesn't know their gender or sexuality.

Two-Spirit

A word some Indigenous people use to talk about Indigenous LGBTQ+ people.

Nonbinary

Someone who isn't a boy or a girl. Another word for nonbinary is genderqueer.

Intersex

Sometimes when a baby is born, the doctors can't tell if the baby is a boy or a girl. Or someone might be assigned a sex at birth. But when they grow up, their body doesn't look like most bodies assigned that sex at birth. They might have different genitals. Or they might have different hormones. Their body doesn't fit into the sexual binary. That person is intersex.

Asexual

Someone who isn't sexually attracted to anyone.

Aromantic

Someone who isn't romantically attracted to anyone.

Allies

Someone who supports a group they aren't a part of. For example, if you are cisgender and straight but support LGBTQ+ people, you would be a LGBTQ+ ally.

If you are questioning your gender or sexuality

It is okay to question your sexuality. It is okay to question your gender.

Sometimes people say you shouldn't question your sexuality or gender. They say it makes you a bad person. That is wrong.

You are not a bad person for thinking about your gender or sexuality. It is a natural, normal thing.

Some people question their gender all their lives. Some people question their sexuality all their lives. It is okay to question and never really figure it out. It is okay not to know.

Being an ally

Allies are people who support a group they aren't a part of. Straight, cisgender people can be allies to LGBTQ+ people. Straight, cisgender people are allies when they support LGBTQ+ people.

Sometimes people who are LGBTQ+ but haven't come out yet call themselves allies. They do this so they can spend time in LGBTQ+ community spaces.

For example:

Dina is a lesbian. She has not told anyone she is a lesbian. It is not safe for her to tell people. Her parents wouldn't like that she's a lesbian. She says she is an ally to LGBTQ+ people. Dina isn't straight. She isn't really an ally. She is a lesbian. But Dina says she is an ally so she can spend time at an LGBTQ+ center.

You can be an ally and be LGBTQ+. You can be an ally to LGBTQ+ groups you aren't a part of.

For example:

Robert is a cisgender gay man. Robert supports transgender people. He is an ally to transgender people.

Pronouns

You should use the pronouns that a person wants you to use. Pronouns are words like he or she. We use pronouns to talk about people without using names.

Women usually use the pronouns she, her, and hers. (But not always! For example:

Tyisha lost her wallet. Can you call her to make sure she gets it back?

Men usually use the pronouns he, him, and his. (But not always!) For example:

Dave lost his wallet. Can you call him to make sure he gets it back?

But not everyone uses these pronouns. Some people use they, them, and theirs. For example:

Camila lost their wallet. Can you call them and make sure they get it back?

Some people use **neopronouns**. Neopronouns are pronouns that are not he, she, or they. Some examples are xe, fae, and hu.

For example:

Blaine lost xyr wallet. Can you call xem and make sure xe gets it back?

Ginny lost faer wallet. Can you fall faer and make sure fae gets it back?

Markus lost hus wallet. Can you call hum and make sure hu gets it back?

You might not know how to use someone's pronouns. That is okay. You can ask them to use their pronouns in a sentence. You can practice using their pronouns.

Types of Discrimination

Discrimination is when someone treats you badly based on who you are. For example, **ableism** is discrimination against disabled people.

Discrimination is wrong. You shouldn't discriminate against other people. Other people shouldn't discriminate against you.

There are two types of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people we want to talk about. These aren't the only types of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. There are other types. The two types we want to talk about are homophobia and transphobia.

Homophobia is discrimination against gay people.

For example:

Greg goes to a gay bar to meet some friends. Some men see him come out of the gay bar. They think being gay is wrong. So they beat Greg up.

Sometimes, people use homophobia to mean discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in general. Other LGBTQ+ people can face homophobia.

For example:

Theresa is bisexual. Theresa lives in Texas. Her boss sees her holding hands with her girlfriend. The next day, Theresa's boss fires her from her job. The law in Texas says it is okay to fire someone for being LGBTQ+. That is homophobic.

Transphobia is discrimination against transgender and non-binary people.

For example:

Billy is a transgender man. Billy's pronouns are he, him, and his. He wants people to see him as the man that he is. Billy told his family that he is a man. But his family doesn't believe him. They call Billy she, her, and hers. They don't care that it hurts Billy to be called she. Billy's family is transphobic against Billy

Presentation

Presentation is the decisions you make about how you look. People can use presentation to show their gender or sexuality. Presentation is also sometimes called gender expression. There are lots of different ways to present. Presentation involves:

- What clothes you wear
- What accessories, like jewelry or hats, you wear
- How you style your hair
- What makeup you wear

Sometimes people say only certain people can wear some kinds of clothes. For example, they say that only women can wear dresses. Or they say that only women and gay men can wear makeup. That is not true. Anyone can wear any kind of clothes. Anyone can wear any kind of accessories, like shoes or makeup. Anyone can wear dresses, even cisgender straight men. You don't have to be LGBTQ+ to wear certain clothes.

For example:

Lu is a gay trans man. He was assigned female at birth. But he lives his life as a man. Lu likes wearing dresses.

Brandon is a cisgender straight man. He has a girlfriend, Sue. Brandon likes to wear makeup, like eye shadow and lipstick.

Emmy is a lesbian. She has short hair. She wears clothes from the men's section of the store. Emmy is still a woman.

Someone's presentation might be different from their gender. Think about the examples we talked about above. Lu, Brandon, and Emmy all present in ways that don't match their gender. They are all gender non-conforming. When you are gender non-conforming, your presentation doesn't match your gender.

Beyond the Box

We talked about questioning your gender or sexuality. Sometimes, people question their gender or sexuality because they don't have words for how they feel. Or, they feel that they don't fit into any of the identities they know of. That's okay. It is okay not to know. If you don't know, you could say you are questioning your gender or sexuality. Or you could use a word like queer that doesn't have one definition. Or you could say you don't have a label.

Sometimes, people say that all people of a certain sexuality should act one way. Or, they say that people of one gender should act a certain way. That's wrong. Those people are talking about stereotypes. A stereotype is where someone thinks that everyone in a certain group is the same. For example, an old stereotype is that all gay men "act like women." That is wrong. It is not true. But some people believe it.

You don't have to act a certain way because of your gender. You don't have to act a certain way because of your sexuality. Anyone can act how they want to. It doesn't matter what their gender or sexuality is.

Some people describe stereotypes as putting people in boxes. We don't want people to feel like they're in boxes. We don't want people to feel like they have to act a certain way. We want to get rid of stereotypes. We want people to be able to act how they want.

Telling other people

You never have to tell anyone about your gender or sexuality if you don't want to. Some people say you have to tell your family about your gender or sexuality. Or, they say that you have to tell people you know about your gender or sexuality. That is wrong. You never have to tell anyone if you don't want to.

You might want to tell other people about your gender or sexuality. Telling other people you are not cisgender or straight is called coming out. You can come out to anyone you want to. Some people you might come out to are:

- Your family
- Your friends
- Your support people

Sometimes you might want to come out to someone. But you might not know if it's safe to come out to them. They might not like LGBTQ+ people. They might think being LGBTQ+ is a bad thing. All of these things are wrong. It is not nice to believe these things. But some people do.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself. You can ask these questions to figure out whether someone is safe to come out to:

- What do I want to say to this person?
- What good things could happen if I tell this person?
- What bad things could happen if I tell this person?
- What will I do if something bad happens when I tell this person?
- What can I do to calm myself down if I'm anxious about telling this person?

You can also talk to the person to try and figure out what they think about LGBTQ+ people first. You could ask them:

- What they think about someone they know who is LGBTQ+, like a friend or a famous person
- What they think about marriage equality. Marriage equality means that LGBTQ+ people can get married, just like anyone else.
- What they think about someone making mean jokes about LGBTQ+ people.
- How they handle big emotional events they don't expect

Changes

Your gender might change over your life. Your sexuality might change over your life. That is okay. It happens to lots of people. It is okay to feel like your gender or sexuality has changed.

But you can't force someone to try and change their gender or sexuality. People have tried to do this. People have tried to force LGBTQ+ people to not be LGBTQ+. That is called conversion therapy. Conversion therapy is wrong. It hurts people. It teaches them that the way they are is not okay. That is wrong.

Being different is hard sometimes

It's hard to be different sometimes. People can be mean and discriminate. You might be nervous to be who you are. It's okay to be nervous!

Find people who

- Support you
- Respect you
- Want you to be yourself.

Remember to always take care of yourself. You can learn more about ways to take care of yourself in part [number], [legal rights part]

You can always try new things

You can always try new things. You could try presenting in a different way. You could try using a different name. You could try using different pronouns. You could try going on dates with new people.

It's okay to try new things. It's okay if it doesn't go well. It's okay if you decide you didn't like it. The important thing is that you tried. The important thing is that you learned something from it.

Finding community

It can sometimes feel really lonely to be LGBTQ+. You might feel like nobody around you understands you. Or, you might feel like there are no other LGBTQ+ people around you.

Remember that there are always other LGBTQ+ people. In the US, about 1 in every 20 adults is LGBTQ+. We don't know exactly how many people with disabilities are also LGBTQ+. But we know that there are a lot of LGBTQ+ people with disabilities.

Here are some ways you can meet more LGBTQ+ people with disabilities:

- Go to community events
- Go to other places where there are a lot of LGBTQ+ people, like a LGBTQ+ center
- If you are part of a self-advocacy group, you can ask about starting a group specifically for LGBTQ+ self-advocates. There might be other LGBTQ+ people in your group. But they might be scared to come out. You can help make a safer space for them.

In the US, there is a law called the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA says that places need to be accessible to people with disabilities. Most places have to follow the law. All public spaces, like

government buildings or parks, have to follow the ADA. Most businesses have to follow the ADA. Private homes don't have to follow the ADA. If you went to someone's house, they wouldn't have to follow the ADA. You can read more about the ADA in our toolkit [blah].

Here are tips for making community events more accessible

- Make sure to hold events in an accessible space
- Build lots of breaks into the schedule.
- Let people know they can leave and come back if they need to
- Make sure the lights are not too bright or too dark.
- Bright lights hurt some people's eyes.
- But other people can't see if the lights are too low.
- If there is music at the event, make sure to keep the volume low.
- Give people a quiet, dark space to go if they get overwhelmed.
- Speak up if someone says or does something ableist.
- Make sure that the materials for the event are in plain language or Easy-Read. Materials are things like handouts or advertising flyers.

Self-advocacy and having pride

Many parts of being LGBTQ+ are like being a self-advocate with a disability. Part of self-advocacy is being proud of who you are.

Both involve:

- Standing up for who you are
- Being proud of who you are
- Working with other people like you
- Caring for people who are like you in some ways and different in others
- Knowing that people are made up of different parts.

For example: Jacob is a Black gay man with an intellectual disability. Those things are all parts of Jacob. He wouldn't be the same person without all of them.

- Making the world a better place for people like you

You can be a self-advocate for LGBTQ+ people. You can help make the world a better place for LGBTQ+ people. It is a lot like being a self-advocate for people with disabilities.

Words to Know

Ableism

Discrimination against disabled people

Ally

Someone who supports a group they aren't a part of

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

A law in the United States that says places need to be accessible to people with disabilities

Aromantic

Someone who isn't romantically attracted to anyone.

Asexual

Someone who isn't sexually attracted to anyone.

Binary

A set of two groups.

Bisexual

Someone who likes people of multiple genders

Cisgender

Someone whose gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. A cisgender woman is a woman who was assigned female at birth. A cisgender man is a man who was assigned male at birth.

Coming out

Telling other people you are not cisgender or straight.

Conversion therapy

Trying to force an LGBTQ+ person not to be LGBTQ+.

Discrimination

When someone treats you badly based on who you are.

Gay

Someone who likes people of the same gender they are. Sometimes, the word “gay” gets used to mean the whole LGBTQ+ community.

Gender

How you feel and see yourself and what you call yourself. For example, “man,” “woman,” “non-binary,” and “genderqueer” are all genders.

Gender binary

The set of only man and woman. The gender binary is wrong. There are more genders than only man and woman.

Gender non-conforming

When your presentation doesn't match your gender.

Genitals

Your sexual body parts. Some examples of genitals are penis, vagina, testicles.

Homophobia

Discrimination against gay people. Sometimes, people use homophobia to mean discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in general.

Hormones

The chemicals in your body. There are many different types of hormones. The two most common sexual hormones are testosterone and estrogen.

Intersex

Sometimes when a baby is born, the doctors can't tell if the baby is a boy or a girl. Or someone might be assigned a sex at birth. But when they grow up, their body doesn't look like most bodies assigned that sex at birth. They might have different genitals. Or they might have different hormones. Their body doesn't fit into the sexual binary. That person is intersex.

Lesbian

A women who likes other women.

LGBTQ+

An acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and more.

Marriage equality

When LGBTQ+ people can get married, just like anyone else.

Neopronouns

Pronouns that are not he, she, or they.

Nonbinary

Someone who isn't a boy or a girl. Another word for nonbinary is genderqueer.

Pansexual

Someone who likes people of many or all genders.

Presentation

The decisions you make about how you look.

Pride

When you have pride, you feel good about yourself. You can have pride in your gender. You can have pride in your sexuality.

Pronouns

Words like he or she.

Queer

Someone who isn't straight and cisgender.

Questioning

Someone who doesn't know their gender or sexuality.

Romantic attraction

Liking someone in a way where you want to do romantic things with them, like kiss them or cuddle with them.

Sex assigned at birth

When a baby is born, the doctors look at its body. Then the doctors say if the baby is a boy or a girl. Someone who the doctors say is a boy is assigned male at birth. Someone who the doctors say is a girl is assigned female at birth.

Sexual attraction

Liking someone in a way where you want to have sex with them.

Sexual binary

The set of only male and female. The sexual binary is wrong.

There are more sexes than only male and female.

Sexuality

Who you are attracted to. Some people are attracted to men.

Some people are attracted to women. Some people are attracted to non-binary people. Some people are attracted to more than one gender.

Stereotypes

Where someone thinks that everyone in a certain group is the same.

Straight

Someone who is attracted to people of different genders from their gender.

Transgender

Someone whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender woman is a woman who was assigned male at birth. A transgender man is a man who was assigned female at birth. Nonbinary people can be assigned either sex at birth.

Transphobia

Discrimination against transgender and non-binary people.

Two-Spirit

A word some Indigenous people use to talk about Indigenous LGBTQ+ people.

This project was supported, in part by grant number C00018GG, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, the Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201 through the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (NYS DDPC). Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy or the opinions, interpretation or policy of the NYS DDPC.