



Using Correct Pronouns & Why it Matters

Common pronouns that we use to refer to people are he/him/his, she/her/hers, and they/them/theirs, but there are many more pronouns that people use. It is respectful and important to give people the opportunity to state their pronouns. For more information on the diversity of gender expression [click here](#).

WHY SHARE YOUR PRONOUNS?

You might ask, “Shouldn’t we be able to tell someone’s pronouns by just looking at them?”. The answer is no! This mindset perpetuates the idea that it is alright to assume someone’s pronouns based on one’s perception. This can make folks outside of the majority feel marginalized. When you state or share your pronouns, you are demonstrating that you are not making these assumptions and have respect for the diversity of pronouns.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Pronouns are used in place of someone’s name. Give as much respect to pronouns as you would someone's name.
2. Every pronoun is valid, even if you have never heard it or used it before.
3. For many the term “preferred” is harmful. A person’s pronouns are not about preference and using this term can insinuate that using correct pronouns for someone is optional.
4. For those that need to hear it: being trans is not a pathology, folks that present as masculine or feminine can have they/them pronouns, folks that present as masculine may also have she/her pronouns, and even biological sex is not binary.
5. Do not use the terms “Born a girl”, “Born a boy”, “biologically male” or “biologically female”.
6. Do not refer to someone by their former name or use the term "biological sex". Instead, use "sex/gender assigned at birth".

WHAT ARE GENDER NEUTRAL PRONOUNS?

They/them/theirs or Ze/zir/zirs are common examples of gender neutral pronouns. These pronouns can be used to refer to someone whose gender is not known (if you learn this person’s pronouns, adjust accordingly) or for someone who does not identify with he/him or she/her pronouns.

TRANS* COVERS MANY IDENTITIES

The asterisk at the end of trans is a common shorthand to refer to all the identities that fall under the term trans. The common denominator is that a trans* person is not a cisgender man or woman. *: transgender, transman/woman, genderqueer, agender, transexual, two-spirit, non-binary, genderfluid, gender non-conforming, bigender, third gender, transmasculin, transfeminine, or androgynous.

TIPS FOR ASKING ABOUT SOMEONE’S PRONOUNS

- Offer your name and pronouns first. This can be an indirect way of showing interest in learning someone's pronouns without putting them on the spot.
- You can also explain why you are asking for someone’s pronouns e.g. “I want to be sure that I introduce you correctly...”.