TRANS INCLUSIVITY 101

By Kalliope R. Dalto
Trans women are women.

Trans men are men.

Nonbinary people are nonbinary.
“Trans” is inclusive of all ways of experiencing gender that varies from the gender one was assigned at birth.

- **Binary**: trans men and trans women
- **Nonbinary**, including: genderfluid, agender, genderqueer, bigender, androgynous - and more!
- **Transmasculine** and **transfeminine**: indicates directionality, alignment with a gendered presentation but not necessarily a gender identity.
• People are assigned a gender at birth based on perceived sex characteristics.

• People who are assigned female at birth (AFAB) may grow up to realize they are men, or nonbinary.

• People who are assigned male at birth (AMAB) may grow up to realize they are women, or nonbinary.

• People who never experience incongruity with the gender assigned at birth are cisgender, or cis.

• Cis is an important word because it reframes the way we talk about trans folks as ‘other’ – rather than ‘trans’ and ‘normal.’

• Simply two different ways of experiencing your body and your gender in the world.
Nonbinary Genders

- Some people aren’t men or women
- There isn’t one right way to be nonbinary – some nonbinary people need medical transition, some don’t. Some change their names or pronouns, some don’t.
- Nonbinary people can have relationships to maleness or femaleness and do not necessarily aspire to androgyny
- *They/them/their* is a common pronoun used by nonbinary people, but it is not ‘the nonbinary pronoun.’ Some nonbinary people use she/her or he/him, and some use *neopronouns* like *ze/zer* or *ze/hir* or *ey/em/eirs.*
Any given individual is the authority on their identity.

a. Some people fit into multiple categories (i.e., non-binary trans guy, genderfluid femme)

c. Some people don’t use these at all – language is one tool out of many for expressing gender and identity

d. *You don’t have to know the specifics of someone’s gender to treat them respectfully!* You don’t have to memorize a list of possible genders. Just listen and be open to alternate forms of address.
Pronouns

- The simplest way you can show trans people you see and recognize their personhood is using their pronouns correctly.
- Most common pronouns: She, her, hers, He, him, his, They, them, theirs
- Neo pronouns: xe/xer, ze/zem
- *Pronouns do not always align with gender!* For example, some nonbinary people use he/him or she/her pronouns. This doesn’t mean they’re men or women – they’re still nonbinary.
- Pronouns are not *preferred*, they simply *are*. It’s more respectful to ask “What are your pronouns?” than to ask “What pronouns do you prefer?”
If you make a mistake, don’t get defensive or make excuses – apologize, correct, and move on.

A big showy apology will just make the person you’re talking to uncomfortable.
“Transition” Means Something Different to Everyone

- No right or wrong way to express your gender!
- Just as with cis men and women, trans men and women can be masculine or feminine or androgynous, whatever suits them best.
- Since trans people’s gender validity is under constant interrogation, there is a lot of social pressure to present in ways that conform to gender roles in order to be recognized as the correct gender. This is a safety concern!
- Social, legal and medical
- Clothing, hairstyle, makeup, pronouns, prefixes, voice
- Legal – Name and gender marker on legal documents
There is no one blueprint for medical transition, and it is not necessary to be trans.

- Medical transition may include: hormone replacement therapy, top surgery (double mastectomy), bottom surgery (genital reconstruction).
- Medical transition is a spectrum: some people quite literally will die without it, some people don’t want or need it.
- It’s up to each individual trans person to know what is necessary for them to feel at home in their body.
Many people can’t access medical transition for financial reasons, health reasons, safety reasons or due to medical gatekeeping.
Dysphoria is the experience of distress at incongruence between one’s gender and one’s body and/or presentation (both physical and social).

Gender euphoria is its inverse and equally important.
• Trans men are men. Trans women are women. Nonbinary people are nonbinary.
• **Trans** or **transgender** is an umbrella term, inclusive of all people who feel an incongruence with the gender they were assigned at birth.
• People who never experience incongruity with the gender assigned at birth are **cisgender**, or **cis**.

• Pronouns are not preferred, they simply are. Using someone’s correct pronouns affirms their personhood.
• There is no one ‘correct’ way to transition, and many many possible ways.
• Any given individual is the authority on their identity.
Further Reading

- *Transgender History*, by Susan Stryker
- *Disclosure*, Netflix, 2020
- Affirmative Care for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People: Best Practices for Front-line Health Care Staff (National LGBT Health Education Center, 2016)
- How Doctors Can Provide Better Care for Transgender Patients: [https://labblog.uofmhealth.org/rounds/how-doctors-can-provide-better-care-for-transgender-patients](https://labblog.uofmhealth.org/rounds/how-doctors-can-provide-better-care-for-transgender-patients)
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