

DEFINITIONS OF COMMON TERMS

Asexual: A person who generally does not feel sexual attraction or desire. Asexuality is not the same as celibacy.

Biphobia: Antagonism/discrimination against bisexual people based on negative bisexual stereotypes or irrational fear. This can come from lesbian, gay, and trans people as well.

Bisexual/Bi: A person who is attracted to people of their own gender and another/other gender(s).

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity and expression matches cultural expectations based on their sex assigned at birth.

Gay: 1) A masculine or male identified person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted primarily to other masculine or male identified people. 2) The term may be used by any person (e.g. gay man, gay woman, gay person), however this may be considered androcentric (i.e., focused or centered on men) and erasing of the breadth of sexual orientations and gender identities within the LGBTQ+ umbrella.

Gender Expression: The way way a person presents themselves that may signify or suggest gender within their culture(s). Examples include: how a person styles their hair, their choice of clothing and accessories, the firmness or grace of the way they intend to speak, additional mannerisms, etc.

Gender Identity: A person's sense of who they are inside in relation to gender; *gender identity may - or may not be the same - as a person's sex assigned at birth*. The emphasis on a person's "gender identity" puts the focus on how a person identifies themselves, versus how others may perceive them.

Homophobia: A range of negative attitudes and feelings toward people who are identified or perceived as being attracted to someone of the same gender. Homophobia can be expressed as antipathy, contempt, prejudice, aversion, or hatred.

Intersex: A person whose sexual anatomy and/or chromosomes fall outside of traditional markers of "female" and "male."

Lesbian: A feminine or female identified person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted primarily to other feminine or female identified people.

LGBTQ+: An acronym for non-heterosexual and cisgender identities that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning. Sometimes these letters will be rearranged as GLBTQ+, or have added letters such as LGBTQIA+ (I standing for intersex and A standing for asexual or aromantic). The "+" is to represent that there are many identities that do not fit within the LGBTQ+ acronym, but that may identify within LGBTQ+ experiences.

Queer: A more open and fluid identity that is sometimes used as an umbrella term for people who do not identify as straight/heterosexual. The term is also sometimes used in relation to gender to signify that a person does not identify as gender conforming. Historically this term was used as a slur, and is often still offensive especially to people who experienced this; some prefer that this term not be used in reference to them or around them given its history, while others feel empowered by it.

Pansexual: A person who experiences attraction to all genders (e.g., 'hearts not parts').

Transgender: This term has many definitions. It is frequently used as an umbrella term to refer to all people whose gender does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. This can include trans women (MTF), trans men (FTM), folks who identify as genderqueer, non-binary, and more. It's important to note that the gender following trans (e.g., trans man or trans woman) indicates how the person self-identifies; for example, someone who is a trans man most likely self identifies as a man; this is not to be mistaken as indicating one's sex assigned at birth, which is a common mistake.

Transphobia: The fear or hatred of transgender and/or gender non-conforming people. Like biphobia, transphobia can also exist among lesbian, gay, and bisexual people as well as among heterosexual people.

Two Spirit: "The term *two spirit* refers to another gender role believed to be common among most, if not all, first peoples of Turtle Island (*North America*), one that had a proper and accepted place within indigenous societies. This acceptance was rooted in the spiritual teachings that say all life is sacred and that the Creator must have a reason for making someone different. This gender role was not based in sexual activities or practices, but rather the sacredness that comes from being different." - *Two Spirit Society of Denver, 1998*

Please Note: It is very important to respect people's desired self-identifications. One should never assume another person's identity based on that person's appearance. It is always best to ask people how they identify (if you need to know), to ask what pronouns they use, and to respect their wishes and identities.

BEST PRACTICES

It's critical to be culturally aware of LGBTQ+ specific differences to provide sensitive and effective services.

- Listen well, and be present for each person.
- Meet people where they are, and try to see them the way they see themselves.
- Avoid making assumptions about someone's gender or sexuality.
- Use gender-neutral language when you don't know their or their partner's gender.
- Ask people their name and pronouns. Use these, even when you're not in their presence (as long as they're out to others). Correct people who misgender others.
- Reflect the language used by the individual you're speaking with.
- If you mess up- apologize and then move on.
- Know Why/Tell Why. If there's information you need- tell the person why you need it. Avoid unnecessary questions.
- Avoid back-handed compliments and "helpful" tips; generally, don't offer advice unless someone asks for it, and sometimes the best advice is a referral to someone who may be able to offer more in-depth support.
- Don't show surprise, dismay, concern, etc. when you find out a person is LGBTQ+. Be careful what messages your body language is communicating.
- Challenge harmful jokes and remarks.
- Assess each individual's unique needs; think creatively to find workable solutions.
- Model acceptance for others. Don't expect everyone to conform to societal norms around gender or sexual orientation.
- Empower individuals with respect, compassion, information and choices.
- Build investment in the community; make real connections with LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Have visible Pride and Ally symbols (flags, pins, ribbons, and/or signs with a rainbow, "ally", "celebrate diversity", "safe space").
- Practice! Practice asking name and pronouns with your friends/coworkers/family, and using gender neutral language.
- Consider your own values and beliefs. Things to reflect upon: What are your personal views about LGBTQ+ people? What were you taught growing up? How might this impact your work with LGBTQ+ individuals?
- Educate yourself by using the appropriate resources (internet, library, YouTube, or calling places like the Pride Center for technical assistance); avoid putting pressure on LGBTQ+ people to educate you, especially if they are your client.

Check out:

- Tips for Being an Ally: <http://www.glaad.org/transgender/allies>
- US Transgender Survey: <http://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/USTS-Executive-Summary-FINAL.PDF>
- How to Be a Trans Ally- the Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GNWCfeXQ8A>
- Trans Ally Guide: <http://www.straightforequality.org/trans>

Contact Us:

www.pridecentervt.org | (802) 860-7812 | education@pridecentervt.org
For SafeSpace Anti-Violence Program's Survivor Support Line call (802) 863-0003



Pride Center of Vermont
255 South Champlain St. Suite #12
Burlington, Vermont 05401

