

A COWORKER'S GUIDE TO:

GENDER TRANSITION AND TRANSGENDER INCLUSION IN THE MUSEUM FIELD



**American
Alliance of
Museums**



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March 11th, 2019

Dear Trans and Allied Colleagues:

When we landed in Phoenix for AAM's 2018 Annual Meeting, we weren't sure how the LGBTQ Alliance would react to our requests for a trans-focused committee. The lack of resources up to that point was, after all, the result of an oversight of the trans community's needs even within specifically LGBTQ spaces. We had both experienced this lack first hand and were determined to make sure others wouldn't have to experience it in the future. Towards the end of the committee meeting, our Chair called for "additional business" and the rest, as they say, is history.

Gender Transition and Transgender Inclusion in the Museum Workplace: A Toolkit for Trans Individuals, Institutions, and Coworkers is the result of three teams of trans and allied museum professionals working across the country to create resources that are approachable even to those without any prior knowledge about the trans community. The *Toolkit* comes at a time when the transgender community is constantly under attack. The education and knowledge it provides can create a path for those interested in becoming allies and can foster a more inclusive atmosphere within the museum field. We hope that the *Toolkit* will prove useful to those who are transitioning or those who wish to improve the diversity and inclusion policies around them.

As Chairs, we are so proud of what the members of the Taskforce have created. Watching so many transgender museum professionals and their allies come together to work on the *Toolkit* has been truly inspiring and reminds us what we can do together as a community. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to: Lauren Griffin, who was consistently amazing and went above and beyond leading our third team; Jennifer Olive, who served as editor for this project; our outside readers, who took time out of their busy schedules to give us feedback; and AAM and the LGBTQ Alliance, who have been so open and eager to helping us correct the oversight that has existed this long. We still have a long ways to go towards equality; but, hopefully, the *Toolkit* can be a significant step in the right direction for the museum field.

If you ever have any questions about the *Toolkit* or about trans inclusion, please reach out to us via the LGBTQ Alliance.

Sincerely,



Alison Kennedy (they/them)
Co-chair, Taskforce for
Transgender Inclusion



Anna Woten (she/her)
Co-chair, Taskforce for
Transgender Inclusion

March 11th, 2019

Gender Transition and Transgender Inclusion in the Museum Workplace: A Toolkit for Trans Individuals, Institutions, and Coworkers

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

At the May 2018 AAM Annual Meeting, the LGBTQ Alliance formed the Task Force for Transgender Inclusion in response to requests from members to provide support for institutions working to become more welcoming of transgender employees and visitors. Led by Alliance members Anna Woten and Alison Kennedy, a group of 22 museum professionals has worked in the intervening months to create *Gender Transition and Transgender Inclusion in the Museum Workplace: A Toolkit for Trans Individuals, Institutions, and Coworkers*. The *Toolkit* was collaboratively written and edited by the Task Force teams, as well as edited by outside consultants.

The *Toolkit* includes three documents that provide targeted guidance for transitioning professionals, institutions, and coworkers. The Task Force expects that the *Toolkit* will most commonly be approached in one of two ways:

- 1) By the Transitioning Professional
 - We imagine this will be the most common
 - The transitioning professional will access the toolkit and provide their institution with *An Institution's Guide* and *A Coworker's Guide*
 - The transitioning professional will then use *A Transitioning Professional's Guide* while working with their institution
- 2) By the Institution who will then use the *Toolkit* and maintain it on file
 - HR will make *A Transitioning Professional's Guide* and *A Coworker's Guide* available to staff
 - HR will then reference the institutional policies and guidelines recommended in *An Institution's Guide* while working with transitioning professionals

The mission of the LGTBQ Alliance is to provide a forum for communication and dialogue to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and inquiry with particular respect to sexual orientation and gender identity within museums. In these times of cultural challenges to acceptance of all people, I can think of no more important, timely, or needed guidance than the resources the Task Force has created.

On behalf of the LGBTQ Alliance, I thank them for everything they are doing to address the needs of all our colleagues. Their work is a model and inspiration.

Sincerely,



Mike Lesperance (he/him)
Chairperson, LGBTQ Alliance

March 11th, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

Diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) are essential values of museums and of the American Alliance of Museums. These principles are not only bedrocks of ethical and morally courageous museum work, but they are also guideposts for how museums can remain relevant and welcoming to an ever-diversifying population. Simply put, inclusion is central to the effectiveness and sustainability of museums – and we must work to welcome all.

This was one of the points in our recent report, *Facing Change: Insights from the American Alliance of Museums' Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group*. Another insight was that inclusive practice requires a careful and continuous examination of our biases and ongoing, conscious efforts to eradicate inequality throughout our institutions.

I am delighted to release *Gender Transition and Transgender Inclusion in the Museum Workplace: A Toolkit for Trans Individuals, Institutions and Coworkers*. I hope this resource will guide museums in welcoming transgender staff — and by extension, transgender audiences, volunteers, and leaders.

The Toolkit is the result of a lot of hard work by the Task Force for Transgender Inclusion. I am grateful to each of its twenty-two members, as well as for the leadership of the LGBTQ Alliance who recognized and addressed this need. I am confident the Toolkit will quickly spark awareness, dialogue, and much-needed action.

As always, I welcome your feedback on how we can do our work better together.

Sincerely,



Laura Lott (she/her)
President & CEO
American Alliance of Museums

INTRODUCTION

According to a 2015 study by GLAAD, 84% of Americans learn about transgender people through the media. Despite this high percentage, only 16% of people surveyed in 2015 reported knowing or working with a transgender person. This percentage goes down to 9% for people age 45+. Because the majority of people in the United States learn about transgender people without actually knowing any transgender people, it is “crucial that the media increase and improve the coverage of transgender issues, and that transgender people have the opportunity to tell their own stories about our lives and the issues we face.”¹ Museums have an excellent opportunity to share the stories of transgender people in all walks of life. In order to best welcome transgender visitors and tell the stories of transgender people, museums must work to support and welcome transgender staff.

For the majority of people, their gender identity matches the one assigned to them at birth. Transgender (trans) people, however, have gender identities that do not match those assigned to them at birth. Many will undergo the process of aligning their life and physical identity to match their gender identity, a process called transitioning.² Medical processes, such as hormone replacement therapy and surgical procedures, are not required to transition. Some people choose not to, or cannot, undergo any medical processes, but this doesn't invalidate their gender.

Each transgender person views themselves and their experiences differently. Individuals will always have personal preferences in terms of the language that their employers use. In this document, we use the umbrella term “transgender”, which includes non-binary identities.³ Because of this broad definition, we encourage you to use the language and identity terms indicated by your transitioning employee or co-worker.

Over 2018-19, a group of transgender and ally museum professionals formed the American Alliance of Museums LGBTQ Alliance's Taskforce for Transgender Inclusion and worked to research and create *Gender Transition and Transgender Inclusion in the Museum Workplace: A Toolkit for Trans Individuals, Institutions, and Coworkers*. We collaboratively wrote and edited the toolkit, as well as received editorial advice from outside consultants, in an effort to provide support for institutions working to become more welcoming of transgender employees and visitors. We envisioned the Toolkit as a starting point and encourage you to adapt its contents for individual situations.

GUIDELINES FOR COWORKERS OF TRANSGENDER COLLEAGUES

The purpose of this document is to prepare museum employees as they work with transitioning colleagues in the workplace. You are likely reading this document because you have a colleague who is transgender, and/or you are interested in best practices for working with a transgender colleague. Included in this guide is information on how to be a better colleague, tools to be a good advocate and ally for your coworker, and a 101 guide to gender theory in language that can help you better understand your colleague's transition. We've also included a number of FAQs and resources for further reading that should be helpful to you through this experience and as you continue to learn more about the trans experience.

PLEASE NOTE

Transitioning is a very personal choice, and only an individual can make the determination if coming out is a safe course of action depending on their location and employer. The content contained within *Gender Transition and Transgender Inclusion in the Museum Workplace: A Toolkit for Trans Individuals, Institutions, and Coworkers* is for informational and educational purposes only. It is **not** intended to be used as legal advice. Always research local, state, and national laws and consult with a lawyer before making any legal decisions regarding workplace transitions.

HOW TO BE A GOOD ALLY TO YOUR TRANS COLLEAGUE

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE AN ALLY?

An ally is someone who actively works to provide safe spaces for transgender people. There's no form to fill out to be an ally to the trans community, but there is plenty of work to be done to make the world more accepting of transgender people. Being a straight and/or cisgender ally to the trans community means being ready to have uncomfortable conversations about gender and privilege. It means being ready to stop talking about, and start listening to the people you are advocating for. It means taking constructive criticism and unlearning problematic habits. It means doing your own research and not putting the onus on your trans colleague to educate you--that's your job. It means you are ready to stand up for your trans friends and colleagues when their basic human rights are questioned or denied.

When it comes to centering the needs of your trans coworker, the most important thing to remember is everyone is different. Some people may not need any particular support from you. Communication is key. Reach out to your colleague, but don't be pushy. Ask them how you can support them.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR WORKPLACE MORE TRANS-FRIENDLY

Creating a welcoming work environment to trans colleagues and guests means fostering an environment for trans inclusion even before a transgender person comes to your museum. Creating trans inclusive places is part of allyship in that it creates a safe space for trans individuals and can be accomplished through a few easy steps. In the document *An Institution's Guide to Gender Transition and Transgender Inclusion in the Museum Field*, there is a guide addressing how workplaces can become more accommodating to trans people at the organizational policy level. As an individual, here are some steps that you can personally take to make your workplace more inclusive:

Use Gender-Neutral Language

There is an ongoing conversation in the trans community about how to address someone when you don't know their pronouns. Many people suggest that if someone has an ambiguous gender presentation, you should address them at first with "they/them" pronouns, and if they have a gendered presentation, use "he" or "she" pronouns. However, there are some trans people who use "he" or "she" pronouns who would feel very uncomfortable about being addressed with "they." As a general rule, start with gender-neutral pronouns when you don't know someone's pronouns, but the moment you find out what pronouns a person uses, you should use them!

Also, flexibility and a sense of humor go a long way. If you are corrected on someone's pronouns, don't take it personally. Roll with the change, and start using the right pronouns. Even in this debate, there are a few places where you can default to gender-neutral language, especially in crowd settings. Instead of using greetings like "Ladies and gentlemen," address a crowd with "Folks" or "Esteemed guests." Instead of greeting a group with "hey guys," "hello everyone" works just as well. You can practice using gender-neutral language in many ways at your workplace.

Use gender-neutral language in everyday settings such as email greetings. For example, start a group email with "Greetings everyone" or "Hi All" instead of "Hey guys."

Think about how you can tweak commonly used phrases in your life to make your language more neutral and your spaces more inclusive. For example, consider how default language tends to skew masculine and make a conscious effort to change everyday phrases like "dude" or "these guys" to more gender-neutral and inclusive language such as "you" or "them."

"Flexibility and a sense of humor go a long way. If you are corrected on someone's pronouns, don't take it personally. Roll with the change."

Share Your Pronouns

One way to alleviate the pressure of getting someone's pronouns right at first guess is to make it a practice to share your pronouns. Everyone uses pronouns, but we often assume which pronouns a person uses based on physical characteristics. Pronouns are words like she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, he/him/his that we substitute for proper nouns. Pronouns are important to our sense of identity, and it can make us feel bad when people get them wrong. Women generally use she/her/hers; men generally use he/him/his, and non-binary people often use they/them/theirs. Other pronouns exist as well, such as zie/zem/ziers. A person's name can also be a pronoun.

In social situations, the onus is usually on trans people to share their pronouns so they are addressed correctly. When only trans people have to share their pronouns, it can be awkward as it markedly signals that they are transgender. When cisgender people make it a normal practice to share their pronouns in the workplace, they relieve that pressure on trans people to perform this practice and normalize the idea that you believe a person when they tell you who they are. It is also a great indirect way of signalling to people that you are an ally and will work to make a safe space for trans individuals. You can share your pronouns in a few ways:

1) When you introduce yourself at a meeting by stating your name and title, also offer your pronouns. For example "Hi, my name is Amy, I'm the Visitor Services manager, and my pronouns are she/hers." Other people may or may not follow your example. The important thing here is that you have taken the lead on normalizing the practice so that it isn't left to someone else who doesn't have the privilege that you do in those situations.

2) Include your pronouns in your email signature. This could look like:

Amy Smith
Visitor Services Manager
she/her/hers
amy@email.com

3) Include a pronoun button with your name tag, badge, or other museum ID, especially if you are in a public-facing position.

4) When you meet a new colleague, ask for their name and pronouns, and make sure to share yours. A good way to ask is "Hi, Michael-- nice to meet you. My name is Amy, and I use she/her pronouns. What pronouns should I use when I refer to you?"

Adopting these practices will help make your work environment more inclusive now, and you'll be more prepared when meeting a transgender colleague, museum visitor, or guest in the future.

What to do if Someone Gets Misgendered by a Colleague in the Workplace

Everyone makes mistakes. Your coworker may be misgendering a person out of ignorance; they may not know the person's pronouns. A polite way to correct your colleague is to start using a person's pronouns as much as possible in the interaction. If the coworker doesn't get the hint, you may need to have a more direct conversation. It may be an uncomfortable conversation for you, but it is even more uncomfortable for your coworker to be misgendered. Take your coworker aside in a private place, and inform your coworker of the person's correct pronouns. A good example would be to say "hey, did you know that Jane's pronouns are she/her/hers? Please use those in the future." You could also send a private email. Only if the behavior continues do you need to involve HR. Included in the FAQ section of this document is a guide on what to do if you accidentally misgender a colleague.

If your institution does not have such a group, find out what you have to do to create one. Don't be afraid to talk to your senior staff about diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion and why it's vital to the sustainability of the museum field. Encourage your HR/personnel department to take an active interest in these issues and support the forming of a diversity working group. AAM offers a number of resources on how to communicate with HR and upper-management.⁴

Creating a Culture of Inclusion at Your Museum

Does your museum have a committee or work group focused on DEAI (diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion)? If so, join it! Become an active member to ensure LGBTQ, specifically trans, issues are represented, discussed, and not erased.

Supporting the Trans Community in Your Work

No matter what kind of job you have in your museum, you can find a way to support the trans community. Here are some examples to help get you started:

If you work in collections or you are a curator, think about how you can represent transgender people in your museum's exhibits and collections. The history you find may surprise you.

If you are in education or programming, think about ways that you can highlight the lives and accomplishments of trans individuals in the programs you develop. That could mean making an effort to include trans speakers on panels, finding examples of transgender people in your collections and exhibitions and highlighting them in educational materials, etc. Reach out to your local trans community, and work with them to create inclusive programming.

If you are in visitor services or a public-facing role, take steps to be warm and welcoming to the trans community. Update your member applications to include gender-neutral honorifics such as Mx. for anyone to use. Make it easy to update first and last names in member profiles. Encourage your staff to wear pronoun buttons, and train them to use gender-neutral language when greeting guests.

Please see the Additional Resources section in Appendix B at the end of this guide to find examples of museums finding ways to include transgender people in their institutions. For further reading, please refer to the *Welcoming Guidelines for Museums*, published by AAM's LGBTQ Alliance.⁵ This document contains specific information and instructions on how to be welcoming to the LGBTQ community with standards that are aligned with AAM's Core Standards.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TRANS COLLEAGUES IN THE WORKPLACE

Q: MY COWORKER JUST CAME OUT! NOW WHAT?

A: Depending on the size of your museum and your workplace relationship with the coworker, the answer will vary in specifics. In general, treat a trans person's change of name and pronouns like you would any name change (e.g., when someone gets married or asks to go by a nickname).

In a big museum, where you don't work closely with your colleague, you might find your coworker has come out through an all-staff email or HR announcement. In this case, simply use their new name and pronouns when you see them next. No need to make a big fuss or offer congratulations.

In a smaller museum, or if you are in the same department as this colleague, you may find out about a colleague's transition via email or during a staff meeting. Again, no need to make a big fuss, just make the switch to new name and pronouns.

If you have a close working relationship with your coworker and you are on friendly terms, they may come out to you before making an announcement at their workplace. The best response is to thank your coworker for entrusting you with this information, and then ask them what they would like you to do next. You may offer your congratulations if that feels appropriate but, let your trans coworker guide your next steps.

They may ask you to keep quiet until an announcement is made and ask you not to refer to them with new name and pronouns until that time. Or, they may ask you to immediately start using their new name and pronouns. They may also ask you to be an ally in the workplace. In section 1 of this document, there are suggestions for how to be a supportive friend and colleague.

If you are in a management position and require further resources, please consult *An Institution's Guide to Gender Transition and Transgender Inclusion in the Museum Field*. There are transition plan examples for HR and managerial staff with step-by-step outlines. It may be useful to you to see how your workplace assists transitioning employees so that you can better assist the person.

Q: I'M CURIOUS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TRANS EXPERIENCE. SHOULD I ASK MY COWORKER?

A: Curiosity is a very human thing, and your trans coworker might be the first trans person you've met (that you know of). It's natural to be curious about a subject you have not yet encountered before, however your coworker is a colleague, not an object in your collection. Be mindful of the fact that you are in a workplace environment. No matter how close you are with your colleagues, or how academic your interest is, there are topics of discussion that are simply off the table in the workplace.

Furthermore, nothing is more frustrating than feeling objectified or tokenized. Asking invasive questions "otherizes" your colleague, and may make them feel singled-out and separate from the rest of the staff. In asking invasive questions, you are also asking them to perform additional labor outside of their work-related duties. When someone is in a workplace environment trying to do their job, it is inconsiderate to expect your colleague to take time from their tasks to educate you about their identity. Your trans colleague is a person first and deserves your respect. Topics that should not be discussed at work include:

Genitals

Don't ask your coworker about their genitals. In any work-related context, asking someone about the size, shape, configuration or use of their genitals is sexual harassment; therefore, it is still sexual harassment if you ask your trans coworker about their genitals. Moreover, their genitals are not your business, so don't ask your trans coworker to provide you with information to which you are not entitled.

Medical History

Your coworker may be very proud and open about the changes they are going through, or they may be extremely private. When it comes to changes that you may notice, let your coworker lead the conversation. If you have a close working relationship, they may choose to share some of the details regarding certain aspects of their transition, but asking about a person's medical history is unacceptable in most circumstances, especially at work.

Don't ask your coworker about surgeries, hormones, therapy, etc. Not only is it rude and invasive, but you may also run afoul of laws regarding workplace harassment and medical disclosure.

Gender History

Do not disclose your colleague's gender history to anyone. An example of inappropriate disclosure would be to tell your new intern "This is Jane. She used to be James." Information on Jane's transition is only for Jane to share as she deems it necessary. While you may have been working together during the transition process and you know Jane's gender history, she may not be comfortable with everyone knowing that she is transgender. Treat someone's gender history like you would treat medical history: sensitive and only disclosed by the person in question.

Dating and Relationships

Don't ask your coworker about their sex or dating life. If you know your coworker is partnered or parenting, don't ask sensitive questions about how their partner/children are handling the transition; it is not your place as a colleague to ask. Also, don't ask about how their dating life may or may not change, or if they'll start dating a different gender now that they have transitioned. Again, in a workplace context, it's not your place to ask. Overall, it is not your business.

At the end of this guide in the Additional Resources section, we've included a number of works about transgender people, including memoirs and biographies. We suggest starting with the works on that list if you are interested in learning more about trans people.

Q: I DON'T THINK MY COWORKER HAS HAD "THE SURGERY" YET. ARE THEY REALLY TRANS? DO I USE THEIR OLD NAME OR NEW?

A: You should start calling your coworker by their new name and pronouns as soon as they ask you to do so! The dominant cultural myth is that there is one defining moment in a gender transition, "the surgery." According to this narrative, a person goes in for a gender-confirming surgery, and they come out with a new name, appearance, and set of genitals, which magically make them a new gender. The truth is that gender transition is a process; it is a lot longer and more complicated than popular culture represents it, and there are as many ways to transition as there are trans individuals.

There is no one surgery, procedure, or way to dress that makes someone trans. Some trans people are comfortable in their bodies and don't want surgery at all. Others are comfortable with their genitals but may get surgery on their face or chest. Many trans people face violence and harassment for being trans, and those trans people may prioritize interventions that help them look less visibly trans for safety reasons.

There are also states where you can't update your gender marker on identification without hormone treatment and/or surgery, so some trans people feel bureaucratic pressure to medically transition. Moreover, the cost of a surgery may or may not be covered by insurance (many are considered cosmetic); therefore income can be a barrier to certain procedures as well. Many surgeries require a significant amount of time off to recover, which is another hurdle that may or may not be possible depending on their employment situation. All of these reasons do not make a person less or more trans; rather, it shows the diversity within the trans community when it comes to medical or physical transitions. Some of these factors may or may not be things that your coworker can control, so be respectful and believe them when they trust you enough to tell you who they are.

Additionally, you may not be able to see all of the changes occurring with your coworker. One of the more common medical steps that a transgender person may take as part of their transition is taking hormones in a process called hormone replacement therapy (HRT). These hormones create changes that are gradual, subtle, and take several years to show effects. Many transgender people describe taking hormones like going through a second puberty, which is a process that takes time and is different for everyone depending on certain medical factors. Some trans people will wear garments such as chest binders or change their hair, clothes, or makeup to better express their gender.

Some trans people will not make changes right away or at all to their current gender expression. There are as many ways to express gender as there are people; so, be respectful and supportive of your colleague by following their lead when it comes to their identity. Pre-existing health issues are another barrier to surgery that may prevent a trans person from having certain procedures.

Because of the reasons mentioned above (and others that we may not have covered), your trans colleague may ask you to start using their new name and pronouns as the first step in their transition before any physical changes take place. Slowly, they'll start incorporating different items of clothing, using a different bathroom, etc. Or, your coworker may take a "rip the Band-Aid off" approach and announce that, on a certain date, they will go by a new name and pronouns, update their work email address, start dressing differently, and using a different bathroom. A trans person may choose not to have surgeries, or take hormones, or change the way they outwardly present themselves. They may only update their name and/or pronouns. Please keep in mind that these choices are about what is personally best for your coworker, and those choices do not invalidate their identity. The best way to be respectful of your trans colleague is to start using their new name and pronouns as soon as they ask you to do so.

Most importantly, remember that there is no one-size-fits all approach to transition. Some of the reasons mentioned here are most common, but the list is not definitive. Keep in mind that your coworker has simply made the choice that is best for them, their health, and their expression of gender, so respect them by helping to make the work environment a safe place for them. If you are interested in learning more about individual transition stories from a range of genders and ages, there are a number of suggestions for further reading at the end of this document.

Q: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CHANGE NAMES AND PRONOUNS? I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN MY COWORKER BY A CERTAIN NAME. WHY DO I HAVE TO CHANGE?

A: Getting misgendered is usually painful for a transgender person. It may make them feel sad about their appearance, like they are being perceived as the wrong gender, or it may remind them of who they used to be before they lived as openly trans, which may bring up a variety of emotions and experiences. Also, consider that people who are transphobic often deliberately use the wrong name and pronouns to be cruel and disrespectful; by using the wrong name and pronouns, you may trigger a defensive or flight-or-fight response in your coworker. For these reasons, when a person is misgendered in the course of a work day, even if it is unintentional, it can be disorienting for them.

By refusing to use their appropriate name and pronouns, you are prioritizing your needs over your coworker's rights. Please keep this information in mind and consider what it means to respect your coworker.

Q: I REALLY WANT TO BE SUPPORTIVE, BUT I'M AFRAID I'M GOING TO MESS UP THEIR NAME OR PRONOUNS, OR ACCIDENTALLY MISGENDER THEM. I DON'T WANT TO BE SEEN AS AN INSENSITIVE JERK. WHAT CAN I DO?

A: Change takes time and action. We live in a world that assumes a binary gender based on arbitrary characteristics. Unlearning this assumption takes time and deliberate practice. You don't have to wait until a coworker comes out before changing how you address people--start using gender-neutral language now.

When your coworker first comes out, there may be a period of adjustment as you start using their new name and pronouns. You will likely be worried about messing up, and sometimes that worry will make it more likely that you will have a slip-up. If a slip-up happens, briefly apologize and then move on. For example, if you are greeting your coworker and you accidentally call them by their former name, an apology could look something like this:

“Hey James-- oh, sorry-- Jane, can you please have a look at that email Mr. Peabody sent to us?”

This apology acknowledged that you messed up, you recognize your mistake, and you've moved on.

Don't respond with a lengthy apology such as “oh, I'm so sorry! I'm really trying; it's just so hard to get it right. I feel so bad!” This apology isn't about your coworker; it is about you. It places the blame for your mistake on your coworker's identity and makes your coworker feel burdensome. Your coworker is now in the position of placating you and making you feel better about your mistake, which isn't the purpose of the apology. Apologize and move on.

While you may be eager to demonstrate that you are accepting of your trans coworker, there are some phrases that may come across as try-hard and inappropriate. Don't overdo it! For example, let's say your office mate has come out as a trans woman. You really want to demonstrate that you support her, so you start greeting her in the morning with a warm “hey girl hey!” If you've never greeted her similarly before she transitioned, and you do not greet any other women in your life in the same way, you are going to come across as a little obvious or forced.

As nice as your intentions may be, this action has a similar effect to the lengthy apology; it puts your coworker in the position of providing you with validation, which is opposite of what the action should be doing. Make sure that your good intentions don't get lost in the delivery. Show your support by not making your coworker feel isolated or pressured into performing emotional labor for others.

Q: I HAVE A RELIGIOUS OBJECTION TO BEING TRANSGENDER. DO I HAVE TO USE THEIR NEW NAMES AND PRONOUNS?

A: In the workplace, everyone has the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Under federal law, you have the right to religious expression, which includes your dress, the time you take off, and the food you eat. Recent court cases suggest that your trans coworker may similarly be protected from discrimination. That means that you need to use their correct names and pronouns.

Using a person's correct name and pronouns is a matter of respect. Names are personal, and they communicate identity. When someone calls you by the incorrect name, it means they do not care enough to acknowledge the real you. Just as it is disrespectful to keep calling you by a nickname you don't like, to use your unmarried name, or to be told that someone can't be bothered to learn the correct pronunciation of your name, it is also disrespectful to use someone's pre-transition name.

When you misgender your colleague, you are saying that you do not respect them as a person and this will make your working relationships very, very difficult. You are allowed to think whatever you would like about transgender people, but in a workplace context, you need to treat them with the same respect and dignity with which you expect to be treated.

Q: I FEEL WEIRD ABOUT USING THE SAME BATHROOM AS MY TRANS COWORKER. SHOULDN'T THEY HAVE TO USE A GENDER-NEUTRAL BATHROOM RATHER THAN A SINGLE-GENDER RESTROOM?

A: First, let's address the legality of bathroom use in the workplace. Under OSHA's Sanitation standard (1910.141), employers are required to give their employees access to toilet facilities as a lack of access to a restroom facility can result in health consequences. As of 2015, Executive Order 11246 has been interpreted to include both gender and gender identity as protected under federal law, thus denial of access to an appropriate single-gender restroom facility is gender-based discrimination. A number of states have passed additional legal provisions that further protect bathroom access. Some workplaces may have a gender-neutral or unisex bathroom, but transgender employees are not required to use it. To force a transgender employee to use a gender-neutral bathroom would be gender-based discrimination.

The *Welcoming Guidelines for Museums* (published by the LGBTQ Alliance and AAM in 2016) states, "Interpretations of these obligations may vary at the state, federal and local level. The museum is encouraged to adopt the most inclusive and welcoming stance appropriate to its mission, staff and audience." While specifics may vary, institutions that have created welcoming and inclusive environments for their employees and patrons will have or create certain policies to protect all employees from discrimination. As such, there is no legal or institutional standard that should prioritize your comfort over your coworker's rights.

Secondly, why do you feel weird about it? Everybody needs to use the restroom at some point in their day. We all need to use the toilet, touch up our hair, take a walk from our desks, etc. If you are concerned about privacy, please know that there are already laws at the federal and state level which protect you from harassment in bathrooms. Banning transgender people from bathrooms does not make anyone safer.⁶ In fact, transgender people have a greater risk of assault in bathrooms than any other segment of the population. In 2016 more than a quarter of all trans people report being questioned in a public bathroom, and one in ten were denied access to a bathroom.⁷ Nearly half of all trans people report avoiding the bathroom in public to avoid confrontation, often leading to medical complications such as urinary tract infections.⁸

Your trans colleague is at more risk in a public bathroom than you are.⁹ There's a long and inaccurate history of propaganda that conflates many minority groups with being sexual predators, and trans people are just some of the most recent public targets.¹⁰ This fear-mongering does nothing but hurt everyone involved and strips already disenfranchised groups of basic rights.

On a personal level, a person's gender identity is integral to their sense of being. Think of it this way: your gender identity is intrinsic to your personhood--it's how you see yourself in the world. What if someone forced you to use a bathroom that didn't match your gender? Would you feel safe and secure there?

If you still feel awkward about it, it is up to you to change your habits. You can choose to use a single-stall bathroom or use the facilities at a different time than your coworker.

"Change takes time and action. We live in a world that assumes a binary gender based on arbitrary characteristics. Unlearning this assumption takes time and deliberate practice."

Q: TRANS PEOPLE MAKE UP SUCH A SMALL PORTION OF THE POPULATION. WHY SHOULD WE SPEND ALL THIS TIME CATERING TO THE NEEDS OF A SMALL MINORITY? AREN'T THERE BIGGER ISSUES LIKE GENDER EQUALITY AND RACISM?

A: Science estimates that about 0.1-1% of the U.S. population is transgender. That percentage may not seem like a lot of people, but let's put it into perspective. Consider that about 1% of the population is redheaded. Next time you are in a crowd, take notice of how many people have red hair, and it will give you some idea of how many trans people are also in that crowd. Trans people are not rare; they are your neighbors, friends, colleagues, and family. There are an estimated 1.4 million trans adults in the U.S. As society becomes more accepting, and more people live as openly trans, that number will rise.

A disproportionate burden of risk is put upon trans people who wish to be out at work.¹¹ More than half of all states have no employment protections for being trans, meaning you can be fired for coming out at work. The unemployment rate for trans people is fourteen percent compared to seven percent for the general population; and forty-four percent of transgender people are underemployed.¹² Trans people face higher rates of unemployment than the general population; they also are less employed than cisgender people from the same racial category.

White transgender people face an overall unemployment rate of fifteen percent (three times the national average for cis white people). Black transgender people face an unemployment rate of twenty percent, double the unemployment rate of the overall Black population in the U.S.¹³ The unemployment rate for Latinx trans people is twenty-one percent, three times the unemployment rate of the overall Latinx population in the U.S.¹⁴

Research from the Williams Institute at U.C.L.A.'s School of Law found that Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Black communities have a higher percentage of transgender people than white communities.¹⁵ In non-white, non-Western communities, concepts of gender can be very different, as not every culture has a binary understanding of gender. In contemporary Samoa, the Fa'afafine are an accepted and valued third gender. Similarly, Māhū are a third gender in Indigenous Hawaiian culture, and Hijra are a third gender in India. The Dineh Nation of the American southwest recognized four distinct genders, and many contemporary Native American nations recognize a third gender category broadly referred to as Two-Spirit. "Transgender identity" is how gender variance is described in the West, but gender variance is a universal across all cultures and races. Fighting racism includes dismantling systems that enforce Western cultural norms as superior, thus anti-racist work should support trans people of color.

"When someone calls you by the incorrect name, it means they do not care enough to acknowledge the real you."

In supporting the rights and freedoms of transgender people, you are also supporting the rights and freedom of cisgender women and men to live free of gender-based discrimination. Laws that target transgender people, such as access to employment, public accommodations (such as restrooms) and housing, also inadvertently affect cisgender people as well.

For example, North Carolina passed a law called the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act (known as HB2) in 2016. This statewide law overruled a city ordinance passed in Charlotte that would allow people to access public accommodations based on gender identity, not sex assigned at birth. HB2 required that people use the bathroom that corresponded to the sex assigned on their original birth certificate. The intention of the law was to keep transgender women from accessing women's bathrooms, and transgender men from accessing men's bathrooms, based on the unproven fear that men would pretend to be trans women to access women's-only spaces (for more information on trans people and bathroom access, please see the previous question in the FAQ).

The reach of HB2 went far beyond North Carolina. The law had the effect of drawing extreme scrutiny to the gender presentation of everyone in all public spaces. Not only were transgender people harassed in public spaces, so were cisgender people who were suspected of being transgender based on their appearance. Many people found their presence in sex-segregated facilities questioned based on their gender presentation.¹⁶ For example, in 2016, a woman was harassed and filmed in a Connecticut bathroom based on the assumption that she was transgender because of her short haircut and baggy clothes.¹⁷ More recently in 2018, a grandmother was arrested in Miami. When she was booked, the intake officer noted that the woman took medication to address a hormone imbalance, a common condition in postmenopausal women. Transgender women often take the same medications. This medical therapy for both trans and cis women is called hormone replacement therapy, or HRT. The corrections officers assumed she was a transgender woman based on the fact that she was undergoing HRT. She was booked into the jail as male and housed with male inmates, placing her at risk of sexual assault and violence. The woman was also subject to transphobic and sexual harassment by both inmates and staff.¹⁸

"More than half of all states have no employment protections for being trans, meaning you can be fired for coming out at work."

Laws and prejudices which explicitly target transgender people often make victims of cisgender people who do not rigidly conform to expected gender roles. Under these laws, any perceived gender nonconformity is suspect. Among many examples, if your hair is "too long," if your face is "too masculine," if your clothes are "too revealing" or "not revealing enough," all place you at risk of violating gender norms in public spaces. Results of such a transgression can include harassment, arrest, and assault based on the assumption that you are transgender. When you support the rights of transgender people to be themselves, you make it easier for everyone to be themselves. These examples serve to show that the struggle for equality is intersectional. Be it homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, or classism, our struggles are tied together. Consider the difficulties that a person of color faces in our society. Now, compound that with the issues a trans person faces in our society. By fighting transphobia, especially in the workplace, we make it easier for all people to find and keep a job, and have a life free of harassment and discrimination.

Q: I SUPPORT TRANS AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE BUT I CANNOT STAND BAD GRAMMAR. WHY DO TRANS AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE FEEL THE NEED TO USE MADE-UP PRONOUNS LIKE ZE/ZIR OR CHANGE THEY/THEM/THEIR TO SINGULAR?

A: The only constant in language is that it is always changing. If you think about it, ten years ago no one would have understood you if you said, “I just posted my hashtag tbt on my Insta.” Nowadays, if someone doesn’t understand this sentence, then they might be the outlier.

One of the biggest struggles of trans and non-binary people is finding language to describe themselves. Most of the English language relies on a gender binary (e.g., he vs. she). Not all people identify as a binary gender, so they do not feel comfortable using binary pronouns. For this reason, many trans and non-binary people create their own words with their own meanings to describe themselves. This includes pronouns, titles, names, identities, etc. The practice of creating new words is completely normal. Every year, the English dictionary adds new words and phrases as they enter the lexicon.

"An English speaker often uses a singular they/them/their without considering it a problem."

They/them/their are more commonly used as singular pronouns in English than we tend to think. The singular they/them/their has existed since Old English. Even today, an English speaker often uses a singular they/them/their without considering it a problem. Think about this situation: If someone said, “I went to the doctor today,” how would an English speaker respond? Would an English speaker use he, she, or they to refer to the doctor? Without context, we do not know the doctor’s gender. More than likely, the response would be something like, “Oh really? What did they say?” You’re already using the singular “they” daily, so there’s no reason to not use “they” pronouns for your non-binary coworker as well.

Ze/zir and other similar pronouns come under a lot of similar criticism for being “made up,” but third-gender pronouns have a long history of use in languages other than English. The pronouns are designed to be completely gender-neutral and eradicate gender assumptions associated with pronouns. These pronouns still follow strict and standard English grammatical principles.¹⁹ By accepting gender neutral pronouns, English only becomes more inclusive of our reality.

In order to be a good ally, it is critical to respect other people’s pronouns and language. By using the correct name and pronouns for another person, you demonstrate that you accept and respect them for who they are. Mistakes are commonplace when adapting to or learning about someone else’s identity, but people are generally understanding and want to help others adapt, learn, and practice.



GENDER STUDIES AND TRANS TERMINOLOGY 101

GENDER STUDIES IS A HUGE FIELD OF ACADEMIC STUDY.

The intricacies of this field cannot be fully explained in a few pages, but we've distilled the most important information into an easy-to-understand guide. In this section, you'll find a guide to exploring gender as a concept and different gender identities. You'll also find some easy-to-reference charts that include updated language and terms. Please keep in mind that the information in this section is meant to help you better understand how to conceptualize and talk about gender, gender identity, sex, and gender expression. In a workplace context, these characteristics have no bearing on the qualifications of an individual, whether they are cisgender, intersex, or transgender.

BASIC VOCABULARY AND DEFINITIONS

Gender is the social state of being a man, woman, or non-binary person. Some cultures, also include third, fourth or more gender states. We don't really know what causes humans to have a gender; scientists are still figuring it out. Our best guess is that gender is a combination of chromosomes, anatomy, genetics, hormones, neurology, epigenetic causes (what you were exposed to in utero), and socialization. There is no one equation, sign, or diagnosis that indicates a person's gender, no single symptom of what a person's gender is or should be. Gender is not equivalent to a person's genitals and is a lot more complicated than just "boys have penises and girls have vaginas."

The American Academy of Pediatrics tells us that a person's sense of gender is innate. Most children can recognize and express their gender by age four. For many people, we identify with the gender that we are assigned when we were born, and we don't think about it much. If you identify with the gender you were assigned at birth, you are cisgender. Some people do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. These people are transgender.

If you are cisgender, it may be hard to imagine why someone would be uncomfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth. A good way to think about gender, is to consider your relationship to your appendix. If your appendix is working fine, you probably don't think about it all that much. It doesn't bother you; it just exists. If something goes wrong with your appendix, however, you would notice. You may choose to ignore the first twinges of pain, but as time goes on, the pain would be impossible to ignore. You would either need to address the issue with medical attention or die of appendicitis. Similarly, most of us don't really think about our gender, unless there is an issue with the gender we were assigned at birth. Ignoring an issue with your assigned gender just gets more painful and urgent as time goes on. Transitioning (living as your true gender) is, according to medical science, the best way to relieve that pain.

Unlike appendicitis, surgery isn't necessarily needed for a gender transition. Whether or not a trans individual needs surgery is personal and does not affect the validity of their gender.

Sex is the scientific classification of a person as male or female at birth based on a combination of physical factors such as external genitalia, secondary sex characteristics, and hormones. About 1 in 1,000 people are physically or genetically intersex. Typically, when this happens, doctors will make an assessment based on the predominant appearance of the baby's genitals into a male or female category and will assign the baby a gender role in which to live. Sex doesn't really tell us a person's gender; sex only tells us a person's physical characteristics. Sex can also be changed by the transition process through either surgery or hormone replacement therapy.

As scientists learn more about sex, the more we understand that sex is not a binary of "male" and "female" based on physical characteristics, hormone levels, reproductive ability, or chromosomes. Many thousands of sex variations exist. Very few of us have our chromosomes tested or our genomes sequenced; you could be intersex and not even know it!

A recent article in Nature magazine states that “The idea that science can make definitive conclusions about a person’s sex or gender is fundamentally flawed.”²⁰ As such, the best option that we have of accurately determining a person’s sex and gender is to trust the individual in question.

Gender Identity is our inner sense of gender. Everyone has a gender identity, even if you are not trans. Some of us identify with the gender we were assigned at birth, making our gender identity either cisgender man or cisgender woman. Some of us do not identify with the gender we were assigned at birth. Such a person is a transgender man, woman, or non-binary person. Gender identity is different from gender expression, sex, and sexual orientation. On the following pages, you’ll find a chart that defines what some different gender identities are.

As a note, the phrase “gender identity” was developed by cisgender people to talk about transgender people in a medical context. The phrase “gender identity” has been deployed in popular discourse in negative ways to invalidate the genders of trans people. An example of this is if someone who is looking to invalidate someone else’s gender identity says, “Well, if that person can say they ‘identify’ as a woman, I get to ‘identify’ as a pineapple.”

"Language is constantly changing as humans adapt to different situations."

For this reason, you should consider the phrase “gender identity” as medical term, and it should really only be used in the context of a doctor visit. If you are referring to a person’s gender, whether trans or cis, just use the word “gender.”

Gender Expression is the way we communicate our gender to others through our choices. Many people think of gender expression as a binary with feminine being at one end and masculine on the other. Along this binary, we tend to think that men need to be masculine and women need to be feminine. Our world is rigidly gendered according to this arbitrary boundary through activities, preferences, clothes, toys, etc. People, regardless of gender identity, feel pressure to conform to expectations of gender expression.

For example, it can be hard in our society to be a boy who likes to sew or a girl who likes to fix motorcycles. Our society teaches us that the transgression of the gender binary is often negative and will damage us. Often time, though, the damage comes from those who want to enforce the arbitrary line of the gender binary and punish others for transgressing it, not from the expressions themselves. The problem with enforcing a binary of gender expression is the fact that none of the choices we make are inherently belonging to any one gender.

One way in which we can see this fluidity in gender expression is the way that societal norms of gender expression change over time. Fifty years ago, most women did not wear pants on a daily basis as pants were associated with work, and work was considered to be masculine. Now, pants are an unremarkable item in the wardrobe of most women. Sometimes, it can feel hard to keep up with what is “manly” or “womanly” in our society, and the pressure to behave in traditionally gendered ways can feel intense.

A person may be a woman (cis or trans) and like things that are typically coded feminine like makeup, cooking, and dresses. A person may be a woman and

like masculine things like short hair, baseball, and beer. A person may be a woman and like a mix of masculine and feminine things! Just because a person likes or behaves in ways usually associated with a different gender does not invalidate their gender identity.

Sexual Orientation is the gender(s) a person has sexual or romantic attraction to. People can be gay (same-gender attracted), straight (opposite-gender attracted, usually associated with male and female gender identities), bisexual (attracted to multiple genders), pansexual (attracted to all genders), etc. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity. For example, a person can be a transgender woman, and also be gay (attracted to other women).

"In order to make everyone feel respected...it is important to employ inclusive language. Using inclusive language in the workplace is especially critical to a trans-friendly environment."

Common Gender Identities

Identity

Description

Agender

Someone who does not have a gender

Bigender

Someone who has two or more genders

Can be in addition to other gender identities

**Cisgender
Cis**

Someone who is a gender that is the same as the gender assigned to them at birth

Dyadic

Someone who is born with anatomy that matches the (biological) sex binary

**Gender Non-Binary
NB
Enby**

Someone who is not a binary gender. They may identify between male and female or outside of the male/female spectrum.

Can be in addition to other gender identities

Common Gender Identities

Identity	Description
Gender Fluid	Someone who is not a binary gender and sometimes changes between different genders and expressions Can be in addition to other gender identities
Genderqueer	Someone who is not a binary gender
Intersex	Someone who is born with anatomy that does not match the (biological) sex binary
Polygender	Someone who has multiple genders Can be in addition to other gender identities
Questioning	Someone who is not certain of their gender Can be in addition to other gender identities

Common Gender Identities

Identity	Description
Transgender Trans	Someone who is a gender that is not the same as the gender assigned to them at birth
Trigender	Someone who has three or more genders Can be in addition to other gender identities
Two-Spirit	An umbrella term for an array of non-binary Indigenous North American genders with specific terms varying between Indigenous groups Should only be used by Native North American people who self-identify as Two-Spirit

TRANS-FRIENDLY LANGUAGE

Language is constantly changing as humans adapt to different situations. Most of the time, words simply become “old” and are replaced with more modern terms. In many cases, this change is necessary because the old idea associated with the term is no longer valid or acceptable. When it comes to terms related to gender or sex, many are used in a derogatory way by straight or cisgender people in order to disrespect trans people. It is important to use accurate language in order to make others feel respected. Using modern language also demonstrates that you are trying to understand and learn about your coworker and their identity.

It can be difficult to keep up with all of the changes and you may even find outdated terminology in articles and documents from just a few years ago. For this reason, we have included a chart on the following pages that shows terms or phrases that are either outdated or offensive. We’ve included an explanation for the change and then a suggestion for more sensitive or inclusive terminology. Please keep in mind that even the language used in this chart may change over time. In the resources section, we’ve included some websites that have the most up-to-date terminology.

You may notice that your coworker uses some of the terms deemed offensive or outdated in the chart, or they may consume media such as tv shows and movies that use outdated language. It is okay for people who have been victims of certain language at one point in history to use that language in colloquial ways. This kind of usage is called language reclamation and is a defensive technique that changes the power of an oppressor's language into the language of power for the oppressed.

Often, trans people may use these terms ironically or in a joking manner. It is okay for trans people to use offensive or outdated words because they have been oppressed by that language. It is not okay for cisgender people to use offensive or outdated words because they are the ones who were, and are, the oppressors whether through direct or indirect action.

Please note, some of the language included in the following chart may not be work appropriate, no matter who says it. Be considerate of who you are speaking to, and what you are speaking about. For example, it may be perfectly acceptable to reference a gender-affirming surgery of a trans person, provided they are an historical figure, you're working on an exhibition label, and the detail that they've had surgery is directly relevant to the narrative (not just an added fact). However, it would be grossly inappropriate for you to ask your colleague if their recent absence was for gender-affirming surgery. Use your best judgement.

Updated Language Chart 1: Offensive or Outdated Words

Word	Definition	Explanation	Modern Alternative
Cross-dresser	A person who wears clothing of the opposite gender	This term is often conflated with being transgender. A person who cross-dresses is not the same as a trans person.	If you are referring to a trans person, use transgender.
Drag Queen/King	Someone who dresses up as an exaggerated feminine/masculine character for performance	Some people conflate doing drag with being trans and use the terms interchangeably. Some drag queens/kings are trans or non-binary; but, some are cis.	Use this word only to refer to people who perform drag.
Dyke	A word that refers to a masculine woman or lesbians often used as a slur by non-queer people	A trans woman may describe herself as a dyke if her gender expression is masculine, but this usage is a form of reclaiming language as discussed in the opening to this section.	Use their true gender identity.
Faggot/fag	A word that refers to a non-masculine man often used as a slur by non-queer people	A trans man may describe himself as a faggot if his gender expression is feminine, but this usage is a form of reclaiming language as discussed in the opening to this section.	Use their true gender identity.

Updated Language Chart 1: Offensive or Outdated Words

Word	Definition	Explanation	Modern Alternative
Gender Identity Disorder	Someone uncomfortable with their gender assigned at birth	An outdated diagnostic word used in a medical context to describe a trans person	Gender Dysphoria
Hermaphrodite	People born with anatomy that does not match the (biological) sex binary	An outdated term used to identify an intersex person	Intersex
Passing/passible	Perceived by others to be cisgender and not visibly trans; often used in a complimentary way	These terms are deeply problematic as they imply that trans people engage in deception by “passing” as a gender not assigned to them. They also imply that being visibly trans is bad.	These words shouldn’t be used by anyone cis, except in an academic setting. Passibility isn’t the ultimate goal of transitioning.
Pre-op	A slur referring to someone who has not had genital surgery	Correlates gender with a person’s genitals	There is no current word to replace this term as people realize it’s rude to focus on the status of another person’s genitals.

Updated Language Chart 1: Offensive or Outdated Words

Word	Definition	Explanation	Modern Alternative
Queer	An umbrella term referring to someone who is not heterosexual and/or cisgender. Sometimes a slur when used by non-queer people.	Whether the term is appropriate or not depends on the context of its use. If unsure, it is best to ask or avoid it. It is an acceptable word in certain academic settings (Queer Studies, etc.).	An alternative would be their gender identity or sexual orientation when known and acceptable or LGBTQ+
Sex Change Operation	A surgery that changes a person's gender	An outdated term as people are their stated gender regardless of surgical intervention or level of medical transition.	If a trans person chooses to have a transition-related surgery, those procedures are called gender-confirming or gender-affirming surgeries because they affirm gender rather than change gender.
Shemale/he-she	A transgender person	A slur derived from a misunderstanding of transgender people and their genders and identities	Transgender person
Transgendered	A transgender person	An inappropriate term that suggests that being transgender is an outcome of surgery or other event rather than an identity	Transgender person

Updated Language Chart 1: Offensive or Outdated Words

Word	Definition	Explanation	Modern Alternative
Transvestite/ Transsexual	A transgender person	Outdated word based on a misunderstanding of transgender people and their genders and identities	Transgender person
Tranny	A transgender person	A derogatory slur referring to transgender people	Trans or Transgender

GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

In order to make everyone feel respected, safe, and accepted in the workplace, it is important to employ language that is inclusive of all genders. Using inclusive language in the workplace is especially critical to a trans-friendly environment. Many common phrases in workplace language are not inclusive of transgender and non-binary people. Using gender-inclusive language may be difficult at first because it requires you to rethink your typical speech behaviors and patterns. But, like everything else, practice makes perfect. The following is a chart including common non-inclusive phrases or terms paired with an explanation of and alternative for the phrase or terms.

Updated Language Chart 2: Gender-Inclusive Language

Non-Inclusive Language	Explanation	Inclusive Alternative
<p>“Are your mom and dad here?” when speaking with children</p>	<p>Not inclusive of all families</p>	<p>“Is there an adult here with you?”</p> <p>“Can you tell me where your grown-up is?”</p>
<p>“Chairman/woman,” or any other title with “man,” or “woman,” suffixed</p>	<p>Not inclusive of non-binary genders</p>	<p>“Chairperson” or title with “person,” suffixed instead</p>
<p>“Handyman,” “Lineman,” “Mankind,” “Middleman,” “or any other word with “man” prefixed or suffixed</p> <p><i>“Human,” “man,” or “woman” do not fall under this category.</i></p>	<p>Not inclusive of women or non-binary genders</p>	<p>Replace “man” with “person,” or other synonym</p>

Updated Language Chart 2: Gender Inclusive Language

Non-Inclusive Language	Explanation	Inclusive Alternative
“Hello boys and girls!” when greeting children	Not inclusive of non-binary genders and further encourages children to think in a gender binary rather than spectrum	“Hello museum explorers!” “Hello Children!”
“Hello Mr./Ms....”	Not inclusive of non-binary genders	“Hello, name of person...” or “Hello, Mx. (micks)...”
“Hey, boy/girl!” when greeting friends or coworkers	Not inclusive of non-binary genders	“Hey, friend!”
“Is this your... father/mother brother/sister grandma/grandpa boyfriend/girlfriend etc.?”	Not gender or family inclusive Can be triggering Can make others feel awkward if incorrect	Introduce yourself directly, “Hello, I am... how do you know...?” or ask “Who is this with you?”
“Ladies and gentlemen...”	Not inclusive of non-binary genders	“Hello, distinguished guests...”

Updated Language Chart 2: Gender Inclusive Language

Non-Inclusive Language	Explanation	Inclusive Alternative
“My dude...” or “My man...” when contradicting someone or greeting someone	Originally masculine terms that can be offensive to some people of non-masculine genders if used to refer to them	“Actually...” or “Well...” (when contradicting); “My friend...” (when greeting)
“When you were a boy/girl...”	Suggests that the listener was once one gender and is now another gender It is not inclusive of non-binary genders	“When you were a kid...”
“Woman!” when arguing with someone	Harsh tone in combination with the term can be triggering for some people	“No!” or “name of person!”
“You guys...”	Denotes objectification of feminine genders by masculine subjects. Not inclusive of women or non-binary people	“Everyone,” “Folks,” “People,” “Y’all”

END NOTES

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

In this section, you will find some of the words you have encountered throughout this document, or through conversation with other people. There are, of course, no exact definitions for these words or directions for how and when to use them. Instead, as in so many other situations, it is important to be respectful of the person to whom you are talking, or talking about, and check with them about what words they would like you to use. Please note that the terms used throughout these Guides may be defined more narrowly than elsewhere for the purpose of discussing gender transitions.

Note: Words marked as adjectives (adj) should **not** be used as nouns (e.g. “a transgender person” **not** “a transgender”).

Assigned Sex/Gender at Birth: the doctor-determined sex of a child as a boy or girl when a baby is born. A commonly encountered acronym for this is AFAB (assigned female at birth) or AMAB (assigned male at birth).

Being Outed: having someone else reveal your gender identity or sexual orientation, usually without your consent.

Cisgender (adj) (abbreviation: cis): someone who is a gender that is the same as the gender assigned to them at birth. The term was created to challenge the assumption that cisgender people (as opposed to transgender people) are always the standard in discussions about gender or sex. It is not a derogatory term or a slur.

Coming Out: ongoing process of becoming aware of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity, accepting it, acting on it, and sharing it with others

Crossdressing (adj) / **Transvestite:** people who dress, either occasionally or more regularly, in clothes associated with a gender other than their own, as defined by socially acceptable norms. Crossdressing people are generally happy with the gender that they were assigned at birth and usually do not want to permanently alter the physical characteristics of their bodies or change their legal gender. This is not a synonym for transgender identities and should not be used to describe anyone without their express request.

FTM (female to male): refers to someone who was assigned female at birth but who is transitioning, or has transitioned, to male.

Gender: umbrella term often used as shorthand to refer to one of, or a mixture of, gender identity, gender roles, or gender expression. When used for gender roles or expressions, it includes the range of socially constructed characteristics assigned to and differentiating between the masculine and feminine. These constructs differ from society to society and can change over time. Traditionally thought of as a binary with male and female as opposing forces, gender is more accurately described as a spectrum.

Gender Affirmation / Gender Confirmation Surgery: refers to the many varied procedures that a transgender individual might undergo to better align their physical body with their gender identity. A transgender person does not need to undergo any procedures for their transition to be complete.

Gender Expression: external appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut, or voice, and which may or may not conform to what is socially defined as typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender Identity: an inner, innate sense of self as male, female, somewhere in between, or outside the gender spectrum. Everybody has a gender identity, not just transgender people. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. Sometimes, this inner sense of gender can be different than the gender assigned to a person at birth.

Gender-neutral (adj.): words or phrases that are free of reference to a particular gender.

Gender Non-conforming (adj.): broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

Genderqueer (adj.): a non-binary gender identity; may be both male and female, neither male nor female, or fall completely outside or somewhere between the gender binary.

Gender Roles: expected behaviors, thoughts, and emotions of a specific gender based upon the views of a particular society or culture.

Intersex (adj.): a person who is born with external genitalia, chromosomes, internal reproductive systems, or other biological markers that are not traditionally associated with the (biological) sex binary.

In the Closet: keeping one's sexual orientation or gender identity secret. A person may be "out" in some social situations, and "closeted" in others.

Male-female/Sex/Gender Binary: the idea that all people must either be male or female.

MTF (male to female): refers to someone who was assigned male at birth but who is transitioning, or has transitioned, to female.

Non-binary Gender: refers to people whose gender does not conform to the traditional Western gender binary model. They may be both male and female, neither male nor female, or fall completely outside or somewhere between the gender binary. Examples of labels people may use to describe their non-binary gender include androgynous, polygender, genderqueer, demigirl, or demiboy. These are only a handful of labels that fall under the non-binary umbrella, and some people may use no label at all.

Passing: when used by transgender people, it refers to being perceived as their actual gender (as opposed to the gender assigned to them at birth). When used by LGB people, it refers to being perceived as heterosexual or “straight.” In general, it should not be used in these ways by non-LGBTQ people.

Personal Gender Pronouns (PGP): the pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. Everybody has personal gender pronouns, not just transgender people. You should always use the pronouns that a person requests.

Questioning (adj): a person who is questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. They should not be referred to as “confused.”

Sex: the scientific classification of a person as male or female at birth based on a combination of physical factors such as external genitalia, secondary sex characteristics, and hormones. Sex and gender are not interchangeable terms although the two are often conflated. Sex refers solely to physical characteristics, which can be affected and/or changed by transitioning.

Stealth (adj): a trans person who chooses not to disclose their gender history. This status may be used for a number of deeply personal reasons, which can include fear of repercussions such as loss of employment, damage to personal relationships, and the threat of anti-trans violence if one’s gender history is discovered.

Transgender / trans (adj): someone who is a gender that is not the same as the gender assigned to them at birth. Being transgender is separate from a person’s sexual orientation and gender expression, and these terms should not be conflated to include being transgender.

Transitioning: the social, medical, and/or legal process of aligning one’s life and physical characteristics to match their gender identity.

Transphobia: refers to the hatred or fear of transgender people. Discrimination based on a person’s transgender identity.

APPENDIX B: FURTHER RESOURCES

In this section, we've included a number of additional resources to help you further research the trans experience. As you read further, keep in mind that there are as many ways to be trans as there are trans people! Included are a number of biographies, academic research papers, and websites with some additional information on the trans experience. Lastly, we've included some information on museums that are highlighting the stories and contributions of trans individuals in their institutions.

Biographies:

- Bornstein, Kate. *Gender Outlaw: on Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*. Vintage Books, 2016.
- Boylan, Jennifer Finney. *She's Not There: a Life in Two Genders*. Broadway Paperbacks, 2013.
- Clare, Eli. *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*. Duke University Press, 2017.
- Mock, Janet. *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & so Much More*. Simon & Schuster, 2015.

Academic Works:

- Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Seal Press, 2016.
- Snorton, C. Riley. *Black on Both Sides: a Racial History of Trans Identity*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.
- Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History: the Roots of Today's Revolution*. Seal Press, 2017.

Trans-inclusive Practices in Museums:

- Victoria and Albert Museum's LGBTQ Working Group collects stories and highlights objects that are related to LGBTQ history and identity
- Gay Ohio History Initiative at the Ohio History Connection is a collaborative effort to preserve Ohio's LGBTQ history.
- Ferentinos, Susan. *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites*. AltaMira Press, 2015.
- Levin (Ed.). *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*. Routledge, 2010.
- Richard Sandell, Eithne Nightingale (Eds.). *Museums, Equality, and Social Justice*. Routledge, 2012.

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We would also like to acknowledge our 11 members who are stealth, or who chose not to be listed by name for personal or safety reasons. While some in the museum field are making progress towards better inclusion of transgender staff, volunteers, and patrons, many institutions do not have policies in place to protect the transgender community. As such, it is not always safe for trans individuals to reveal their identity or trans status, even if they have already transitioned. We greatly appreciate the risk they took to help the *Toolkit* become a reality and we hope that this will make the museum field a safer place for everyone.