

TRANS* 201

For Significant Others, Partners, Friends, Family, and Allies (SOFFAs) of Gender Diverse People



What other resources has Skye created and where can I find these?

Trans* 101 for SOFFAs: This introduces gender identity and trans* identities and gives family members, friends, and partners, information about how to be an ally to the trans* people in their lives. It ends with a list of LGBTQ+ organizations in Indiana and contact information for these organizations.

Trans* 301 for SOFFAs: This gives more in depth information about language usage and how allies can participate in trans* advocacy.

Trans* 101 & 201 for Trans* and Gender Diverse People: These booklets give trans* people more information about gender diversity, transitioning, and resources.

Trans*, Intersex, and DSD Resource Consolidation Packet: because information, resources, and support should be easy to access. This is a 125+ page packet that lists resources for many different topics important to trans* people & allies.

Trans* Friendly and Aware Medical Practitioners in Indiana: doctors who treat trans* people with respect – a list built by trans* and gender diverse community members. Check it out!

Trans* Inclusive Health Care and Health Insurance: This booklet gives people information about how to navigate health care and health insurance and access trans* inclusive health care and insurance.

How to get a Legal Name Change and Gender Marker Change: on your driver's license, birth certificate, and on federal records (at the Social Security Administration): This booklet contains information about legal transitioning.

Personal Advocacy: each of us can be our own greatest advocate. This booklet gives people information about how they can advocate to get respectful treatment in different spaces and navigate challenging situations.

This document was not made by any organization or non-profit, but is offered through Trans* Lafayette at Pride Lafayette. Find updated versions of these documents at www.pridelafayette.org/translafayette, or email Skye at skye@pridelafayette.org, or come to Trans* Lafayette meetings! Documents are posted online in a readable or printable format.

Created by Skye Brown
with the support of many community members

Edited by Aiden Powell

HOW DO I USE THIS BOOKLET?

Who was this booklet made for?

This booklet was made for anyone who is interested in learning more about trans* identities and experiences and being a better ally as a friend, family member, or partner of a trans* identified person. The information in this booklet is mostly in a Q&A format and is directed towards people who have some experience with and/or understanding of trans* issues. If this booklet is difficult for you to understand, try reading the Trans* 101 for SOFFAs booklet first. If you are a trans* identified person, this booklet may be a helpful tool for you to discuss your experiences and identity/identities with those close to you.

How was this booklet made?

This booklet was constructed by Skye after almost 10 years of being part of the trans* community and working with those who identify as part of trans*, gender non-conforming, and/or intersex/DSD communities. The contents of this booklet cannot possibly describe the experiences of ALL trans* identified people – instead this is only an effort to raise awareness about some trans* experiences and offer support to trans* people who would like a resource that they can give to those close to them.

What should this booklet be used for & what should it not be used for?

This booklet is an educational tool only. It does not reflect the views of all trans* identified people or the views of any organization that distributes this material. It should not be used as a legal document or legal aid. It should not be used as medical advice and should not be used to replace medical/health or legal information given by a medical professional or legal professional.

What is Trans* Lafayette?

Trans* Lafayette is a discussion and social group for all Trans* and gender diverse people, those living with disorders of sexual development (DSD), those who identify as intersex, and their allies. Trans* Lafayette is hosted by Pride Lafayette in Lafayette, IN, but serves gender diverse people and their SOFFAs (significant others, friends, family, and allies) statewide.

Who is welcome at Trans* Lafayette events?

Trans* Lafayette welcomes everyone from LGBTQ+ communities, the same gender loving (SGL) communities, queer allies, straight, heterosexual, and cisgender allies, domestic and international gender diverse individuals, and anyone else who is interested in discussing and exploring sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation and affectional orientation. Trans* Lafayette is a safe and welcoming environment for anyone regardless of sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual/affectional orientation, ability level, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, legal status (including undocumented status), age, religious or spiritual beliefs, marital or relationship status or structure, familial or parental status, pregnancy, veteran status, socioeconomic status, or genetic or other biological status. At Trans* Lafayette we celebrate diversity!

How can get more information about Trans* Lafayette?

Visit our webpage: www.pridelafayette.org/translafayette

Visit our facebook: www.facebook.com/translafayette

Email: skye@pridelafayette.org

How can I contribute to Trans* Lafayette?

If you are interested in supporting Trans* Lafayette through financial donation, you can either donate on the webpage with a credit card or email Skye Brown to meet and donate with a money order or cash. If you are interested in supporting Trans* Lafayette through your time, materials, or resources, please contact Skye Brown at skye@pridelafayette.org.

Are you a different person now?
 Were you born in the wrong body?
 It's not possible to be anything but male or female.
 You must be making this entire thing up.
 How did you become trans*?
 Why would you make things harder on yourself?
 I knew [name] since before they transitioned.
 You won't be able to get a job, have a family, or get married now.
 Did your mother smoke/drink/ do drugs while she was pregnant?
 Did you have a mental breakdown?
 Where you hospitalized in a psych institution?
 Have you seen a doctor for that?
 Can they fix that?
 What bra size are you? You do a great job hiding your breasts.
 How do you hide your penis?
 How did you get a date?
 You have a date? Have you told them you are trans*?
 Do you have a penis or a vagina?
 Oh, you have both a penis and a vagina?
 Can I feel? Can I touch your chest/butt/genitals/hair, etc?
 You know you can't REALLY be male if you have a vagina.
 You know you can't REALLY be female if you have a penis.
 Are you going to have THE surgery?
 I'm so happy that after your surgery you will finally be male or female.
 After the surgery will you have a "REAL" penis/vagina?
 Why would you do that (physical transition) to your body?
 Why do you want that kind of surgery?
 Won't it hurt for them to do surgery on your genitals?
 Won't you die if you try to transition?
 How do you have sex?
 You will always be a virgin.
 That's not "real" sex.

THE BASICS!

Sex: all the physical aspects of a person's body that contribute to their gender identity, including (but not limited to): chromosomes, hormones, genitals, reproductive organs, secondary sex characteristics, etc.

Gender Identity: how a person understands their gender in the context of socially defined gender norms

Gender Expression: the social cues a person displays to present their gender identity

Sexual Orientation: the direction of a person's physical and sexual attraction towards others

Affectional Orientation: the direction of a person's emotional and romantic attraction towards others

The golden rule of labels:
 Only use words to describe a person that the person uses for themselves.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are trans* identities?

Trans* is a term that embraces gender diversity. Trans* identified people are those people whose gender identity is different than the gender they were assigned at birth. Asterisks (*) in writing imply a footnote or list, and in this case there is an asterisk to imply a comprehensive list of identities. This list is never actually written out because there are so many trans* identities that no one could possibly know or list them all. Instead, the asterisk makes the word an umbrella term, inclusive of all gender diversity and all gender identities. An example of a trans* identity might include someone who was assigned "female" at birth, but identifies as androgynous.

What are cisgender identities?

Cisgender is a term used to describe someone whose gender identity is in line with the gender assigned at birth. An example of a

cisgender identity might include someone assigned “male” at birth and who identifies as “male”.

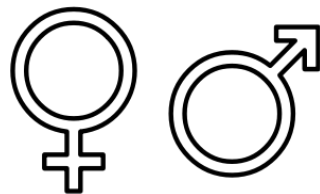
What is gender non-conforming?

“Gender non-conforming” (GNC) refers to when someone’s gender expression does not follow gender norms (for example, if a woman is wearing men’s pants). Some trans* people are GNC and some cisgender people are GNC. GNC people – whether they identify as trans* or cisgender – often experience the same stereotypes and discrimination. Therefore, GNC people will be considered part of the trans* community in this booklet.

What is the gender binary?

The gender binary is the assumption that only male and female bodies and identities exist. The binary is different across space and time and is sometimes used to police people into certain gender expressions. For example, in the U.S.: men are expected to be physically strong and not cry or wear dresses; women are expected to be good at cooking and parenting and be clean. Gender norms that are used to reinforce the gender binary are different depending on the society and subculture – they may be different among Asian Americans vs. white Americans, younger vs. elder people, and those from outside the U.S.

The gender binary frequently ignores those who live and identify as non-binary (not male bodied, not female bodied, not female identified, and/or not male identified). There have been people who do not identify within the binary at every time in human history and in every place in the world. Being aware that the gender binary exists and its effects can help you be more aware of how to be respectful towards all genders.



THINGS NOT TO SAY -EVER

The following describes questions you should never ask and statements you should never say to a person. This is true whether you think or know they identify as trans* or not. If you have questions about why these are inappropriate or want the answer to some of the questions, try looking in the “Trans*, DSD, and Intersex Resource Consolidation Packet” at www.pridelafayette.org/translafayette.

Are you a he-she/shemale/crossdresser/transvestite/transgender?

Are you a trans* person? Are you transgender?

Are you one of those...?

If you do _____ or don’t do _____, then you aren’t really a trans* person.

You will always be female to me.

You will always be male to me.

I can still see your male/female characteristics.

If you just did your hair/clothing/make-up/nails/shoes differently you would be very pretty/handsome/attractive and/or pass better.

Wow, you don’t look like a trans* person. Good job.

What did you look like before you transitioned?

But you used to be so pretty/handsome/beautiful? Why did you change?

What’s your real name?

It’s too hard for me to switch to your new name/pronouns – can I just keep using the old ones?

I’ll use your pronouns since you get the surgery.

“They” is not a pronoun.

Oh, I could tell you are trans*!

I know someone else who is trans*.

Do you know [name]? They are a trans* person, too.

You should be on RuPaul’s drag race!

Are you sure this isn’t a phase?

Are you doing this for attention?

Are you doing this to get back at me?


Why can’t you just stay a man or a woman?


Being an Ally of Gender Diverse People as a Service Provider


Social service providers, such as those working in poverty alleviation and homelessness alleviation programs, child and elder protective services, social security, welfare and workfare programs, public health programs, adoption and foster care systems, hospitals, etc., being trans* aware and trans* affirming is extremely important. Social services often overlook trans* specific needs and unknowingly create unsafe and unwelcoming environments for trans* youth and trans* adults. Some simple ways to increase gender diverse inclusion at a social services facility are to train employees and volunteers on terminology, pronouns, and etiquette, create gender inclusive forms, and put up statements, signs, and symbols of trans* inclusion.




How does “trans*” differ from “transgender”, “transsexual”, “transvestite”, and “hermaphrodite”?


 **Trans*** and **transgender** are both terms that are considered affirming of gender diversity and can be used to describe a trans*/transgender identified person or the trans*/transgender community at large. Trans* and transgender are slightly different connotations, but are frequently used interchangeably.


 **Transsexual** is sometimes used to describe a transgender identified person who plans to physically transition and/or is currently physically transitioning. As all terms, this word has a complicated history, so it should only be used for someone when they are comfortable with it and use it for themselves. Some trans* people who physically transition do not identify as transsexual.


 **Transvestite** is now almost always used as a trans* slur because it has historically been used by medical professionals to diagnose trans* and gender non-conforming people with mental illness and force or coerce them into undergoing harmful medical “treatments”. Transvestite usually refers to someone who does not identify with the gender they are assigned and cannot or does not try to conform to strictly “male” or strictly “female” gender expression norms. It should not be used unless an individual identifies with this label and uses it for themselves.

 **Hermaphrodite** is a medical term that refers to someone who is born with testicular tissue as well as ovarian tissue. This condition is relatively rare and is rarely used in an affirming way. Since this physical state has no direct relationship to a person’s gender identity, the word “hermaphrodite” almost never accurately or positively represents a trans* identity and therefore should not be used to describe someone.

What words should not be used to describe trans* people?

 **Tranny:** This word has been historically used to describe trans* people who are forced into sex survival work on the street and/or as a slur used deliberately to dehumanize trans* people, especially towards trans* women. Even if someone is comfortable with this word, it should still be avoided since someone overhearing this word being used could imply to the person listening that it is an acceptable word to use for any trans* person.

 **Tranny-chaser:** The term dehumanizes trans* people as sexual objects and when applied to partners of trans* people, invalidates their relationship and attraction as a sexual fetish. This term can refer either to: 1. Individuals who fetishize trans* identities and bodies as a sexual object, or 2. to partners of gender diverse people, partners of trans* people who medically transition, and those who are attracted to non-binary bodies or identities. While these are two very different groups of people, this term should never be used for either.

 **Crossdresser:** Since the word suggests the person is dressing “opposite” of how they should, it also suggests that they are not the gender which they are expressing. Some trans* people DO identify as part of the crossdressing community. However, many times this word is used to describe a person when they are wearing gendered clothing that is viewed as different than their assigned gender or gender identity. This label is often used to invalidate the gender expression of a trans* person if they cannot pass as male or female, or if they are gender non-confirming. Only use this word to describe someone who identifies as a crossdresser.

Being an Ally of Gender Diverse People as a Partner

Lastly, it is very important to be respectful of partners’ boundaries during sex, if partners are engaging in sexual activity. Before any sexual activity (yes, EACH TIME), set out rules about what each person is completely comfortable with, what each person is completely uncomfortable with, and what gray spaces exist. Each time you changes positions, roles, or scenarios, check that everyone is still comfortable and having fun. Come up with safe words for “stop”, “slow down”, and “go”. All relationships and friendships should be mutual and honest.

Being an ally of a trans* partner means keeping open, honest, and frequent communication. When someone transitions, all their friends and family transition with them. This is especially true for partners of trans* identified people. If a trans* person socially or medically transitions, it will also create changes in the way the partner is perceived. Let’s use this example: one partner is cisgender and female identified and femininely expressing, and one partner identifies as a trans* man. If the trans* man decides to medically transition from female to male, both partners may now be perceived as being in a heterosexual relationship rather than a lesbian or queer relationship. This is a simplified example, but the point is that transitioning is not just a process the person transitioning goes through.

For those in committed partnerships (exclusive or open, coupled or poly, etc), having discussions about what about transitioning is exciting, intimidating, or unexpected is not just very healthy and helpful, but also fun. It can be really interesting to see where each partner is at in the transition process, and help each partner navigate concerns respectfully. For those in uncommitted relationships, it is also extremely important to have discussions about gender, transitioning, and sexual activity and sexual consent!

The greatest thing a partner can do to be an ally to their trans* identified partner is listen and respect. The greatest thing a trans* partner can do for a cisgender identified partner is listen and respect. If more than one partner is trans* identified, the same guideline applies – keep talking!

Being an Ally of Gender Diverse People as a Friend

If a friend comes out as trans* identified, the most empowering and supportive responses you could give might include “Thank you for sharing something so personal with me,” and “I’m so proud of you for coming out and being honest.” These sound really cheesy, but saying something similar will mean an extraordinary amount to whomever is coming out to you. Resist the urge to ask questions at first – stick with something like “How are you doing?” “How are you feeling?” Your friend may or may not know whether they want to physically transition, they may not have a word or label that they identify with, and all of that is OKAY. Sometimes the most affirming thing you can do, is be okay with your friend not having all the answers!



X Shemale: This term dehumanizes trans* people – especially trans* women – by suggesting that they can be summed up by their genitals. Shemale refers to someone who is femininely identified, but has some aspects of their body that society considered “male”. This term is frequently used in porn and should never be used to describe someone.

X He-she: This term dehumanizes trans* people by making fun of non-female and non-male (non-binary) gender identity, expression, or body. It also invalidates non-binary identified people by placing gender binary identities (male and female) as being the “best” or “only” genders.

X It: It refers to an object, *never a person*.

X Transgendered: Trans* and transgender are both adjectives because they describe a person. Transgendered is not a word because it is grammatically incorrect. For example, saying, “Mika is a transgendered man,” suggests that Mika had transgender happen to him – which *does not* make sense. “Mika is a transgender man,” states that Mika is a man that identifies as transgender or is transgender identified – which *does* make sense.



How do I know what labels to use with trans* people?

Follow the golden rule for labels! Only use labels for people if they identify with them and use the label for themselves. If

someone does not call themselves “transgender”, then do not use the word “transgender” to describe them. If someone uses the word “queer” to describe themselves, it is probably alright to describe them as a queer

person. If you are unsure whether a person is comfortable with a label or if you are unsure whether the person would be comfortable with you using a label to describe them, it is usually better to just ask respectfully.

How do I know what pronouns to use with a trans* person?

Just ask! Ideally, you should ask every person you meet what pronouns they prefer. This is a great way to be respectful and avoid singling out people you think might be trans* identified. Many people get worried about coming off as rude for asking about a person’s pronouns. If someone gets offended when you ask, you can easily say something like, “I usually ask people about their pronouns so I do not make assumptions about how they identify.” This type of statement will help people understand you are coming from a place of respect and not ridicule.

This question is also an excellent way to have a conversation about being an ally to trans* people. The most common pronouns people use are she/her/hers, he/him/his, ze/hir/hirs, and they pronouns, but there are many other sets of pronouns. Here are some examples: “Zach identifies as agender and ze uses gender neutral pronouns,” or “Taylor identifies as genderqueer and they use gender neutral pronouns.”

Subject	She	He	Ze	They
Object	Her	Him	Hir	Them
Possessive Adjective	Her	His	Hir	Their
Possessive Pronouns	Hers	His	Hirs	Theirs
Reflexive	Herself	Himself	Hirself	Themselves

Being an Ally of Gender Diverse Children

If your child tells you that they do not identify with the gender they were assigned or behaves in gender non-confirming ways, it is extremely important to treat the child with respect and not assume it is a phase.

When parents are trying to be accepting of their child’s gender identity and expression, sometimes their instinct is to prevent the child from expressing this in public to protect the child. Navigating public spaces is complicated, but the child should be involved in every step of the decision making process. Have a discussion with the child to show your support and love, and discuss how society expects “boys” and “girls” to behave and dress. Discuss possible outcomes (positive and negative) if the child dresses or behaves in the way they are most comfortable. It is important to have this discussion in an open and honest way, not in a way that instills fear or causes shame.

Be sure to discuss different settings – school, home, shopping for clothing and going into dressing rooms, getting groceries, how to navigate restrooms, etc. Also, once the parents/guardians have discussed identity and how to be affirming and safe with the child’s gender expression, parents/guardians should facilitate discussion with other family members, educators, and other adults the children may encounter. Once the child is aware of all their options and the possible outcomes for all these decisions, support them! Always keep in mind that as the child gets older, their decisions may change and it is important to remain flexible and affirming as children grow.



Interrupt Inappropriate/Harmful Language and Behavior

First, make sure you are safe and consider how much influence you have in the situation. If you are at home and your parents keep using the wrong pronouns for your sibling, ask yourself if it is safe for you to correct them and figure out how much influence you may have over your parents. Most likely if you are interacting with people close to you, you will have a greater influence on their beliefs and behaviors and you may be safer when interrupting inappropriate or harmful behaviors and language.

One effective way to interrupt harmful language or behavior is to ask a question to the person doing the harm. For example, if your parents are using the wrong pronouns for your sibling, you might ask, “Why are you using those pronouns when [my sibling] asked you to use these pronouns?” This gets the person to think about what they are doing and why. Then you can follow up with, “I understand why you are doing that, but it is upsetting [my sibling] and that also upsets me.” This lets your parents know how important it is to you and the trans* identified person in your life that they be respectful. Lastly, let them know how much you appreciate it when they change their language or behavior.

**One effective way to
interrupt harmful language
or behavior is to ask a clarifying
question.**

**Trans* issues affect all people
in every aspect of life.**

What are social, legal, and physical/medical transitioning?

Socially transitioning refers to when a trans* identified person goes through the social process of getting their identity recognized and affirmed by their partners, family, friends, and community. This might involve changing their name, changing the pronouns they ask people use for them, changing non-permanent aspects of their gender expression (haircut, voice changes, etc.).

Legal transitioning may include the legal process of getting a name and/or gender marker change on legal identification like driver’s license, passport, with the social security administration, etc.

Physically or medically transitioning involves any and all aspects of a person expressing their gender identity through semi-permanent or permanent body modification. This might include (or might not include): hormone therapy, body hair changes, bone restructuring surgeries, genital surgeries, breast augmentation or removal, tracheal shave, etc.

How does someone know they are trans* identified?

Everyone knows how they feel about themselves and sometimes labels help each of us build communities with others who have had similar experiences. If someone identifies as Christian, other people do not question whether they are “really Christian” because each of us recognizes that we each know ourselves best. If someone identifies as trans*, then they are trans*. If someone identifies as genderfluid, then they are genderfluid. If someone identifies as female, then they are female. Respect each person’s own understanding of themselves.

of non-female and non-male bodies that can arise through genetics, hormones, etc. Non-binary bodies are very common and it is important to recognize that there is a lot of physical diversity – even within the loose categories of “male” and “female”.

Lastly, many people do not identify as “male” or “female”. Some people identify as neutrois, genderfluid, butch, queer, androgynous, etc. You do not need to know all the labels – just that there a lot more than “male” and “female” out there!

Trans* people are born with “ambiguous” genitals or have both “male” and “female” body parts.

Body parts and genitals are not “male” or “female”, but have been labeled this way by medical professionals and scientists over time. Medical professionals frequently label new born infants as “female” if they have an external genital part that is “small”, have a vaginal cavity, and/or have separated labial/scrotal tissue. Medical professionals frequently label new born infants as “male” if they have an external genital part that is “large”, have no vaginal cavity, and/or have connected labial/scrotal tissue. However, labeling these body parts as “male” or “female” does not convey how a person may feel about their body, how they use their body, who they are attracted to, what type of sex they have, what gender expression or gender roles they will or will not take on, or any other information. Any person – trans* identified, cisgender identified, or any person with any gender identity – can have any combination of genes, gene expression, reproductive organs, genitals, and hormones. Trans* people are no more or less likely to be born with a certain type of body than anyone else.

**Body positivity
is for ALL bodies.**

Educate yourself, keep learning, and know your limits.

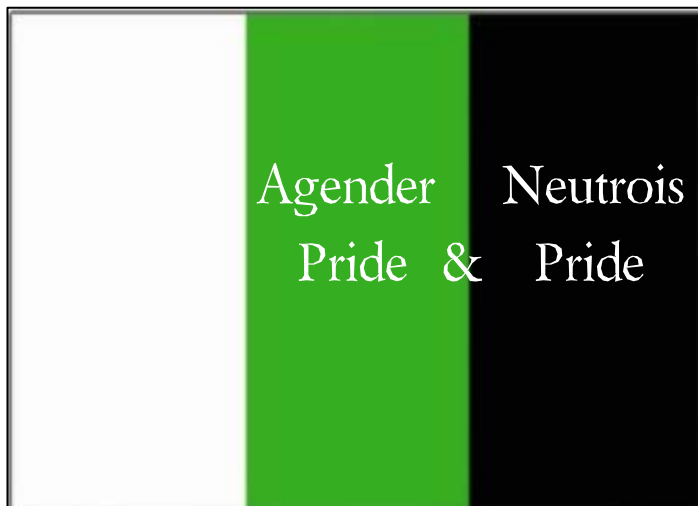
Instead of asking the trans* identified people in your life endless questions, do as much research as possible on your own. Read about trans* identities and check out trans* community blogs, websites, and youtube channels. Start by checking out the “Trans*, Intersex, and DSD Resource Consolidation Packet” offered on Trans* Lafayette’s webpage at: www.pridelafayette.org/translafayette.

As you learn about trans* identities and experiences, keep in mind how the diversity present in the trans* community. Every person is an expert in their own experiences only. A single trans* person cannot know what ALL trans* people experience, just as no single person can know everything about an entire community. Stay aware of what you need to learn more about and what trans* issues are you comfortable with and understand well. Never pretend to understand terms or trans* issues that you do not. Ask questions, do research, be respectful, and always keep learning!



Do not make assumptions about a trans* identified person’s sexual or affectional orientation or their sexual practices.

Trans* identified people can be gay, lesbian, same-gender-loving, bisexual/biromantic, pansexual/panromantic, asexual, questioning, heterosexual/heteroromantic, queer or have any other sexual or affectional orientation. Trans* identified people can have romantic or sexual relationships with people who are male or female bodied, intersex or have a disorder or sexual development, and non-binary bodied people. Trans* identified people can be attracted to people of any gender identity or expression. Trans* identified people can be tops, bottoms or versatile, can be involved in kink, BDSM, leather, rubber, or other fetish communities, and engage in any sexual practice that any given person might enjoy. Just because a trans* woman might identify as female does not mean she has to have sexual or romantic identities that are stereotyped for women. Just because a trans* person identifies as genderqueer does not mean they cannot have sexual or romantic identities that are stereotyped to belong to “men” or “women”. Everyone’s sexual and romantic identities and practices are personal, not based on their trans* identity or status.



All trans* identified people physically transition.

Some trans* identified people do choose to modify their bodies to better reflect their gender. Some trans* identified people choose not to modify their bodies because they already feel their body reflects their gender or they may feel that the options for body modification will not allow them to get closer to a body that reflects their gender. Some trans* identified people do not modify their bodies because they are unable to for others reasons, like social pressure, financial limitations, or legal limitations (for example, it is very difficult for someone to get permission to physically transition in the military). These are not all the reasons someone may choose to physically transition, may choose not to physically transition, or may be unable to physically transition. However, the point is that the trans* community is very diverse and an individual does not have to change their body to be trans* identified.



Trans* people are mentally ill and that is why they transition.

Trans* people are not unstable or mentally ill. Gender diversity exists in many countries and cultures and has existed as long as human history. People transition medically or socially because their gender identity is different than the gender assigned to them at birth. No one knows why so many people identify with the gender they were assigned at birth or why many people do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. However, just as being assigned female and identify as female is not an illness, neither is being assigned female at birth and identifying as male, pangender, or agender, etc.

Support people's restroom choices.

Don't police who belongs or does not belong in restrooms and changing

Trans* people have no other identities.

Trans* people can be trans* people of color, trans* and disabled, a same-gender loving trans* person, a trans* elder or a trans* youth, trans* with English as a second language, and millions of other identities. Trans* and intersex communities contain an extraordinary amount of diversity and complexity, which is why individuals and communities can be so unique.

Trans* identified people all think the same socially and politically and share the same values.

This is absolutely false. The trans* community is incredibly diverse and individual's values and beliefs are no different. As mentioned earlier, trans* identified people often have many different identities, come from different backgrounds, and have varied experiences in life.

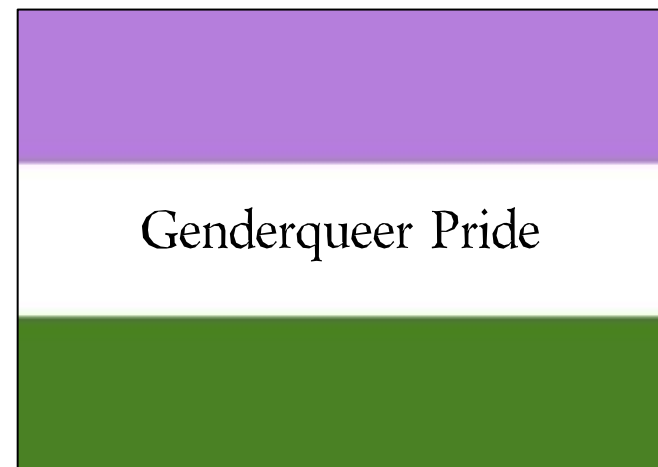
Trans* identified peoples' bodies or appearance is obviously different than cisgender identified peoples' bodies or appearance.

False. There is nothing inherently different about how trans* and cisgender people look and there is nothing inherently different about their bodies. It is not uncommon for a trans* people to physically transition and decide to live their life as they gender they identify without disclosing their trans* history to others, even their partners. This sometimes means a partner may not know their partner is trans* identified or had a different kind of body previously. Bodies and appearance all depend on the person, not on label categories.

Everyone's sexual and romantic identities and practices are personal, not based on their trans* identity or status.

Do not sexually objectify trans* people.

Never tell any person – whether they are trans* identified or not – that you think trans* men/women/people are “hott” or “exotic” because they are a trans* person. Do not tell someone that you’ve “always wanted to see what it would be like to have sex with a trans* person.” Every person in the world has sex a little differently (if they are sexually active). Trans* identified people are not there for anyone's sexual gratification. A trans* identified person's body is not a sex object or a sex toy. A trans* identified person's body does not sum up their gender identity, their sexual orientation, or whether they are romantically or sexually compatible with any given person. Just like some non-trans* identified people, some trans* identified people do not have a sexual identity and/or choose not to have sex or sexual relationships.



Do not regulate people’s gender expression or give passing tips.

Do not tell someone they can or cannot wear or do something because they are _____. For example, do not tell your trans* male partner that “real men” pay for everything. If you have a friend who is trans* femininely identified, do not tell her that her body is “too [anything] to look good” in a certain type of dress, pants, or other clothing, or assume they need your help applying make-up if they wear any. If you have a friend who has trans* masculinely identified, do not try to “help” your friend learn how to walk or talk “more masculinely”. These statements impact people by making them feel that they are not good enough at expressing their gender however they feel comfortable. Lastly, do not tell someone that when they DO something, they “really look female” or “really look male”. In conclusion: do not comment on whether a trans* identified person is passing or not and do not offer help unless they ask you for support and advice on passing.

Remember that each trans* person cannot represent the entire community and no single person can be an expert on all trans* experiences.

If you are asking an individual about their experiences, they can tell you about their own experiences. They cannot represent the entire trans* community. Every person is at their own point in learning – whether they are trans* identified or cisgender identified. Do not expect the trans* person in your life to have all the answers for themselves or others. Try to find the answers to your questions by reading and becoming more aware before you ask a trans* identified person.



Trans* men are masculine, trans* women are feminine, and those who identify as non-binary express their gender androgynously.

There is no one way a trans* person can be, look, or express themselves. Someone who identifies as male does not have to be masculine. Someone who identifies as female does not have to be feminine. Those who identify as neither female or male might look masculine, feminine, androgynous, or present their gender in any way imaginable. Also, just because someone expresses their gender masculinely does not mean they identify as male. Just because someone expresses their gender femininely does not mean they identify as female. And just because you cannot tell if someone is “male” or “female”, it does not mean they cannot be or identify as male or female.

Anyone who does not identify as “male” or “female” is just confused.

This is false. Many people identify as a gender other than “male” or “female” and these identities are just as real, legitimate, and stable as “female” or “male” identities. Gender identities often change over time as well, and this does not mean the person’s gender is “unstable” or they are confused. People grow and learn more about themselves with time and some people learn new words or find words that fit them better as they grow and get older.

Respect the person’s
gender history and
confidentiality.

Trans* people do not have a sexual or affectional orientation.

All people have a sexual and/or affectional orientation and the most important thing to understand is to use the language that the person uses for themselves. If a trans* woman identifies as a lesbian, then she is a lesbian. If a trans* woman identifies as queer, then ze is queer.

Trans* people are always attracted to the “opposite” gender.

As this packet has discussed a little in previous sections, there is no “opposite” gender. There are hundreds, thousands, millions of gender identities all of which just are. They are not comparable, similar, or different – but they exist. The understanding that gender is not binary makes sexual and affectional orientation seem more complicated because there are fewer boxes to fit people into, BUT this also allows people to describe themselves with more freedom. Just like gender identities, there are an infinite number of orientations. The important thing is simply to respect the language that people use for themselves.



Trans* people are not able to have jobs, a family, or go to college.

Many trans* people do have jobs, find partners and have children and/or pets, and get a formal education. The reason so many trans* people do not have access to these things is social stigma. When people hold stereotypes that trans* people are dangerous, abnormal, or mentally ill, they are frequently not hired, paid less, not able to access health care, not given access to housing, rejected my family, friends, and partners, denied the opportunity to adopt or foster children, and/or lack the financial and emotional support to attend college. These are the reasons that reading this information, becoming aware of trans* issues, and becoming an ally and advocate for trans* people is so important. *You* have the opportunity to be a safe space, ask friends and family to be respectful, and change your personal and professional environments.

Respect labels and choosing to have no labels.

Some people use many words to describe their identities and experiences and others do not. Labels and words that describe people are very personal and holding meaning to each person who chooses to use or not to use certain words. The words that people use to describe themselves are always right for that person in that moment – do not question if they are “really” an identity. Some people feel strongly that many labels do not fit them and that should be respected. For example, some people with a trans* history, stop identifying as trans* or part of the trans* community at some point. This is their truth and their reality. In this example, it would be inappropriate to tell this person that they “are really a trans* person and just in denial,” or something to that effect. Lastly, some people do not identify with any labels. Be comfortable with the knowledge that many people are trying to find the right words to describe themselves and others never like to use labels to describe themselves if they feel that it boxes them in.

Avoid generalizations.

Do not assume all trans* identified people are binary or not binary identified, transition or do not transition, identify sexually or romantically in some way, are all a certain race or ethnicity, are all American, all have a certain ability level or documented status, have a certain kind of family or a certain relationship with their family or relatives.... Or anything else. Trans* identities and trans* experiences are very diverse and should be respected as diverse. Every person is an individual with their own experiences and identities. Listen to trans* identified peoples’ stories! They are beautiful and diverse.

Respect the person's gender history and confidentiality.

Do not ask what the person's "real" or "original" name was. Do not ask to see pictures of the person before they began transitioning. If the person does show you pictures of themselves before they began transitioning, do not make comments like, "But you were so handsome/pretty before!" or "Why would you do this to yourself when you were so beautiful before." Or "So that was when you had a vagina/penis?" Do not ask the person questions about their current or past body, especially their genitals or other body parts that cannot be seen in public. Do not "test" the person by asking them questions "only a real woman" or "only a real man" would know the answers to. Never ask a person "what" they are – a person is not a thing and their body and identity are personal. If a person wants you to know more about their body or identity, they will tell you.

If you see someone whose gender you cannot identify, do not try to "figure out" what body parts they have or how they identify their gender. Under no circumstances should you ever approach someone to ask what gender they are or what body parts they have, and you should also be sure never to stare. This is especially important in restrooms, locker rooms, and other gendered spaces!!! Staring or asking invasive questions is uncomfortable, is very rude, and happens to many trans people very often.

Do not out the person by discussing their birth name, gender history, transition status, etc, unless the person has explicitly stated that they are comfortable with others knowing their gender history. Never sensationalize a trans* identified person's experiences and identity by saying, "Would you believe [name] used to be [birth name]?" or saying, "Would you believe "he" used to be a "she"?" or any other statement/question that has the same effect.

BEING A TRANS* ALLY

Ask people what pronouns people use.

Everyone has pronouns they would like used for them or does not care what pronouns are used for them– but you will not know how to be respectful until you have asked. The easiest thing to do is ask all people what pronouns they prefer. He/him/his, she/her/her, ze/hir/hirs, and they pronouns are the most common gender pronouns. Some people do not have a pronoun preference and are comfortable with any pronouns.

Some people get offended when asked their preferred pronouns. The most effective way to navigate this situation is to just explain that you were asking to be respectful and avoid assuming things about them, and that you ask everyone this question.

If you are in a situation that you cannot ask about the person's pronouns, use "they" pronouns. For example, "Sam is going to the store soon. Do you want them to get you anything?" Instead of saying, "Sam is going to the store soon. Do you want him/her to get you anything?"





Do not ask questions for the sake of your own knowledge.

Trans* people – especially those who are viewed as non-binary or “in between” – get asked a lot of personal questions. Many times these questions are only asked so the person asking can get an answer and feel more comfortable, while simultaneously creating a very uncomfortable, hostile, or unsafe space for the trans* person. Questions about a person’s body, transition status/progress, or identity are inappropriate. If someone asked you whether you have a penis or vagina, wouldn’t you be upset, offended, or feel that your personal space was invaded?

Here are a few of the more common questions that should never be asked: “What are you? Do you have a penis?/Do you have a vagina? Are you a girl or a boy/woman or a man? Are you a “he” or a “she”? What is your “real” name? What is your birth name/original name?”

If and when a trans* person feels comfortable disclosing this information to you, they will. Otherwise, it is respectful not to ask. If you are looking for information to help a friend with their transition, to better understand information for your gender diverse child, or otherwise get informed, please contact Trans* Lafayette or use the “Trans*, Intersex, and DSD Resource Consolidation packet that you can find at www.pridelafayette.org/translafayette! Trans* Lafayette exists to serve gender diverse people and allies and this includes providing information! You can find Trans* Lafayette’s contact info in the back of this packet.

Use pronouns and name the person asks you to use.

Do your best to remember and use the person’s name and pronouns. Some people find this more difficult if they knew the person when they went by another name or different pronouns. The best policy is to be respectful by learning to switch name/pronouns and if you accidentally use an old name or pronouns, correct yourself and move on with the conversation. Dwelling on the mistake only makes the situation awkward for everyone.

Use the language the person uses!

Besides name and pronouns, follow the Golden Rule of Labels. Use words to describe each person that the person is comfortable with and uses for themselves.

