

Gender, Sex, & Sexuality

GENDER IDENTITY: situation within social identifiers (i.e., man/woman, girl/boy); innate sense of belonging within gender categories

GENDER EXPRESSION: external expressions associated with masculinity and femininity. (Includes: clothing style/color, grooming and hair style, gait, posture, vocal inflection, etc.)

SEX: physical traits, their functions, and their social conceptualization. (Including: genitals, hair growth, fat distribution, breast tissue, etc.)

Sex is *not binary* (some are born intersex) and *can change* over time (due to transition or hormonal shifts). Many nonbinary people have, desire, or conceptualize their bodies outside of binary sex.

ORIENTATION: romantic or sexual attractions, often (but not always) dependent on gender

CISGENDER: a descriptor for those whose gender identity is the same identity (male/man, female/woman) assigned to them at birth

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NONBINARY 101

What is nonbinary gender?

Nonbinary people are those that do not identify exclusively as "man" or "woman," "male" or "female." Some consider themselves both, neither, partially one or the other, a combination, or a fluid and changing mix.

Language is always changing, but as of 2016, "nonbinary" is widely considered an umbrella term for many other identities, including genderqueer, agender, and genderfluid.

Some nonbinary people refer to themselves with binary pronouns (he or she), but many use singular they or others (such as ze/hir or xe/xem).

Nonbinary Identities

GENDERQUEER: having queer (nonconforming or subversive) gender expression and/or identity

GENDERFLUID: gender that shifts between multiple identities or presentations over time

AGENDER: lack of identification with gender

NEUTROIS: neutral or neuter gender identity

DEMIGENDER: partial identity with gender(s). Often expressed as demiboy, demigirl

BI-/TRIGENDER: possessing two or three gender identities which may be distinct or intertwined

TRANSGENDER: identity with a gender other than assigned gender. Due to connotations with transition, binary identity, and dysphoria, some nonbinary folks do not identify as transgender

CROSSDRESSER: distinct from drag; presenting or dressing in clothes "opposite" of assigned and/or identified and/or socially recognized gender

How To Use Singular They

"They" can be both singular and plural, just like "you"! Most people use singular they already to refer to third parties whose pronouns are unknown:

i.e., "Someone delivered a package earlier."

"Did *they* leave a note?"

It takes a little time to get comfortable, but we promise *it really does come naturally with practice!*

Guidelines for the grammatically-inclined:

Verbs used with singular they conjugate as with plural they, not as with he/she.

i.e., "*They come* from Seattle and *love* rain,"
not "*They comes* from Seattle and *loves* rain."

And unlike he/she, verb conjugation changes depending on whether the person's name or pronoun is the subject.

i.e., "Because *they come* from Seattle, *Sam loves* rain."

Reflexive use is the one major way in which singular and plural they differ. They becomes "themselves," not "themselves."

i.e., "Sam takes good care of *themselves*."

Language Use

HONORIFICS: Mx. (pronounced "mix") vs Mr./Ms.

FORMS OF ADDRESS: Instead of "sir," "ma'am," "ladies," or "gentlemen," try neighbor, friend, folks, esteemed guests, dear/kind people, or "all."

FAMILIAL TITLES:

Brother/Sister - - - - - Sibling
Mother/Father - - - - - Parent, Zaza (inf.)
Daughter/Son - - - - - Child/kid, little one, birth order
("oldest," "youngest")
Granddaughter/-son- - - - - Grandchild/-kid
Grandmother/-father- - - Grandparent, Grandy, Nini
Aunt/uncle - - - - - Pibling (parent's sibling)
Niece/nephew - - - - - Cousin, Nibling

ROMANTIC/SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP TITLES:

Partner, significant other (SO), spouse, lover, sweetie, date, enbyfriend, boifriend, datemate, paramour, beloved, Imzadi (Star Trek?)

SPANISH: Some nonbinary folks substitute o/a out for @ in written language - i.e., "Soy latin@" - and for "e" in spoken language - i.e., "Soy latine."

Nonbinary vs. Trans

Are nonbinary people trans?

This is contested and ever-changing. Some identify that way; others do not. Often, trans-identified nonbinary people identify that way because their genders differ from the genders they were assigned; others don't because they don't desire transition to a different gender (whether social or physical). We are diverse.

Can nonbinary people transition medically?

Absolutely! A host of transition options are available. Many people are under the misconception that transition is "all or nothing." Though access to health care is often financially difficult, nonbinary transition is very possible. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) - either testosterone or testosterone blockers and estrogen, can be taken in low doses without significant health risks. "Top surgery" can involve breast implants, reductions, or mastectomy. International guidelines (WPATH) do not require certain procedures to access others.

Micah at neutrois.me has shared great resources for those seeking nonbinary transition.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does "enby" mean?

"Enby" is from the abbreviation for "nonbinary," N-B. Some use it as an alternative to girl/boy.

What are your genitals like?

Please never ask this of anyone unless they offer.

The boring truth? Lots of ways. Some NB folks don't want/need hormone replacement or genital surgery, and they're still nonbinary. Some folks born with penises take testosterone blockers/estrogen, which can decrease genital size and alter function. Some folks with vulvas take testosterone, which results in the growth of clitoral tissue. What we think of as clitorises and penises develop from the same embryonic tissue, anyways; hormones greatly impact their size & function. Some get genital surgeries, which come in many varieties. Almost always, people get such surgeries to lessen dysphoria.

What is gender dysphoria?

An unpleasant anxiety condition that causes physical, mental, and/or social discomfort. Some nonbinary people experience dysphoria.

What is intersex? Is nonbinary the psychological equivalent of intersex?

Intersex people are born with genitalia and/or chromosomes that do not conform to traditional XY-male or XX-female characteristics. Though some intersex people are trans and/or nonbinary, many do not identify that way. Intersex is different from nonbinary. Intersex folks are people, not a philosophical exercise.

What is two-spirit?

Two-spirit is a traditional Native American identity sometimes identified as part of the nonbinary umbrella. Non-native people should refrain from appropriating this identity, which has deep roots in native cultures. Bigender or genderfluid are similar western equivalents.

But gender has always been just male and female!

Nope! Especially in non-western cultures, gender has often transcended the binary, and in some cultures includes four or five categories. Western culture has consistently tried to shut out such diversity.