

# Y'all Means All

## Discussing Gender and Sexual Orientation

### The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

#### Overview:

This training will serve as an introduction to discussing gender and sexual orientation. Throughout the workshop, participants will learn definitions, reflect on personal and shared experiences, and discuss social justice issues that surround these topics. Participants will be challenged to rethink the common narratives surrounding gender and sexual orientation.

#### Category:

Diversity; Gender; Sexual Orientation; Dialogue

#### Level:

Introductory to Advanced. This training is slated for Junior Year but can be used at any time during the Bonner program. It is recommended that Bonners at least complete the River Stories training beforehand.



Third Year

#### Recommended

**Bonner Connections:** This workshop is recommended for students in their second or third year in the Bonner Program, who have begun preliminary discussions regarding gender and sexual orientation. This training is recommended as a class-based meeting or All-Bonner meeting, as part of the Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 model, Stage 3: Application & Discussion.

Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 Student Developmental Model			
Stage 1: Exposure	Stage 2: Understanding	Stage 3: Application and Discussion	Stage 4: Adaptation

## Focus or Goals of this Guide:

The overarching goal is to develop a sense of community that is based on valuing others and understanding differences. By the end of this training, participants will:

- Understand the difference between gender and sexual orientation.
- Develop an awareness of the varieties in gender and sexual orientation.
- Become aware of discrimination and other issues that surround these topics.
- Challenge the common narratives regarding gender and types of relationships.
- Develop an understanding of how these topics intersect with social justice issues.
- Learn how to intervene in different struggles that surround these topics.

## Materials:

- Slideshare Presentation: <https://www.slideshare.net/BonnerFoundation/yall-means-all-discussing-gender-and-sexual-orientation>
- Nametags
- Chalkboard/flip chart/poster
- Marker/chalk
- *Salt & Pepper* game cards
- Tape
- Terms and Definitions handout
- Pens/pencils
- Note paper

## How to Prepare:

For this training it is important that the facilitator looks over the trainer guide and becomes familiar with the information being discussed. No prior knowledge of gender or sexual orientation is needed, however, it may be useful to review the resources presented throughout this guide to become more comfortable with terms and definitions being discussed.

For this training you will need to prepare some materials prior to starting the training. It is important that you do everything listed below before the group arrives.

- Check all links to make sure they are working properly. Each link should be clearly stated in this guide. This includes links for the [Slideshare Presentation](#) and Kahoot Quiz.

- Print out the Terms and Definitions handout for each participant.
- Print out and cut out the pieces required for the *Salt & Pepper* game. Further instructions can be found on the handout located at the end of this guide.
- Review the FAQ page at the end of this guide to familiarize yourself with some frequently asked questions and comments about these topics.
- There are *many* hyperlinks to references and further resources in this guide. You can use these to gain more information and to send links to students interested in learning more.
- Make sure you have a board, flip chart, or poster to use when working with the group to brainstorm and write down group expectations. (If the group has some trouble coming up with any, there are suggested group expectations on slide 2.) These expectations need to be visible to everyone in the group so that everyone can experience the training in a safe and respectful environment.
- Make sure you are wearing a name tag with your name and gender pronouns (for example, if you identify as a woman, you would likely write “she/her” under the pronouns). Have name tags ready for participants to do the same, after the Establishing Terms & Definitions section of the workshop.
- Since this training touches on some emotionally charged information, it’s important to have both your campus and community mental health resource contact information on hand to publicize for the group. This page on Everyone Is Gay’s site provides a broad list of resources and has a link to state-by-state resources: <http://everyoneisgay.com/national/> Write campus and community contact information on the board/chart along with the following resources, and encourage students to take a photo of these resources with their phones:

Crisis Text Line

Website: [www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

Phone: Text START to 741-741

The Trevor Project

Website: [www.thetrevorproject.org/](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/)

Phone: 1-866-488-7386

LGBT National Help Center

Website: <http://www.lgbthotline.org>

Phone: 1-800-246-PRIDE (1-800-246-7743)

Facebook: [Facebook.com/GLBTNationalHelpCenter](https://www.facebook.com/GLBTNationalHelpCenter)

It Gets Better Project  
Website: [www.itgetsbetter.org/](http://www.itgetsbetter.org/)

Side by Side Youth Support Line  
Website: <http://www.sidebysideva.org>  
Phone: 1-888-644-4390

### **Brief Outline:**

The structure provided with this training involves a mix of group discussion, various types of reflections, and some fun/interactive activities. Gender and sexual orientation may be new concepts for some but not for others. This is okay. It is important to begin by establishing a common definition for each concept, allowing for everyone to be on the same level of understanding. The debriefing sessions will serve as critical parts of the training, as they should offer a space for information and feelings to be processed and accepted. If this trainer guide is followed accordingly, this session should take 60 minutes to complete.

Note: If you have Bonners in your program who are Gender Studies majors and/or are active in educating about this topic, you're encouraged to involve them as co-leaders for the training.

The outline has the following parts:

Total: 60 minutes

- |                                     |                           |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Mingle                           | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 2) Establishing Terms & Definitions | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 3) Salt & Pepper Activity           | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 4) Debrief                          | suggested time 5 minutes  |
| 5) Exploring Issues                 | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 6) Discovering How To Be An Ally    | suggested time 10 minutes |

### **Part 1) Mingle**

Suggested time: 10 Minutes

During this portion of the training, you will be establishing group expectations as well as leading an activity to make the group starts to feel more comfortable with each other.

To begin, introduce yourself, and then gather everyone’s attention to look at the group expectations that you have posted. (These expectations are listed below, and on the PowerPoint on slide 2.)

Refrain from making someone a spokesperson for a certain group	Refrain from using one experience to explain a large group	Refrain from judgement but be aware of personal biases
Do not expect everyone to know your “Story”	Do not assume that you know anyone’s story	Step Up. Step Back.
Remember, you are your best advocate.	Be willing to listen to difference.	Express needs for clarification.
Be respectful.	Encourage curiosity	Use I statements & refrain from “generals”

In 5 minutes or less, develop group expectations as a group. Ask the group if they have any questions.

After establishing a common understanding of expectations, have everyone stand up. This icebreaker activity is called *Mingle*. The rules are simple. You instruct the group to walk around the room, “mingling.” After a short amount of time (15 to 30 seconds) you say, “mingle in a group of **(blank)**!” You will then yell a number and the participants get in a group of that many people. After getting in their groups, you read a question from the list below. Allow time for everyone in the group to briefly share. You repeat this until you have read all the questions. After reading the last question, gather everyone into one large group. From there, move into the next section.

Mingle Questions:

1. What is the last song you listened to?
2. What is one of your favorite foods?
3. When was the last time you felt rebellious?
4. Have you even worn something that wasn’t “manly” or “girly”? How did people respond?
5. Have you ever had to decided to do something that made you happy but made others upset?
6. Have you ever seen someone do something that made them happy but made you upset or made you disagree with them?
7. How do the words “gender,” “gender identity,” and “sexual orientation” make you feel? What do they make you think of?

## Part 2) Establishing Terms & Definitions

Suggested time: 20 Minutes

During this portion of the training, you will be establishing terms and definitions for this training. It is important to remind the group that some of these concepts and definitions may be new to some participants, however, it is important that everyone uses the appropriate terminology when having conversations. Maintaining consistency allows for everyone to stay on the same page throughout. To help facilitate this you will use the PowerPoint provided as well as distribute a handout.

This section is heavily scripted; you can directly read everything that's in quotes and italicized. The scripts include the verbatim definitions posted on the slideshow as well as on the handout.

At this point, you can pass out the Terms & Definitions handout. You may also begin the PowerPoint.

To begin, read the script below.



*"Today we are going to be talking about Gender and Sexual Orientation. A common misconception is that these two are synonymous with each other. While Gender and Sexual Orientation can influence each other, they are two different things. Throughout the session, we're going to explore the definitions, predominately provided by Planned Parenthood, and the concepts that make up these terms."*


### **Transition to Slide 3.**

On Slide 3, you will see a diagram that has "Sexuality" and 4 terms listed below. Inform the group that the definitions will be discussed as they are ordered on their handout.



*"We will start with the term Sexuality. Sexuality is defined by Planned Parenthood as the interplay of your **biological sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual preferences, and the way these things interact with your emotional, physical, social, and spiritual life.** Today we will be looking at Biological Sex, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation. We will not be discussing Sexual Preferences today, but I can provide you the links to resources if you want to read more about that later."*


#### Transition to Slide 4.



*"To start, we will look at Biological Sex. This is often referred to as **Sex Assigned at Birth**. There's a lot more to being a man, woman, or any gender than the male, intersex, or female sex assigned at birth. Your biological or assigned sex does not tell your complete story regarding your gender; however, gender is assigned at birth by medical professionals based on biological sex. Biological Sex is composed of physical anatomy, hormones, and chromosomes. These factors result in us having 3 "medical" genders: Male, Female, and Intersex." (Source: Planned Parenthood, 2017)*

*"Male and Female are commonly understood terms for biological sex. Intersex, however, is a biological sex not often talked about. Being intersex is defined as **being born with a combination of male and female biological characteristics, such as chromosomes or genitals, that can make it difficult for doctors to assign their sex as distinctly male or female.**" (Source: Planned Parenthood, 2017)*


*Response Question:* Ask the group how many people they guess are born intersex. Allow for 2 to 3 people to answer before reading the answer below.



*"Data on intersex individuals has often focused on one intersex trait alone to try to measure the prevalence of all intersex people. This led to the popularization of the statistic that 1 in 2000 people are born intersex. However, in a review of the medical literature from 1955 to 1998, researchers found that 1 in 100 people are born with bodies that differ from standard male or female. This indicates that there about as many people born intersex as there are people born redheads." (Source: [Intersex Society of North America, 2008](#))*

Instruct the group to look at the definitions for those provided on their handout. Survey the group, asking if anyone has any questions so far. You do not want to take too much time here as you have many more terms to go through.

#### Transition to Slide 5.



*"Another major factor in sexuality is gender identity. Your gender identity is **how you feel inside and how you express those feelings**. Clothing, appearance, and behaviors can all be forms of gender expression—ways*

to express your gender identity.” (Source: [Planned Parenthood](#), 2017)



“Cisgender is a term used to describe **people whose gender identity feels in harmony with their biological sex**. If someone’s gender identity is not in harmony with their biological sex, or with the idea of being “a man” or “a woman,” they may identify with different genders, including: transgender, genderqueer, gender fluid, agender, non-binary, or gender nonconforming. These terms all signify that one’s identity is not described by traditional definitions of gender.” (Source: [Planned Parenthood](#), 2017)

“The wide range—and often personal nature—of gender identities makes it important to never assume a person’s gender, and to always practice respect and ask what someone’s pronoun(s) are.”

### Transition to Slide 6.

“Now that we’ve established definitions of different gender identities, we’ll look at how gender plays a role in our attraction to others and discovering who we want to have relationships with—in other words, how gender interacts with sexual orientation. Sexual orientations include gay or lesbian (homosexual), straight (heterosexual), bisexual, pansexual, queer, and asexual. People can also express their uncertainty about their orientation by saying that they’re “questioning” or “curious.” (Source: [Planned Parenthood](#), 2017)



“Sexual orientation is about who you’re attracted to and who you feel drawn to romantically, emotionally, and/or sexually. It’s different than gender identity. Your own gender identity isn’t about who you’re attracted to, but about who you are — woman, man, etc. This means that the common association of being transgender also resulting in being gay is a myth. Sexual orientation is about who you want to be with. Gender identity is about who you are.” (Source: [Planned Parenthood](#), 2017)

“Here are the definitions for the different types of sexual orientation.  
Heterosexual- People who’re attracted to people of a different gender.  
Homosexual- People who’re attracted to people of the same gender.  
Bisexual- People who’re attracted to both people of their gender and another gender.  
Pansexual or Queer- People whose attractions span across many different gender identities.





Asexual- People who don't experience any attraction for anyone often call themselves asexual." (Source: [Planned Parenthood](#), 2017)

After going through the last definition, transition into the next activity. If participants appear to have questions or comments, pass out note paper and pens and ask them to write them down. Reassure them that they will have an opportunity to get their questions answered during the debriefing that will take place after this next activity. Also, it's important to let the Bonners know that written questions can be submitted anonymously and read by the facilitator so that people can have their questions answered without identifying themselves.

### **Transition to Slide 7.**

### **Part 3) Salt & Pepper Activity**

Suggested time: 10 Minutes

During this portion of the training, participants will be playing a fun game to help practice the definitions you just went over. You will have the group up and moving around while participating. This will help relieve some stress and tension that group members may have, while also allowing the group to have some fun. You should explain the rules and objectives in roughly 2 minutes. Give the group 5 minutes to try to match the definitions. That should leave you 3 minutes to go through all the definitions one more time, telling everyone the correct matches.

To begin this activity you will need to have your Salt & Pepper cards already cut and ready to be distributed. You will give everyone a facedown card and a piece of tape—be sure to tell them NOT to flip their card over to read what's written on it! Have everyone in the group tape their card to their back; they can help each other do this, as participants are allowed to see what's written on every card except their own.

Inform the group that every card has a pair and that it is their job to help match all the cards up. (Henceforth the name, salt and pepper.) When you say go, everyone must walk around asking yes or no questions in order to find out what word or definition they have taped to their backs. The goal is to match up as quickly as possible.

Give the group 5 minutes to try to match all 14 definitions with their respective terms. If the group is really struggling, you may give them the ability to communicate in ways other than "yes" or "no." This option should only be introduced in the last 2 minutes of the activity. Also during this time, go around the group and collect any written questions.

After their time is up, regather their attention. Using your *Facilitator's Guide to Salt & Pepper*, read aloud the matches and allow the group to meet up with their respective match.

Thank the group for participating and have them gather back in a large group.

### **Transition to Slide 8.**

### **Part 4) Debrief**

Suggested time: 10 Minutes

During this section, you will be debriefing the terms covered as well as the matching activity. A script and set of reflection questions are provided for convenience.

After reconvening in the large group, use the script below to start the debriefing activity.



*"Thank you again for participating. Now, we are going to look at some reflection questions to process the activity and the terms and definitions we learned."*

Below are the reflection questions that you will ask the group to debrief the previous two activities. You should read through every question and allow the group to answer after each one. These are the same questions that are on slide 8.

#### Reflection Questions:

- Initial thoughts or reactions to what we've discussed so far?
- Did you learn a new definition? If so, which one?
- Did you struggle with any of the concepts discussed? If so, why?
- What is one way you can apply this newly learned information?
- Was the matching activity difficult for you? If so, why?
- Gender is something that everyone thinks they know and/or understand. However, we just explored how complex the language used to talk about gender really is. Why do you think that gender is rarely discussed in its full complexity?

### **Transition to Slide 9.**

### **Part 5) Issue Briefs**

Suggested time: 10 Minutes

During this portion of the activity, the group will explore a few issues that surround the topics gender and sexual orientation. You will do this by using Kahoot!, an interactive online software. Alert participants that since you will be exploring how gender and sexual orientation intersect with social justice issues, some of the information you're about to cover may be upsetting. Remind them that they can feel free to step out to get some water or otherwise take care of themselves if need be, and tell them that you will be hanging back for about 15 minutes after the training in case anyone wants to follow up with you.

To begin, have everyone pull out a device that has internet access (i.e. laptop, phone, tablet, etc.). You can inform them that the group will be looking at some issues that surround gender and sexual orientation. You will be doing this by participating in online trivia! You will present the question, followed by the answer and the source for that answer.

When the group is ready, direct them to go to [kahoot.it](https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/b67c87e0-51dc-4345-9d1a-d7db6625cc1f) . Using the link provided below, you should pull the page up and see an access code. Have each participant put that code in and make a username to participate. After that, you can click "next" and start the trivia.

<https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/b67c87e0-51dc-4345-9d1a-d7db6625cc1f>

Some questions are true/false and others are multiple choice. The questions, statements, and scripts for reading afterwards are listed below.

**Slide 1:** 1 in 5 Women Report they Have Experienced Sexual Harassment In Their Work Place.

*Answer: False. The Huffington Post reported in 2015 that at least 1 in 3 women have reported being sexually harassed in their workplace.*

**Slide 2:** What Is The Leading Cause Of Death For People Ages 15-24?

*Answer: According to the CDC, suicide is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 35. This is beat only by unintentional injury (which may be conflated, as some suicides may appear to be accidents). It is also reported by the CDC that Queer Youth are 4 Times more likely to commit suicide.*

**Slide 3:** What Percent Of Transgender Individuals Have Reported Attempting Suicide?

**Answer:** *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey stated that 92% of Transgender Individuals have attempted suicide.*

**Slide 4:** What Percent Of LGBTQ+ Youth Have Been Threatened or Injured With A Weapon On School Property?

**Answer:** *The CDC reports that 10% of LGBTQ+ students have been threatened or injured on school property.*

**Slide 5:** Doctors, Psychologists, & Other Medical Professionals Can Refuse Services To LGBTQ+ People.

**Answer:** *True. States including Tennessee, Mississippi, and Texas all have bills that allow for a medical professional to deny care to a patient. (Source: The Atlantic)*

**Slide 6:** What Percentage Of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Employees Have Experienced Discrimination At Work?

**Answer:** *The Huffington Post reported that at least 40% of GLB Employees have faced some form of discrimination.*

**Slide 7:** What Percent Are Women Paid In Comparison To Men?

**Answer:** *Women make on average, 80% of what men do for the same work. These statistics fluctuate when race is factored in (for example, white women make more on the dollar than black women do). Source: This statistic comes from The American Association of University Women, a group that is the leading voice promoting equity and education for women and girls.*

After reading all of the points, ask the group the following reflection questions:

- What do you think about these stats? Have you heard some of these before, or are they new?
- How do you feel in reaction to these statistics?
- How do gender and sexual orientation relate to social justice?

After finishing, thank participants for their cooperation. The topics may have left the group with some heavy thoughts, questions, or intense feelings. That is okay. Remind the group that you will be around afterwards to talk if anyone needs to decompress, and remind them of the local and wider resources you have displayed in the room that they took photos of on their phones. Move the group to the next activity where you will debrief some of what has occurred.

**Transition to Slide 10.**

## **Part 6) How to Be An Ally**

Suggested time: 10 Minutes

During this section, you will be exploring ways to make a safer and more welcoming space on your college campus and in your greater community. Campus Pride, an organization that helps educate students on LGBTQ+ issues, has a few steps that everyone can take. You will be revising them with the group.

To begin, ask the group these 2 questions: "What is an Ally?" and "Who are Allies?" Give the group a moment to process this. Allowing for some participants to share their response.

After hearing a few responses, pass out the handout titled "*How To Be An Ally.*" As a large group, go through and read each bullet point. You can choose to have people volunteer or maybe read this popcorn style (one person reads some and then gets to pick someone else to read, etc.).

There are two sections to the reading, Things To Do and Educate Yourself. Read the first section aloud. You can use the PowerPoint as a way make the information accessible to everyone. After reading the first section, **transition to slide 11.**

Read the second section aloud, using the PowerPoint to follow along.

### ***Transition to slide 12.***

After reading all of the points, ask the group the following reflection questions.

- Initial thoughts and/or reactions?
- Did you find any of these actions difficult? Easy?
- What is one issue you would like to see changed in your lifetime?
- What is one way (not listed on the handout) you can be an ally and see the change you desire to see?
- What is one way you can apply the knowledge you learned from this training in real life?

After going through those questions, thank your participants for joining you. Remind them that you will be sticking around for 15 minutes after the training in case anyone wants to follow up with you about anything. If they have further questions, invite them to follow up with you. If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and let

them know you'll find out and get back to them! A FAQ guide is included at the end of the training to help answer additional questions.

### **Credits:**

Developed in 2017 by Hunter Malone, Bonner Scholar at Berea College

Editor and Content Consultant: Caroline Black

Resources have been sourced from:

- Planned Parenthood
- Sexuality, Justice, and Language, by Caroline Black
- Campus Pride
- Huffington Post
- The Atlantic
- The American Association of University Women
- Advocates for Youth
- Intersex Society of North America
- Everyone Is Gay
- Trans Student Educational Resources (TSER)
- It's Pronounced Metrosexual
- Human Rights Campaign (HRC)

### **Followed by Handouts:**

- Salt & Pepper Game Activity Cards
- Terms & Definitions Handout
- How To Be An Ally Handout
- FAQ

# Salt & Pepper Activity Cards

It is recommended that you print out two copies of this. One will serve as your facilitator's guide and one will be the one you cut out and distribute the group.

<b>Sexuality</b>	The interplay of your biological sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual preferences, and the way these things interact with emotional, physical, social, and spiritual life. Sexuality is shaped by your family and the social norms of your community.
<b>Biological Sex</b>	This is based on your chromosomes, hormones, genitals, and reproductive organs.
<b>Male</b>	A person with XY chromosomes and male genitalia and reproductive organs.
<b>Female</b>	A person with XX chromosomes and female genitalia and reproductive organs.
<b>Intersex</b>	A person who is born with a combination of male and female biological characteristics, such as chromosomes or genitals, making it difficult for doctors to assign their sex as distinctly male or female.
<b>Gender Identity</b>	Your gender identity is how you feel inside and how you express those feelings. Clothing, appearance, and behaviors can all be ways to express your gender identity.
<b>Transgender</b>	This term can describe a person who feels that the sex they were assigned at birth is discordant with their gender identity.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	The term used to describe who you're attracted to romantically, emotionally, and/or sexually. These attractions are often defined as homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, queer, or asexual.
<b>Heterosexual</b>	People who're attracted to people of a different gender.
<b>Homosexual</b>	People who're attracted to people of the same gender.
<b>Bisexual</b>	People who're attracted to both men and women.
<b>Pansexual</b>	People whose attractions span across many different gender identities.
<b>Asexual</b>	People who don't experience any sexual attraction for anyone often call themselves _____.

# Terms & Definitions

1. **Sexuality:** Sexuality is the interplay of your biological sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual preferences, and the way these things interact with emotional, physical, social, and spiritual life. Sexuality is shaped by your family and the social norms of your community.
2. **Biological Sex:** This is based on your chromosomes, hormones, genitals, and reproductive organs.
3. **Male:** A person with XY chromosomes and male genitalia and reproductive organs.
4. **Female:** A person with XX chromosomes and female genitalia and reproductive organs.
5. **Intersex:** A person who is born with a combination of male and female biological characteristics, such as chromosomes or genitals, making it difficult for doctors to assign their sex as distinctly male or female.
6. **Gender Identity:** Your gender identity is how you feel inside and how you express those feelings. Clothing, appearance, and behaviors can all be ways to express your gender identity.
7. **Transgender:** This term can describe a person who feels that their biological sex is discordant with their gender identity.
8. **Cisgender:** A term used to describe a person who feels that their biological sex is in harmony with their gender identity.
9. **Sexual Orientation:** The term used to describe who you're attracted to romantically, emotionally, and/or sexually. These attractions are often defined as homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, queer, or asexual.
10. **Heterosexual:** People who're attracted to people of a different gender.
11. **Homosexual:** People who're attracted to people of the same gender.
12. **Bisexual:** People who're attracted to both people of their gender and another gender.
13. **Pansexual:** People whose attractions span across many different gender identities.
14. **Asexual:** People who don't experience any attraction for anyone often call themselves asexual.



# How to Be an Ally:

It is important to remember that being an “ally” is not an identity. Being an ally is also more than standing up for a community even when they’re not around.

## Things to Do

- Acknowledge that “ally” is not an identity.
- Check your privilege at all times. You can do this by considering the advantages you may have that others don’t—such as those related to citizenship status, fluent English, religious affiliation, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.
- Do not assume the sexual orientation or gender identity of another person.
- Speak out against offensive statements or actions you see or hear. The way you confront these statements can vary. For example, if someone makes an offensive joke, you can call it out directly by saying “That’s not funny,” or you can say “I don’t get it” and make the person explain the joke, showing them that you do not think that it’s funny.
- Use gender non-specific language, like “partner” instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend.”
- Respect the coming out process, and understand that some information may be off-limits. A good rule of thumb is to ask the person if it’s alright to ask them about a certain topic!
- Know that your opinion takes a backseat to those with lived experience of the topic at hand. Use these conversations as opportunities to reflect on how your opinions of a group of people developed.
- Listen when someone opens up about their experience.
- Validate people’s sexual orientation and gender expression. If a person shares preferred pronouns with you, be intentional about using them, even when they aren’t in the room; if others make pronoun mistakes when referring to the person (who is absent), kindly correct them. If someone tells you about their same-sex partner, ask about their relationship like you would a straight friend’s.
- Educate yourself about LGBTQ+ histories, cultures, and concerns. The Human Rights Campaign ([www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)), Campaign for Southern Equality ([www.southernequality.org](http://www.southernequality.org)), Campus Pride ([www.campuspride.org](http://www.campuspride.org)), Straight for Equality ([www.straightforequality.org](http://www.straightforequality.org)) and PFLAG ([www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)) are good places to start.
- Involve yourself/support LGBTQ+ organizations and causes.

## Educate Yourself

- Understand that knowing and being friends with people who are marginalized ≠ being an ally.
- Be honest about things you don't understand—don't try to fake it! Respectful questions are generally better than making assumptions about someone's identity.
- A person's gender identity is different than a person's sexual orientation.
- When someone comes out, it does not mean they are sexually attracted to you.
- Do not 'out' a person as LGBTQ+ to others. Respect people's privacy and recognize that it should be their decision when and with whom to share their LGBTQ+ identity.
- The gender identity development experience is different for each person.
- Be aware of the vital role you can play as an ally.
- Remember the intricacies of oppression.

All of these tips came from the organization Campus Pride. You can find these, and other amazing resources at the following link: Source: <https://www.campuspride.org/resources/how-to-be-an-lgbt-ally/>

# How to Be an Ally:

## Frequently Asked Questions/Comments

**“But it’s not proper grammar to say ‘them’ or ‘they.’”** It’s true that traditional English grammar can make adjusting pronouns sound a little awkward. However, many world languages do not have gender-specific pronouns, and some specifically have gender-neutral pronouns (such as “[hen](#)” in Swedish)—so it’s English’s problem, not the person’s! For more information on pronouns and how to use them, check out this page from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee: <https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/>

**“If someone says they’re bi, doesn’t that just really mean they’re gay?”** While the belief that being bisexual is just a “pit stop” on the way to realizing that you’re gay is still common, it’s a misguided assumption. For example, a person’s attraction to a man does not cancel out their attraction to a woman, or vice versa. This myth came about to reinforce binary thinking about gender and sexual orientation, which we know is too limiting to describe the diversity of human sexuality.

**“Aren’t being transgender/transsexual/transvestite all the same thing?”** Nope! Remember, biological sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation are all different things.

- **Transgender** is an umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity differs from the social expectations for the biological sex assigned to them at birth. Since these social expectations include gender roles (feminine women and masculine men), people who do not conform to prescribed gender roles may be considered part of the transgender community. A transgender person may or may not ever choose to become transsexual. (Source: Advocates for Youth, 2017)
- **Transsexual** refers to a person who experiences a mismatch of the body and the brain and sometimes undergoes medical treatment, including hormone therapy and sexual reassignment surgery, to change physical sex to match gender identity. (Source: Advocates for Youth, 2017)
- **Crossdressers** (formerly known as **transvestites**) are people who like to dress in the clothing of the gender identity opposite to that considered socially appropriate to their biological sex. Most crossdressers are content with their own biological sex and gender identity. Most crossdressers do not want to be the other biological sex or to be another gender. (Source: Advocates for Youth, 2017)

**“What’s the difference between pansexual and bisexual?”** The term 'bisexual' refers to people who are emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people of their gender and another gender; this term is most often used to describe people who are attracted to men and women. Since there are more than two genders, however, the term 'pansexual' refers to sexual attraction toward people across a spectrum of genders.

**“What’s the difference between transgender, gender fluid, agender, non-binary, gender nonconforming, or genderqueer?”**

- **Transgender** refers to a person who recognizes themselves as a member of a gender other than that assigned at birth based on biological sex. (Source: It’s Pronounced Metrosexual, 2017)
- **Gender fluid** is a gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of boy and girl. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more man some days, and more woman other days. (Source: It’s Pronounced Metrosexual, 2017)
- **Agender** refers to a person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutral, or genderless. (Source: It’s Pronounced Metrosexual, 2017)
- **Non-binary** is an umbrella term for all genders other than woman/man, used as an adjective (e.g. Jesse is a nonbinary person). (Source: TSER, 2017)
- **Gender nonconforming** can refer both to gender identity and/or gender expression. This is a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary, often abbreviated as “GNC.” This is a gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (masculine woman or feminine man). (Source: It’s Pronounced Metrosexual, 2017)
- **Genderqueer** is a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman. It can also be an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid). (Source: It’s Pronounced Metrosexual, 2017)

There are a lot more terms out there, too, so if you want to know more, check out [TSER](#) and [It’s Pronounced Metrosexual](#).

**“I thought ‘queer’ was a bad word.”** “Queer” was indeed a derogatory term for gay men, bisexuals, lesbians, and transgender people, and has recently been reclaimed by

the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community as a term of pride. However, many have not chosen to reclaim the word and still see it as a derogatory. The terms “dyke” and “fag” have a similar history and usage. (Source: [Advocates for Youth, 2017](#))

**“Is intersex the same thing as a hermaphrodite?”** Intersex people were once called hermaphrodites, but this term is outdated because of its pathologizing connotation and inaccuracy. Intersex people are people born with ambiguous genitalia or genitalia having characteristics of both sexes. Usually a doctor will immediately perform surgery to assign the infant's sex, usually removing male characteristics and 'creating' a female. Because this surgery is medically unnecessary, advocates today are asking that doctors and parents wait until the child is old enough to self-identify their appropriate biological sex and gender and also old enough to choose whether or not to have the surgery. Some who had surgery as infants later experience conflict with their assigned gender, similar to that experienced by transgender people. They may opt for hormone therapy and surgery to transition to the gender that they should have had. (Source: [Advocates for Youth, 2017](#))

**“What’s the difference between sexual preferences and sexual orientation?”** Sexual orientation is not a choice; it is the inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other *people* (Sources: [Advocates for Youth, 2017](#); [Human Rights Campaign, 2017](#)). Sexual preferences refer to the types of sexual *activities* that a person likes to engage in (Source: [It’s Pronounced Metrosexual, 2017](#)).

**“I thought you were supposed to say ‘preferred pronouns.’”** Just as sexual orientation is inherent, gender identity is also an innate part of a person’s being. Therefore, saying “preferred pronouns” can imply that the person is choosing their identity, rather than intuitively perceiving what they know to be true about themselves.

**“Gay men are usually effeminate and lesbians are usually masculine.”** This is a great example of mixing up sexual orientation and gender expression! While our mainstream culture has reinforced stereotypes of what gay and lesbian people look, act, and even sound like, remember that people of all sexual orientations can have varying gender expressions.

**“When do trans people know they’re trans?”** As with sexual orientation, people can realize their gender identity at any point in their lives. Many simply grow up knowing, while some come to understand their identity and orientation later in life (in their teens or 20s, for example). It is important to note that nothing someone encounters in life can 'make' one LGBTQ+. Although events in a person's life can be catalysts toward self-discovery, sexual experience is not necessary for anyone to understand their sexual

orientation. How does a heterosexual male know he is attracted to women before having sexual experience, or a heterosexual woman know that she is attracted to men? They just know. It is the same with LGBTQ+ people. Similarly, a transgender person does not have to have lived as a gender to know that it is his/her correct gender. (Source: [Advocates for Youth, 2017](#))