



Naropa University Title IX Office

Gender Pronouns: A Guide for Faculty and Staff

Understanding Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexual Orientation

Throughout this document you will read references to Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexual Orientation. It is important to understand the definitions of these terms and how they are applied.

Sex: Biological designation based on visible genitalia and generally categorized into two discrete and arbitrary categories (male or female) with a stigmatizing designation for bodies that challenge binary assignment (Intersex).

Gender Identity: A person's inner truth about what gender that individual identifies with (ie. woman, man, nonbinary, fluid, etc.), which may or may not correspond to a person's sex assigned at birth or to a person's primary or secondary sex characteristics. Since gender identity is internal, a person's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Expression: The presentation of an individual, including physical appearance, clothing choice and accessories, and behaviors that express aspects of gender identity or role. Gender expression may or may not conform to a person's gender identity.

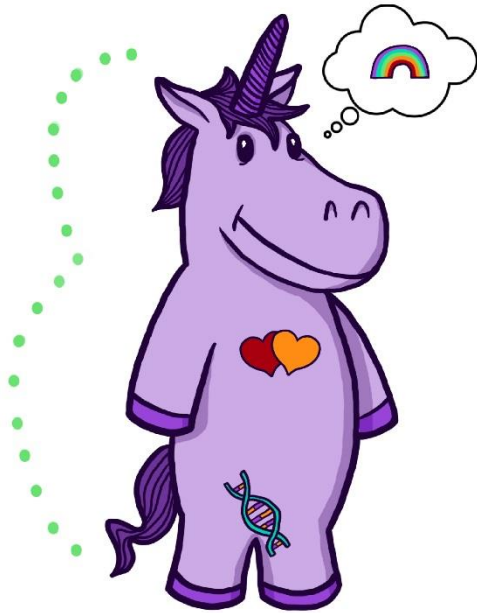
Sexual Orientation: A component of identity that includes a person's sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behavior and/or social affiliation that may result from this attraction. A person may be attracted to men, women, both, neither, and/or to people who are genderqueer, androgynous, or have other gender identities. Individuals may identify as lesbian, gay, heterosexual, bisexual, queer, pansexual, or asexual, among others.

The Gender Unicorn

Are you a visual learner? The Gender Unicorn may help you further understand the terms defined above.

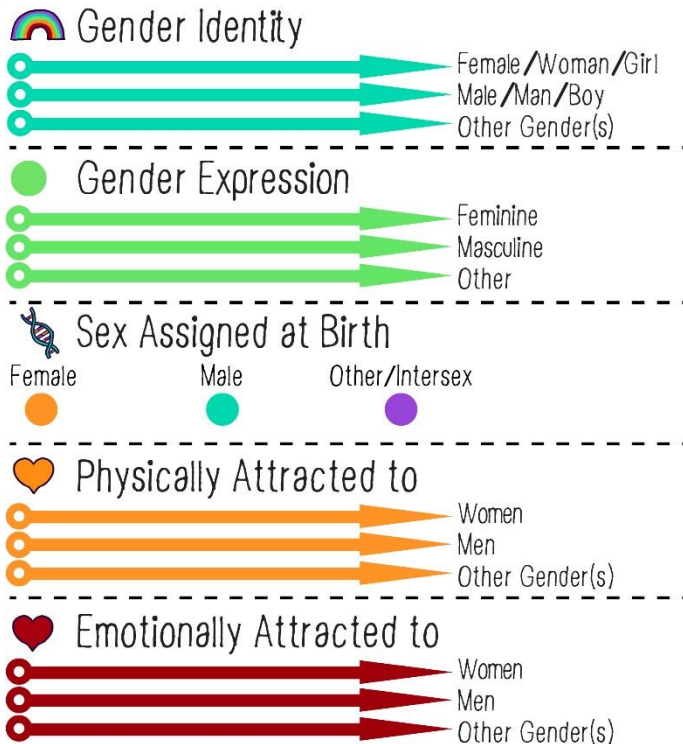
The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by L. andyn Pan and Anna Moore



What is a pronoun?

A pronoun is any word that can replace a noun or noun phrase (I, you, them).

What is a gender pronoun?

Gender pronouns refer specifically to people that are being talked about (he, she, him, his, her, they, them). **We have moved away from the language of “preferred pronouns” due to people generally not having a pronoun “preference” but simply having “pronouns.”** Using “preferred” can accidentally insinuate that using the correct pronouns for someone is optional.

For an expanded resource on an LGBTQIA Ally’s Guide to Terminology, please visit:

<https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/allys-guide-to-terminology.pdf>.

What kind of pronouns can be used?

There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns. Some people do not use pronouns, and would like their names to be used instead.

Below is a chart of some commonly used pronouns, although by no means is this chart exhaustive as new pronouns continue to emerge in our language.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive	Pronunciation	Example
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself	Pronounced as it looks	She likes herself.
He	Him	His	His	Himself	Pronounced as it looks	He likes himself.
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves	Pronounced as it looks	They like themselves.
Xe	Xem	Xyr	Xyrs	Xemself	X pronounced as a "Z."	Xe likes Xemself.
Sie/Zie	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself	Pronounced zee, here, here, heres, hereself	Sie/Zie likes hirself.

Why is it important to respect pronouns as faculty and staff members?

You can't always tell someone's pronoun by looking at a person. Faculty and Staff are often in positions of power, so by respecting one's pronoun consistently, you set an example for peers and other students.

When someone is referred to by the wrong pronoun, it can make the person feel disrespected and alienated.

Inquiring about pronouns is a simple way to show that you want to cultivate an environment that respects all gender identities.

It is a privilege to not have to worry about which pronoun someone is going to use for you based on how they perceive your gender. If you have this privilege, yet fail to respect someone else's gender identity, it is not only disrespectful and hurtful, but also oppressive.

It may feel offensive to ask for pronouns, because society has taught us that naming difference is rude, but in the case of gender pronouns, it's incredibly necessary, and a way to be inclusive. If a person responds with, "Why would you ask that, isn't it obvious?" you can simply say, "I always default to asking over assuming." If you want to take it step further you can talk about how people can be mis-gendered on a daily basis and you're doing your part to be inclusive. By not assuming gender pronouns you are helping to make a learning and work environment that is more comfortable for everyone.

All class syllabi must include the statement below. All Naropa community members must respectfully address one another by using self-identified pronouns.

Gender Pronoun Syllabi Statement

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. Please let your instructor know the appropriate gender pronoun to use for you. Also, if you would like to be called a name other than what is on the class roster, please let your instructor know. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact your instructor.

How should I ask what someone's pronoun is?

You can simply ask **“What pronouns do you use?”** to an individual in private. This may feel uncomfortable at first, but you do not want to say the wrong pronouns based on assumptions, and the student will most likely appreciate your effort.

We encourage you to use language such as, **“Please don't hesitate to let me know what pronouns you use in order for me and other students to be respectful. If it feels uncomfortable to share in front of everyone, I encourage you to have those conversations with me, and others, in a smaller setting, such as during my office hours. I am interested in being respectful by not making assumptions about people based on their appearance.”**

If you make a mistake: If you use the wrong pronoun, apologize, correct it, and then move on. Avoid continually talking about how bad you feel for making the mistake, for it makes the person feel like they need to console you. If you forget someone's pronoun, follow the same protocol: **apologize, correct it, and move on.**

If other students or faculty are using the wrong pronoun for a person, try to correct it by saying something like “Actually, Alex uses the pronoun she.”

If students, staff, or faculty continue to use the wrong pronoun, do not ignore it. It might help to ask the individual who has been misidentified if they would like you to take the person aside and remind them of the proper pronoun.

Never refer to a person as “it” or “he-she,” unless the individual requests that you do so.

More ways to be pro-active around this topic: include your pronouns in your email signature or add them to your class syllabus, consider substituting language such as everybody, folks, or this person for gender binary language: ladies, gentleman, boys and girls, he or she.

<https://genderneutralpronoun.wordpress.com/tag/xer/>

The Gender Unicorn

<http://www.transstudent.org/gender>

Gender Pronouns: A Guide for Faculty, Staff, and Allies. Retrieved from Caltech Center for Diversity, https://diversitycenter.caltech.edu/documents/16-preferred_gender_pronoun_guide.pdf

Preferred Gender Pronouns: For Faculty. Retrieved from CCSU, <https://www.ccsu.edu/lgbt/files/PreferredGenderPronounsForFaculty.pdf>