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Pronouns: He, him, his

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Pronouns: They, them, theirs

SAAF — Southern Arizona **AIDS** Foundation

Kindness & the LGBTQ Community: How Are They Connected?

There are many ways folks can adopt best practices for being kind to and with the LGBTQ community. Members of the LGBTQ community participate in every part of our lives. When someone in the LGBTQ community is public with their identity, we call that being "out." There are many reasons folks "come out" and there are many reasons folks choose not to come out, including personal safety and family preferences. We should respect an individual's decision to be out or not. Remember: it is never ok to "out" someone without their express permission.

When it comes to sexual orientation, our culture tends to normalize heterosexuality—that is, attraction to someone of the opposite gender. This is called heteronormativity. In a broad sense, heteronormativity describes the cultural norm that presumes a person is heterosexual; all other sexual orientations are then considered "less than." The effects of heteronormativity are deep and felt in all aspects of life. We're often unaware of them until we study them. In the classroom, we often see heteronormativity governing relationships, such as boys should be friends with boys and girls should be friends with girls. On the playground or in gym class, we gender activities based on the presumption that heterosexuality is the only orientation.

"The LGBTQ Zip Code"

As a starting point, we should define what many in the community call the "LGBTQ Zip Code." There are many versions and variants for what the letters in LGBTQ stand for. When in doubt, it's ok to ask what someone considers to be their definition. A common definition of the acronym includes: LGBTTQQIAAPTs+, which breaks down to:

    L = Lesbian
    G = Gay
    B = Bisexual
    T = Transgender
    T = Transexual
    Q = Queer
    Q = Questioning
    I = Intersex
    A = Asexual/Aromantic
    A = Ally
    P = Pansexual
    Ts = Two-Spirit
    + = Plus

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"The LGBTQ Zip Code" Continued...

As you can see, this is quite long, so it's often represented as "LGBT" or "LGBTQ." Some folks choose to reorder the acronym to provide emphasis on a particular identity. It's also pretty common that folks may use several of the letters in the Zip Code. For example, someone may be Trans-Queer-Intersex. Someone who identifies as Gay might also identify as an Ally to the Trans community. There's no one right way or hard-and-fast rule for how people use the acronym. What matters most is that everyone feels welcome in the Zip Code.

One way that allies can show their kindness to the LGBTQ community is to make sure they're asking others what identity markers they prefer. Allies can also demonstrate kindness by practicing active listening skills (i.e., "listen, rephrase, and repeat"). We can practice our listening skills with the knowledge that we will encounter folks in our day-to-day lives who live in the Zip Code. What questions would we want to kindly ask them so we can better understand them?

*Remember: someone's being LGBTQ is NOT permission for anyone to ask personal questions about sex acts, genitals, or family status. One way to avoid doing this is to ask yourself: "Would I want to answer this question about myself in a public setting?" or "Do I need to know this information?"

Pronouns

In the English language, we need subject pronouns in our sentences so we know who's carrying out the action of the verb. The subject pronouns are: I; You; He/She/It; We; You; They. If you notice, He/She are different than the rest: they also convey the gender of the subject of the sentence. This is one way that the English language conveys information from one person to another about their gender identity (how someone inwardly understands their gender), as well as their gender expression (how someone outwardly displays their gender). We tend to think of gender identity as how someone says they feel on the inside—e.g., "I am a girl" or "I am a boy." Someone's gender might be expressed in the clothes they wear, their hairstyle, or their choice of jewelry. There are many, many ways to express gender! We learn gender expressions from society and understand their cultural meaning only through society.

But, there's a problem with pronouns in the English language!

He/She really implies that there can only be two genders: male and female. We call this the "binary" because it forces a choice between one or another option, leaving no middle space. But we know there is middle space. Gender is a social construct, with gradations between points. In between two fixed points, we know there are an infinite number of spaces. Every person's gender identity and gender expression fall somewhere along a continuum. In fact, it's often true that at different times and in different places, someone's gender identity or gender expression might shift.
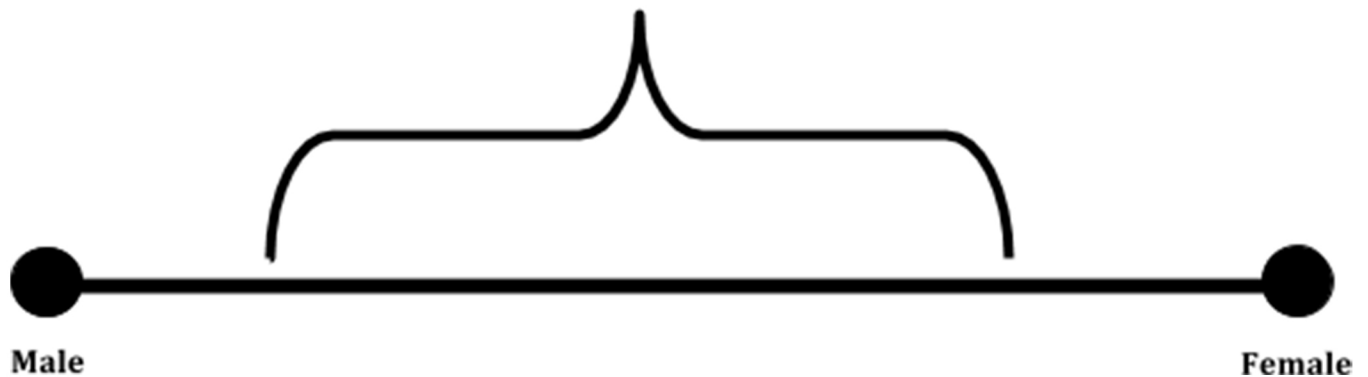
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INFINITE possibilities for Gender

Expression & Identity

Male

Female

Pronouns *Continued*

For some people, neither male nor female pronouns correctly express their gender identity and gender expression. Instead, they use gender-neutral pronouns: they/them/theirs. By avoiding the ends of the binary, gender-neutral pronouns better allow someone to express their gender more accurately and more fluidly.

To be the best ally you can, remember to always use the pronoun(s) someone indicates. It may seem difficult at times to use "they" for a singular person, but it's absolutely correct! How will you know which pronouns to use? ASK! You can ask someone: "What pronouns do you use/prefer/identify with?" And then you can use those pronouns.

**To schedule a full LGBTQ-101 presentation, please visit the SAAF website's Community Education page and fill out the request form: https://saaf.org/hiv-prevention-and-testing/community-presentations/

Kindness and LGBTQ Dilemmas

1. You are in class and a new student walks in. The new student says they are trans and they use female pronouns.

2. Your friend tells you that they want to join the dance team (or play football/join drama/take cooking classes, etc.). Your first reaction is to say, before you even realize it, "That's for [another gender]! You can't do that!" Your friend is taken aback.

3. Your friend comes out as gay to you. You talk with your friend about things and you tell them how happy you are that they could share this with you. A few months later, another friend asks if your other friend is gay.

4. From the above scenario: your school administration has decided that your friend can't bring his boyfriend to prom.

KINDNESS AND THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

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Want to Know More About Kindness and the LGBTQ Community?

Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Network (GLSEN) is the leading national education advocacy group, supporting inclusive educational practices and institutions, with information about policies, research, and teaching resources.
www.glsen.org | 480-776-4936

LGBTQ Integrated Health Coalition of Southern Arizona supports the Southern Arizona community by working to end health disparities for LGBTQ citizens. They also offer trainings for the general public, clinical practitioners, and those working with youth. | https://lgbtqintegratedcoalition.wordpress.com/
Contact Davin Franklin-Hicks for more information about trainings: dfranklin-hicks@lafrontera.org

National Coalition for LGBT Health is a national coalition that advocates at the federal level for better policies to support the health and well-being of all members of the LGBTQ community. Their website offers web-based trainings and other support for health professionals and leaders in the LGBTQ wellness movement.
Healthlgbt.org | 202-232-6749

Health Resources & Services Administration is an agency of the federal government whose mission is to provide critical, affordable healthcare services to populations throughout the U.S., including the LGBTQ community. Their Culture, Language & Health Literacy Resources: Gender provides materials for health providers and the general public.
https://www.hrsa.gov/cultural-competence/gender.html

National LGBT Health Education Center supports health care providers and organizations nationwide with consultation, materials, and programming to support better and more affordable health care for the LGBT community.
https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/ | 617-927-6354

one-n-ten is a Phoenix-based organization that supports LGBTQ youth from 14-24 years of age. Through creating a safe space for youth to explore and embrace who they are, one-n-ten strives to create social change through empowering self-acceptance, leadership development, self-esteem, self-expression, and positive life choices.
onenten.org | 602-400-2601 | kado@onenten.org

Out in AZ is project run by SAAF that provides information to Southern Arizona residents about LGBTQ-friendly organizations and businesses. It features a member service and newsletter.
https://outinaz.org/ | outinaz@saaf.org

Pima Council On Aging offers a training to support the caregivers to older adults in the LGBTQ community. PCOA can bring **Project Visibility** to your agency to help you create a warm, inclusive, and safe space for LGBTQ adults.
www.pcoa.org | 520-790-7262

University of Arizona LGBTQ Resource Center provides great resources
Lgbtq.arizona.edu/safe-zone | 520-626-1996