

A Discussion on Gender Identity: Understanding Basic Terminology

It is common, and normal, for people to misunderstand or confuse terms that relate to gender identity. It is important to understand the differences on this journey for you and your child/adolescent. Here are some simple terms, although this does not cover all terms used in the LGBTQIA+ community.

Gender identity: A person's internal sense of being male, female, neither gender, or other gender

Natal Sex: The assigned sex a person is given at birth; male, female, intersex

Sexual Orientation: A person's physical, emotional, romantic and/or other forms of attraction towards others. This term is different than a person's gender identity

Gender Expression: The physical manifestation of a person gender identity through clothes, hair, voice, etc. This is HOW a person expresses their identified gender

Cisgender: A person who identifies with the gender and natal sex given at birth

Non-Binary/Agender/Gender Non-Conforming/Gender Neutral: Some examples of gender identities of folks who may not identify within the binary of social norms. People with these identities may or may not identify with a gender or genders and may have no association with gender at all. This person's gender expression may be different from societal expectations related to gender. Not all non-binary/agender people identify as trans* and not all trans* people identify as non-binary/gender

Transgender (trans or trans*): The descriptor used by those who do not identify with the gender they were given at birth. There is no "correct" way to be trans*. People who identify within the transgender community can be transitioning from male to female, female to male, identify as non-binary, gender non-conforming and many other identities

AMAB: Assigned male at birth

AFAB: Assigned female at birth

Pronouns: The terms society uses to identify people aside from a name (i.e. she/her, he/him, they/them, etc.). Pronouns are important in validating and respecting one's identity

Intersex: Individuals born with any of several variations in sex characteristics including chromosomes, sex organs, sex hormones or genitals that, do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies, or are ambiguous in nature. This range of atypical variation may be physically obvious from birth – babies may have ambiguous reproductive organs, or at the other extreme range it is not obvious and may remain unknown to people all their lives