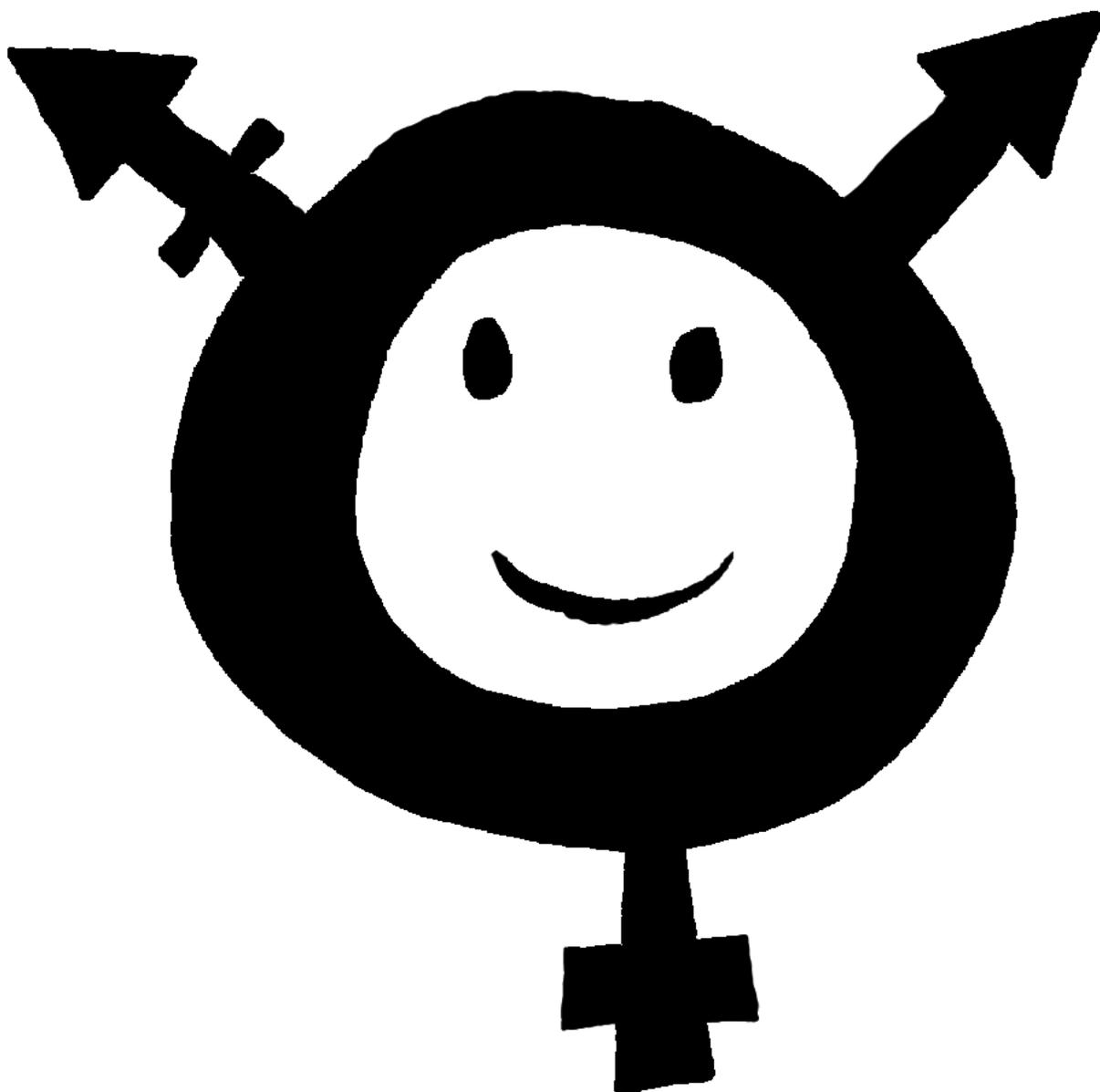


How To Be Respectful of Trans* People in Just 7(ish) Semi-Easy Steps



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Thanks for picking up this 'zine! Being interested in learning is a good first step toward being sensitive to the needs of transpeople, and to making your workplace, school, home, activist group, social group, or anywhere else welcoming to people of all genders. I hope you find the information useful.

1. Ask us what it is ok to ask us.

This 'zine covers the basics but every person is different, and some may be comfortable with things that others are not. So the first thing you should do if someone comes out to you as trans* is calm down that curiosity and listen to them and what they are comfortable sharing with you.

It is very personal for us, and something that carries a lot of stigma in society. We get a lot of questions, and we do not want to share with everyone who comes along. If you have questions, perhaps you could check out the huge number of sites on the internet that can answer them for you.

2. Do not question whether someone “really is” trans*

If someone says they’re a certain gender, they most likely are. Even if they change their mind later, the only person who can decide what someone’s gender is, is them. After all, you are the only person who knows what it’s like to be you! Some people who are sad look happy, some people who are outspoken may have their quiet moments, and some people who are genderqueer (look it up) may look like men to you. Believe me, nobody is trans because it’s trendy.

3. Don’t ask questions about our bodies.

Questions like “Do you have a vagina or a penis?” “How do you have sex?” “How does the surgery work?” or “Have you had ‘the surgery’ yet?” are intrusive. You probably wouldn’t answer a friend’s or stranger’s questions about your body, and most trans* people don’t want to reveal that kind of information anyway, at least not to people we’re not involved with physically. If someone wants to tell you about their medical history, let them do it in their time.

4. Respect our pronouns

It's difficult to adjust to calling someone "he" if you have known him as "she" for a long time, or even if your eyes tell you that the person in front of you is female. But believe me, this is one of the biggest things you can do to respect a trans*person! For a trans*person, using the wrong pronouns can be the equivalent of an insult, no matter how well-intentioned you are. Imagine if you had worked for years and studied hard to become a scientist, but people still insisted that you were an artist. We are not just being trendy or difficult, we are trying to assert who we are, and that can be a daily struggle. So ask your friend/colleague/patient/parent/child/partner what pronouns they prefer to use, perhaps not in front of other people, and then practice using those pronouns, even when they are not in front of you. It may take a little time, but if you try your hardest you can do it. It might be a good exercise to go around asking everyone what their pronouns are, even if they don't look "trans*" to you. You might be surprised.

And while you're at it, correct other people when they use the wrong pronouns, too. However, please check with the trans*person first, as this can be a form of outing if they haven't told someone else that they use certain pronouns.

Gender-neutral Pronouns

She	her	her	hers
"She asked me"	"I asked her"	"that is her 'zine"	"that 'zine is hers"
He	him	his	his
"He asked me"	"I asked him"	"that is his 'zine"	"that 'zine is his"
They	them	their	theirs
"They asked me"	"I asked them"	"that is their 'zine"	"that 'zine is theirs"
Ze	hir	hir	hirs
"Ze asked me"	"I asked hir"	"that is hir 'zine"	"that 'zine is hirs"

Certain people don't feel comfortable being referred to as "she" or "he," and/or don't feel female or male, so new gender-neutral pronouns have come along. Pronouns do not equal gender, so someone who likes being

referred to as “he” may not identify as male, for example.

“They” used as a pronoun for a single person when gender isn’t specified has been around for a long time-- Shakespeare may have used it. “Ze” and “hir” (pronounced like ‘here’) are just another example of a set of gender-neutral pronouns that someone may use. If you can learn a new language or a new word, you can learn to use gender-neutral pronouns!

More gender-neutral pronouns:

Ey, eir, eirs - like ‘they’ without the ‘th’, invented by Christine Elverson and popularized by Michael Spivac for use online.

Co, co’s - used by the Federation of Egalitarian Communities.

Yarr, Arr - pirate pronouns. May not actually be in use at this time, but they should be.

Hen - Sweden’s official gender-neutral pronoun.

5. Respect our chosen names

Many people change their names for many different reasons, not just trans* people. But for trans* people, a name is an important part of one's identity. They may not be the names our parents gave us, but they are our "real" names nonetheless. And we don't necessarily want to share what our names were originally, and many of us don't want our birth names shared with others, even if we haven't had our name legally changed yet and might still be using it in some circumstances.

6. Do not out us to others unless you have permission

It may fascinate you to know that someone has gone through such a big life change, and like many people you may want to mention it to others. But it is best if you don't. Let the trans* person be in charge of that information.

7. Don't assume that there are only two genders.

There are many people who identify as both genders or neither. If you're writing a

form, please put space for someone to write their gender in. If you've got two single-occupier toilets, make both of them gender-neutral.

Other things not to ask/say

- What's wrong with being a [birth gender]? (nothing, I'm just not one!)
- Well, you look like a [birth gender] to me.
- Oh, you're trans? I have a friend who's a drag queen/king...
- You're a *real* trans*person, unlike [trans*person] over there.
- You're such a convincing [gender]!
- Calling someone "it" or a "thing."
- Calling someone a "tranny." (some trans*people may find this acceptable, but for most, it's an offensive slur.)
- You're only a *real* [man] if you have a [penis].
- But how can you be trans *and* gay, a person of colour, religious, disabled, etc.?