

A basic guide to gender nonconformity and cisgender, transgender, and non-binary identities.

Terms you should know:

Cisgender - When someone's gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, if you were assigned female at birth and identify as a woman, you are cisgender. "Cis" means "on this side" in Latin, so it can be helpful to look at cisgender as when your gender identity lands on the same side of the "binary" as your biological sex.

Transgender - When someone's gender identity does not match their biological sex. For example, if you were assigned female at birth and identify as a man, you are transgender. "Trans" means "on the other side of" in Latin, so it can be helpful to look at transgender as when your gender identity lands on the opposite side of the "binary" as your biological sex.

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The easiest way to respect someone's identity is to listen to them. If they say that they are a transgender woman, they are a woman. It's not often we refer to cisgender people as a cisgender man or woman, and we should treat transgender identities the same way. You do not need to know someone's biological sex to respect their gender. Your takeaway should be the word left after removing "cis" or "trans".

Everyone has a gender identity.

The gender binary is a social construct, placing man and masculinity on one end, and woman and femininity on the other. These ends of the binary are opposite, contradictory, and contrasting.

Gender Nonconformity

Gender identity is how you feel on the inside, whereas gender expression is how you express yourself on the outside. Gender nonconformity relates to your gender expression and is a term that can be used for anyone who expresses themselves in a way that falls out of line with the gender binary. The gender binary associates women with femininity and men with masculinity, and gender nonconformity is any form of expression that bends or breaks that framework. Both cisgender and transgender people can be gender nonconforming, and there is no right or wrong way to express gender nonconformity.

Non-binary Identities

Non-binary identities are gender identities that fall outside of the gender binary. To gain knowledge on these identities, it helps to look at the gender binary as a gender spectrum, like a colour wheel. Non-binary is an umbrella term, meaning it covers a wide range of identities. There are countless identities within the non-binary spectrum, the same way a colour wheel offers countless different shades and pigments. Like gender nonconformity, there is no right or wrong way to be non-binary.

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People You May Know

ALOK (they/them)	ALOK is a non-binary writer, performer, and public speaker. They are the author of <i>Femme in Public</i> (2017), <i>Beyond the Gender Binary</i> (2020), and <i>Your Wound/My Garden</i> (2021).
Laverne Cox (she/her)	Laverne Cox is an actor, producer, public speaker, and advocate for equal rights. Laverne's role in the Netflix series 'Orange Is The New Black' led her to become the first openly transgender woman of colour to have a leading role on a mainstream television series.
Elliot Page (he/they)	Elliot Page is an actor and producer, originally from Nova Scotia. Page's career began back in 1997, and they publicly came out as transgender in December 2020. He is the first openly transgender man to appear on the cover of Time magazine (March 2021).

About the Youth Project

The Cape Breton Youth Project is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to providing support and services to youth, 25 and under, around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. We have a provincial mandate and travel around the province to meet with youth in other communities.

We provide a variety of programs and services including support groups, referrals, supportive counselling, a resource library, educational workshops, social activities & a Gender Affirming Garment program.

We are a youth directed organization. Youth have decision making control over the direction and action of the Project. We promote and nurture an environment that is appreciative of youth from all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds. We value the contribution and experiences of all youth. All activities and events run by the Youth Project are drug and alcohol free.

Contact

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