Discussing Trans and Gender-Diverse People

Guiding Principles

1. Reflect the language that people use to talk about their own lived experiences.
2. Use the right name and pronouns. This applies to reporting on any time period in a person’s life—past or present.
3. When it comes to names and pronouns, avoid characterizing them as preferred—they just are.
4. Gender identity and sexual orientation are separate. One doesn’t tell us anything about the other.
5. Every transition is unique and there is no single, linear or “correct” way to transition. So, avoid qualifying transitions with adjectives like a “full” or “complete” transition.
6. Take care to not characterize trans people as having a mental disorder, or implying that all trans people experience discomfort with their bodies.
7. Define terms that your readers or listeners may not understand. Please see The 519’s Glossary of Terms: http://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary
8. Don’t make any assumptions.

Recommended

- Do use a trans person or a transgender person (as an adjective)
- Do use a person is transitioning
- Do use they were assigned female or male at birth
- Do use cis or cisgender woman or man
- Do respect someone’s self-declared pronouns; consider setting an example by introducing yourself and your pronouns
- Do use and respect the name someone gives you
- Do use photos you were provided
- Do use transition-related surgeries, plural where possible, noting that some people use gender-confirming, gender-affirming surgeries or other terms

Offensive

- Don’t use a trans or a transgender (as a noun)
- Don’t use a person is transgendering
- Don’t use they are biologically female or male
- Don’t use non-trans or real woman or man
- Don’t assume someone’s pronouns
- Don’t imply someone’s birth name is their “real” name
- Don’t use photos without someone’s consent
- Don’t use sex change, sex-reassignment surgery (SRS) or gender-reassignment surgery (GRS)

Ask Yourself

Is a person’s gender identity and/or sex assigned at birth relevant to your story?
Why are you asking each question in your interview?
Do you need to know?
Do you need to ask?
Would you ask someone who isn’t trans this question?

Don’t describe someone as*

tranny
MTF/FTM
she-male
transgendered
transvestite
pre-op/post-op
transgenderism
transgenderist

* unless someone uses these or other terms to describe themselves

For more resources

The519.org/education-training
RainbowHealthOntario.ca/resources