

Glossary of Common Terms

Bisexual refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to both males and females.

Cross-dresser refers to a person who expresses his or her gender identity through clothing and behavior traditionally associated with the opposite sex. In the past, cross-dressers were often referred to as 'transvestites,' though now that term is often considered derogatory. Since gender identity and sexual orientation are separate concepts, cross-dressers may be either heterosexual or lesbian, gay or bisexual, and may or may not identify as transgender.

Gay refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to persons of the same sex. Sometimes, it may be used to refer to gay males only. It is preferred over the term homosexual, which has clinical overtones.

Gender Expression refers to the manner in which a person expresses his or her gender through clothing, appearance, behavior, speech, etc. A person's gender expression may differ from the norms traditionally associated with his or her assigned sex at birth. Gender expression is a separate concept from sexual orientation and/or gender identity. For example, a man may exhibit an effeminate manner, but he may identify as heterosexual and male.

Gender identity refers to a person's internal, deeply felt sense of being male or female. Everyone has a gender identity.

Gender Identity Disorder (GID) is a diagnosis listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (DSM IV). Some persons whose gender identity conflicts with the sex assigned to them at birth may be diagnosed with GID. Certain treatments, such as hormone therapy or sex reassignment surgery, are often medically necessary for persons diagnosed with GID.

Lesbian refers to a female who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to other females. It is preferred over the term homosexual, which has clinical overtones.

LGBTQ is an acronym commonly used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning individuals.

Queer is a term used by some members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender community to refer to themselves or others like them. Those persons use the word to reclaim it from its derogatory origins. Great care should be used with this word as it is still considered derogatory by many. Whether it is viewed as unacceptable or acceptable depends significantly on who uses it and its context.

Questioning refers to a person, often an adolescent, who is exploring or questioning issues of sexual orientation or gender identity in his or her life. Some questioning people will ultimately identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, or as transgender; others will self-identify as heterosexual or not transgender.

Sexual orientation refers to a person's emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to persons of the same or different sex. More appropriate than sexual preference.

Transgender may be used as a general term to include all persons whose gender identity or gender expression do not match traditional expectations of how a person of that sex should behave in relation to his or her gender. For purposes of laws regarding discrimination and harassment, transgender includes both self-identified transgender individuals and persons whom others perceive to be transgender, whether or not those persons have a diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder.

Transgender female youth are young people who were assigned male sex at birth and who now identify as female. Similarly, the terms 'transgender girls,' 'trans women,' and 'male-to-female (MTF)' refer to those who now identify as girls or women.

Transgender male youth are young people who were assigned female sex at birth and who now identify as male. Similarly, the terms 'transgender boys,' 'trans men,' and 'female-to-male (FTM)' refer to those who now identify as boys or men.

Transition refers to the time period when a transgender person starts living as the gender they identify as. Transition often includes a change in style of dress, selection of a new name, a request that people use the correct pronoun, and possibly hormone therapy and/or surgery.