



Understanding Terms: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

GENERAL TERMS:

LGBTQ+: An umbrella term that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning/queer. The + is sometimes added to include additional terms.

Sexual Orientation: Our identity based on our own gender and the gender(s) of the people we are attracted to romantically, spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. Terms used to name this identity include but not limited to same-gender-loving, lesbian, bisexual, gay, queer, straight, pansexual, asexual, etc.

Romantic Orientation: Identity labels which are based upon one's own gender, as well as the gender of the people one can be romantically attracted towards (e.g. aromantic, panromantic, polyromantic, etc.)

Gender Identity: The inner sense of 'being' man/male, woman/female, butch, femme, trans, both, all, multi, or neither. This usually matches with one's physical anatomy, but sometimes does not.

Gender Expression/Gender Presentation: the way a person expresses their gender through gestures, movement, dress, and grooming.

Questioning: A term used to describe a person who is not certain of their sexual orientation/gender identity.

Queer: Someone who doesn't conform to society's expectation of whom they are. Today, queer is increasing being used as an umbrella term for LGBTQ individuals. Queer was formerly a slur, and not everyone is comfortable with this term as an umbrella term (typically it is the younger generations that are more comfortable).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION TERMS:

Lesbian: A woman who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual attractions to other women and/or female bodied/identified individuals.

Gay: Usually, but not always, refers to a man who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual attractions to other men and/or male bodied/identified individuals. Also used as an umbrella term for the LGBT community.

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and sexually attracted to members of more than one gender. Since Queer culture rejects the gender binary that only allows for two genders, some bisexual people also identify as omnisexual and pansexual.

Pansexual: A term used to describe a person who is sexually attracted to members of all genders.

Polysexual: A term used to describe a person who is sexually attracted to members of a few genders (more than two).

Asexual: A term used to describe a person who is not sexually attracted to anyone.

GENDER IDENTITY TERMS:

Transgender: An umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender expression is nonconforming and/or whose gender identity is different from their birth assigned gender. This can range from simply self-identification to undergoing hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery and/or to other forms of dress/presentation. Transgender people can include all those who defy what society tells them is appropriate for their "gender".

Cisgender: A term used to describe someone whose gender identity matches up with the gender that they were assigned at birth.

Transsexual: A term most commonly used to refer to someone who surgically transitions from one gender to another. Although this term is still used today, usually the term Transgender is more acceptable.

Genderqueer: A term used to describe a person who does not identify as completely male or female. Genderqueer people may or may not identify as transgender.

Gender Non-Conforming: A term used to describe a person who is, or is perceived to have, gender characteristics and/or behaviors and/or gender expression that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations.

Androgynous: a term used to describe a person who expresses or presents merged socially-defined masculine and feminine characteristics, or mainly neutral characteristics.

Intersex: Refers to a series of medical conditions in which a child's sex (chromosomes) and phenotypic sex (genital appearance) do not match, or are somehow different from the 'standard' of male or female. About one in 2,000 babies are born visibly intersex, while some others are detected later. More info: <http://www.intersexinitative.org>

Gender Binary System: A social system that requires everyone to be raised as a boy or a girl (assigned gender at birth depending on biological sex) which in turn forms the basis for how you are expected to behave, wear, look like, feel like, act like, and who you should be attracted to/love/marry etc. The **Sex Binary System** is a similar social system which only accepts two sexes (male and female) and that every person's anatomy will neatly fit into one of those definitions (including intersex people).