

## GENDER 101

GENDER IDENTITY is a person's sense of self that is connected to concepts of woman-ness and man-ness. A person can identify as a woman, a man, a mix of those two, neither of those two, or outside these concepts entirely. For some people, being a woman or a man doesn't fit.

**Why is that?**

**b/c gender is assigned.** At birth, anatomical sex is often equated to gender identity (e.g. if you have a vulva, you are a woman; if you have a penis, you are a man). For many people that works - they are CIS-GENDER women or men. But that doesn't work for others - they are TRANSGENDER.

REFLECT ON THIS! What if everyone you have ever met was convinced that you were a gender you are not, how would you feel?

**b/c gender is socially constructed.** Traits of femininity and masculinity are often categorized as if they are opposite. If you fit into either the feminine or masculine box, then you are BINARY. Trans folks can be binary. If you do not, you are GENDER NON-BINARY or NON-CONFORMING.

REFLECT ON THIS! What traits are seen as feminine? As masculine? How does society react when a woman expresses masculine traits? When a man expresses feminine traits?

TRANSITIONING is when a person takes steps to physically (e.g. through clothes, make-up, hairstyle, hormones, or surgery) or socially (e.g. "coming out", using a new pronoun, changing which gendered bathroom to use) to feel more aligned with their gender identity. It is a process that is different for everyone. Not all trans folks take steps to transition.

## SEXUALITY 101

ATTRACTION includes sexual and romantic attraction, which are different kinds of attractions. A person's attractions is distinct from their gender identity. For some folks, being HETEROSEXUAL (being sexually attracted to people of the binary gender that is opposite to their own) (e.g a woman who is attracted to men, a man who is attracted to women) doesn't fit. **Why is that?**

**b/c attractions are determined by many factors for each and every person.**

REFLECT ON THIS! What are some reasons you are attracted to someone sexually? To someone romantically? How does your gender identity play a part? How does theirs?

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT TERMS

2SLGBTQIA+ is an acronym mostly concerning diversity in sexual attraction but also for gender identity. It includes: two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, intersex, and asexual. Because there are many kinds of sexualities and gender identities, a "+" is often added. You will see 2SLGBTQIA+ or some form of that used to describe the entire community of gender and sexually diverse folks, (i.e. those who are not cisgender or heterosexual). "QUEER COMMUNITY" or "RAINBOW COMMUNITY" are other terms used in similar ways.

All terms and language develop as society changes. And they can develop over a person's life as well, as each person feels more comfortable with certain labels and/or tries to reclaim labels from something that was harmful to something now empowering.

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT HEALTHY, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Anatomical sex does not equate to gender identity. Sexual and romantic attraction are other things entirely. All these aspects of a person is what makes each person unique. We are complex and influenced to be who we are by our biology, by our experiences, by our cultures... Navigating one's gender identity and attraction is a part of healthy, human development over each person's life.

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE REALITIES FOR YOUTH & FOR YOU

You might be hearing more about gender and sexually diverse folks. This increased visibility indicates that the stigma is decreasing, which is great. That said, there exists some very real and hard realities that these people face. Terms below vary as they refer to specific research. Refer to **WHERE CAN YOU LEARN MORE?**

- 70% of trans youth in Canada have experienced sexual harassment.
- More than 1/3 of trans youth ages 14-18 years old have been physically threatened or injured in the past year.
- 20-40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2+.
- LGBTQ youth find each other online, especially if they live in places that do not have an abundance of "out" youth, i.e. rural places. This can increase risks to online victimization and exploitation.

*As a parent, know that you are not alone. All parents have some discomfort in talking with their youth about gender and sexuality. Your feelings of discomfort might be compounded because your own identities and experiences might be different than that of your youth.*

We know you don't want to say anything that might be inaccurate or further harming. Please refer to **WHAT CAN YOU DO?** and **WHERE CAN YOU LEARN MORE?**

Our current concepts of gender and sexuality were brought to these lands through colonization, effectively erasing other ways of understanding ourselves that had already existed. “Two Spirit” is a broad term that covers many concepts among Indigenous communities and individuals that are different and unique to them concerning their gender and sexuality.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Be kind.
2. Validate and support your youth's identity.
3. Respect who your youth is.
4. Let them take the lead and listen.
5. Research and learn. Do your homework.
6. Don't guess a person's pronouns! Ask them.
7. Accept and respect non-disclosure.
8. Be mindful of assumptions you make.
9. Own your mistakes and apologize.
10. Challenge harmful views.
11. Understand privilege.
12. Understand how trauma might impact your youth.
13. Say what you mean. Clarify your terms and language around gender, sex, bodies, and identities.
14. Connect with other parents.

### 3 ALLY PRACTICES

Being **BESIDE** - standing with your youth  
Being **IN FRONT** - blocking harm from your youth  
Being **BEHIND** - letting your youth lead

**REFLECT ON THIS!** In what situations can you stand beside, stand in front, and stand behind your youth?

## WHERE CAN YOU LEARN MORE?

LGBTQ2+ Youth & Gender-Based Violence Report  
<https://www.wisdom2action.org/gbv/>  
Trans 101 Video - The Basics  
<https://youtu.be/-3ZzpTxjgRw>  
Victoria Sexual Assault Centre Support Guide  
<https://vsac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Supporting-Trans-Two-Spirit-and-GenderDiverse-Survivors.pdf>  
The 519 Ally Guide  
<http://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/our-resources/creating-authentic-spaces/being-an-effective-trans-ally>  
CBC Article with Parent Sara MacKay  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/pictou-county-support-group-parents-lgbtq-youth-1.4944869>  
Teen Health Source (Queering Sex Education) Website  
<http://teenhealthsource.com/blog/queering-sexual-education/>  
Trans Youth Sexual Health Booklet  
<http://cdn0.genderedintelligence.co.uk/2012/11/17/17-14-04-GI-sexual-health-booklet.pdf>  
Action Canada Gender Galaxy  
[https://www.actioncanadashr.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Action\\_Canada\\_for\\_Sexual\\_Health\\_and\\_Rights\\_BeyondtheBasics\\_Galaxy-web.pdf](https://www.actioncanadashr.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Action_Canada_for_Sexual_Health_and_Rights_BeyondtheBasics_Galaxy-web.pdf)

### WHAT ARE SOME LOCAL SERVICES?

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association... 902-863-6221  
Lindsay's Health Centre for Women... 902-863-6221  
Men's Health Centre... 902-863-2358

### WHAT ARE SOME 24/7 SERVICES?

Sexual Assault Crisis Line... 1-877-880-7263  
Kids Help Phone... Call 1-800-668-6868  
Kids Help Text... Text 686868  
Emergency... 911

# GENDER & SEXUAL DIVERSITY

a guide for parents  
& guardians

This guide was created as part of the Advancing Women's Equality (AWE) Project, a collaboration between the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association and the Strait Regional Centre for Education in March 2020.

For more, visit: [awrcsasa.ca/community-development-social-advocacy/advancing-womens-equality-project](http://awrcsasa.ca/community-development-social-advocacy/advancing-womens-equality-project) or contact Annie Chau, AWE Project Coordinator, at [annie@awrcsasa.ca](mailto:annie@awrcsasa.ca).