

LGBTIQ+ 102 – UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

Learning things ahead of time takes the burden of education off LGBTIQ+ people.

This tip sheet will provide further in depth understanding on LGBTIQ+ identities. LGBTIQ+ 102 will help you understand the difference between bodies, gender, and orientation. It is important to keep in mind that people have the right to identify using the language that they choose for themselves.

Gender

Gender is part of a person's innate sense of self. A person's gender identity and how they express themselves may change.

- Gender isn't based on bodies, expression, or orientation.
- Gender isn't universal – it can be influenced by things like culture and time period.
- Gender isn't static – a person's relationship with their gender can change over time.

Expression can reflect a person's gender identity, but this is not always the case – gender expression is only one part of expression – there are lots of things that influence the way that someone presents, like disability and culture. It is best to never assume a person's gender identity based on how they express themselves.

“Approaching someone for help and realising I have to explain my gender, culture, and disability is exhausting.”

Bodies

Bodies and gender are often conflated. There's a misconception that some body parts, characteristics, or types of bodies are inherently female or male, and when we're born we're often assigned a gender based on how our genitals are perceived. But genitals, hormones, or other bodily characteristics don't determine gender, so this isn't accurate.

Sometimes people assume that they can tell if and how someone is disabled based on how they perceive their body. That can mean making inaccurate assumptions about someone's skillset, or assuming that someone “isn't really disabled”.

Autonomy and Privacy

People may use different language in different contexts depending on what is safe and comfortable. Make sure you know what language someone wants to use in a certain space before referring to them.

The language people use to describe themselves is important and personal. Just because one person is comfortable with a certain term doesn't mean that everyone will be. It's important to respect people's autonomy in the language that is used for them, and not label them, their identities, or their bodies without their consent.

Lysander is a wheelchair user seeking assistance from an advocacy organisation. The doctor Lysander sees has recently refused to give them a Pap Smear because she thought that Lysander couldn't be sexually active. Lysander informs you that they are non-binary and microaggressions and transphobia from the Doctor is affecting them. Lysander wants to advocate for their right to access basic medical needs and push for the service to get LGBTIQ+ training.

What should you consider when assisting Lysander?

Orientation

Orientation is about if, to whom, and how someone is or is not attracted to others.

The way people experience attraction is individual and personal. A person's attraction can change over time. It is important not to assume that other people experience attraction in the same way that you do.

Attraction, not actions

When, how, with whom, and if someone has had sex or a relationship in the past doesn't define their orientation and sexual identity.

“It is hard to feel seen, when my sexuality and attraction, or lack thereof, is not even recognised by service providers. Why do I have to do the education to feel respected?”

Understanding Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the way our different experiences and identities interact and affect the discrimination we face. For example, when black women deal with racism and sexism, their experience of racism is affected by the sexism they face and vice versa. Their experiences are not exactly the same as how black men experience racism or white women experience sexism. These differing experiences was coined 'Intersectionality' by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989.

Discussing intersectionality encourages us to think about our experiences of discrimination, stigma, prejudice, and oppression due to social attitudes, institutional systems, and structures in the communities around us.

Attitudes and unconscious biases based on factors like sexism, racism, queerphobia, biphobia, transphobia, intersexism, and ableism can lead to further experiences of inequality and exclusion.

How do your work, policies, and forms recognise and address intersectionality?

Rokhl is a queer ADHD woman. She values her connection with her local LGBTIQ+ community and has been trying to volunteer in a local LGBTIQ+ group. She is currently facing a lot of barriers – they don't respect her communication style, she needs a flexible schedule for her chronic illness, and volunteer inductions are held on Shabbat. She is worried that she'll be dismissed if she brings up multiple problems at once, but wants the organisation to be more inclusive. She is also looking to connect with other LGBTIQ+ disabled people/groups.

What should you consider when assisting Rokhl?