Neurodiversity, Sexuality, and Gender Identity
Neurodiversity Movement

"Neurodiversity": First attributed to Judy Singer, self-advocate and Sociologist, in the 1990s.

- **Neurodivergent** describes an individual.
- **Neurodiverse** describes a group or community.

"Singer recognized that people with different kinds of minds were oppressed in the same ways women and gay people were, before they have their own movement, and that the neurologically diverse needed a movement of their own." - SpectrumSuite.com
Gender Identity Vocabulary

The Gender Unicorn

Gender Identity
- Female / Woman / Girl
- Male / Man / Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression
- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth
- Female
- Male
- Other / Intersex

Physically Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to: www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore
# LGBTQIA+

## LGBTQI+ Terminology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation:</th>
<th>Sexual and romantic attraction to other people.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian:</td>
<td>A woman who is mainly attracted to other women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gay:</td>
<td>Someone who is mainly attracted to people of the same gender.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bisexual:</td>
<td>Someone who is attracted to more than one gender e.g. both men and women.</td>
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### LGB

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual:** About Sexual Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Terms:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pansexual:</td>
<td>Someone who is attracted to any person, regardless of their sex assigned at birth or gender identity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queer:</td>
<td>Some people use this word as an alternative to LGBTQI+. Other people may use it to explain their gender, sexual or political identity.</td>
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## About Gender Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Identity:</th>
<th>Our personal sense of our own gender.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transgender or Trans:</td>
<td>A term describing a person’s gender identity that does not match their assigned sex at birth. This word is also used as an umbrella term to describe some groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Terms:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex assigned at birth:</td>
<td>The designation of a person at birth as male or female based on their anatomy (genitalia and/or reproductive organs) or biology (chromosomes and/or hormones).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary:</td>
<td>People whose gender identity is neither exclusively woman or man or is in between or beyond the gender binary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender:</td>
<td>Someone whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Expression:</td>
<td>How we show our gender through our clothes, hair etc.</td>
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## Intersex:

An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations that do not fit typical binary notions of male and female bodies, for example variations in hormones or chromosomes.

## A- Asexual:

People with little to no interest in sexual relationships (may have interest in emotional relationships).
Emerging Trends

- Autistic people are **3 to 6 times more likely** than neurotypical people to be gender diverse. (Warrier et al, 2020)

- Gender-diverse people may be **more likely to have autism** than cisgender people. (Strang et al, 2018)

- “On two measures of autism traits, higher scores were associated with a higher likelihood of gender diversity.” (van der Meisen et al, 2018)

- “Gender-diverse people are **more likely to report autism traits and to suspect they have undiagnosed autism.**” (Walsh et al, 2018)
15% of autistic adults in the Netherlands identify as trans or nonbinary as compared to <5% of adults in the Netherlands’ general population. (Walsh et al, 2018)

“I don’t feel like I’m fully socially transitioned because I am experiencing more autism barriers than I was as a woman…I had thirty odd years to learn how to pretend to be female…and I’m still trying to come up with new strategies to be consistently read as male because expectations are different…Autism makes this slow. I’m also being read more as autistic because I’ve not learned the disguises for someone now read as male…My confidence is affected…so more autistic behaviour, like stim[ing] creeps out.”*
In the United States, 6.5% of autistic adolescents and 11.4% of autistic adults said they wished to be the gender opposite of what they had been assigned at birth, compared with just 3-5% of the general population. (Walsh et al, 2018)

“I just didn’t feel I fitted in anywhere, not with my sisters, my brother, other people or EVEN with myself, it’s like everyone was a stranger and I was the strangest of the lot…I’d think…am I just not supposed to exist?!”*
Only 30 percent of autistic people in a 2018 study identified as heterosexual, compared with 70 percent of neurotypical participants. (Walsh et al, 2018)
Study focused on autistic women/non-male young adults:

- 51% cis-gender women
- 8% heterosexual
- 36% asexual
- 15% bisexual
- 14% pansexual/polysexual
- 10% queer
- 6% lesbian/gay

(Walsh et al, 2018)
Experiences from Research Participants

Participant described feeling in a “double bind of trying to ‘pass’ as neurotypical...and also trying to act or ‘pass’ as a woman...I felt like I was in drag.”*

“...there’s us that are oblivious to what other people think of us...; and there’s those who worry about what everybody’s thinking...I fit into the category of I’m not bothered, which is a blessing, so I’ve not had any negative experiences...or...possibly if there has been something said and done I’ve missed it.”*

Why? (Hypotheses)

- Less susceptible to social conventions
- Increased ‘honesty’ or commitment to the ‘truth’
- Ability to see beyond traditional definitions/views of identity
Considerations

- Normal part of development
- Mental Health/Suicidality
  - Effect of affirming adults!
- Camouflaging
- Service barriers/Health disparities
Questions we have heard- and brief answers!

“My child struggles with self-awareness. How can they be certain about something so complex as gender identity?”

- It is complex but also simple! They can know themselves.

“Does my child truly understand what it means to be [identity]?”

- Do any of us fully understand/share an understanding?

“My child keeps changing their identity / hasn’t changed their expression”

- This means they feel safe exploring, finding the right fit.
Questions we have heard- and brief answers!

“My child doesn’t want to talk about their identity. What do I do?”

- Be supportive but don’t push. Preferences vary.

“My child likes traditionally [“girl”/”boy”] things. Are they questioning their gender identity?”

- Ask! This can be simply them following their own interests.
What You Can Do (Allyship)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Listen and observe</th>
<th>Encourage and support</th>
<th>Advocate</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Use chosen name and current pronouns.</td>
<td>• Avoid gender stereotypes</td>
<td>• Listen and observe without judgment</td>
<td>• Encourage and support autonomous self-expression</td>
<td>• Advocate to ensure education is inclusive of LGBTQIA+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tell others your pronouns to normalize</td>
<td>• Activities, clothing, behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Give choice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ask if you are unsure</td>
<td>• Social choices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Language: “Everyone” or “Folks”</td>
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“Your experience of the world is really different so it’s always in conflict, so in communicating my view and well…I was seen as being in the wrong, but it was like “I can’t be in the wrong”, it was really debilitating!…Add to that seeing gender differently and WHOAH!…Autistic people can end up with mental illnesses because they’re being told their truth doesn’t exist and that’s really scary.”
Resources

- Ally Parents listserv (trans.org)
- BAGLY, NAGLY, NBAGLY
- PFLAG (https://www.pflag.org/)
- Family Acceptance Project (http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/)
- Fenway Health (https://fenwayhealth.org)
- Gender Cool Project (https://gendercool.org)
- Gender Spectrum (www.genderspectrum.org)
- Trans Youth Family Allies (http://www.imatyfa.org/)
- Supporting and Caring for Transgender Children (https://www.hrc.org/resources/supporting-caring-for-transgender-children)
- Trans Family Support Services (http://transfamilyssos.org/)
- The Transgender Teen by Stephanie A. Brill and Lisa Kenney (2016)
- Helping Your Transgender Teen by Irwin Krieger
Upcoming Events (Aspire)

For Parents

**Understanding the Intersection of Gender Identity and ASD**

*Virtual*  
*Price*: $35

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm  
5/8/2023

This workshop is intended for parents and caregivers of individuals on the autism spectrum with Asperger or similar profiles.

This workshop highlights our growing understanding of the unique considerations for gender identity as related to recognized features of autism spectrum disorder. Participants will receive an overview of emerging trends, which will help inform advocacy and inclusion efforts.

For Adults

**Understanding the Intersection of Gender Identity and ASD for Adults**

*Virtual*  
*Price*: $35

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm  
5/9/2023

This workshop is intended for adults on the autism spectrum with Asperger or similar profiles.

This workshop highlights our growing understanding of the unique considerations for gender identity as related to recognized features of autism spectrum disorder. Participants will receive an overview of emerging trends, which will help inform advocacy and inclusion efforts.
References


The Four Most Important Beliefs Adults Can Foster in Individuals in Their Care:

• A feeling that they are appreciated/liked/valued for their neurodiversity (comprehensively).
• *What* they do is different than *Who* they are.
• A sense that they have some control over their lives. Mastery leads to pride.
• A sense that they are increasingly autonomous.

Q+A