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Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

There are a lot of different types of sexual orientations that people can have. Gender identity can add layers of complexity on top of sexual orientation. This resource will help you learn about sexual orientation, gender identity, and how they are related.

Sexual orientation: The type of emotional, romantic or sexual attraction someone has to other people. A person's sexual orientation is usually labeled based on the gender relationship between the people.

Lesbian: A woman who is predominantly attracted to other women.

Gay/Homosexual: In the past, only men who are attracted to men used the word "gay." Now, it is common for "gay" to be used by anyone who is attracted to their same sex or gender.

Bisexual: A term that describes someone who is attracted to both men and women, or to more than one gender identity.

Asexual: A term describing individuals who do not experience sexual attraction or do not have interest in or desire for sex.

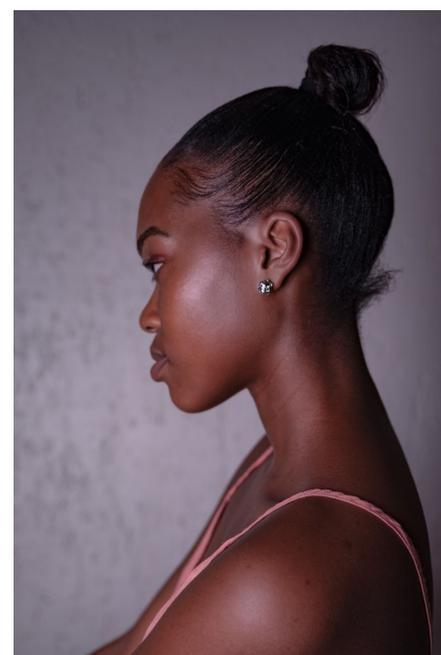
Pansexual: Describes people who are capable of being attracted to all sexes or gender identities.

Demisexual: Little or no capacity to experience sexual attraction until a strong romantic connection is formed with someone, often within a romantic relationship.

Straight/Heterosexual: Experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to members of a different sex or gender.

Polyamory: Having ethical, honest, and consensual relationships that with multiple partners.

Questioning: A person who may be processing or questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This may be someone who isn't sure what their sexual orientation is and are trying to figure it out.



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GENDER IDENTITY

Gender identity is a complex topic. Most of us were taught that there are only two genders (man/masculine and woman/feminine) and two sexes (male and female). However, there is a lot more to it than that.



Biological Sex: When we're born, a doctor assigns us a sex. This has to do with our biology, chromosomes, and physical body.

Gender Identity: Gender identity is a person's internal concept of themselves as male, female, a blend of both or neither. Gender identity can be the same or different from the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Expression: Gender expression refers to the external appearance of someone's gender identity. This is usually expressed through things like behavior, clothing, and hair.



Transgender: This term refers to people whose gender identity or gender expression is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not have any relation to sexual orientation. Transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Genderqueer, Gender Non-Conforming, and Nonbinary: These identities describe someone whose gender expression is neither male nor female, may identify as both male and female at one time, as different genders at different times, or as no gender at all. Usually, genderqueer and gender non-conforming people avoid gender-specific pronouns like "she/her" and "he/him," and use more neutral pronouns instead like "they/them."



Cisgender: This term is for people whose gender identity matches their biological sex assigned at birth.