PRONOUNS AND GENDER IDENTITY

What is a gender identity? How is gender different from sex?

Everyone has a gender identity. Gender identity is how you feel inside and how you express your gender through clothing, behavior, and personal appearance. It differs from assigned sex (male, female, intersex), which depends on physical characteristics.

Some people are cisgender – their gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Others identify with a gender that is different from what they were assigned at birth. Regardless of a person's sex assigned at birth, a person may identify as a woman, a man, both, neither woman nor man, or they may switch between genders (genderfluid). Respecting a person's gender identity and asking about their name and pronouns are an important part of facilitating a welcoming workplace for our colleagues.

What is a Gender Pronoun?

Pronouns like "she," "he," "they," or "it" take the place of a noun. For example, rather than saying "John is tired," you could say "He is tired." Gender pronouns (e.g., he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, etc.) are pronouns that reflect gender identity. We often don't think a whole lot about them and usually interpret a person's gender based on their outward appearance or their name and assign the person a gender pronoun. However, our assumption of their gender may not be a correct interpretation of a person's gender identity.

Why Should I Display My Gender Pronoun at Work?

Because gender identity is internal (an internal sense of one's own gender), we do not necessarily know a person's correct gender pronoun by looking at them or knowing their name. Additionally, a person may identify as gender-fluid, genderqueer or non-binary, and may not use either male (he/him/his) or female (she/her/hers) pronouns. A genderqueer or non-binary identified person may use a gender-neutral pronoun such as "they." For example, you would say "I know Sam. They work in our legal department." Displaying your gender pronoun at work, such as in your email signature or in an employee directory, makes our workplace more inclusive of people of all genders.

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