

Gender Identity & Sexuality

Key terms and definitions



Gender Identity

Gender identity is a person's internal, deeply felt sense of their own gender, such as being a man, woman, both, neither, or another gender. It may or may not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is deeply personal, and every individual has the right to define their identity on their own terms. When discussing this identity with a client, it is essential to respect how people identify their gender without judgement or assumption.

Key terms

Agender A person who does not identify with any gender or experiences an absence of gender.

Cisgender man / Cisgender woman A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Culturally Specific Identities Some cultures recognize genders beyond the Western binary of male and female, for example Two-Spirit and Fa'afafine.

Gender fluid A person whose gender identity shifts over time or in different contexts.

Gender non-conforming A broad term for individuals whose gender expression or identity does not fit traditional societal expectations.

Genderqueer A person who identifies outside the binary of strictly "man" or "woman" and may embrace a combination of genders.

Intersex A person born with a combination of both male and female biological traits.

Non-binary An umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity exists outside the male/female binary.

Trans man / Trans woman A person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth and who identifies as a man or woman.

Sexuality

Sexual orientation refers to a person's pattern of emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to others—such as being attracted to people of the same gender, a different gender, multiple genders, or none. It is separate from gender identity and reflects who someone is attracted to, not who they are. It is an important part of identity, and each individual has the right to define it in a way that feels authentic to them. When discussing this identity with a client, it is essential to respect people's sexual orientation and relationships.

Key terms

Aromantic A person who experiences little to no romantic attraction to others.

Asexual A person who experiences little to no sexual attraction to others.

Bisexual A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender.

Gay A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same gender, often used by men but may apply to anyone.

Lesbian A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to women, typically used by women.

Pansexual / Fluid A person who experiences attraction regardless of gender identity.

Queer A broad term that some use to describe a fluid or expansive sexual orientation beyond traditional labels.

Questioning or Unsure A person who is exploring or unsure about their sexual orientation.

Same-Gender Loving A term primarily used within Black LGBTQ+ communities to describe same-sex attraction.

Straight (Heterosexual) A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of a different gender.