

## **LGBTQIA+ Terminology to Build Your Vocabulary**

**Ally** – a (typically straight- or cis-identified) person who supports and respects for members of the LGBTQ community.

**Asexual** – having a lack of (or low level of) sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest or desire for sex or sexual partners.

**Biological Sex** – a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal, and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply “sex,” “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned [or designated] at birth.”

**Bisexual** – a person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to male/men and females/women.

**Cisgender** – (pronounced “siss-jendur”) a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and male-assigned). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not trans\*, they are often cisgender.

**Coming Out** – (1) the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one’s own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself). (2) The process by which one shares one’s sexuality or gender identity with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.).

**Gay** – (1) a term used to describe individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex and/or gender. (2) An umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

**Gender Expression** – the external display of one’s gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally measured on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as “gender presentation.”

**Gender Identity** – the internal perception of one’s gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don’t align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans, and more.

**Genderqueer** – a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman; or as an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid).

**Homosexual** – a [medical] term used to describe a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This term is considered stigmatizing due to its history as a category of mental illness and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

**Intersex** – someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. In the medical care of infants, the initialism DSD (“Differing/Disorders of Sex Development”) is used. Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic) but is now considered outdated and derogatory.

**Lesbian** – a term used to describe females/women-identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other females/women-identified people.

**LGBTQ/GSM/DSG/+** – initialisms used as shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality. **LGBTQ** is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (sometimes people add a + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive); **GSM** is Gender and Sexual Minorities; **DSG** is Diverse Genders and Sexualities. Other popular options include the initialism GLBT and the acronym QUILTBAG (Queer [or Questioning] Undecided Intersex Lesbian Trans\* Bisexual Asexual [or Allied] and Gay [or Genderqueer]).

**Pansexual** – a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions.

**Queer** – an umbrella term to describe individuals who don't identify as straight.

**Questioning** – when someone is unsure about or is exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Sexual Orientation** – type of sexual, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction one feels for others, often labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to (often mistakenly referred to as sexual preference which is considered outdated and derogatory).

**Straight** – a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people who are not their same sex/gender. A more colloquial term for the word heterosexual.

**Transgender** – (1) An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an \* is often used to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term. (2) A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex.

*Adapted with permission from the Safe Zone Project.*