

Gender Pronouns

A Guide to Getting It Right

The respectful use of appropriate pronouns is an important aspect of fostering an inclusive environment that allows persons to feel welcome and valued. But what are pronouns? And how do we get them right?

Understanding Pronouns, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression



Pronouns

Words that refer to the speakers in a conversation (e.g., “I” and “you”) or to another person or object being mentioned (e.g., “she”, “it”, “their”). Gender pronouns refer specifically to the gender identity of the person being discussed (e.g., “she/her, he/they”).



Gender Identity

The personal and internal experience of gender based on how a person knows and understand themselves. It is the sense of being a man, a woman, neither, both, or somewhere in between. Gender identity may or may not align with the person’s sex assigned at birth.



Gender Expression

The ways in which a person presents their gender publicly, including the pronouns they choose to use (e.g., choice of dress, hairstyle, make-up, body language, name, voice, etc.)

Using Correct Pronouns is a Simple Way of Showing Respect

Despite common misconceptions, pronouns are NOT just for queer, transgender or gender-diverse persons. In fact, pronouns are for everyone and getting a person’s pronouns correct is a simple way of demonstrating that you respect them and want them to feel included. This means pronouns are not just “preferred”, but are something we all share in the responsibility of getting right.

Gender pronouns you’re likely to recognize include he/him, she/her, and they/them. You may also see pronouns such as ze/hir or ze/zir (pronouns such as these are sometimes known as neopronouns). Regardless of the pronouns a person uses, it’s necessary to put in the effort needed to get them right.

Helpful Tips

1. The pronouns a person uses may or may not match their gender expression.
2. Gender identity and gender expression are NOT the same as sexual orientation.
3. Gender pronouns are NOT a “preference”. They represent a person’s true gender identity.

For more information, contact Kerry's Place Autism Services:

 +1-833-77-KERRY/1-833-775-3779

 intake@kerrysplace.org

 kerrysplace.org



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