



Action Steps for Being a Trans* Ally

Don't make assumptions about a trans person's sexual orientation.

Gender identity is different than sexual orientation. Being gay doesn't mean you're trans and being trans doesn't mean you're gay. Sexual orientation is about who we're attracted to. Gender identity is about how we see ourselves. Trans people can identify as gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual or asexual.

If you don't know what pronouns to use, ask. Politely and respectfully. Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so also.

Confidentiality, Disclosure and "Outing." Some trans people "pass" and some do not. Knowing a trans person's status is personal information and up to them to share with others. Gwen Araujo and Brandon Teena were both murdered when others revealed their trans status. Others routinely lose housing, jobs and friends. Do not casually share this information, or "gossip" about a person you know or think is trans.

Don't assume what path a transperson is on regarding surgery or hormones. Affirm the many ways all of us can and do transcend gender boundaries, including the choices some of us make to use medical technology to change our bodies. Some trans people wish to be recognized as their gender of choice without surgery or hormones; some need support and advocacy to get respectful medical care, hormones and/or surgery.

Don't police public restrooms. Recognize that gender variant people may not match the little signs on the restroom door—or your expectations! *Encourage businesses and agencies to have gender neutral/unisex bathrooms*, and offer to accompany a trans-person to the bathroom so they are less vulnerable.

Don't just add the "T" without doing work. "GLBT" is now commonplace to show support for queerness. To be an ally for Transpeople, Gays, Lesbians and Bisexual people need to examine their own gender stereotypes and transphobia and be willing to defend trans people and celebrate trans lives.

Listen to trans voices. The best way to be an ally is to listen to trans people themselves. Check out websites and books by trans people. Talk to trans folks in your community. All trans people are individuals. They are the experts on their own lives!

by Samuel Lurie, Transgender Training and Advocacy; www.tgtrain.org