

GUIDE TO BEING A TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE ALLY

Listen, acknowledge and respect

It's OK if you don't have a perfect understanding of an individual's identity or about trans and gender diverse (TGD) issues in general. It is important not to judge another by their gender identity or deny that it exists. A way to show respect is to listen to TGD people and recognise their experiences. Too often narratives about trans and gender diverse people originate outside of the community, and information can be damaging or incorrect.

A person doesn't have to present physically in a certain way to be trans or gender diverse

TGD people may or may not adhere to gender norms around physical presentation and dress. Some trans people choose to highlight an androgynous or playful gender presentation, whereas others do not. It is not possible to tell if a person is TGD simply by appearance, and many TGD people live their lives without anyone knowing. You can support TGD people by encouraging them to present in whatever way feels most comfortable for them and best reflects their gender identity.

Educate yourself – don't assume TGD people will be happy to be your educators

There are plenty of resources on the internet for those who want to know more about TGD issues and lives. Transgender and gender diverse people are often the subject of casual curiosity and it can feel like a burden having to continually educate others. By educating yourself and those around you, you can lessen the load.

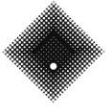
Don't out people without their permission

A TGD person's decision to be publicly 'out' is theirs alone and can vary in different contexts. Outing someone without their permission can put them at risk of ridicule or violence and is a serious privacy breach. It should never be done, even if you think they are out to everyone they know.

Pronouns: Normalise asking about pronouns or displaying pronouns via badges or digital signatures

Contrary to what our culture teaches us, some people may prefer pronoun sets other than 'she/her' and 'he/him'. Some gender-neutral pronoun sets include singular 'they/them', 'zie/zir', 'sie/hir' and 'ey/eir'. Normalising alternative pronoun use is a way of being inclusive of the TGD community. It's good to keep in mind that you may unintentionally 'out' someone by asking for their pronouns in a public setting. In situations where you're unsure, you could listen to how the person refers to themselves, or simply use their name.

You can help by:



- Introducing your own pronouns during introductions at meetings or gatherings
- Wear a name badge that includes your pronouns
- Include your pronouns in email signatures

Small things like this go a long way to help TGD people feel welcome in the workplace.

If you make a mistake with someone's name or pronoun, apologise, move on and improve for next time

It is distressingly common for TGD people to be publicly misgendered, either by someone using a former name or by using the wrong pronoun. If you accidentally do this, the best course of action is to apologise and quickly correct yourself, move on and take steps to remind yourself of the proper form of address for next time. (E.g. 'He, sorry, *they* presented to the executive last week'). Excessive apologising for the incident and centring your own discomfort over that of the misgendered person will only compound the distress felt by them.

Use inclusive language

TGD people are often misgendered and sidelined through the application of highly gendered language and signage. Forms of address like 'Ladies and Gentlemen' can make gender diverse people feel othered and ignored. Consider using gender neutral language when addressing a group, e.g. 'Good afternoon everyone' or 'Welcome folks' when beginning a meeting, or 'Dear colleagues' for a mass work email.

As a general rule of thumb, consider the following when asking a trans person a question: 'Would I feel as comfortable asking this question of a stranger in the street?' if the answer is no, it is likely that your question is inappropriate and will cause offense. Examples of inappropriate questions are questions concerning their physical appearance, genitals, surgical status or sex life.

Stand up for Trans and gender diverse people and communities when you have the opportunity. Be a champion for those who are tired of talking about these issues all the time

TGD people and identities are often subject to public attack through forums such as mainstream media, social media and political debate. They are also at higher risk of being targeted for bullying, harassment and violence. It is often left up to the individual to defend themselves. Dealing with constant attacks becomes exhausting. You can be an ally and stand up for TGD people when the opportunity presents itself; it may be a casual conversation where you can correct someone for misgendering another, it could be challenging bigotry in print or online media, or it could be attending an event like Trans Day of Remembrance. There are many ways to publicly support your trans friends and colleagues through advocacy.

Become part of the VU Ally network

Joining the VU Ally network signals to your colleagues that you are serious about supporting TGD people and the wider LGBTIQ+ community in your workplace. You will also have access to training sessions and a strong network of supportive people to increase your awareness of issues affecting TGD people.



Contact allynetwork@vu.edu.au for more information.

Resources

- ◆ Trans Hub <https://www.transhub.org.au/>
- ◆ Zoe Belle Gender Collective: <https://zbgc.org.au/>
- ◆ Transgender Victoria: <https://tgv.org.au/>
- ◆ Trans 101; Gender Diversity Crash Course: <https://www.trans101.org.au/>
- ◆ Y gender: <https://www.ygender.org.au/>

Significant Dates

Mar-31	Transgender Day of Visibility
Jul-14	International non-binary people's day
Nov-12-19	Trans Awareness Week
Nov-20	Transgender Day of Remembrance