

How to Respect a Person Who is Trans

Basic Stuff

- **Accept me as a full-fledged** member of the gender with which I identify.
- Always **use the language that corresponds to my gender identity**, e.g. he, she, even if my body does not seem to match yet and even when talking about my past.
- If you are still adjusting, **it's normal to make mistakes**. Don't draw attention to it by saying "sorry" over and over again. **Just correct yourself right after and carry on.**
- If I identify as male, never use female-marked words like girl, waitress, breasts, vagina, etc. to describe anything about me, and vice versa. Always use language that corresponds to my gender. **For example, if I am a female-to-male transsexual person, I am always a guy and never a girl. Don't call me "female-bodied", unless I use that term myself.**
- **A transsexual woman is male-to-female. A transsexual man is female-to-male.** Never the other way around.
- **Gender identity is distinct from sexual orientation.** Whether I am attracted to men, women, both or neither is a totally separate thing from whether I am male or female. For example, if I am a transwoman who likes women, treat me no differently than any other lesbian woman.
- Don't expect me to conform to the stereotypes of my gender. I'll wear whatever clothes I like and have whatever interests I have. Being masculine or feminine (i.e. having mannerisms or interests that are seen by society as stereotypical of one gender) has nothing functionally to do with being male or female (i.e. identifying as a certain gender). Butch transwomen and feminine transmen exist, just like they do among non-transsexual people.
- For almost all transpeople, **being transsexual is not a choice or a decision. It is a simple reality.** The only "decision" is whether to accept my situation and fix it to live a healthier life, or deny it and suffer.
- **Never mention my old name** or ever ask what it was. Instead of saying "back when you were Fred", say "before you came out as female".
- Don't use my name in the 3rd person as if I were a person separate from myself, e.g. "are you dressing as Lisa now?"
- **I am a person, a guy or a girl, a man or a woman, foremost.** If you must use the word transsexual (or trans), it's better to use it as an adjective to describe a person, not as a noun onto itself, e.g. trans people, transfolks, transguy, etc.

Transition

- Use the word "transition" to describe what I am going through or went through.
- The changes I make to my body are not purely cosmetic, but rather reconstructive. Having a body I am comfortable with is vital to my health and in my social and physical interactions with other people.
- Don't openly talk about my genitals any more than you would for a non-trans person, unless I bring up the topic myself.
- Don't immediately assume that genital sexual reassignment surgery (SRS) is my priority. Every transsexual person is unique and chooses different steps during their transition, based on many factors. Not everyone wants SRS.

Social Situations

- Being transsexual is a very personal matter. Treat it with respect.
- I'm not here to shock anyone or get attention. I am not selfish. I'm just a person like anyone else, and I have a right to be healthy and live in my honest gender.
- If I blend well (i.e. I pass) or if I am online, then don't tell anyone I am transsexual unless they are too. Just talk about me like any other normal guy or girl, according to my gender identity.
- If I am visibly gender variant (i.e. I don't pass) and am out as transsexual, it's OK to educate your friends, e.g. about pronouns, before meeting me in person.
- Don't introduce me as your "transsexual" friend. Don't ask me to explain my life story or my gender situation to people I just met.
- Ask permission before taking a photo of me or before displaying old, pre-transition pictures of me.
- Don't call me whenever a documentary about transsexuals is on TV just because I am transsexual. I already know what being transsexual is about! But do it if I am genuinely interested in the subject.

Gender

- Gender comes from social valuation and devaluation of behaviors, traits and characteristics unnaturally tied to biology.
- Gender identity has to do with the way our brain, mind and/or soul is configured, not from the body – chromosomes, hormones, upbringing, etc. do not conclusively determine or change a person's gender.
- The only person who can know about their gender is oneself. No external "clues" can prove or disprove somebody's true inner gender. Some people know it their entire lives. Some manage to deny it for a long time. Some always knew there was something different. Some did a lot of soul searching to figure out they were male or female and that this was a legitimate medical situation.
- Don't call a non-transsexual woman a "real girl" or "completely female".

Terminology

- Do not confuse transsexuality with cross-dressing. Cross-dressers are typically men who like to wear women's clothing for sexual or fetishized reasons. These men do not identify as female and are often heterosexual.
- Do not confuse transsexual people with drag queens or kings. Drag performers will wear elaborate and often stereotypical clothes of the opposite gender on stage for performance art or to do impersonations. This is most often done by people who are gay and lesbian.
- The term "transgender" is an umbrella term that includes any and all gender variant people: transsexual people, cross-dressers, drag kings and queens, intersex, genderqueer and bigendered people, and many other types. Be careful when using it. For example, many transsexual people don't like to be associated with cross-dressers.
- The short form "trans" can mean either transsexual or transgender.
- The term "tranny" is slang for transsexual, either as an adjective or noun. Many feel that it is offensive, on par with words like fag, dyke and nigger. As such, many feel that only transpeople themselves can reclaim it and use it. In some cities, however, it only means cross-dresser and not transsexual. Use it with much caution, if at all.
- The term "she-male" is vulgar and never appropriate. It is used by the pornography industry to objectify and fetishize transsexual women.
- Don't call it cross-dressing if I am wearing clothes that match my gender. Cross-dressing is if I wear clothes of another/opposite gender, e.g. a female-to-male transsexual man wearing women's clothing.
- If I am a transsexual guy undergoing top surgery, then I am not "getting my breasts removed," I am getting a chest reconstruction.

If I Just Came Out

- If I have just come out as my real gender, you should use my chosen name and pronouns with me and with all (and only those) who know about me, even (and especially!) with people who are still struggling to adjust to my correct gender.
- **If I haven't told everyone yet that I am trans, then don't tell anyone.**