

GENDER 2.0

A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

KEY:

- Language for adults
- ★ Language for kids

SEX:

- The sex a person is assigned at birth, typically informed by genitalia.
- ★ When a baby is born, doctors and parents usually decide to call them a boy or a girl because of what their private parts look like.

GENDER IDENTITY:

- A person's deepest sense of self. Male, female, somewhere in between, both, or neither. May or may not align with sex assigned at birth.
- ★ The gender you feel you are on the inside. It doesn't have to match what's between your legs. Most of the time, a person's private parts match the gender they feel they are, but sometimes not. *Gender is what's between your ears, not between your legs.*

CISGENDER:

- Gender identity aligns with sex assigned at birth
- ★ A person whose private parts match the gender they feel they are. So, a person born with a penis who feels like a boy. Or a person born with a vulva who feels like a girl.

TRANSGENDER:

- Gender identity does not align with sex assigned at birth.
- ★ This is when a person, even a kid, knows deep inside that the private parts they were born with don't match the gender they know they really are. So, a person born with a penis can actually be a girl, or a person born with a vulva can actually be a boy.

INTERSEX:

- A person born with both male and female biological characteristics, including hormones, chromosomes, and/or genitalia. A little under 1% of the population is intersex, but it is still cloaked in stigma and shame. Many intersex babies are assigned a gender at birth by parents and doctors, though with more education on later trauma, this practice is increasingly challenged.

- ★ A person who is born with a body that has both male and female parts.

GENDER NON-BINARY:

- A person who does not feel completely male or completely female, who may feel like both, neither, or somewhere in between.

*This is a more nebulous concept for many people, in part because the binary is SO deeply lodged within us. Non-binary folks still struggle to be seen and legitimized. Though their gender expression is often non-conforming (i.e. it does not subscribe to stereotypical gender norms), they do not necessarily feel they are “in the wrong body.” Gender neutral pronouns, like “they/them,” are sometimes, but not always, preferred, and the only way to know for sure is to normalize pronoun-sharing for EVERYONE, so the onus is not always on non-binary folks to out themselves.

GENDER EXPRESSION:

- The way we move through the world as gendered people. How we dress, our hairstyles, how we walk, talk, and behave. Gender expression is still set against the binary backdrop, however, and colored by bias about what it means to be “masculine” or “feminine” so even as we make room for more gender expansive expressions, we still measure the distance from traditional notions of masculinity and femininity.
- ★ How we express the gender we feel we are, like the way we dress, our hair, our hobbies. Everyone gets to decide how they feel most comfortable expressing themselves, even if it doesn’t follow silly “gender rules.”

GENDER EXPANSIVE:

- Actually, this term applies to many of us. It simply means that a person’s gender expression does not conform to society’s prescribed norms for their assumed gender identity. (Similar terms are gender-nonconforming, gender variant, and gender creative.)
- ★ Lots of us are gender expansive because we don’t fit into typical gender stereotypes. It might mean we dress differently or choose activities that some people think are “just for boys” or “just for girls.” We know better!

GENDER FLUID:

- A person whose gender identity and/or expression are/is dynamic and flexible, not fixed. Can change day-to-day, or over time.
- ★ *A harder concept for young kids to grasp, but for slightly older kids, like grades 4 & 5:* A person who is gender fluid might express the gender they’re feeling on any given day with their clothing, with their words, or with their behaviors. Only *they* know how they feel inside from one day to the next.

GENDER QUEER or GENDER EXPANSIVE:

- More encompassing terms that include any person who does not identify or express themselves within the conventional gender binary framework.
- ★ *Ditto on the more challenging abstractness of this broader concept for younger kids.*
For grades 4 & 5: Folks who don't feel they fit into traditional male/female identities or expressions sometimes use one or both of these terms to describe themselves.