Transgender Terms

Gender Identity – The gender that a person feels they are. The gender you are when you wake in the morning and go to sleep at night.

Gender Presentation – The gender that a person shows to others and often to the world at large. It is the “performance” of gender that we all do, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Transgender – A person who transitions from one gender to another.

Cisgender – A person who identifies as the gender they were identified as at birth.

HRT – Hormone Replacement Therapy. The artificial hormone regimen that many transgender people use to physically realign their chosen gender.

SRS – Sex Reassignment Surgery. The operation performed to change the genitals of a transsexual person. Also often referred to as GRS, Gender/Sex Affirmation/Confirmation Surgery or other variants thereof. It usually refers specifically to Vaginoplasty (the construction of an artificial vagina) or Phalloplasty (the construction of an artificial penis).

Passing – Being perceived as one’s chosen gender.

Gender Role – Societal expectations of gender.

Popular Gender Variant and Gender Neutral Pronouns – Ze, Hir, Herm, They, Them and Their, all may be used at various times to refer to a person without specifying gender. When in doubt about a person’s preferred pronouns, it is best to simply ask.

Mx – An honorific, like Mr., Mrs., or Ms., sometimes used by GenderQueer individuals.

Zister – A similarly gender variant or gender-neutral honorific. Also sometimes used to refer to a gender variant or gender-neutral sibling.

Internet Resources

www.tsroadmap.com
One of the oldest, most comprehensive sources of information for and about transsexual and transgender people on the web.

www.ftmi.org
Similarly, one of the oldest, most respected groups offering support and information for Female to Male spectrum individuals

www.transequality.org
The National Center for Transgender Equality. A national political advocacy organization for transgender people.

Printed Resources

“Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us”
By Kate Bornstein

“Stone Butch Blues”
By Leslie Feinberg

Everything you ever wanted to know about Transgender people (But were afraid to ask).
There are so many different terms and expressions out there. What do they all mean? What’s the difference between transsexual,” “transgender” and “transvestite?”

“Transgender”
- An umbrella term referring to a spectrum of people who are transitioning their gender identity and/or presentation from one gender to another.
- Also, it may refer to people whose gender doesn’t fit precisely into a single gender role and may even be a regular state of flux.
- What they tend to have in common is a desire to change gender identification or presentation from that which they were labeled by others to that which is more true to their feelings.
- It may be a permanent, physical transition of gender identity involving surgery, hormones, and updating legal documents.

“Transvestite”
- A person who will wear the clothing of a different gender in order, among other things, to feel more “feminine” or more “masculine.”

“Drag Queens and Drag Kings”
- Generally are more for entertainment purposes.
- There is a long rich history of this performance style going all the way back to Shakespearean times.

“Intersex”
- People are born with ambiguously gendered physical traits and may or may not identify as transgender as well.
- Often inaccurately referred to as “hermaphrodite”
- All too often the gender of an intersex child will be decided upon by a doctor shortly after birth. Their gender roles imposed upon them surgically.

“Gender Queer”
- People who identify as Gender Queer may alter their gender identities and gender presentations in many of the ways and tend to be fluid about it.
- Very often they may not identify as part of the traditionally recognized gender, male or female.
- They may instead identify as a “Third Gender,” as no particular gender at all, or even all of the above.
- They may also use Gender Variant Neologisms (new words for gender), alternate pronouns such as “Ze” or “Hir” as listed earlier.

Food for Thought:
- There are the “Travesties” of Brazil, who though they might fit our every criteria of a transgender woman, don’t necessarily identify as women in the way others, even other transgendered women do.
- Consider the Native American “Two-Spirit” people, who would embody a number of different gender roles and were often considered important in the spiritual life of the tribe.
- Often in the past, transgender people (in our culture) have hidden themselves away from a world that was often violently hostile to any sort of perceived deviancy.
- That has been changing rapidly over the past couple decades. Increasingly transgendered people are standing up to be counted and fighting for basic rights that have been denied for much of the past.
- A transgender person may throughout the course of their life identify with any number of these labels. Or they may have a solid and unwavering sense identifying them with only one. As human beings we evolve and discover ourselves over time.

This pamphlet originally created and used with permission by the Iowa City LGBT committee.

Information for this pamphlet taken from “Transcending Boundaries” by Loreli Erisis. More information can be found at: www.transcendingboundaries.org.