



### Common LGBTQ Terms and “Definitions”

*“‘Definition’ is perhaps too strong a word; if our gender is ambiguous, then so is the rest of our existence. These definitions are approximately correct, but they are soft around the edges.” –Diane Wilson*

Ally: In its verb form, ally means to unite or to form a connection between. In the LGBTQ community, allies are all those wonderful folks who have attempted to educate themselves about gender and sexuality issues, who work to reduce homophobia and transphobia in themselves, their families and communities, and who try their best to support LGBTQ people in the political, social and cultural arenas.

The LGBTQ+ Community: An umbrella term used to refer to people who self-identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, and all those whose identity transcends the bounds of culturally prescribed norms for gender and/or sexuality.

Gender: A set of social, psychological, and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations that classify an individual as masculine or feminine. Some terms referring to gender include:

- Cisgender: A person whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Gender Identity: refers to an individual’s internal sense of the gender they most identify as. Gender identity may change over time and may not conform with one’s sexual identity or gender expression.
- Gender Expression: refers to the way an individual expresses their gender according to social and cultural understandings of male and female through appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions. Gender expression may change over time and from day-to-day and is not related to an individual’s gender identity.
- Non-binary: Used to describe a person who feels they do not fit within the traditional binaries of gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.
- Transgender: a self-identifying term that describes a person whose gender identity is different than their assigned sex at birth. There are transgender people from every race, class, sexual orientation and ability. Trans is often preferable to transgender for some people.

Intersectionality: the interconnected nature of social identities such as race, class, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Queer: a self-identifying term which can be controversial because it has been used historically as a derogatory term to identify LGBTQ people. It has been widely reclaimed by people in the LGBTQ community to represent individuals whose gender and sexuality do not conform with typical gender and sexuality identities.

Questioning: a term used to describe someone who is questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Sex: refers to the cluster of biological, chromosomal and anatomical features, including genitalia, hormone levels, genes, or secondary sex characteristics, as they are present in the human body. Some terms used to refer to sex are:



- Assigned Sex: the sex one is assigned at birth, generally by a medical professional, based on an examination of external genitalia.
- Intersex: A term used for a person born with internal or external reproductive or sexual anatomy that do not align with traditional definitions of female or male.

Sexual Orientation: the culturally defined set of terms people use to describe their feelings of attraction. Sexual orientation is not static and can shift over time. Some terms referring to sexual orientation include:

- Asexual: someone who does not have feelings of sexual attraction to another person.
- Bisexual: the attraction to more than one gender, whether on an emotional, physical, and/or sexual level.
- Gay: a term used mostly by a man who is attracted to men. It is a self-identifying term that describes feelings and emotions, not behavior.
- Lesbian: a term used mostly by a woman who is attracted to women. Again, like “gay,” “lesbian” is a self-identifying term that describes feelings and emotions, not behavior.
- Pansexual: the attraction to people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. *Is sometimes referred to as “Pan” for short.*
- Same-Gender Loving: A self-identifying term, often used by communities of color, referring to people who are attracted to other people of the same gender.

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*Side by Side is an LGBTQ+ youth serving organization in Richmond, VA. We are dedicated to creating supportive communities where Virginia’s LGBTQ+ youth can define themselves, belong and flourish.*

Terms and definitions were constructed with the help of:

- [www.fyeahtransitioninggqs.tumblr.com](http://www.fyeahtransitioninggqs.tumblr.com) (Specific Gender Identities/Expressions)
- [www.Genderqueerid.com](http://www.Genderqueerid.com) (Identities)
- List compiled with thanks and apologies to Raphael Carter, Evan Hempel and Joelle Ruby Ryan. Edited by Jack Skelton in 2007.
- *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community*, Laura Erickson-Schroth, ed, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- And the creative energy of Side By Side staff and volunteers