

Being Respectful to LGBTQ+ People



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People can be intimidated by the LGBTQ+ vocabulary and silenced by the fear of saying something wrong, but in order to create inclusive spaces we must have conversations. Below are 8 respectful communication tips to use when talking with LGBTQ+ individuals.

1. Start conversations by saying, "I mean to be respectful. Please forgive me if I use the wrong term and feel free to educate me." Our tone is as important as our words. Speak from the heart and your message will be clear, even if you get the words wrong.
2. Mirror the terms that people use for themselves and their loved ones. Do not label people or assume that the next person will prefer the same terms.
3. Try and ungender your language as much as possible. Avoid words like: sir, ma'am, husband, ladies, girlfriend, etc. Instead try: partner, friends, folks, someone special, etc.
4. If you think your question might be too personal try the "flip it" test and yourself if you would ask a non-LGBTQ+ person the same question.
5. If you need to know someone's name and pronoun, you should create a system where you are asking everyone these questions, not singling people out.
6. Strike these words from your vocabulary: Lifestyle, Hermaphrodite, Homosexual, Transsexual, Transvestite and Sexual Preference. They are dated terms and they may cause offense.
7. Always use the correct name and pronoun for individuals, even if they do not match the person's legal name, including when you are talking about someone's past.
8. Forgive yourself and offer a sincere apology if you make a mistake by using the wrong term, name or pronoun, but do the work to get it right the next time.

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