

HOW TO BE A TRANSGENDER ALLY

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

Don't assume that you can tell what gender a person is, what restroom someone belongs in or what pronoun someone prefers just by looking. If you're not sure, consider asking: "Do you mind if I ask which pronoun you prefer?"

CREATE A SAFE AND OPEN ENVIRONMENT

Work toward creating an affirming environment where individual gender expression is supported and where there is room for dialogue and discussion. Challenge homophobic and transphobic remarks and jokes. Use inclusive, non-gender-specific language. Support others who challenge inappropriate behavior. "What are you?" or "What genitals do you have?" are never appropriate questions to ask.

EXAMINE YOUR OWN PRIVILEGE AND BIASES

We live in a society with rigid gender roles, where we're often rewarded for falling squarely in one category or another — male or female, masculine or feminine. We call this a binary system, where any in-between or crossover is either ignored or discouraged, and people who do not fit clearly in one of these categories face discrimination. A person who *does* fit within this binary can rely on their privilege — the privilege of being in a dominant group that is more accepted than the minority — to stifle difference or to ignore hardships the minority group faces. To be a true ally, it helps to notice your comfort level with different types of gender expression and see how this affects your interactions with others. Educate yourself about dismantling privilege and challenging prejudice.

UNDERSTAND WHAT GENDER IDENTITY MEANS

Each person's gender identity is authentic for that person. Some people have gender identities and expressions that challenge the binary of female and male. Don't be afraid to ask respectful questions of a trusted transgender friend or family member, but remember that transgender people — even your friends and family — are not solely responsible for educating you. Finally, don't forget that gender identity and expression are only two aspects of a whole person.

WALK THE WALK

Support your friend or family member's gender identity and expression. Volunteer for a transgender rights organization or community group. Admit when you're wrong and don't get defensive. Listen and learn.