

THE GENDER TREE



GENDER EXPRESSION (WHAT THE TREE BEARS)

A person's outward presentation of gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, speech patterns, mannerisms, interactions, and other factors. Gender expression can vary for an individual from day to day or in different situations, and most people have a range of expression that makes them feel most comfortable and/or safe.

OUR FLUIDITY AND HISTORY (THE RINGS OF THE TRUNK)

All aspects of our holistic identity (gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship orientation, and all other identities) can change over time and in different situations.

GENDER IDENTITY (THE TRUNK)

An individual's deeply-felt sense of gender that may include man, woman, genderqueer, agender, and other endless possibilities and combinations. A person's gender identity(ies) may or may not align with others' perceptions of their gender. The only way to know a person's gender identity is to ask them.

ASSIGNMENT AT BIRTH (THE ROOTS)

What the doctor "labels" a baby when they are born (generally labeled male or female).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION/IDENTITY (OUR ENVIRONMENTAL ATTRACTIONS)

A person's self-identity related to who they are attracted to sexually, romantically, and/or emotionally. Such identities may include: lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, heterosexual, straight, asexual, unlabeled, etc.

RELATIONSHIP ORIENTATION OR STRUCTURE (HOW WE ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS)

An individual's deeply-felt sense of intimate connection with others through a relationship structure(s) with individuals, couples, or networks. Can include polyamory, monogamy, friends-with-benefits, sexual relationships, non-sexual relationships and many more.

Relationship orientation may be different from relationship behavior because it refers to feelings and self-concept. Persons may or may not express their relationship orientation in their behaviors.

SOCIETAL INFLUENCE (THE SOIL)

We are surrounded by social, cultural, and institutional influences. As we learn and grow as a gendered individual, we are constantly given different messages and feedback about ranges of accepted practices, appearances, and behaviors.

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