

LGBTQIA+ Terminology

Note: This summary of LGBTQIA+ terminology may be used as a psychoeducation exposure for sexual orientation or gender-themed OCD. Exposure examples include reading this summary silently or aloud, presenting what you've learned to someone else, or considering how these labels might relate to your sexual and gender identities.

There are many terms used to describe the variety of identities encompassed within the LGBTQIA+ community. Below is a list of commonly used terms and concepts.

LGBTQIA+: An acronym to describe Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and all other identities referring to a person's sexual orientation or gender identity denoted by the "+"

Lesbian: A woman who is romantically, sexually, or emotionally attracted to other women.

Gay: A person who is romantically, sexually, or emotionally attracted to members of the same gender. Historically used to describe men who are attracted to men but can also be used as an umbrella term.

Bisexual: A person who is romantically, sexually, or emotionally attracted to more than one gender. Can be used interchangeably with the term "pansexual" which shares the definition of bisexual.

Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction to others or has low or absent interest in sexual activity. Asexual people may still desire emotionally intimate relationships.

Transgender: An umbrella term used to describe someone who identifies as a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth. This does not imply a person's sexual orientation; transgender people can identify as straight or another sexual orientation.

Cisgender: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.

Intersex: A person who is born with or develops biological sex characteristics that are not typically male or female. Intersex people may identify their gender as man/woman, or may identify as an alternative gender. Some intersex people identify as part of the transgender umbrella, while others do not.

Non-binary: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity does not fit within the "male" - "female" gender binary. A non-binary person may identify as being both a man and a woman, neither, somewhere in between, or another gender altogether. Some non-binary people identify as part of the transgender umbrella, while others do not.

Queer: A reclaimed slur used by people who identify as any part of the LGBTQIA+ community. It can be an umbrella term to describe any sexual orientation or gender identity that is not straight or cisgender.

Gender Identity: A person's deep-seated, internal sense of who they are as a gendered being—specifically the gender with which they identify themselves. All people have a gender identity.

Gender Expression: A person's outward gender presentation, usually comprised of personal style, clothing, hairstyle, makeup, jewelry, vocal inflection, and body language. Gender expression is typically categorized as masculine, feminine, or androgynous. All people express a gender. Gender expression can be congruent with a person's gender identity, but not always.

Sex assigned at birth: The determination of a person's sex based on the visual appearance of the genitals at birth. The sex someone is labeled at birth.

Sexual Orientation: A person's feelings of attraction (emotional, psychological, physical, and/or sexual) towards other people. A person may be attracted to people of the same gender, a different gender, multiple genders, or without reference to gender. Some people do not experience primary sexual attraction and may identify as asexual. Sexual orientation is about attraction to other people (external), while gender identity is a deep-seated sense of self (internal). All people have a sexual orientation that is separate from their sex assigned at birth, gender identity, and gender expression.

References

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