

# Transgender 102

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Unitarian Universalist Association

## TRANSGENDER

Our culture tends to limit its understanding of gender to man and woman. OBGLTC believes there are more than two genders. OBGLTC uses the word transgender as an umbrella term to describe the following people: crossdressers/transvestites, third gender people, transsexuals, intersexuals and any self-identified transgender people.

## GENDER IDENTIFICATION

Transgender is a gender identification—*not* a sexual orientation. Gender identification expresses how you identify your gender. Sexual orientation refers to whom you are sexually, affectionally, or romantically attracted. A transgender person can be of any sexual orientation.

## GENDER v. SEX

People are assigned a biological sex, but define their own gender.

**Sex:** Male, Female, Intersexual

**Gender:** Man, Woman, Transgender

## LANGUAGE

OBGLTC believes that “transgender” is a noun equivalent to “man” and “woman”, and as such should not be spelled or pronounced with an “-ed” suffix. We believe that just as we would not say a person is “manned” or “womanned”, we should not say a person is “transgendered”. Not all of the transgender community is in agreement about the use of “transgender” and “transgendered.”

When adding transgender to the already long list of bisexual, gay and lesbian people, it is important to include transgender at the end, preceded by “and/or”. We do this because it emphasizes that people can be bisexual, gay or lesbian, *and* transgender, but are not always both.

## WHOM THE UMBRELLA COVERS *(We solicited these definitions from the communities they describe.)*

- **CROSSDRESSERS (also known as TRANSVESTITES)**

*People who dress in the clothing, partially or completely, of the societal norm for the “opposite” gender. Most crossdressers are heterosexual men who crossdress for pleasure. Bisexual and gay men who crossdress usually do so for entertainment purposes, making fun of what it means to be a man.*

DrAG Queens\*—Dressed As a Girl

DrAB Kings\*—Dressed As a Boy

*\* DrAG Queen and DrAB King are historical terms. Currently, “DrAG” refers to either.*

- **THIRD GENDER**

*A person whose understanding of her/hir/his gender identification transcends society’s polarized gender system. OBGLTC believes that the dichotomized system of gender is limiting; therefore, OBGLTC encourages everyone to think outside and beyond this schema.*

Male-to-Third Gender (born in body of male, believe self to be another gender)\*

Female-to-Third Gender (born in body of female, believe self to be another gender)\*

*\* People who are third gender often prefer “transgender” to “third gender”.*

- **TRANSSEXUALS**

*People born in the body associated with one gender but believe internally that they are of another gender.*

Male-to-Female (born in body of male, believe self to be female)

Female-to-Male (born in body of female, believe self to be male)

Being transsexual may or may not involve sexual reassignment surgery (SRS). Some transsexuals use hormones to create the bodies they believe they were born to have. There seem to be some potential health risks for some hormone treatments. More research is needed to allow for better health care for transgender people. The Benjamin Standards are requirements set by a committee of the American Psychological Association. In order for a transsexual legally to change external identities and body, the person must meet the Benjamin Standards.

Pre-operative (considering or planning SRS)

Post-operative (has had SRS)

Non-operational (for personal and/or medical reasons—e.g., breast cancer—has chosen not to have SRS)

- **INTERSEXUALS (historically called hermaphrodites)**

*A person born with mixed sexual physiology, with a physical manifestation of genital/genetic/endochronological differentiation which is different from the cultural norm. Intersexuals often are “assigned” a boy/girl gender, and surgery is done soon after birth to “correct” their “problem.” The problem may well be our society’s tightly held view that there are only 2 genders.*

## /// HOW TO BE MORE UNDERSTANDING AND WELCOMING OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE ///

### 10 BASIC ACTIONS

1. Respect a person’s identity and self-label.
2. Create single stall bathrooms.
3. Say the words: Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender.
4. Ask about appropriate terminology to use.
5. Try not to make assumptions about gender identity or sexual orientation.
6. Do not assume a transgender person is all-knowing and/or wants to speak about TG issues.
7. Do not assume a transgender person can speak only about transgender, nor that it is or is not an issue at all.
8. Hand out TG102 wherever possible—make it available to all.
9. Use the word “children” instead of “boys and girls”, “people” instead of “women and men”.
10. Create/include a TG box on forms where gender is requested. Also, ask for “gender”, not “sex”.

### 10 ADVANCED ACTIONS

1. Ask questions about transgender issues.
2. Do not tokenize persons who are TG.
3. Talk to children about transgender issues.
4. Talk about gender roles you grew up with.
5. Review member policies for your men’s and women’s groups—do they make room to include transgender folks?
6. Realize that learning about gender is a life-long process.
7. Do not divide groups (including in worship) into groups of men and women.
8. Do not ask the gender of a newborn child.
9. Experiment: Spend a day or week avoiding using pronouns when referring to someone important in your life.
10. Learn about the local laws regarding:
  - a. hate crimes
  - b. name changes
  - c. changing gender
  - d. discrimination (employment, housing...)
  - e. impersonation of a gender