



## Gender Exploration

### 2SLGBTQIA+

Let's break it down ...



2S

#### 2-SPIRITED

An Indigenous person who identifies as having both masculine and feminine spirit, or identifies as intersex, but does not identify as a binary male or female.



L

#### LESBIAN

A woman or trans-feminine person who is attracted to other women and trans-feminine people.



G

#### GAY

A man or trans-masculine person who is attracted to other men and trans-masculine people.



B

#### BISEXUAL

A person who is attracted to two or more genders of people.



T

#### TRANSGENDERED

An adjective and umbrella term used to describe a person whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth.



Q

#### QUEER

An umbrella term used by some to describe people who think of their sexual orientation or gender identity as outside of societal norms.



I

#### INTERSEX

A sex designation and umbrella term for a number of conditions that cause reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit into the binary of male and female.



A

#### ASEXUAL

A person who experiences no sexual feelings or desires, or who is not sexually attracted to anyone.



+

#### OTHER

Other can include a variety of identities including non-binary (flag shown) referring to gender identity as a spectrum and not limited to strictly being male or female.

\*There are many other ways in which people may identify and the above list of identities and pride flags is not a completely inclusive list, but gives a good starting point of reference and demonstrates the complexities of identities that exist and the "+" tries to represent this too.\*



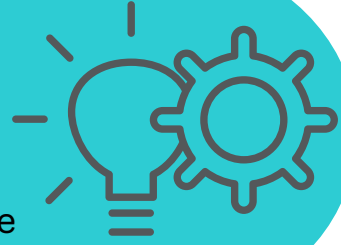


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# WHY IT IS IMPORTANT?

### WELL DID YOU KNOW?

Canada is home to approximately one million people who are 2SLGBTQIA+, accounting for 4% of the total population aged 15 and older in 2018. Youth aged 15 to 24 comprised just under a third (30%) of the 2SLGBTQIA+ population in 2018.



Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) found that 2SLGBTQIA+ people face a much higher risk and rate of: depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive and phobic disorders, suicidality, self-harm, substance use, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than heterosexual people.



2SLGBTQIA+ youth have an approximately 14 times greater risk of suicide and substance use than their heterosexual peers. Trans youth specifically are at a much higher risk for suicide.



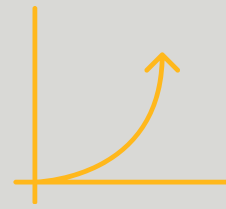
Politics, religion, location, positionality, socialization, education, and historical context play a huge part in the perspective, and internalized level of homophobia experienced.



An Ontario-based survey showed that 77% of trans youth have seriously considered suicide and 45% have attempted suicide.



Hates crimes motivated by sexual orientation more than doubled in Canada from 2007 to 2008, and were the most violent of all hate crimes.



Mental health and well-being research shows that youth who have supportive friends, family, schools and community, and have their social determinants of health met, are more likely to have a positive coming out experience.



Part of navigating wellness and mental health for children and youth in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is having safe spaces to explore, seek wisdom and feel valued and accepted, free from homophobia, hate, shame or negative consequence.







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### WHAT CAN YOU DO?



#### **Spend time with your young person**

People need people and spending time with your young person and getting to better understand who they are and what they are enjoying and struggling with in life will help their human development and level of resilience.

Develop a foundation of trust that the young person can rely on and be more likely to come to you with their concerns.

#### **Develop a trusting relationship**



#### **Maintain open communication with your young person**

Normalize the young person's journey of gender exploration. Take time and care to talk about challenging topics.

Ask the young person about what they are feeling or thinking about this. You can also ask the young person how they would like you to support them, as they may already have an idea in mind to share.

#### **Be compassionate and curious, ask questions**



#### **Be supportive - Listen, Affirm and Validate**

Listen to what is being shared, affirm the young person's feelings, and validate their experience without judgements. Normalize the young person's journey of gender exploration.

Find and explore any 2SLGBTQIA+ events, clubs, support groups, or communities that you can get your young person involved with and gain support from, and celebrate that they are not alone.

#### **Support your young person in developing community**



#### **Get informed**

Learn as much as you can about the topic of gender exploration and identity. Being more informed allows you to be more supportive and demonstrates to the young person that you care.

Use gender-neutral terms, expressions, greetings ("Hey everyone" instead of "Hey you guys", or "Invite them in" instead of "Invite her/him in"). Ask the person how they would like to be referred to, and know that this may differ depending on the situation and context.

#### **Be proactive and inclusive**



#### **Be an ally, and advocate for all 2SLGBTQIA+ community members**

Learn to be aware and understand your own values and biases; and learn how to identify, interrupt, and shut down harassment and discrimination. Stand up for your young person and others in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community socially and politically.

If your young person is struggling and you are not sure how to help, it is important to seek out supports in your community and/or professional help in regards to overall health and well being (especially with mental health).

#### **Seek professional support, counselling, and knowledge**





# Gender Exploration Complexity of Identity

## Gender Unicorn

**Gender is a personal and fluid thing, which can make it challenging to understand. Here are various aspects of identity to help unpack the complexities of Identity.**

### Pronouns Identity Titles

Pronouns are personal and individual and can help how and what the person feels most comfortable with being called in relation to their identity.

Some examples are he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, xe/xem/xyr, ze/hir/hirs, ey/em/eir, ne/nem/nir.

### Gender Identity How a Person Sees Themselves

One's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or another gender(s). Everyone has a gender identity, including you. For transgender people, their sex assigned at birth and their own internal sense of gender identity are not the same.

Some common gender identities include, but are not limited to: female, male, non-binary, trans, 2-spirited, intersex, etc.

### Gender Expression How People Present

The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc.

Transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth.

### Sexual Orientation Physical/Romantic Attraction

It is important to note that sexual and romantic/emotional attraction can be from a variety of factors including, but not limited to gender identity, gender expression/presentation, and sex assigned at birth.

### Emotional Identity Romantic/Emotional Attraction

It is important to note that sexual and romantic/emotional attraction can be from a variety of factors including but not limited to gender identity, gender expression/presentation, and sex assigned at birth.

### Birth Sex Assigned Sex at Birth

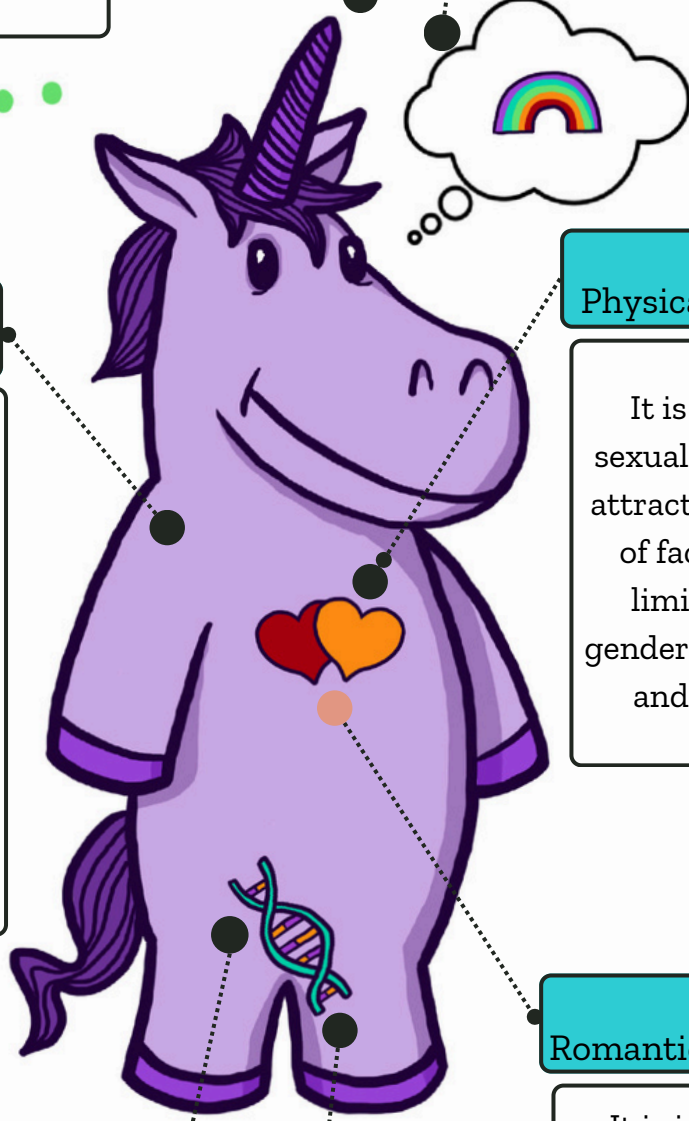
Assigned sex at birth (ASAB) is the sex (male or female) assigned a child at birth, based on the child's external genitalia. Also referred to as birth sex, or natal sex.

ASAB is a moment in time that does not change. One can change their birth certificate, etc., but what gets changed is biological sex or sex, not ASAB.

### Biological Sex Sexual Identification

Biological sex is how someone identifies their sex and it is reflected on regulatory documents; a person's biological sex or sex can be the same as ASAB or different from ASAB.

Biological sex and sex can change, and one can change their birth certificate.



This Gender Unicorn was developed through referencing:

1. [www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)
2. [textualharassment.tumblr.com](http://textualharassment.tumblr.com) ([http://www.reddit.com/r/transgender/comments/ipgod/oversimplified\\_diagram\\_but\\_still\\_a\\_good\\_way\\_to/](http://www.reddit.com/r/transgender/comments/ipgod/oversimplified_diagram_but_still_a_good_way_to/))
3. <http://cisnormativity.tumblr.com/post/9652156368/gingerbread-person-this-is-an-anthropomorphic>

Illustrations by Anna Moore. Design by Landyn Pan, Eli Erlick, and many others







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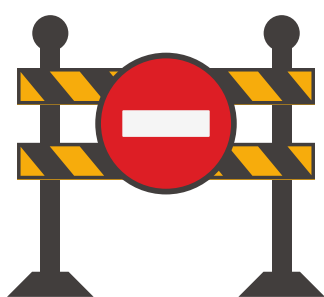
### ROADBLOCKS: What NOT to do!

**WARNING**



**Don't project or relate your identity based on the young person's identity!**

Don't project your own assumptions or judgements on the young person. This is not your journey and not your identity, but it is your role to support the young person with their journey.



**Don't respond with shock, fear, shame or disappointment!**

It is a big deal that the young person is trusting you with this information and acceptance of them as a human first is the most important thing. You may be feeling various emotions internally, but it's important to respond with acceptance, curiosity and support, letting the young person know you care about them no matter what and it's ok that they are feeling this way.

**Don't minimize the young person's concern they are trusting you with!**

Don't ask the young person if they are sure, or if they have really thought about this, or tell them that it's just a phase. Gender is a fluid thing and the gender exploration journey can take time.



**Don't over-react or become overly emotional when the young person shares with you!**

This is not about you, so be the supportive adult in the moment. Be calm and open and listen! Hold the emotional space for the vulnerable young person's feelings and emotions so that you can better understand.



**Don't make assumptions or generalize!**

Don't make assumptions or generalize based on something you heard or other people's stories and experiences. It's okay if this all feels new or intimidating. Be open-minded and willing to learn more about it so you can best support your young person and learn with them.



**Don't forget to adapt!**

Don't continue to mis-gender the young person after they have shared their preferred name/pronouns with you. It is likely that you will make mistakes with this as you are adjusting, but catching and correcting yourself right away is important to demonstrate to the young person that you care, are trying and understand it is important.



**Don't "OUT" your young person to others!**

It is not your truth to tell. Your young person will decide on when and how to tell others when they are feeling safe to do so. They may feel safe with some and not others, so always ask for consent before sharing or ask how and if your support/help is wanted.

