

Creating Safe Space

An adult class presented by the Menno Pride Committee

**Using a resource from the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT (BMC-LGBT) Interests: *Safe Zone Training*



Welcome, Overview, Introductions

Creating our own “Safe Zone”

- Where does the term “Safe Zone” come from?
 - Vulnerability of LGBTQ persons: “Dos” and “Do nots” for interacting to LGBTQ persons
 - What else would be helpful for you to do this learning? Let us know any thoughts you have by email
- Agreements/Assumptions for the work**
- We are all here with a desire to create spaces that are safer for lgbtq persons that is free of injustice, prejudice, and harassment
 - Always consider there may be an LGBTQ person in the room
 - Feel free to speak and ask questions even if you don’t have it all figured out
 - Help each other learn new things
 - Be respectful to each other and the differing experiences we have



Prayer!

Terms 101

Exercise 1: Terms 101 Safe Zone Module 2

Note: Language is fluid. Descriptions and understandings of words change across time and place. Always allow people to choose the words and pronouns they use to describe themselves.



they/them	A gender-neutral pronoun
AFAB, AMAB	Assigned female at birth, Assigned male at birth
transition	The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender, with their outward appearance. Some people might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others modify their bodies through medical interventions.
intersex	A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.
two-spirit	A term used by some indigenous North Americans to describe gender-variant individuals in their communities.
cisgender	A person who identifies with the gender and/or sex assigned to them at birth.
trans woman	A woman who was assigned male at birth. Sometimes the acronym MTF (male-to-female) is used to describe them.
genderqueer	An umbrella term covering any gender identity that doesn't fit within the gender binary. The label may also be used by individuals wishing to identify as falling outside of the gender binary without being any more specific about the nature of their gender.
assigned sex	A way to refer to the sex that was put on your birth certificate without making assumptions about your actual/current sex, body or identity.
non-binary	An identity taken on by a variety of people who feel that, in some way, the very substance of their genders lies outside the gender binary's two labels of "male" and "female."
misgender	The experience of being labeled by someone as having a gender other than the one you identify with.
trans man	A man who was assigned female at birth. Sometimes the acronym FTM (female-to-male) is used to describe them.
gender fluid	A gender identity which refers to a gender which varies over time.
gender expression	The external manifestation of one's gender identity, usually through 'masculine,' 'feminine,' or gender-variant behavior, clothing, haircut, voice or body characteristics.
gender identity	One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither.
gender dysphoria	A term used by psychologists and physicians to describe people who experience significant dysphoria (distress) with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.
transgender	An adjective to describe someone who identifies with a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth

In pairs, complete the following sentences with a gender-neutral or non-binary third person pronoun. See the Gender Neutral and Non-binary pronouns table below for a list of pronouns.

_____ go/goes to the park every day.

I gave the keys to _____

_____ books are on the table.

Are these books _____?

Taylor looked at _____ in the mirror.

SUBJECT	OBJECT	POSSESSIVE ADJ.	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN	REFLEXIVE
e/ey	em	eir	eirs	eirself
[name]	[name]	[name]'s	[name]'s	[name]'s self
per	per	pers	pers	perself
they	them	their	theirs	themselves
ze	hir	hir	hirs	hirself
ze	zir	zir	zirs	zirself
xe	xem	xyr	xrys	xryself

Try and get into the practice of using "they" or another gender neutral pronoun when referring to those whose gender you do not know. Practice sentences using gender-neutral and non-binary pronouns on your own, either in writing or speech. Ask each new person you meet what pronouns honor them. If you slip up occasionally, apologize and correct yourself. Do not refer to someone with the pronoun "it" unless they explicitly say to refer to them that way.

GET THE FACTS ABOUT TRANS YOUTH

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Who is transgender?

Transgender people are those who know themselves to be one gender, but who were labeled a different gender at birth.

For example, a child who was thought to be a girl but knows himself to be a boy might call himself transgender.



How many kids are transgender?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost 2% of high school students identify as transgender.^a Applied to all youth, this means there are at least:

1.3 million+ trans youth (ages 0-17)

WHY IS FAMILY ACCEPTANCE SO IMPORTANT?

Research shows that trans youth with supportive families experience:

- 52%** decrease in recent suicidal thoughts^b
- 46%** decrease in suicide attempts^b



Significant increases in self-esteem and general health^b



But only **27%** of trans youth say their families are very supportive.^c

Fewer than half (43%) say they have an adult in their family they could turn to if they felt sad or worried.^c



HOW CAN FAMILIES SUPPORT THEIR TRANS CHILD?



Expressing love and support for trans youth, including:

- respecting their chosen name and correct pronouns.
- allowing them to choose their clothes and hair style.
- allowing them to choose their toys and activities.

This helps children know there are adults who love and support them—especially important for when they experience negative reactions outside the family.^d



Preventing trans youth from seeing other trans youth or participating in related activities can increase isolation and risk factors.^e Therefore, this should be avoided.

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MANY TRANS YOUTH EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION IN THEIR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Only **9%** of trans youth say their communities are very accepting.^c

Only **8%** of trans youth say their place of worship is very accepting.^c

80% of transgender students said they'd avoided bathrooms because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

64% of transgender students avoided gym class because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

59% of transgender students had been required to use a bathroom that did not match the gender they live every day.

Only **12%** of trans youth say their school or district has official policies support trans students.^a



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HOW CAN SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES SUPPORT TRANS YOUTH?



Teachers and staff should model inclusive behavior, including respecting chosen names and correct pronouns, as well as incorporating age-appropriate representation of LGBT people and history into curriculum.



Schools should ensure trans kids can participate in school activities and teams consistent with their gender identity.



Gender and sexualities alliances (GSAs, also called gay-straight alliances) and similar community organizations can support LGBTQ youth and even reduce the harmful impacts of bullying.^f



Libraries should include books and resources for all ages that represent trans and gender diverse youth and people.



Faith communities should make their support of trans and LGB youth clear, use inclusive language, and work alongside local trans advocates and youth to create affirming communities.



Service providers, such as health care professionals and child welfare workers, should educate themselves on best practices for supporting and advocating for trans youth and their needs.

Inclusive Policies Make a Difference for Transgender Students

Transgender students in schools with supportive policies are less likely to miss school due to feeling unsafe, and they are more likely to feel greater belonging to their school communities. Yet only 12% of transgender and gender diverse students reported that their school or district had official policies or guidelines supporting transgender or gender diverse students.^g



DISCUSSING MYTHS AND FACTS

We live in a world that is full of myths and inaccurate information about lgbtq people. No one is immune to the effect of living amongst these beliefs, no matter what our sexual orientation or gender identity is.

Read through the myths and facts below, either individually or in a group. Keeping a few of the statistics in mind, discuss responses to the following questions:

1. Have you heard some of these myths before; are there any other common myths you have heard?
2. How does living in an environment where these myths persist affect an lgbtq person?
3. How do they affect a straight or cisgender person?
4. How can you become aware of myths that you have learned as facts?
5. How can you correct myths when you hear them repeated?

All transgender people are gay or lesbian | There is no direct correlation between gender identity and sexual orientation. Transgender people may identify as gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual or heterosexual.

Being LGBTQ is a mental disorder | In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed "homosexuality" from the list of mental disorders. "Gender dysphoria" remains on the list, though many advocate for its removal. However, if removed, health insurance companies will not cover hormone treatment and/or surgery for transgender people who seek these options.

The sex assigned to a person at birth is their "real" sex or gender | Sex is assigned at birth on the basis of a cursory look at the infant's genitals. In about 1% of births, there is some ambiguity in the external sex organs and mistakes can be made. There can also be inconsistencies between a person's internal reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, external sex organs or secondary sex characteristics.

Transgender people live "crazy" lives | TV and media often portray transgender people doing drag performances, drugs and prostitution and as having hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine behavior. These portrayals are an incomplete, stereotypical view of transgender people. Trans people do "every day" things like cisgender people do.

All trans people have surgeries and go on hormones | Some transgender people go on hormones and have surgeries to more closely align their sense of self with their physical body, but many transgender people do not and are comfortable with their body without altering it.

All transgender people perform drag shows | Many of the people who participate in drag shows are cisgender. "Drag Queens and Drag Kings 'do drag' for theatrical, comedic, and at times, political purposes. When a trans woman wears women's clothing or a trans man wears men's clothing, they are not doing drag. Nor are they cross-dressing. They are just wearing their clothes."

All trans men are very masculine, all trans women are very feminine, all genderqueer people are androgynous | Transgender people have a wide variety of gender expressions, just as cisgender people do. Trans women can be masculine, trans men can be feminine.

Exercise 3: Understanding Transphobia

15 MINUTES

Goal: To increase understanding of the way transphobia operates in our lives on a personal and interpersonal level.

Before reading and discussing the personal assessment, we need to define what transphobia is in general terms.

The term "**transphobia**" was first recorded in 1993, defined as "fear or hatred of transsexual or transgender people." Like homophobia and biphobia, the term is used to describe oppression against transgender people and the cultural hatred of transgender people as a social group as well as individuals. The term is often used to describe cultural attitudes about transgender people where cissexism is used to describe institutional oppression against transgender people.

Now, read through the personal assessment list and discuss in small groups what else you think could be added to this list and your responses to the questions. Be honest about your experiences, socialization and thoughts about each question. Discuss the ways you can change your patterns of thinking and actions so that you do not perpetuate transphobia.

Note: This list is meant to incite conversation about personal and interpersonal transphobia, rather than looking at the larger societal consequences and structures that have created these ideas and stereotypes. In Exercises 4 and 5, we will discuss those consequences and cissexism.

TRANSPHOBIA PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

- ◆ Have you used "real," "biological" or another similar term to describe the gender of a cisgender/non-transgender person?
- ◆ Have you repeatedly used the wrong pronoun for someone after they told you their preferred pronoun?
- ◆ Have you refused to use the correct (chosen) name for a transgender person?
- ◆ Have you asked invasive questions about sex, transitioning and/or genitalia after learning that someone is transgender?
- ◆ Have you made jokes or derogatory comments about someone you suspect is transgender?
- ◆ Have you asked for a transgender person's "real" (i.e. birth or given) name?
- ◆ Would you date a transgender person?
- ◆ Have you assumed that you can always identify someone who is transgender?
- ◆ Have you learned or thought that being transgender is a mental illness?