

Transgender terminology is constantly evolving and expanding, which is why it's important to stay on top of it to avoid saying something that is incorrect or hurtful to a trans person.

Even though you may be well-meaning, your 'compliments' may end up being anything but. These are called Microaggressions and knowing what not to say will go a long way to being a good ally to a trans person.

So nine phrases that you should never say to a trans person that you may not have realized are transphobic.

Are you "Biologically female" or "biologically male"

Referring to someone as "biologically" female or male can be invalidating to a trans person's gender because it implies they are not, in fact, the gender they identify as.

Instead, saying someone was "assigned male at birth" or "assigned female at birth" is better. It acknowledges that, at birth, we are assigned genders decided by our genitalia, rather than our actual gender identity.

Asking a trans person if they have had "a sex change operation" is not the right terminology.

There are a variety of gender-affirming surgeries a trans person may choose to have in their lifetime. These include top surgery and bottom surgery. Top surgery refers to changing the chest to augment breasts or remove them.

Bottom surgery is a colloquial phrase that can mean a number of different procedures, including phalloplasty or metoidioplasty, which both create a penis for people with vaginas, or a vaginoplasty, which creates a vagina for a person with a penis.

While people typically mean bottom surgery when they ask if someone has had "the" surgery, many trans people do not get bottom surgery or any kind of gender-affirming procedure.

A transgender person's medical history says nothing about their transness, so it's best to not ask unless a person offers that kind of information.

"Are you fully transitioned?"

Similarly, asking if someone is "fully transitioned" or planning on "transitioning" implies a trans person isn't valid unless they have gender-affirming procedures.

Many trans people will start hormone replacement therapy (HRT), but don't feel the need to have any surgery. Others may want gender-affirming surgeries but may not opt for HRT.

Every trans person's journey with their gender is different.

"Are you pre-op or post-op?"

Pressing a transgender person for whether or not they've undergone gender-affirming surgeries by asking if they are "pre-op" or "post-op" is also offensive.

Asking about someone's medical history will not tell you "how transgender" a person is.

Many transgender people do not have gender-affirming procedures in their lifetime, sometimes out of lack of access to care and other times because they do not feel a need to.

"You need dysphoria to be transgender"

Gender dysphoria is the feeling that your body does not fit your gender identity.

Telling a trans person that they don't appear to have outward gender dysphoria is presumptuous. It also implies that trans people need to feel a certain way about their body to be trans.

Just because someone doesn't openly discuss their gender dysphoria or aren't on HRT, doesn't mean they aren't experiencing dysphoria internally. Additionally, not all trans people experience gender dysphoria. Their experience is equally valid.

Like any other mental health issue, dysphoria is a private matter.

"You don't look transgender"

Telling a trans person they don't "look trans" isn't a compliment. You cannot assume someone's gender identity based on how they look.

Just because a person is wearing makeup or dressing in a manner you view as feminine doesn't mean they aren't a transman, and just because a transwoman is dressing masculine doesn't make her a man.

Gender presentation and gender identity are two separate concepts. The first refers to how a person dresses and expresses their outside appearance and the second refers to a person's gender.

"She-male," "he/she," or "it"

"She/he," "she-male," and "it" are all derogatory phrases that can be extremely hurtful to transgender people. These phrases can be alienating and hurtful, making a person feel invalid and dysphoric.

Transgender people, and transwomen and femmes of color in particular, face disproportionate rates of violence in the US. Saying any of these phrases plays off the same sentiments used in these attacks.

"Transsexual" or "transvestite"

Transsexual and transvestite are both outdated terms to refer to transgender people that have fallen out of favor among trans people. Both are frowned upon now because they were used to pathologize trans being and refer to being trans as a mental illness.

In Planned Parenthood's handy guide on identity terms and labels, experts say: "Some people find these terms offensive, others do not. Only refer to someone as transsexual if they tell you that's how they identify." That applies for the term "transvestite" too.

"What's your real name?"

Asking for a person's "real name" or the name they were given at birth is deeply personal to a trans person. Many trans people refer to the name they were assigned at birth as their "deadname" because they do not share it and never use it.

Using a trans person's deadname can be hurtful and triggering for someone, so it's best to not ask. If a trans person does share their deadname, it's important to not call them that.

Source: Business Insider

"Which Bathroom Do You Use?"

The “bathroom debate” has received quite a bit of public and political attention, but that doesn’t mean that transgender individuals want to talk about it. People often see this as an uncomfortable and personal question that can lead to an unwanted debate.

"You're Just Confused"

Transgender people typically spend years reflecting on their identity and coming to the conclusion that they don’t fit the sex they were born as. Therefore, telling them that they’re “just confused” will be received as very disrespectful, ignorant, and invalidating. Remember that trans people know themselves better than anyone else, so it’s not right for you to assume you understand their identity better.

"It's Just a Phase"

Similarly, you shouldn’t assume that a person’s carefully considered gender identity is “just a phase.” This will make the person you’re talking to feel invalidated, disrespected, and misunderstood. It also suggests that their gender identity is frivolous or easily changeable.

"You Must Like Men/Women, Right?"

Contrary to what some people think, one’s gender identity and sexual orientation are two completely separate concepts. Just like cisgender people, trans individuals can have any sexual orientation. Therefore, you shouldn’t assume that someone isn’t transgender just because they’re attracted to people of their own gender.

"But You Were So Pretty as a Girl/Boy"

Telling someone that you preferred what they looked or acted like before transitioning is never a good idea. It can make them feel like their value or worth is only dependent on their appearance or whether they conform to gender norms. You may also make them feel like they should regret their transition.

"Aren't You Just a Drag Queen/King?"

There is a big difference between being transgender and being a drag artist. Drag is all about entertainment and performance, while being transgender is about one’s personal gender identity. Telling a transgender person that they’re “just a drag queen/king” is therefore considered very disrespectful and ignorant.

"How Do You Have Sex?"

Asking someone about their sexual activity is almost always considered intrusive and inappropriate regardless of their gender identity, so you shouldn't ask transgender people about it, either. Doing so can easily make you come across as rude, disrespectful, and invasive.

"You Must Be So Brave"

While it's fairly common for people to tell trans individuals that they're brave as a compliment, it won't always be received as one. It can make them feel like you see them as very different and abnormal, or like being their true self is inherently risky.

"Are Your Parents Okay with This?"

Asking whether a transgender person's parents are okay with their transition implies that the validity of their gender identity is dependent on how others see them. This can also be a very sensitive subject for some people if their parents aren't understanding or supportive of their identity.

"Is This Because of a Trend?"

Being transgender is not simply a passing trend. As noted by [the Human Rights Campaign](#), people have identified this way for a long time and across many different cultures. Asking someone if their identity is just part of a trend can feel very hurtful, invalidating, and dismissive.

"I Miss the Old You"

Sometimes, people who knew someone before and after their transition can be tempted to make comparisons or reflect on how they used to be different. However, telling someone that you miss the "old them" or preferred how they were before can make them feel like you don't accept or appreciate them for their true self.

"You're Doing This for Attention"

Being transgender isn't easy, so it's wrong to assume that people would go through such a big change simply to gain more attention. Telling them this can also make them feel belittled, invalidated, and misunderstood. Being transgender is about being your true self, not gaining attention.

"Can't You Just Be Gay?"

Some people mistakenly assume that one's gender identity is just a sexual orientation issue. In reality, sexual orientation and gender identity are completely separate and should be treated as such. Asking this question also implies that you think being gay is somehow "better" than being trans.

"You're Actually So Pretty!"

According to the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#), giving compliments based on stereotypes about how men or women “should” look can actually be harmful. It implies that you’re surprised that a person “passes” and don’t expect transgender people to look good, making it more of a backhanded compliment.

Source: MSN.com

“Do you stand up to pee?” (to a trans man)

Apart from being a totally inappropriate thing to say, how a person uses the bathroom is personal and should not be the subject of curiosity. The ability for a trans person to use the bathroom that matches their gender identity is often a very sensitive issue and can trigger many negative emotions.

When are you going to pick one gender or the other? (to a non-binary person)

Why should a person who identifies as non-binary pick a gender just to make you comfortable? The gender spectrum has many genders, and many non-binary persons are perfectly happy living their lives in a gender other than the binary genders of man or woman. If they are happy as they are, then you can feel happy for them too.