

FAQ

1. What does it mean to be transgender?

Being transgender means that a person's gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is an individual's internal sense of their gender, whether that's male, female, a blend of both, or neither. Transgender individuals may or may not choose to transition, which can include changing their name, pronouns, appearance, or undergoing medical treatments.

2. What is the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation?

Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of their gender (how they feel inside), while sexual orientation refers to whom a person is attracted to. For example, a transgender person may identify as a woman, man, or non-binary, and they can be attracted to people of any gender, just like cisgender people.

3. What is gender dysphoria?

Gender dysphoria is a psychological condition where a person experiences discomfort or distress because their gender identity does not align with their assigned sex at birth. Not all transgender people experience gender dysphoria, but for those who do, it can be alleviated through social, legal, or medical transitions.

4. What does "transitioning" mean?

Transitioning refers to the process a transgender person may go through to live as the gender with which they identify. Transitioning can involve social changes (e.g., changing one's name or pronouns), legal changes (e.g., updating identification documents), or medical changes (e.g., hormone therapy or surgeries). The specific steps vary for each individual, and not every transgender person chooses to transition in all or any of these ways.

5. How can I be supportive of transgender individuals?

To be supportive, it's important to respect and use a transgender person's chosen name and pronouns, listen to their experiences without judgment, and advocate for their rights and dignity. Creating an inclusive and accepting environment in your personal and professional life helps foster understanding and equality for transgender individuals.

6. What kind of human rights concerns do queer people face?

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people (LGBTIQ+ people) in all regions of the world face discrimination and violence, including physical attacks, rapes and killings. In

close to a third of the world's countries, someone suspected of engaging in same-sex relations may be arrested and jailed, and in at least six countries executed. These and other laws are often also used to target transgender people and others who do not conform to expected gender norms. Furthermore, most States fail to adequately protect LGBTIQ+ people from discrimination, including in employment, housing, education and healthcare. Transgender people are unable to obtain legal recognition of their gender in most countries around the world. Intersex people are often subject to medically unnecessary surgical interventions without their informed consent, which may lead to a lifetime of suffering.

7. Is same sex attraction or being transgender a western phenomenon?

No. Diverse sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions have existed everywhere, in all countries, among all ethnic groups, at all socioeconomic levels and in all communities throughout history. However, many of the criminal laws used today to punish lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people are of European origin – initially imposed by colonial powers and then maintained by postcolonial legal systems.

8. Is it possible to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity?

No. Attempts to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity, also known as practices of so-called "conversion therapy" have been found to be unethical, unscientific and ineffective. They can be deeply harmful, violate human rights and in some cases may even amount to torture. Rather than trying to force people to be who they are not, efforts should be directed at changing the negative social attitudes that stigmatize lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people and contribute to violence and discrimination perpetrated against them.

9. When do people realize they're queer?

People can realize that they are lesbian, gay, bi, trans or queer at any age. While some people may be aware of their sexual orientation or gender identity from youth, others may need more time to experience, understand and accept these parts of themselves.

10. What if my religion says it is wrong to be queer?

Every faith tradition is different. Even within the same religion different interpretations, beliefs and practices exist, but most believe in the value of treating people kindly and with respect. Therefore, holding beliefs from one's own faith traditions shouldn't prevent us from respecting others, even if they believe in or practice something different to us. There are LGBTIQ+ people from every faith tradition around the world, as well as many religious communities that are welcoming and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people. Ultimately, the right to freedom of religion or belief means that all persons are free to choose their religion or belief. However, religion or belief can never be invoked to try to justify violence or discrimination against anyone – including LGBTIQ+ people.

11. Are queer people themselves dangerous to children and families?

No. There is no link between same-sex attraction or being trans and child abuse. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people all over the world can be good parents, teachers and role models for young people. Portraying them as dangerous to children and families is wholly misleading, discriminatory and a distraction from the need for serious and appropriate measures to protect all children, including those coming to terms with their own sexual orientation and gender identity.

Additional Sources

FAQ page: <https://www.unfe.org/know-the-facts/faqs/>

Égale, A Guide For Having Difficult Conversations: https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Difficult-Conversation-Guide_V-01.pdf

The 519 Resources: <https://www.the519.org/resources/>