Gender Pronouns:

how tos, making mistakes, and taking an active role

Creating a culture where folks can use and share their gender pronouns is part of MCN's initiative for creating an inclusive and equitable environment for our staff, members, and community.

Why is it important to respect people's gender pronouns?

- Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns shows respect.
- When someone is referred to with the wrong pronouns, it can make them feel invalidated, dismissed, or alienated.
- It is additionally complicated in a work space where there are power dynamics and fears of retaliation.

What are some commonly used gender pronouns?

Gender pronouns	Notes	Examples
She/her/hers he/him/his	Not everyone who uses "she or he" identifies with the associated gender.	"Xena ate her food because she was hungry."
They/them/theirs	They/them pronouns are used in singular.	"Xena ate their food because they were hungry."
Ze/hir/hirs ...and many more!	Ze is pronounced "zee" and is also spelled zie or xe. It replaces she/he/they. Hir is pronounced "here" and replaces her/hers/him/his/ they/theirs	"Xena ate hir food because ze was hungry."
She/they He/they	Some people use both gendered and gender neutral pronouns.	"Xena ate their food because she was hungry."
Name	Some people do not use pronouns and use their name instead.	"Xena ate Xena's food because Xena was hungry."

How do I ask someone about their gender pronouns?

- Gender pronouns are not defined by physical appearances.
- When you introduce yourself to a new person, include your gender pronouns, "My name is Xena, I use she/her pronouns".
- Include pronouns in introduction exercises, "tell us your name, your pronouns, and your favorite food."

Note: Avoid using, "preferred pronouns" as it suggests that gender is a preference, and "masculine/feminine pronouns" because pronouns are not associated with gender expression.

What if I make a mistake?

Everyone slips sometimes. The best thing to do is to say something right away, "Sorry, I meant she," it can be tempting to go on about how bad you feel. Don't. It can make the person who was misgendered feel responsible for comforting you, which is not their job.

How to take an active role:

If you hear a colleague refer to another colleague using the wrong pronouns. In most cases, it is appropriate to gently correct them, "Actually, Xena uses the pronoun she".

It may be appropriate to approach the person who was misgendered and say, "I notice that you were referred to with the wrong pronoun earlier. Do you want me to take them aside and remind them about your pronouns?" Follow up if necessary, but take cues from the individual who has been misgendered.

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