

## Respectfully Communicating With LGBTQ People



- If you think your question might be too personal, it probably is. Check yourself by asking if you would ask a non-LGBTQ person the same question.
- Forgive yourself if you make a mistake. Offer a sincere apology and ask what term, name or pronoun the individual prefers. There are no expiration dates on apologies.
- Try not to make assumptions about people's sexual orientation and gender identity, or treat them as one and the same. One has to do with who we are attracted to and the other is how we identify ourselves as a man, a woman, neither or both. (Hint: Gay men do not really want to be women.)
- Mirror the terms that people use for themselves and their loved ones. Do not label people or assume that the next person will prefer the same terms.
- Don't ask someone when they "decided" that they were LGBTQ. Don't assume that being LGBTQ is a choice or a "lifestyle." The only choice people make is whether to hide who they are or live openly and freely.
- Our tone is as important as our words. Speak from the heart and your message will be clear, even if you get the words wrong.
- Remember that LGBTQ equality is not about what we do in the bedroom. It is about being authentic. It's about not having to lie or hide. It's about living, loving and expressing ourselves freely and openly, and that affects us all.

## Fine Tuning Our Language

Different people prefer different terms, but in general, the terms listed below on the left should be replaced by the terms on the right. It is a respectful place to begin.

Gay Lifestyle to **LGBTQ Community** or **Gay Lives**

Hermaphrodite to **Intersex**

Homosexual to **Gay**

Transgenders to **Transgender People** or **Trans Individuals**

Sexual Preference to **Sexual Orientation**

Transvestite to **Cross Dresser**