

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER

# What does it mean to be nonbinary?

KEY WORDS

nonbinary | acceptance | self-expression | gender



Did you know that you can compare gender to a big rainbow? Most people think there are just two main colours, blue and pink. Well, being nonbinary is like saying, "Wait a minute, I'm not just blue or pink; I'm a completely different colour, or a mix of colours in between!"

In other words, **being nonbinary means you feel that you don't fit into the categories of 'boy' or 'girl', or 'male' and 'female'.**

Some nonbinary people may feel that they belong to both genders, and would therefore take on masculine or feminine behaviours or outward expressions (such as clothing style) depending on the situation.



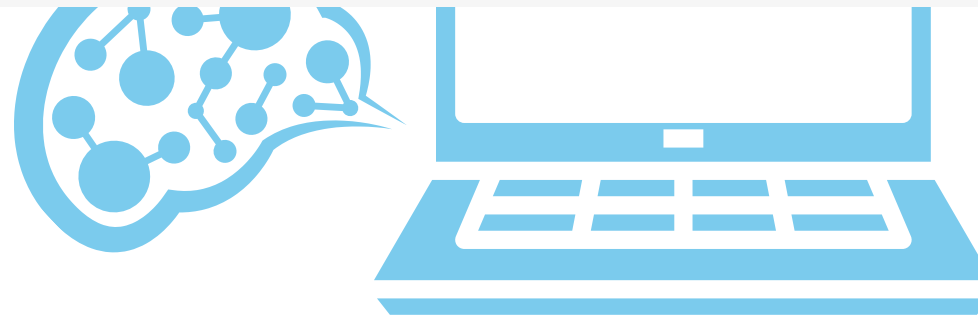
Other nonbinary people may alternate between gender expressions, sometimes feeling like women, sometimes men, and sometimes something beyond that, regardless of their original sex. There are also those who feel that they do not belong to any sex and those who have characteristics of multiple genders at the same time.

Instead of using binary pronouns to address them such as 'he' or 'she', some nonbinary people might let you know which **pronouns** they prefer to be addressed with:

**They/Them pronouns:** Instead of he or she, some nonbinary people prefer they/them pronouns. So, you might say, "They are going to the store," instead of "He is going to the store" or "She is going to the store."

**Other pronouns:** Some might use different pronouns like ze/zir, ey/em, or any other pronouns that feel right for them.

**No pronouns:** Some nonbinary people might be cool with no pronouns at all – and prefer it if you just use their name.



Unfortunately, because of the newness of the term ‘nonbinary’ and society’s limited knowledge of the topic, many nonbinary people may experience challenges in their day-to-day lives. Some of these challenges may include:

- people **misgendering** them, which means them being referred to by incorrect pronouns
- **lack of legal recognition**, as official documents and systems often stick to a binary understanding of gender (male or female)
- **lack of visibility and representation** in media, education, and public and political discussions
- pressure to conform to (or act like) one of the **traditional gender roles**
- **healthcare disparities**, because medical and professionals might not be adequately trained to address the unique needs of nonbinary individuals.

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Remember that just like everyone else, nonbinary people are unique and amazing in their own way. What’s most important is expressing your gender in a way that feels authentic to you, no matter your biological sex!

And keep in mind that you don't have to have everything figured out right away – it's totally cool to explore and discover who you are at your own pace. 🌈✨



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