

Seeing Beyond Gender

This activity shows the difficulty of using gender non-conforming pronouns. Place participants into groups of two (Partner A and Partner B) and project image of a person on the projector screen. Have each person talk to their partner for three minutes about the image without using pronouns or other gender indicators. If a person runs out of descriptors, they should make-up characteristics for the person in the image to practice gender non-specific terminology. When time is up, have Partner A move to the next person in rotation and change the picture on the screen. Do this for a minimum of three rotations and add more if necessary.

Facilitator Questions:

- How did you feel using gender-nonspecific language? Was this difficult or easy for people? Why?
- How did you feel listening only to gender-nonspecific language?
- Did you try to guess the gender of the person in the image being described, or was it a non-issue?
- Why do you think you had the responses you did?
- What other reactions or thoughts did group members have around this activity? What do these reactions tell us about our views on gender?

Facilitator Observations:

- This activity shows the difficulty that Trans* individuals experience in a cisgender world.
- When talking about someone or telling a story, many of us are in the habit of identifying the people mentioned by gender, either explicitly or by pronoun use.
- The LGBT movement has encouraged the use of gender-nonspecific language, such as “partner” and “spouse,” around domestic partnership issues. Similarly, the feminist movement has encouraged people to use terms such as “chairperson” and “police officer” rather than “chairman” or “policeman.”
- Some trans-friendly terms include: child (rather than son/daughter), sibling (rather than brother/sister), parent (rather than mother/father), and significant other, partner or spouse (rather than girlfriend/boyfriend or wife/husband).

Display on the screen Safe Zone’s pronoun page and go over the first pronoun table:

	Subject	Object	Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
Female	She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
Male	He	Him	His	His	Himself
Gender Neutral	Ze	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself
Gender Neutral Pronunciation	/zee/	/here/	/here/	/heres/	/hereself/

