

Safe Zone Core Vocabulary- Participant

agender – *adj.*: a person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Rejecting gender as a biological or social construct altogether and refusing to identify with gender.

ally /“al-lie”/ – *noun*: a (typically straight and/or cisgender) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQAIP community. We consider people to be active allies who combat homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism on both a personal and institutional level.

androgyny/ous / “an-jrah-jun-ee”; “an-jrah-jun-uss”/ – *adj.*: 1 a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity.

asexual – *adj.*: experiencing no sexual attraction to others. Individuals may still be emotionally, physically, romantically, and/or spiritually attracted to others, and their romantic orientation may also be lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, etc. Asexuality exists on a continuum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex, to those who experience low levels, or sexual attraction only under specific conditions, and many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see demisexual). Sometimes abbreviated to “ace.”

biphobia – *noun*: a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, invisibility, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have or express towards bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the LGBTQ community as well as straight society. Biphobic – *adj.*: a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes towards bisexual people.

bisexual – *adj.*: 1 a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to some males/men and females/women. 2 a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people of their gender and another gender. This attraction does not have to be equally split or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders or sexes an individual may be attracted to.

cisgender /“siss-jendur”/ or **cissexual** – *adj.*: a person whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity align (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a man). The word cisgender can also be shortened to “cis.” - “Cis” is a latin prefix that means “on the same side [as]” or “on this side [of].”

cisnormativity – *noun*: the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans* identities or people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

coming out: 1 the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one’s own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself). 2 The process by which one shares one’s sexuality or gender identity with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.).

demisexual – *adj.*: little or no capacity to experience sexual attraction until a strong romantic or emotional connection is formed with another individual, often within a romantic relationship.

gay – *adj.*: 1 individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex and/or gender. Can be used to refer to men who are attracted to other men, and can be applied to women as well. 2 An umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

gender- socially constructed roles, behaviors, and attributes considered by the general public to be “appropriate” for one’s sex as assigned at birth. Gender roles vary among cultures and along time continuums.

gender binary – *noun*: the idea that there are only two genders (man or woman), which are biologically-based, and that every person is one of those two. This system is oppressive to anyone who doesn’t identify with their birth assignment, and who are gender-variant people and do not fit neatly into one of the two categories.

gender expression/role – *noun*: the external display of one’s gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as “gender presentation.”

gender fluid – *adj.*: A person who is between identifying with a gender or who do not identify with a gender. This term overlaps with genderqueer and bigender, implying movement between gender identities and/or presentations.

gender identity – *noun*: the internal perception of an one’s gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don’t align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans*, and more. Often confused with biological sex, or sex assigned at birth.

genderqueer – *adj.*: 1 a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman; 2 an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid).

hermaphrodite – *noun*: an outdated medical term previously used to refer to someone who was born with some combination of typically-male and typically-female sex characteristics. It’s considered derogatory, stigmatizing and inaccurate.

heteronormativity – *noun*: the assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities: *when learning a woman is married, asking her what her husband’s name is*. Heteronormativity also leads us to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.

homophobia – *noun*: an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have towards members of LGBTQ community. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. **Homophobic** – *adj.*: a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes towards gay people.

homosexual – *adj. & noun*: a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This [medical] term is considered stigmatizing (particularly as a noun) due to its history as a category of mental illness, and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

intersex – *adj.*: term for a combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals that differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic), but these terms are now outdated and derogatory.

lesbian – *noun & adj.*: women who are primarily attracted romantically, sexually, and/or emotionally to other women.

non-binary gender–: refers to (a)gender as broader, less defined, more fluid, and a more imaginative and expressive matrix of ideas. It challenges power differentials, by deconstructing and reconstructing ideas, reflecting on disjunctures, unpacking gender, gender identities and gender expressions, and providing opportunities for new knowledges to emerge.

pansexual/omnisexual – *adj.*: a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. Often shortened to “pan.”

passing – *adj. & verb*: 1 trans* people being accepted as, or able to “pass for,” a member of their self-identified gender identity (regardless of sex assigned at birth) without being identified as trans*. 2 An LGB/queer individual who is believed to be or perceived as straight.

queer – *adj.*: used as an umbrella term to describe individuals who don’t identify as straight. Also used to describe people who have a non-normative gender identity, or as a political affiliation. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, it is not embraced or used by all members of the LGBTQ community. The term “queer” can often be used interchangeably with LGBTQ (e.g., “queer folks” instead of “LGBTQ folks”).

questioning – *verb, adj.*: an individual who or time when someone is unsure about or exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

romantic attraction – *noun*: a capacity that evokes the want to engage in romantic intimate behavior (e.g., dating, relationships, marriage), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

sex – *noun*: a medical term used to refer to biological traits including, chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics. The assignment and classification of people as female, male or intersex at birth is often based solely on external reproductive anatomy. Often referred to as simply “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned at birth.”

sexual attraction – *noun*: a capacity that evokes the want to engage in physically intimate behavior (e.g., kissing, touching, intercourse), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with romantic attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

sexual orientation – *noun*: the type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one has the capacity to feel for others, generally labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to. Often confused with sexual preference.

straight – *adj.*: a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people who are not their same sex/gender. A more colloquial term for the word heterosexual.

third gender – *noun*: for a person who does not identify with either man or woman, but identifies with another gender. This gender category is used by societies that recognize three or more genders, both contemporary and historic, and is also a conceptual term meaning different things to different people who use it, as a way to move beyond the gender binary.

trans* – *adj.*: An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an asterisk is often used in written forms (not spoken) to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term, and specifically including non-binary identities, as well as transgender men (transmen) and transgender women (transwomen).

transgender – *adj.*: A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that assigned at birth based on anatomical sex.

transition / transitioning – *noun, verb*: this term is primarily used to refer to the process a trans* person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression. Transition can include: coming out to one's family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) some form of surgery. It's best not to assume that someone will "complete" this process at any particular time: and individual's transition is finished when they are finally comfortable with how their gender identity is aligned with their body, and may not include going through all of the aforementioned steps.

transphobia – *noun*: the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans* people, the trans* community, or gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the queer community, as well as in general society. Transphobic – *adj.*: a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes, thoughts, intents, towards trans* people.

transsexual – *noun and adj.* a person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex. Transitioning across the sexual binary can go from female to male (FTM) or male to female (MTF).

transvestite – *noun*: is outdated and often viewed as offensive and derogatory. Use *cross-dresser* instead to describe someone of either sex who sometimes dresses in clothing associated with the opposite sex. Note that cross-dressing does not mean that someone is transgender.

two-spirit – *noun*: is an umbrella term traditionally within Native American communities to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders.

**Please note: There is no "final list" of terms that one can access in this work. In preparation for every training, we facilitate we add and delete terms. We encourage participants to continue to check in with current literature and training to make sure the terms that are used in your community are current, respectful, and inclusive.*

**We used both www.TheSafeZoneProject.com and Teaching, affirming and recognizing trans and Gender creative youth by s.j. Miller (2016) to compile this list of vocabulary.*