Pronouns: What they are and why they matter

She/her, he/him, they/them. We use pronouns to describe each other all the time. Most people don't actively choose their pronouns because they align with their gender identity.

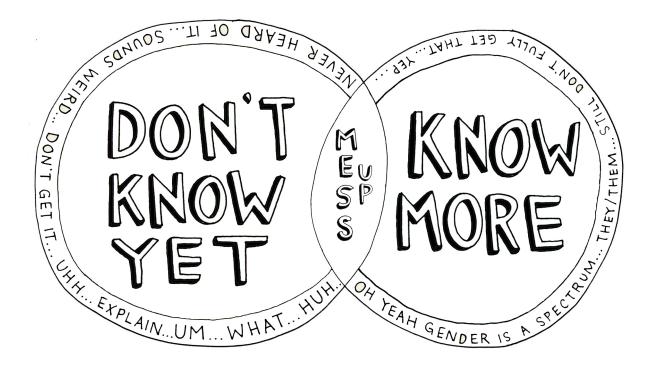
For a cis woman, her sex is female, her gender is woman, and her pronoun is she/her.

For someone gender non-conforming, transgender, agender or intersex these assigned pronouns may not feel aligned with their gender identities. It is vital to respect someone's chosen pronoun and/or name (a former name no longer in use is often referred to as a dead name). Many people who are in the middle or completely outside of she/he identities chose to use the gender neutral they/them pronoun. This simply substitutes in for she/her or he/him in concept and grammatically. The excuses abound of why people refuse to refer to someone in their life as by they/them:

- 1. "It's too hard."
- 2. "It's unnatural."
- 3. "It's not that big of a deal."
- 4. "It doesn't make sense grammatically, it's plural."

None of those are good or valid excuses to not try! Everyone will mess up and that's okay, but messing up a handful of times in the beginning indicates effort, safety and respect. In response to those reasons why it's an obstacle to use the gender-neutral pronoun, I would ask you to consider these points:

- 1. It's really not. We easily learn to call newlywed people by a new last name.
- 2. Language evolves. This is an evolution of language. Everything feels "unnatural" at first but then becomes normalized. We created language so we can change it.
- 3. Think about if everyone in your life began calling you by the opposite pronouns than your gender. You'd feel pretty bad, wouldn't you?
- 4. Someone lost their wallet. There you did it, singular they.



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