

Trans Ally Worksheet

Reflecting on what you learned, try to answer the following questions

1. You are walking by a group of students and you hear one of them say, “That was super weird when Mr. Snow came out to all of us, that must have been so awkward for him.” You want to correct the person’s misgendering of Ms. Snow. How could you do that with this group of students? What might you say?

2. You walk into the common room of your dorm and hear a group of students saying, “Dude, transgender people can do whatever they want I just can’t imagine how weird it’d be if he, she, whatever, used the women’s bathroom? Why not just have a transgender bathroom?”

3. You walk into an empty classroom and find a group of students watching Orange is the New Black on a laptop while they wait for class to begin. You overhear one of the students say, “Laverne Cox is hot. Do you think her breasts are real? And what about down there? Think she still has her junk? Do all trans people have sex changes?”



Trans Ally Worksheet - Sample Answers

(1) You are walking by a group of students and you hear one of them say, “That was super weird when Mr. Snow came out to all of us, that must have been so awkward for him.” You want to correct the person’s misgendering of Ms. Snow. How could you do that with this group of students? What might you say?

- **Simply address the misgendering:** “Ms. Snow.”
- **Address the misgendering:** “Hey, I heard you all talking about Ms. Snow, just wanted to offer a gender reminder that it really is important that we refer to Ms. Snow as she identifies, so please practice calling her Ms. Snow.”
- **Address the misgendering and mention it is a community effort to hold each other accountable:** “Hey, I heard you all talking about Ms. Snow and I wanted to remind you that it is Ms. Snow. I realize you may have just misspoken and this does take some practice, but it is important that as a community we help each other remember as we transition our language.”

(2) You walk into the common room of your dorm and hear a group of students saying, “Dude, transgender people can do whatever they want I just can’t imagine how weird it’d be if he, she, whatever, used the women’s bathroom? Why not just have a transgender bathroom?”

- **Open the conversation in a non-threatening way:** “Hey, I heard you speaking about trans people and I was wondering if I could offer my two cents.” OR “I appreciate that you said that person can be who they want to be, and that is really important.”
- **Relate in and correct:** “I heard you struggling to remember how to refer to that person you were talking about, I know this might be new information and is a lot to take in, but if someone identifies as a woman, they are a woman. And if they’ve asked us to refer to them with she/her pronouns we need to respect that. So if we are talking about Ms. Snow then we need to say, “What if *she* was in the bathroom?”
- **Expand on the info if you feel they will accept more info:** “It would be pretty discriminatory if we said that trans people had to use a particular “transgender bathroom”. That would basically amount to outing anyone who is transgender every time they need to use the bathroom. We need to respect all people’s right to use the bathroom that fits their identity. And, in an ideal world we’d have lots of “all gender bathrooms” that people of all gender identities - cis, trans, queer, etc.. could all feel good about using. Just like with anyone, there is big range of wants/needs for trans people. Some people do feel more comfortable being around people of their same gender identity in a restroom so as a trans man they may feel safest in the men’s restroom. In other cases, some trans people may prefer using an all gender or gender-neutral bathroom. But sometimes that option isn’t available. So it is important that if someone identifies as a man we make him feel safe being in a men’s room and if someone identifies as a woman, we make her feel that it is safe for her to be in the women’s restroom.”



3. You walk into an empty classroom and find a group of students watching *Orange is the New Black* on a laptop while they wait for class to begin. You overhear one of the students say, “Laverne Cox is hot. Do you think her breasts are real? And what about down there? Think she still has her junk? Do all trans people have sex changes? ”

- **Open the conversation in a non-judgemental, but serious way:** “Hi. It sounds like you all are doing some research. I understand you have questions and are curious, but before you start talking about someone’s body think about what it would feel like to you if someone was making comments about your body or asking about your genitals. Ask yourself, why do you want to know the answer to those questions? Does it really matter?”
- **Address the questions and correct the invasive nature of them :** “That being said, I can share some thoughts with you. Rather than speaking about a specific person or specific body parts, we can talk in more general terms. When someone identifies as transgender it means that their gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Some people who identify as transgender transition. This can mean any number of things. People who transition socially typically change their name and/or pronouns and ask that you recognize their identity as a gender other than what they were assigned at birth. So for example, someone may have been assigned female at birth but now uses the pronouns he/him or they/them. And, they may have changed their name. They can transition without taking hormones or having gender affirming surgery. Others transition with surgeries and/or hormones. Though you may want to know how a person has transitioned, what their body looks like, what changes they have gone through, this is private and is not appropriate for you to ask about or speculate about. Imagine if someone was asking you about your genitals, body hair, voice pitch, etc...
- A good ally thinks about why they want to ask a question. If it is simply curiosity, try Google or YouTube. There are tons of resources out there to teach you about the physical changes that occur and you shouldn’t expect a trans person to share their personal body narrative with you unless they volunteer it. It is great though if you engage with people about their lives just as you would any other person. But before you ask any question, it’s really important to get consent to ask about a person’s life or transition. For example, you can ask, “Is it okay to ask you a question about your transition?” If they say yes, a great one is, “How’s it going with your co-workers now that you’re transitioning?” Or, “How are you doing?”, Or, “Is there anything I can do to support you?”
- **Talk about the limits of what we know and should talk about:** So for example, “Laverne Cox was assigned male at birth. We know now that Laverne did not identify as male and transitioned to female. That’s actually all we know. And really that’s all it means to be transgender. Surgery and hormones are options that some people have but not all people who identify as transgender undergo surgery or take hormones. Some don’t because they do not want to or feel it is right for them, others face barriers such as cost, parental consent, legal, etc... Are there other questions about Laverne Cox or trans issues in general that you want to talk about? I am really excited that you want to engage on this stuff, I’d just rather we talk about issues other than a person’s body.”