

# Why Pronouns Matter



**Pronouns are the first step in creating a more equitable environment for not only LGBTQ+ adults, but all people as they age. Pronouns indicate something about a person's personal identity and are important in making people feel welcome, heard, and understood. Respectful use of pronouns moves us into the direction of listening without judgement and moving further toward a sense of belonging.**

## Honoring the uniqueness of every person.

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Here are three areas where pronouns matter in the places and spaces that we all age in and occupy.



### COMMUNITY

Embracing new language and symbols saves lives.



### WORKPLACE

How can you create space for all people in the workplace?



### EVERY DAY

Taking steps to create more equitable spaces impacts the way we all age.

## Community

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Pronouns are a valuable tool in being able to respect and recognize the humanity of others. In community, pronouns are important because using them affirms or reaffirms shared histories, courage, and acts of resilience. New terms can be like learning a new language. It takes time, and a commitment to accepting that you may not always get it right. Learning from those in your family, community, and social circles fosters a greater sense of belonging.

Terms like "*non-binary*" describing a gender identity that is neither female or male, or identities outside traditional concepts of male or female, and symbols like the *Transgender* symbol are all important pieces of identity for entire communities. We encourage coffee shops, bookstores, and businesses to incorporate these symbols in storefront windows or advertising to designate a safe space free from harm. Using pronouns, additional terms, and symbols can change and save lives.

# Workplace

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In the workplace, acknowledging gender pronouns can come in many forms. One way is in speaking to leadership to suggest that everyone add their pronouns to their Zoom profiles and email signatures. Doing this creates a pathway to incorporating equity into your workplace culture, making the workplace a space where LGBTQ+ members of your team feel comfortable to share their own.

Another way to increase a sense of belonging is to share your pronouns when meeting someone new (e.g., a stakeholder, partner, client, etc.) for the first time. For example, “Hi, my name is Lina Garcia, and my pronouns are she/her, nice to meet you.” Having frequent conversations with your leaders, company/organization’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion officer, liaison, or Employee Resource Group (ERG) leads will help encourage the adoption of these concepts to make the workplace a place for everyone.

# Every day

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Recognizing the importance of pronouns and utilizing them with respect is part of a larger conversation around Allyship – when a non-LGBTQ+ person shows support for LGBTQ+ people and advocates for equality. However, we ask you to support a reimagined view, as well: Allyship is a strategic title used by individuals who have: 1) *Been welcomed into the LGBTQ+ community as an ally*, and 2) *Acted as collaborators and advocates in promoting equity and justice in the workplace through personal relationships and public acts of advocacy*.

Exploring our own allyship is something we can do every day:

- ▶ Commit to providing your pronouns when introducing yourself to someone new;
- ▶ Educate yourself on issues impacting the LGBTQ+ community, especially as they get older and needs may change;
- ▶ Facilitate a deeper level of self-awareness and recognize your privilege; and
- ▶ Acknowledge that privilege is a resource that can be used for good.

**Pronouns are the first step in...**



**Acknowledging shared histories.**



**Being open to new forms of expression.**



**Creating safe spaces for all.**



*This equity in action tool was made possible by working in partnership with SAGE. To learn more about SAGE and their work to bridge generations, please visit: [sageusa.org](https://sageusa.org)*

## References

- ▶ Tsedale M. Melaku, Angie Beeman, David C. Smith, and W. Brad Johnson. Be a Better Ally. *Harvard Business Review*. 2020; <https://hbr.org/2020/11/be-a-better-ally>. Accessed June 23, 2023.
- ▶ Matthew Shepard Foundation. LGBTQ+ Terms and Symbols Glossary. <https://www.matthewshepard.org/resources/lgbtq-terms-and-symbols-glossary/>. Accessed June 23, 2023.