

# THIS IS WHAT A WOMAN LOOKS LIKE



**SOLIDARITY**



**WORKBOOK**

# INTRODUCTION: CELEBRATING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A WOMAN, NOW AND ALWAYS

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**LGBT Foundation is the UK's largest health and wellbeing charity for LGBTQ+ people. We've been championing our mission of Queer Hope & Joy since 1975.**

This Is What a Woman Looks Like is LGBT Foundation's bold new campaign celebrating the strength, beauty, and diversity of women everywhere.

From billboards across the high streets of our cities to the timelines of your favourite social feeds, this campaign is a visible, proud declaration that all women - trans women, lesbian and bisexual women, women of colour, disabled women, older women, working-class women, migrant women, and many more - of all shapes, sizes and walks of life - deserve to be seen, heard, and celebrated.







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# THERE ARE AS MANY WAYS OF BEING A WOMAN AS THERE ARE WOMEN IN THE WORLD.

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**There is so much that unites all women: our shared joys, our unique experiences, and the challenges we face in a patriarchal world.**

These are often increased and impacted by our other identities such as race, sexuality, and disabilities. We are all multifaceted people who go beyond a simple sentence summarising womanhood. A rigid, simplistic definition both limits and reduces our womanhood.



## A woman is someone who identifies as a woman.

Many women are **cisgender** (often written as cis), and this means the gender they were assigned at birth matches their gender identity.

Some women are **transgender** (often written as trans), and this means that the gender they were assigned at birth didn't match their gender identity.



**CIS WOMEN AND TRANS  
WOMEN ARE WOMEN -  
IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.**



## WHY DO WE USE TERMS LIKE ‘WOMEN AND PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE’ AND ‘WOMEN AND PREGNANT PEOPLE’ RATHER THAN SIMPLY SAYING ‘WOMEN’?

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### **Not everyone who experiences these things are women.**

In the case of people who menstruate, not all cis women experience periods – they may have had a hysterectomy or other surgical interventions, or may be living with a condition that means they aren’t menstruating. There are also people who menstruate who aren’t women including some trans men and some non-binary people.

Similarly, not all women will go through pregnancy, and not everyone who experiences pregnancy is a woman – some trans men and non-binary people can and do get pregnant.

By using terms such as ‘women and people who menstruate’ or ‘women and pregnant people’, we don’t isolate women who do not menstruate or experience pregnancy, and we include those who aren’t women that do. Using more inclusive language doesn’t exclude anyone. In coming together, women can all put our collective strength towards the shared challenges faced by women – navigating a patriarchal world that creates barriers around healthcare, education, and employment.



**USING MORE INCLUSIVE  
LANGUAGE DOESN'T  
EXCLUDE ANYONE.**

## WHAT ABOUT WOMEN'S SPACES? SHOULDN'T WE PROTECT THOSE?

**There is sometimes talk of women's spaces being 'under threat' and often this focuses on trans women accessing spaces.**

Trans women are women, and can & should access the women's spaces that they need.

The real threat to women's spaces comes from a **lack of funding**. In 2021, the Women's Resource Centre found that **72%** of women-centred organisations reported their income did not increase or it decreased, even though **80%** of the organisations saw an increase in demand for their services in the same period.



There are fewer and fewer spaces for LGBTQ+ women across the UK, both for support and for socialising.



Women's spaces also need protecting from people who want to create divides among women.

A loud minority who claims to protect women's spaces wish to create arguments about who women's spaces are for, splintering women's groups when we should be supporting each other.

Every LGBTQ+ woman's experience is different, but there is so much more that unites us than divides us. The liberation that comes with learning more about who you are, the comfort in realising you are not alone and there are millions of women who feel just like you, **the fun to be found in your spaces and your communities are just some of the joyful things we share as LGBTQ+ women.**







## ACTIVITY: START A CONVERSATION

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**Gather your friends or create a quiet, reflective space for yourself to think about the following prompts and what your response to them might be. Why do you think you've answered this way? What might other people's answers be? What can you learn from these different experiences?**

What does **being a woman** and **womanhood** mean to you?

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What does **feminism** mean to you?  
Would you call yourself a **feminist**?

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What role does **gender** play in your life and/or identity?

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## ACTIVITY: WORD CLOUD

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**Jot down words you automatically associate with the word “woman”.**

**Now think about the terms “womanhood” and “sisterhood” - what are you adding? Are you taking anything away?**

**You can do this activity alone or with a group. What are the common themes? Do you think you would have answered differently at another point in time, or depending on who you’re with?**

WOMAN



## WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT WOMEN?

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**Seek out works by a broad spectrum of women** – books, articles, podcasts, music, films and TV. Diversifying the art and entertainment you enjoy can really expand your world view and bring you an insight into other communities. Share these works with others to celebrate the works of women!



**If you're running a women's space open to all communities of women, put guidelines in place to make sure all women feel included** (see our Safer Spaces Policy for an example). If certain communities of women are missing from your space, explore what you can do to make it a safer space for them.



**Listen to the voices of women on issues that affect them**, particularly when they talk about how their lives are impacted by other aspects of who they are. For example, Black LGBTQ+ women will have different experiences to white LGBTQ+ women, and disabled women will have different experiences to non-disabled women.



**Talk to your friends.** We don't all have knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a woman and how to include all women. Share what you've learnt and call someone in when you need to. Calling someone 'in' rather than calling someone 'out' assumes that a person simply doesn't know why their behaviour might be harmful. This way we can grow and learn together.



**Celebrate women!** Women have always and will always have an incredible impact on the world, and we deserve to celebrate ourselves and each other.



## WHAT ABOUT PRONOUNS?

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**If you're not sure of a person's gender, often you don't really need to know.**

If you are having a conversation with or about a person, it's considered more polite to ask for a person's pronouns. You can ask the person privately

**"How would you like me to refer to you?", or**

**"Can I just check, what pronouns do you use?"**

It is then up to them whether they give you just their pronouns, or tell you more about their gender, but at least you have given them that decision.

**Repeated misgendering or invasive questioning about someone's experience of gender can trigger gender dysphoria. Before you ask any question, check if it is necessary, and do not pressure them to answer.**

If you do need to know their gender, for example if they are a service user at your workplace and you need to complete a demographic form for them, then do so as you would any other sensitive piece of information about a person.

**It is best to ask privately, and perhaps alongside other information you need to collect, in order not to single that aspect of them out as "unusual".**





## WHAT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE?

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**Everyone makes mistakes from time to time, it's just important that you acknowledge them and learn from them, as long as you don't dwell on them.**

It may feel terrible to accidentally use the wrong name or pronouns for someone, but continuing to linger on it or bring it up will only draw attention to it and drag out the discomfort for the person.

**Your best option is to acknowledge it, often privately to yourself, apologise quickly, correct yourself, and move on with the conversation.**

**It's important to respect people's wishes if there are particular nuances about how they wish to be referred to, by you. It may not be different person-to-person.**

People who identify as women, men, trans, non-binary and queer can have a huge variety of experiences within these communities. The most common mistakes are made by assuming that everyone in a group has a shared experience or identifier.

We can't always tell someone's gender just by looking at them, and we know there are more genders than just "man" and "woman". Using they/them pronouns for people as standard before you know their gender or pronouns, or simply by using their name (even if it's repetitive!) can be a useful way to avoid using the wrong pronouns by mistake. It's hard to undo years of your brain gendering people quickly, but it gets much easier to avoid doing it with practice!



**AVOID MAKING  
ASSUMPTIONS -  
IT'S BETTER TO ASK**

## ACTIVITY: IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES

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**Think about your day-to-day life and the spaces you use - your neighbourhood, your workplace, the gym, the supermarket, your GP practice, for example. How inclusive are these spaces? How do ideas of sex, gender, masculinity, femininity, binaries etc. affect these spaces?**

What are some ways in which trans people might be excluded?

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What is one way you could make a space welcoming for all women?

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What is a misconception you've had about someone else?

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## WORKSHOP: SAPPIC SHOWCASE

**The Sapphic Showcase is one of LGBT Foundation's most beloved events, a night celebrating the creativity of LGBTQ+ women and sapphics. Could you also create an inclusive event in your friend circle, neighbourhood, community or company to platform music, comedy, poetry, dance and more?**

**...why not make it happen?**

Imagine you're partnering with a venue or sponsor to bring the cost down. What are some of your non-negotiables?

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What would you name your event?

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Who would be some of your dream performers?

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Would this be a women-only space?  
Why/why not?

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## ALLIES: DO...

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**Acknowledge your form(s) of privilege**

**Ask for pronouns if you need to know**

**Create space for women and  
marginalised groups**

**Educate yourself about different  
identities and experiences**

**Listen and acknowledge an experience**

**Ask how you can support them**

## ALLIES: DON'T...

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**React defensively if challenged/corrected**

**Assume someone's gender or pronouns**

**Speak on behalf of women and  
marginalised groups**

**Expect those with different identities  
and experiences to teach you**

**Compare or vaguely relate it to yourself**

**Offer unsolicited advice**

## GLOSSARY

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**AFAB:** Acronym for “Assigned Female at Birth”.

**AMAB:** Short for “Assigned Male at Birth”.

**CIS:** Short for “cisgender”, meaning someone who is the same gender as the gender they were assigned at birth. “Cis” is Latin for “on the same side as”, whereas “trans” is Latin for “crossing from one side to another”, or other kind of movement to somewhere.

**CISSEXISM:** The assumption that everyone in society is cis, and society being structured around this idea.

**CROSSDRESSER:** Someone who dresses in clothes different to their gender. They may not necessarily identify themselves as the gender they dress as, or they may do for the period they are dressed in that gender. They may also use terms such as “drag king” and “drag queen”, though often these terms reflect more eccentric dress. They may or may not identify themselves as trans.

**DYSPHORIA:** The discomfort a trans and/or non-binary person may experience from society’s expectation of gender presentation and roles. Someone might experience dysphoria from a range of areas, including parts of their body, their voice, receiving incorrect gendered pronouns, and other perceived discrepancies between themselves and society’s idea of how they should be.

**GENDER CRITIC:** A term used to describe anti-trans activists who believe sex is biological and irrefutable, so they wish to exclude trans people (particularly by excluding trans women from women’s spaces).

**GENDER EXPRESSION:** How a person chooses to outwardly present their gender, through things like their clothing, pronouns, name, behaviour, hairstyle and voice.

**GENDER NON-CONFORMING:** When someone’s appearance deviates from societal or

conventional expectations of the gender binary. This does not necessarily mean they are trans or non-binary.

**INTERSECTIONALITY:** A framework that addresses multiple types of discrimination (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality) and how they interact.

**INTERSEX:** An intersex person is someone who has sex characteristics that don't necessarily reflect a male/female binary.

**MARGINALISED:** A term to describe communities that may have societal disadvantages placed upon them, often based on their identity or social class. People may belong to more than one marginalised community.

**NON-BINARY:** A term to describe someone who identifies as a gender outside of the binary identities of "man" and "woman". This might mean they experience a fluid or fixed gender, multiple genders, a different gender, or no gender.

**TRANS:** An inclusive term for anyone whose gender identity does not completely match the gender that they were assigned at birth.

**TRANSITION:** The process through which a person aligns closer to their gender identity. Types of transition include social transition (e.g. dressing with a different gender expression), legal transition (e.g. getting a name and gender markers changed on identity documents) and medical transition (e.g. hormone replacement therapy, surgery).

**TRANS MAN:** A man who is trans, and was assigned female at birth (AFAB).

**TRANS WOMAN:** A woman who is trans, and was assigned male at birth (AMAB).

**TRANSPHOBIA:** Hatred, fear, or discrimination directed towards someone or a group of people because they are or are perceived to be trans.



## ...AND REMEMBER...

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**Identity can be a confusing thing to discuss and navigate. There are so many different experiences and opinions, and you might feel overwhelmed or afraid of making a mistake. Here are some simple key takeaways to keep in mind.**

**Trans women are women**

**Identifying as a “woman” doesn’t necessarily mean using she/her pronouns**

**Non-binary people can have varied forms of gender expression**

**Transphobia is harmful for everyone**

**Inclusion must be intersectional**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT...

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### LGBT Foundation:

[www.lgbt.foundation](http://www.lgbt.foundation)

[www.lgbt.foundation/ThisIsWhatAWomanLooksLike](http://www.lgbt.foundation/ThisIsWhatAWomanLooksLike)

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### Mermaids:

[www.mermaidsuk.org.uk](http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk)

### The Proud Trust:

[www.theproudtrust.org](http://www.theproudtrust.org)

### FFLAG:

[www.fflag.org.uk](http://www.fflag.org.uk)

### Supporting BAME Trans People:

<https://www.gires.org.uk/inclusivity-supporting-bame-trans-people/>

### Including Non-Binary People:

For Service Providers and Employees: <https://www.scottishtrans.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Non-binary-guidance.pdf>

### Transforming Outcomes and other research by LGBT Foundation:

<https://lgbt.foundation/publications>

# WE EMPOWER LGBTQ+ PEOPLE TO REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL, EVERY DAY.

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