

FLIP script

the

TRANSGENDER¹ IN THE WORKPLACE

Actions reflect workplace culture. Even with the best intentions, our actions can reinforce negative stereotypes around gender identity. Be mindful that our actions matter. Act in ways that ensure people know they are valued, feel safe to be their authentic selves at work, and have a sense of belonging as trusted, contributing members of their teams.

DISHONORING ←

→ HONORING

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"AT LEAST
YOU LOOK LIKE
A REAL WOMAN
NOT A MAN,
IN A DRESS."

HOW IT'S DISHONORING
Using words like "real" or "normal" discredits transgender individuals' authenticity. Comments such as these also suggest that transgender people must look a certain way to be acceptable to society.²

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
Avoid using terms or making judgments that attempt to qualify one's gender identity or expression such as "real" or "normal."

Recognize and accept that each transgender person will present in their own unique way.

INSENSITIVE ←

→ SENSITIVE

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"HAVE YOU HAD
THE SURGERY
YET?"

HOW IT'S INSENSITIVE
Not all transgender individuals want to transition from one gender to another by means of surgery, or want to achieve a binary male/female aesthetic.³

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
Allow people to express themselves freely without imposing on them the need to be either "fully" male or female.

Refraining from asking intrusive questions or making comments that generalize the transgender experience helps reduce micro-aggressions that can take an emotional toll on transgender individuals.

NOT CONFIDENTIAL ←

→ CONFIDENTIAL

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"WHAT WAS YOUR
NAME AT BIRTH?"

HOW IT'S NOT CONFIDENTIAL
Some transgender individuals prefer to identify by their gender identity rather than labeling themselves as trans. Probing questions that reference a person's identity pre-transition can challenge a transgender individual's ability to fully embody their current gender identity.⁴

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
Use people's chosen name and other stated forms of address.

Demonstrate **HUMILITY** by accepting that your views may be incomplete and showing your willingness to hear other points of view.

DISEMPOWERING ←

→ EMPOWERING

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU AS A CHILD TO MAKE YOU THIS WAY?"

HOW IT'S DISEMPOWERING
This statement implies that transgender people "have something wrong with them" by suggesting they must have some kind of physical or psychological defect.⁵

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
Accept those who identify as transgender for who they are, acknowledging that every individual's gender identity and expression is deeply personal and varied.

Dishonoring, invalidating, or otherwise being insensitive to the experiences of transgender people can contribute to feelings of disempowerment.

INVALIDATING ←

→ COURAGEOUS

WHAT PEOPLE SAY
"THIS IS JUST A PHASE..."

HOW IT'S INVALIDATING
This statement undermines the intensity of emotions and challenges experienced by transgender people. It does not signal an environment of safety for them to be themselves or share the truth of their experiences with you and others.⁶

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
Always affirm transgender people's experiences, and stay away from language that (unintentionally) minimizes the realities of their lived experiences.

Actively listening to, validating, and supporting transgender individuals are important skills for an inclusive leader and ally in fostering a sense of empowerment.

SELF-REFLECT
Assess your thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs to understand your **unconscious biases** and assumptions.

ENGAGE IN COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION
Inquire across differences with sensitivity and humility to expand your knowledge and build bridges. Avoid making assumptions rooted in stereotypes, biases, and myths.

CONTINUE TO EDUCATE YOURSELF
Learn more about issues that affect transgender individuals and how you can be an ally. Catalyst and many other organizations have resources that can support you in this process.

KEEP A GROWTH MINDSET
Remain open to different experiences and perspectives, even when they challenge you or push you outside your comfort zone. Recognize that your learning is a journey.

SOURCES:

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2. Elijah C. Nealy, "The Presentation of Trans in Everyday Life: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Gendered Performance," (PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 2014).
3. Debra Davis, "[Transgender Issues in the Workplace: HRD's Newest Challenge/Opportunity](#)," *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 11, no. 1 (February 2009): p. 109-120. Mustafa Bilgehan Ozturka and Ahu Tatli, "[Gender Identity Inclusion in the Workplace: Broadening Diversity Management Research and Practice Through the Case of Transgender Employees in the UK](#)," *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 27, no. 8 (2016): p. 781-802.
4. Debra Davis, "[Transgender Issues in the Workplace: HRD's Newest Challenge/Opportunity](#)," *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 11, no. 1 (February 2009): p. 109-120. GLAAD "[Tips for Allies of Transgender People](#)."
5. Kevin L. Nadal, Chassitty N. Whitman, Lindsey S. Davis, Tanya Erazo, and Kristin C. Davidoff, "[Microaggressions Toward Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Genderqueer People: A Review of the Literature](#)," *The Journal of Sex Research*, vol. 53, no. 4-5 (2016).
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RESEARCH PARTNERS:

Altria Group, Bank of America, Bloomberg, BMO Financial Group, The Boston Consulting Group (BCG), Cargill, Incorporated, Chevron Corporation, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, Dell Inc., EY, IBM Corporation, Kimberly-Clark Corporation, McDonald's Corporation, Merck & Co., Inc., Sodexo, Uber Technologies, Inc., UPS, Verizon Communications Inc.



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