

# Learning About Sexual Identity

Part of a person's sexual identity is their feelings of sexual attraction toward others. This is often called **sexual orientation**.

There are different types of attractions.

- Many people are sexually attracted to people of a different gender—boys to girls and girls to boys. The term for this type of attraction is **heterosexual** or **straight**.
- Some people are sexually attracted to people of the same gender—boys to boys or girls to girls. The term for this type of attraction is **gay** or **lesbian**.
- Some people are sexually attracted to more than one gender—a boy may be attracted to both girls and boys, or a girl may be attracted to both boys and girls. One term for this is **bisexual**.
- Some people use the term **pansexual**, which refers to sexual attraction that is not limited to a particular gender.
- Some people don't feel sexually attracted to others. One term for this is **asexual**. This is normal and OK.

Another part of a person's sexual identity is how they identify their gender. How people see themselves in relation to being a man/boy, a woman/girl, a blend of both or neither is called **gender identity**.

- People are usually assigned a sex at birth by a health care provider based on their genitals, or external reproductive anatomy. They are usually assigned male or female.
- Many people who are assigned male identify as a boy or man, and many people who are assigned female identify as a girl or woman. **Cisgender** is the term used to describe a person whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Some people have gender identities that are different than the sex they were assigned at birth. The term for this type of gender identity is **transgender**. A transgender person might identify as a boy/man, girl/woman or have their own unique term for their gender.
- People who identify as **non-binary** don't define their gender as either man or woman.
- How people present or show their gender to the world through such things as clothes, hairstyle and how they act is called **gender expression**.
- Some people identify as **gender fluid**. They may choose to express themselves as different genders at different times. Or they may prefer to express themselves as no particular gender at all.
- **Gender roles** are ideas about how boys/men or girls/women should behave. These ideas can be influenced by a person's family, culture, peers and society. They can change over time.
- Sometimes people feel comfortable acting in ways that fit common gender roles. At other times, people can find gender roles limiting or frustrating. They may feel pressured or bullied to act in certain ways or do certain things that don't feel right to them.

