

The Impact of Pronouns

*"When a trans woman is called a man, that is an act of violence."
— Laverne Cox, Creating Change 2014*

Cassie Brighter wrote an article titled *I Wasn't 'Annoyed' At Your Misgendering Me* (Be Yourself, 2018). Below are some of her words on the impact of pronouns:

...At every event — every gathering, someone would eventually misgender me.

At one point it got so bad that I stopped going to events in general. What'd be the point? I was no longer enjoying [the events]; I'd be cringing, awaiting the inevitable "he" or "him."

For a trans woman, being misgendered is not an annoyance. It is a direct blow to the heart, a jolt of negative current to the brain. Have you ever had the dream that you're at a public event and suddenly you realize that you're naked? That. Times one thousand...

When you misgender me [especially repeatedly], you're saying:

- 1. That you think you know me better than I know myself.*
- 2. That you'd rather hurt me repeatedly than change the way you speak about me.*
- 3. That my sense of safety is not important to you.*
- 4. That my identity isn't real and shouldn't be acknowledged.*
- 5. That you want to teach everyone around you to disrespect me.*
- 6. That offending me is fine if it makes you feel more comfortable.*
- 7. That you can hear me talking, but you're not really listening.*
- 8. That me being who I truly am is an inconvenience to you.*
- 9. That you'd prefer it if I stopped being honest with you.*
- 10. That you're not an ally, a friend, or someone I can trust...*

Using the right pronouns helps:

1. People feel affirmed and valued.
2. Prevent harm, both physically and mentally.
3. Signal that you value this person's sense of safety highly.
4. People feel like they can be more honest with you and that there is potential for trust.

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Common Pronouns:

She/Her/Hers

He/Him/His

They/Them/Theirs

Xe/Xem/Xyrs

Name only

And there are more!

You can practice pronouns online at <https://www.minus18.org.au/pronouns-app/>. This is especially helpful if you are working on improving your use of any particular set of pronouns.

SHE	HE	THEY	XE	NAME	_____ sing(s) well.
Her	Him	Them	Xem	Jamie	Give _____ the flowers.
Her	His	Their	Xyr	Jamie's	Is that _____ coat?
Hers	His	Theirs	Xyrs	Jamie's	The class is _____.
Herself	Himself	Themselves	Xemself		Cyd will do it _____.

If you accidentally misgender someone,

1. Correct yourself
 - a. If you apologize, make it a short and sweet “sorry.”
2. Move on.
3. Make an active effort to not misgender them again.
 - a. You can practice pronouns online at <https://www.minus18.org.au/pronouns-app/>

If you find yourself repeatedly misgendering someone without intending to, reflect how you are seeing and thinking of that person. Are you seeing them the way they see themselves?

Contact Us:

www.pridecentervt.org | (802) 860-7812 | education@pridecentervt.org
For SafeSpace Anti-Violence Program's Survivor Support Line call (802) 863-0003



Pride Center of Vermont
255 South Champlain St. Suite #12
Burlington, Vermont 05401

