

# How Can I Be An Ally to the Transgender and Intersex Communities?

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If you are asking the question, you've already demonstrated the first step in being an ally to often invisible and/or marginalized communities. The following points are suggestions rather than rules to be followed. As with anything in our social world, individuals have different preferences, and those preferences should be respected. With that said, here is a list of suggestions that you might consider:

- ① Although the trans and intersex communities share a lot of similarities, it is important to remember that they are also separate communities.
- ① Don't assume you can tell if someone is intersex or transgender. When addressing or speaking about any group of people, speak as though someone in the room might be TG or IS because, well, they might be!
- ① Do not tolerate anti-trans or anti-intersex remarks or humor in public spaces.
- ① Report all anti-trans or anti-intersex harassment to the proper authorities.
- ① Display positive materials for trans and intersex persons. If possible, display relevant posters or flyers (i.e. Hillcat Ally sticker).
- ① Respect the confidentiality of anyone who comes out to you as trans and/or intersex. If your sense is that the person is "out" to everyone, ask just to be sure. "Is there anyone with whom you prefer I not share this information?"
- ① Deal with feelings first. If a person is coming out or dealing with painful experiences, you can help tremendously just by listening.
- ① Use the pronouns of the gender they feel themselves to be. For instance, if the person identifies as male, use 'him/he', regardless of what kind of body the person may have been born into. If you are not sure, just ask! This is a sign of respect and support.
- ① Do your best to be respectful and call the person by the name they request. Although it can be hard to refer to a person by a new name, a gender questioning person will usually notice and appreciate your concerted effort to respect their wishes.
- ① An intersex person may have undergone painful surgeries without their consent that can have permanent effects on their life (i.e. reduced or absent sexual function, increased susceptibility to infections, etc.). Realize that because of these possibilities, an intersex person may not want to hear that infant genital surgeries are 'for the best' or 'necessary', since those judgments may ignore values that they hold dear.
- ① If your family bears or adopts a trans or intersex child, get all the facts before making medical decisions. Seek out support groups, such as [www.aisdsd.org](http://www.aisdsd.org) for intersex children.
- ① Trans and intersex people have usually been targets of violence. This tradition continues today and is often based on the idea that gender is rigid, bi-polar category that cannot be violated. A small but useful way to help change this is to examine

your own ideas of gender stereotypes and challenge those around you to do the same.

Remember: above all, trans and intersex people are individual human beings who deserve respect and understanding.

