

COMING HOME: A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING GENDER & SEXUALITY

Ever feel a little lost in a bunch of terms like sex, gender, and sexual orientation? By learning more about the terms commonly used when talking about the LGBTQIA+ community, we can celebrate everyone's unique journey. Developing a better understanding of this can be the first step in creating a world where everyone feels safe to embrace their identity.



Let us help you understand them via the HOUSE metaphor!

Welcome Home!

Imagine yourself in a fantastic house – it's yours to design and decorate however you like. This house represents your unique identity, and different parts reflect your identity.

Let's explore!

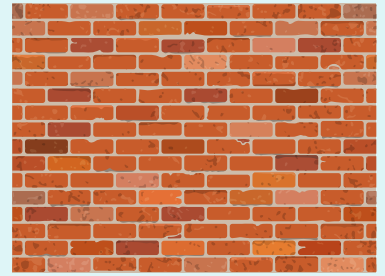
The Land: Biological Sex

This land represents the biological sex that you were assigned at birth, typically classified as male, female, or intersex based on the genitals you were born with and the sex chromosomes you have. Just like the land can be a starting point for the style of your house, biological sex is one aspect of your identity, but it does not define who you are, your gender or gender identity.



The Walls: Gender Identity

This is our internal sense of our gender - which may or may not align with the sex we were assigned at birth. The walls of the house can be painted in different colors or decorated however we like, just like our gender expression isn't limited by biological sex.



For instance, a transgender person (as opposed to a cisgender person) is someone whose gender identity differs from what is usually associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. The term non-binary (similar terms include genderqueer or genderfluid) refers to a spectrum of gender identities for individuals who don't identify as exclusively male or female.

The Rooms: Sexual Orientation

The Rooms inside the house represent our sexual orientation. This refers to who we are attracted to romantically or sexually – men, women, or neither. We can have different preferences for inviting people into our emotional rooms.



Imagine these rooms as the people you invite in for special connections. Who makes your heart flutter? These rooms can be for different types of guests, depending on your sexual orientation:

Straight: If you're straight, you're primarily attracted to people of the opposite sex or gender identity.



Gay or Lesbian: If you're gay (men attracted to men) or lesbian (women attracted to women), your rooms might be designed to feel welcoming to people of the same sex.



Bisexual: If you're bisexual, you're attracted to people of more than one gender identity or sex.

Pansexual or Omnisexual: These are similar orientations where you're attracted to people regardless of their gender identity. Your rooms might be decorated to reflect this openness and celebrate the unique qualities of each person you invite.

Asexual: If you fall on the spectrum of asexuality, you may not experience sexual attraction. These rooms may become a space for you to connect with yourself and others in non-sexual ways.

Like gender identity, sexual orientation also exists on a spectrum rather than categories.



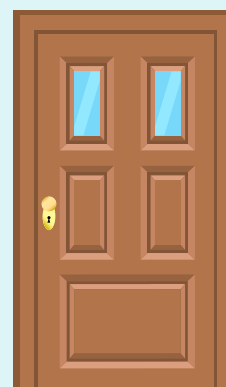
The Furniture: Gender Expression

The furniture inside the house represents our gender expression. This is how we outwardly show our gender identity through things like clothing, hairstyle and behavior. Just like furniture styles can vary, our gender expression exists on a spectrum viz. masculine, feminine, androgynous, or anything in between.



The Door: Coming Out

The front door of the house represents "coming out." This is the process of sharing your sexual orientation or gender identity with others. You decide who enters your house and when – coming out is a personal choice.

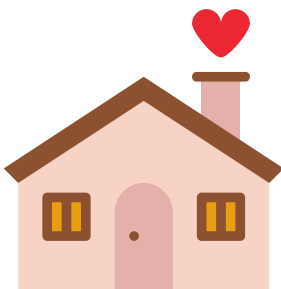


Now, What If Someone Tells You Your Home, Isn't Yours?

Imagine you've poured your heart and soul into building your safe space, your house. The walls make you feel warm, the rooms reflect the inner you, and you've created a haven that reflects who you truly are. Now, picture someone knocking on your door, waltzing right in, and declaring, "This whole thing is wrong! You shouldn't have these colors, this furniture is all messed up, and frankly, this house shouldn't even exist!"



"Now, imagine that someone's trying to tell you the very core of who you are – who you love, how you see yourself – is just plain wrong. This is the harsh reality that many LGBTQIA+ folk are forced to face in society, where heterosexual and cisgender identities and experiences are seen as the ideal, and anyone who does not fit into these definitions is considered 'wrong'. It makes you question everything, even the things you love most about yourself. It's exhausting, isolating, and makes you want to hide the beautiful parts of yourself that make you, well, **YOU**.



But here's the important thing to remember: This is **YOUR** house. You built it with love, and it reflects who you are at your core. No one has the right to tell you how to decorate it or who gets to live inside. As allies of the LGBTQIA+ community, we must work towards a world where every individual can feel safe in their own homes - *i.e. to embrace their identities fully and freely.*

If you, or someone you know is looking to seek professional help, reach out to us at **The Mood Space** <https://www.themoodspace.com/getstarted> and our Care Team will get back to you within 24 hours.

Not looking for professional help just yet? We understand, keep browsing through our Care Space tools and explore our self-help handouts and worksheets to navigate mental health-related challenges in a better manner.