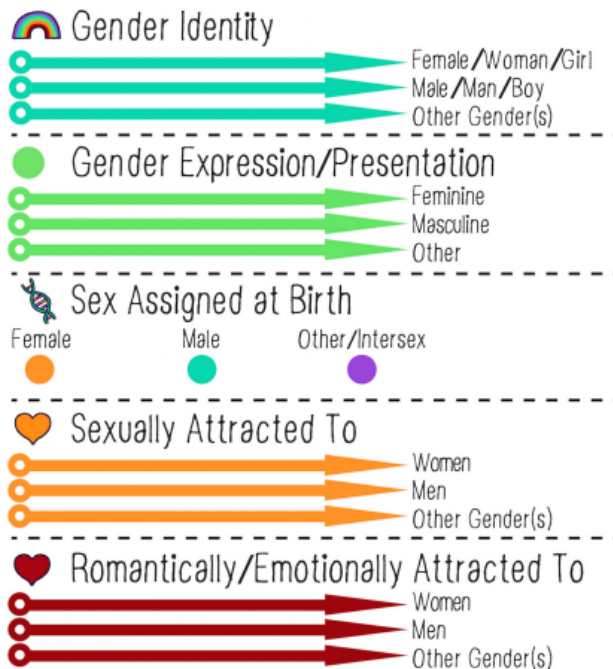
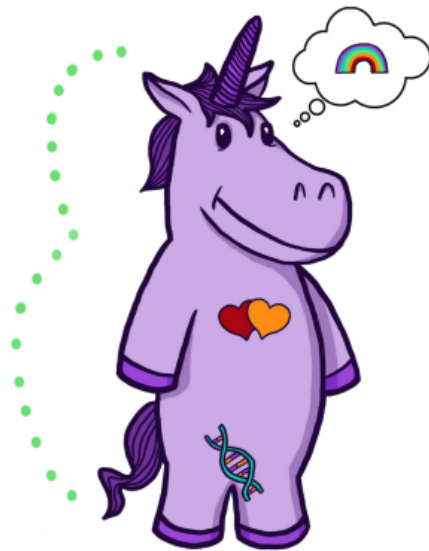


Discussing Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

According to recent research, there is growing evidence that autistic individuals are more likely to identify as non-heterosexual and have a higher prevalence of gender diversity than their non-autistic peers. The Gender Unicorn is one tool you can use to have a discussion with your youth about topics such as sexual orientation and gender identity.


The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan



Gender identity is not just two gender expressions or sexes, man/male/masculine or woman/female/feminine. There is biological sex, or the sex you were born with, as defined by your physiology and biology. There is gender identity, which is the sex you identify with. It can be the same (known as cisgender) or different from the sex you were born with. Gender expression is the outward appearance of your gender identity. The arrows on the Unicorn in each of the sections allow you and your youth to discuss where on each arrow they feel they are. If they feel solidly one gender identity or expression, they can fill out the circle on the left. If not, they can indicate on the arrow where they feel they fall.

Sexual orientation is defined as who you are sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to. Some may be sexually attracted to one gender while romantically or emotionally attracted to another, as depicted by separate lines for both on the Unicorn. Your youth may have a definite opinion as to which gender they are attracted to. Or they still may be trying to figure it out, or not have any sexual or romantic interests at this time. It's important for them to know that this can be a confusing time and if you are comfortable, let them know you are willing to talk with them about their questions. They can figure out their feelings on their own timeline.

If your youth has indicated that they are not heterosexual or cisgender, it might be a good idea to connect them with a therapist or organization that can give them support and belonging. According to [Spectrum News](#), “belonging to any kind of minority group makes a person more susceptible to mental health problems, because of a phenomenon known as ‘minority stress.’ For a person who is both neuro- and gender-diverse, belonging to several minority groups can intensify those problems.”

References:

<https://paautism.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/SexualOrientationAndGenderIdentity.pdf>

<https://www.spectrumnews.org/news/gender-and-sexuality-in-autism-explained>

∟