OUR BODIES OURSELVES TODAY
AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

Why do we use the term "women, girls, and gender-expansive people"?

Our Bodies Ourselves Today provides information and resources for people of all ages and identities. "Gender-expansive people" is an umbrella term that includes all whose gender identity, experience, and/or expression lies outside the typical expectations of society. Gender-expansive people may identify as female or male. They may also identify with more than one gender (gender fluid) or with no gender (agender). Some of the identities that may fall under the "gender-expansive" umbrella include bigender, boi, butch-of-center, butch, demiboy, demigirl, fem, femme-of-center, femme, gender-nonconforming, gender-variant, genderqueer, intersex, non-binary, pangender, questioning, stud, trans, transgender, trans-feminine, trans-masculine, two spirit, womxn, as well as a wide range of culturally-specific terms such as muxe (Mexico) or burnesha (Albania).

For over 50 years, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* has been "A Book by and For Women." It is still deeply woman-centered and will remain so. At the same time, Our Bodies Ourselves Today is expanding the tent to include people with various gender identities or expressions other than "woman" who use our resources. For example, many trans men will find relevant information about menstruation, reproduction, and heart health. It's critical to our mission to include gender-expansive people. This inclusivity doesn't in any way marginalize cis women. Rather, we aim to enlarge the collective "we" in "Ourselves."

The language people use to convey identities can be very personal and may be a sensitive issue. Gender-related terminology is also in flux and varies by context and by individual. It would be impossible to list all the gender identities that are important to people who might use Our Bodies Ourselves Today. "Women, girls, and gender-expansive people" is our phrase of art to include as wide a range as possible.

Pregnant People?

A closely related issue that we continue to grapple with is how to refer to female reproduction and sexual anatomy. After all, not everyone who menstruates, gets pregnant, gives birth, has an abortion, etc., is a woman. Trans men and non-binary people do all of these things as well. Understanding the medical and psychosocial harm that comes to gender-expansive people when their existence is erased by binary language, we use gender-inclusive language whenever possible. To this end, we often use non-binary terminology (e.g. "menstruators") when referring to people who have specific biological functions.

However, the vast majority of people who experience these functions identify as women and girls, the overwhelming majority of the clinical, public health, and social science research on these issues has focused specifically on women. The legal regime in the U.S. is organized so that women suffer unequal treatment. In many cases laws that criminalize abortion specifically target women, are constructed around gender binaries, and are rooted in patriarchy and colonization.

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Many feminists use terms such as "people with uteruses," aiming to be gender inclusive. While some of our resources use these terms, they can be problematic, just as binary language can be. Misogynist men and powerful social institutions have tried to reduce women to our sexual and reproductive functions since the dawn of patriarchy, denying our full humanity. Terminology such as "people with vaginas" can smack of this kind of reductionism. Many women experience it as objectifying, offensive, and even triggering to refer to us by our vaginas.

So, Our Bodies Ourselves Today uses both gender inclusive and gendered language, depending on context. We work hard to be as sensitive and inclusive as possible, recognizing that not everyone will be satisfied. While it's all but inevitable, we hate the thought that any of our users might feel unseen, marginalized, or otherwise upset by it. So let us reiterate here that, whatever your gender identification, we see you and we built this site with you in mind. You belong here. Welcome!

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