



## **Building Bridges Initiative (BBI)**

### **Why are Pronouns Important?**

July 2022

## What are pronouns?

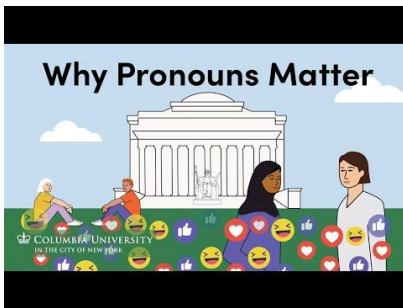
Pronouns are used in place of a proper noun (like someone's name). We use pronouns most often when referring to someone without using their name, like he/him, she/her, or they/them.

In English, "he" and "she" are our most used pronouns, and they specifically refer to a person's gender. For queer, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and transgender people, these pronouns may not fit, can create discomfort, and can cause stress and anxiety.

Pronouns are one of the ways we portray our identities (if you'd like to learn more about these identities check out this resource: <https://www.genderbread.org/>). When someone asks you to use their pronouns, they are asking for you to respect their identity.

## Why are pronouns important?

Honoring someone's pronouns demonstrates respect and affirms one's identity. It's important not to assume someone's pronouns. If you aren't sure, use reflective listening, ask respectfully, or simply stick to their name! If you accidentally misgender someone (it happens!), make sure to give a genuine apology without defensiveness, swiftly move on without making it a big deal, and commit to getting it right moving forward. Click [here](#) or on the video below to hear more about why pronouns matter.



## Commonly used pronouns:

Pronoun	Use	Variations
He/Him	You're familiar with this one!	His, Himself
She/Her	You're familiar with this one!	Hers, Herself
They/Them	Yes, this can be used for to a singular person.	Theirs, themselves
Ze (or Zie)	Zee (like "see" with a "Z").	Can also be spelled as xe
Name	Whatever their name is!	Some folks don't want to use pronouns at all and will ask you to refer to them by their name alone.

More pronouns and their uses are described further here: <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/pronouns-inclusive-language>

Here are some additional resources for continued learning:

- <https://pronouns.org/>
- [Human Rights Campaign](#)
- [GLAAD](#)