

[Gender Spectrum](#) was asked to participate in the [Simmons College Online MSW Program's campaign](#) to promote educational conversation about the Transgender community.

The campaign asks participants to offer perspectives on “what TO ask and what NOT to ask trans*people.”

Gender Spectrum enters this dialogue as an organization whose mission is to create gender inclusive spaces for **all** youth. Daily, we observe the creative and growing ways that youth are personalizing their own sense of gender. So we're turning the Simmons' questions around and offering questions to ask yourself about gender.

Here are a few:

- Growing up, did you think of yourself as a boy, a girl, both, either or in some other way? How did you come to that understanding? When?
- What messages did you receive from those around you about gender? Did those messages make sense to you?
- What's your first memory of gender defining or impacting your life?
- When you were in school, how were students who did not fit into expectations about gender treated in school by other students? By the adults around them? By you?

Why ask yourself questions about gender as part of a campaign to promote education about transgender youth and adults? Because wherever you fall on the gender spectrum, you have a gender story. If we can understand the ways that our conceptions of gender have both privileged and challenged us, we are more likely to be able to promote constructive dialogue about gender in our schools, communities, families, and professions.

The power of looking inward has been evident in the experiences of educators and others who have attended our workshops. After being asked to answer questions like those above and to grapple with their own understanding of gender in individual, interpersonal and structural realms, participants report new insight and commitment to gender inclusiveness. Here are just a few examples:

- A social work intern realized that she internalized message that “boys don't cry” at an early age and that this message influenced her treatment of students as well as family and friends.
- A school principal shared how he had struggled with negative perceptions about men in early childhood professions. As he recalled these experiences, he challenged his staff to ensure that no students would be limited by expectations about their Gender identity or expression.
- An educator shared how they were showing up at school every day without being true to their gender. While this was not a new realization, they found themselves considering more seriously the impact they were having on the students in their classroom who were missing the opportunity to experience diverse gender identities and expressions.
- A coach choked up, remembering a Gender-expansive classmate of his who was bullied in school. He vowed that he would tell his current students about the regret he feels for not standing up for this person in order to encourage them to avoid bullying behavior and to be allies if they observe such behavior.

Don't take our word about the power of asking these kinds of questions. We invite you to [link](#) to our longer list of gender journey questions and answer them for yourself. Share the questions with friends, family and colleagues if you'd like. See what kinds of dialogue emerges.