

TIPS for...

USING GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE In Pregnancy Care

Accurate and inclusive language is important for creating a health care system that is accessible and inviting. People who have a uterus may not identify as women, but can, and do, carry pregnancies. Similarly, a family dynamic may include LGBTQ+ relationships, non-biological caregivers, more than two primary caregivers, and many other unique and important family dynamics.

Understanding the Language

Cis-normativity: The assumption that one's gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth.

Heteronormativity: The assumption that everyone is "naturally" heterosexual, and the privilege that comes with heterosexuality

Gender Identity: One's understanding of themselves in terms of masculinity and femininity or combinations of both. A person's gender identity may determine their pronouns, appearance, and perceptions of self. One's gender identity may be the same or different to their sex.

Inclusive Pregnancy Books:

- Why Did No One Tell Me This?: The Doulas' (Honest) Guide for Expectant Parents by Natalia Hailes and Ash Spivak
- Baby Making for Everybody: Family Building and Fertility for LGBTQ+ and Solo Parents by Marea Goodman and Ray Rachlin
- Transformed by Birth by Britta Bushnell Ph.D.

Why is Language Important?

Language has the potential to sustain stigma and negative stereotypes in society. Non-inclusive language also influences a person's sense of self-worth by making them feel excluded, negatively impacting overall mental health and wellbeing. Moreover, research has shown that non-heteronormative people may experience microaggressions, invalidation, and, discrimination, thus making them more likely to experience psychological distress.

Instead Of:

Try:

- Mothering → Parenting or Child Care
- Mother or Father → Parent, Grown-Up, Responsible Adult
- Wife or Husband → Partner or Significant Other
- Breastfeeding → Chest-feeding, Nursing, or Feeding
- Pregnant Woman → Expecting/Expectant Parent or Pregnant People

REMEMBER!

Gender inclusive language in pregnancy care does not discredit cis-gendered women who become pregnant, but instead functions as an umbrella of language for all people currently pregnant, regardless of gender identity or sex assigned at birth. Moreover, these terms don't necessarily need to be used within your own family, but offer inclusivity when addressing other families where you may not know about the family dynamic.

