It's Perfectly Normal
Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, Gender, and Sexual Health

ROBIE H. HARRIS and MICHAEL EMBERLEY
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PRAISE FOR

It’s Perfectly Normal

An American Library Association Notable Children’s Book
A Booklist Editors’ Choice
A Boston Globe–Horn Book Honor Winner
A Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books Blue Ribbon Winner
A Horn Book Best Book of the Year
A New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing Selection
A New York Times Book Review Notable Book of the Year
A Parenting Reading Magic Award Winner
A Publishers Weekly Best Children’s Book of the Year
A School Library Journal Best Book of the Year

★ “A wonderful guide for young adolescents setting sail on the stormy seas of puberty.”
   — School Library Journal (starred review)

★ “Caring, conscientious, and well-crafted.”
   — Booklist (starred review)

★ “Intelligent, amiable, and carefully researched.”
   — Publishers Weekly (starred review)

★ “One of the most unintimidating and informative sex books to come along for this age group.”
   — Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books (recommended and starred review)

★ “A terrific teaching tool that just may help slow the spread of sexual disease and ignorance.”
   — Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

★ “The book will serve as a useful tool in the sex education curriculum.” — The Horn Book (starred review)

“A family-friendly guide to everything your kids ever asked you about sex, but you were afraid to answer.”
— Child Magazine

“Reliable basic information is provided about both the mechanics and the consequences of puberty, sexual activity, birth control, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases.” — Parenting

“Utterly contemporary and comprehensive. . . . Highly recommended for talking your way through just about any embarrassing interrogation your ever-curious kids can devise.” — Los Angeles Times Book Review

“A frank and funny compendium that includes unbiased and up-to-date information . . . all explained in jaunty and accurate full-color art depicting people of many races, cultures, sizes, and ages.”
— San Francisco Chronicle Book Review

“It’s Perfectly Normal answers more pre-adolescent questions about sex than any others on the shelf, and it does it gently, scientifically, and with humor.”
— The Press-Enterprise, Riverside County, California

“Conversations with kids about sex are about as welcome by most parents as dental surgery. . . . Robie H. Harris has made it easier with It’s Perfectly Normal. . . . The book, for ages 10 and up, is sophisticated, comprehensive, reassuring.” — USA Today

Informal, wide-ranging, candid, and funny. . . . A younger child can enjoy the art. . . . An independent reader can seek definitions in privacy. Preadolescents can test their knowledge. And adolescents can give a superior smirk while secretly learning what they most need to know about sexual survival.” — The New York Times Book Review
PRAISE FROM THE EXPERTS

“It’s Perfectly Normal gives growing children a chance to read an honest and explanatory view of their developing bodies. The text and pictures will give them a chance to understand and value themselves. I recommend it to parents, children, and adolescents. They will love it!"
—T. Berry Brazelton, MD, founder of Brazelton Touchpoints Center, Boston Children’s Hospital, and Joshua Sparrow, MD, co-authors of Touchpoints: Birth to Three and Touchpoints: Three to Six, Boston, MA

“It’s Perfectly Normal, as well as Harris and Emberley’s books for younger children, are some of the best tools available to promote family communication about critical topics related to sexuality. We know from research that when families communicate about sexual and reproductive health topics, preteens and teens make healthier decisions. It’s Perfectly Normal will spur parent-child communication about essential topics like puberty, sex, relationships, sexual orientation, gender identity, and more. In today’s world, where young people are bombarded with messages from many sources, having this carefully crafted, age-appropriate, and engaging book is a gift to us all.”
—Leslie M. Kantor, PhD, MPH, professor and chair, Department of Urban-Global Public Health, Rutgers School of Public Health, Newark, NJ; former vice president of education, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, New York, NY

“It’s Perfectly Normal remains one of the most useful, accessible, and inclusive resources for talking with youth and families about sex, gender, relationships, and values. These conversations help young people learn how to make safe and healthy choices and live their lives with integrity. It’s Perfectly Normal is the perfect catalyst to start these conversations.”
—Melanie Davis, MEd, PhD, CSC, CSE, Our Whole Lives program manager, Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston, MA

“If you have ever found it difficult to talk to your child about sex, or even if you find it easy, this book will be an invaluable friend. The quality of the information it provides is superb. Its language and illustrations speak in a direct, nonjudgmental manner and present diverse families, diverse relationships, and diverse bodies.
Harris and Emberley cover everything a young person needs to know about sexual health, including how to safely use the Internet by providing strategies for finding reliable information and ways to prevent potential hazards of Internet use. It will draw in tweens, teens, and parents and totally engage all.”
—Angela Diaz, MD, MPH, Jean C. and James W. Crystal Professor, Departments of Pediatrics and of Preventative Medicine, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai; director, Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center, New York, NY

“Now more than ever, America’s preteens and teens in every community across our nation need the latest and most accurate information about sexual health as they go through the challenging ups and downs of puberty and adolescence. It’s Perfectly Normal is the go-to book for every young person. Why? Because it educates our youth about sexuality in the most honest and respectful manner and does not shy away from giving them the very information they are looking for and need.”
—Marc H. Morial, president and CEO, National Urban League, Inc., New York, NY

“At last! A book that tells preteens and teenagers what they need to know about sex without turning off the less sophisticated, turning on the more sophisticated, or offending the moral values or sensibilities of parents and teachers. It’s Perfectly Normal is informative and interesting; reassuring and responsible; warm and charming. I wish every child (and parent) could have a copy.”
—Penelope Leach, PhD, author of Your Baby & Child and Children First, London, England
Ever since It’s Perfectly Normal was first published twenty-five+ years ago, we have never stopped talking with older kids, preteens, teens, and adults about the information and issues in this book. This has given us the chance to learn even more about what you need to know to stay healthy. We are so excited to share our newest and the most fully updated edition of this book with you. This edition is jam-packed with the latest information kids and teens need to know to stay healthy and safe.

Over the years, we have also continued to ask experts, including parents, teachers, librarians, doctors, nurses, psychologists, psychoanalysts, scientists, and clergy, what information about puberty, sex, sexual health, and gender needs to be changed, updated, or added to keep you healthy.

Whenever changes in the text and the art are necessary to make this book as up-to-date and accurate as possible, we make them. For this edition, we have updated the scientific and medical information and have added more information and facts about gender, reproduction, birth control, abortion, sexual abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and many other topics.

Since so many of you use cell phones, tablets, and computers to go online to find information and to communicate with others, we have added more information and facts about the benefits and risks of being online. We believe this will help you use the Internet to find truthful, accurate, responsible, and up-to-date information about sexual health and will help you protect your own as well as your friends’ and your family’s privacy and personal safety.

While writing and illustrating this book, we checked and rechecked the scientific information and the latest research. We learned from scientists and health professionals that knowledge about this subject is continually evolving and changing. While there is much agreement, there is also some disagreement, and some questions still remain. At this time, the information in this book is as up-to-date and as accurate as possible. If you have more questions or need further information, most always it can be very helpful to talk with someone you know and can trust—a parent, doctor, nurse, teacher, school counselor, therapist, or clergyperson.

Today, even more kids have a chance to read It’s Perfectly Normal. It has been translated into more than thirty-five languages and is read around the world—from the United States to the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, Japan, Taiwan, China, Mongolia, South Africa, and Australia.

We hope that our newest edition will help to keep you healthy and safe. We also hope it will help you and your friends make informed and responsible decisions about sexual health as you continue to grow up and go through puberty and adolescence.

Robie H. Harris and Michael Emberley
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Candlewick Press
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Hey! Do you want to know what I’m reading?
No. Not now. I’m in the middle of reading about astronomy.
I’m reading about science too, you know.
You are! Well, that’s a first!

This book will be a first for you. Take a look. I guarantee you will like it.
Ohhh… my goodness. This is a book on…
sex. You have a problem with that?
I certainly do! I’ll stick to the stars, thank you.

You’re a chicken.
Have you lost your mind? I’m a bee. And bees are extremely brave.
If that’s true, then take a look at this book.

Well, okay, but just a quick look.
Sometime between the ages of eight or nine and fifteen or so, kids’ bodies begin to change and grow into adult bodies.

Most kids wonder about and have lots of questions about what will be happening to them as their bodies change and grow during this time.

It’s perfectly normal for kids to be curious about and want to know about their changing and growing bodies. Most of the changes—but not all—that take place during this time make it possible for humans to make a baby and give birth to a baby. And making a baby has a lot to do with sex.

Sex is about a lot of things—bodies, growing up, families, babies, love, caring, curiosity, feelings, respect, responsibility, biology, and health. There are times when sickness and danger can be a part of sex, too.

Most kids wonder about and have lots of questions about sex. It’s also perfectly normal to want to know about sex.

You may wonder why it’s a good idea to learn some facts about bodies, about growing up, about sex, about sexual health, and also about gender. It’s important because these facts can help you stay healthy, take good care of yourself, and make good decisions about yourself as you are growing up and for the rest of your life.

Besides, learning about these things can be fascinating and fun.
What is sex? What is it . . . exactly? What is it all about?

These are questions lots of kids wonder about. You needn’t feel embarrassed or stupid if you don’t know the answers, because sex is not a simple matter.

Sex is many things, and people have many different feelings and opinions about it. That’s why there is more than one answer to the question, What is sex?

One way to find out about sex is to ask someone you know and trust. Remember, there are no stupid questions. Another way to find out about sex is to read about it. For example, you can look up the meaning of the word sex in the dictionary. Here is what one dictionary says under the word sex:

1: Either of the two groups, female or male, into which most living things are placed.
may not include everything you may want to or need to know about sex or gender. There is a lot to learn about sex and about gender.

Most people want to know the sex of a new baby. So it’s no surprise that—even if the parent or parents knew the sex of the baby before birth—the moment a baby is born, someone will often shout out, “It’s a girl!” or “It’s a boy!”

And often one of the questions kids may wonder about or ask when they first hear that a new kid is joining their class is, “Is it a boy or a girl?” When kids ask that question, they are usually asking about a person’s sex. The labels “girl,” “boy,” “male,” and “female” are labels that most babies are given at birth. But these labels are only based on what the parent, doctor, nurse, or midwife sees at the moment of birth. If that baby has a penis, most often the baby is labeled “boy.” And if that baby has a vagina, most often the baby is labeled “girl.” However, not all people’s bodies, including babies’ bodies, are exactly the same. Most babies are born with either a vagina or a penis. Some babies are born with a mixture of male body parts and female body parts. If a person is born with that mixture, their sex is “intersex,” which is the word that is often used to describe that mixture.

When people talk about sex and body parts, many think they are talking about a person’s gender. But gender is not just about our body parts. Gender is also about the many thoughts and feelings each of us has about being who we are: a girl or a boy, or a man or a woman, or a mixture of genders, or somewhere between female and male, or neither male nor female.

Many people use the words girl or boy, or man or woman, to describe who they are. Yet other people feel or know that those words do not describe who they are and that the sex they were assigned at birth does not fit with who they are. They may be or feel that they are a different gender than the gender they were assigned at birth. Or they may feel that neither female nor male describes who they are and may not want to use girl or boy, man or woman, or female or male to describe who they are. Other people choose not to be defined by their gender. They feel that there are more things than gender that define who they are.

A baby’s birth certificate, which is a record of a baby’s birth, usually has two genders listed on it—female or male. There are some states and cities that have now added another option for gender to their birth certificates—the gender X. This means that parents in those states or cities may record “female” or “male” or “X” (after the word “sex,” that is) on their baby’s birth certificate at birth. Parents in these states and cities also have the option of changing their child’s gender on their birth certificate at a later date in their child’s life. Older children in some of these states and cities also have the option of changing their own gender on their birth certificate at a later date in their lives.
How you feel, see, and describe yourself—whether it is according to the sex you were assigned at birth or the gender you now feel and know you are—is called your gender identity. A person’s gender identity is often defined by the clothes we wear, or by the way we behave, or by the way we look, or by other traits we may have.

Sometimes other people may try to define your gender for you. But who you are is most always the person you feel you are, or figure out you are, or already know you are, no matter what anyone else may say or think about you.

Gender is many things. That’s why there is more than one answer to the question, What is gender?
The dictionary tells us more about sex. It says, “Sexual reproduction.”

Sex is also about reproduction—making babies. To reproduce means to “produce again,” or “make again.” When our bodies have grown up and become adult bodies, certain parts of our bodies make it possible to reproduce—to make babies. The parts of our bodies that make this possible are called the reproductive organs.

Our bodies’ organs are the parts of our bodies that have special jobs to perform. For example, the heart is the organ whose special job is to pump blood. Scientists know that most organs inside our bodies, such as our hearts, our lungs, and our stomachs, are the same no matter what sex or gender we are. One group of organs that is not the same for female bodies and male bodies is the reproductive organs.

People also call the reproductive organs the sexual organs or the sex organs. Our sex organs are designed to work in an amazingly interesting way. They are different from each other because they have different jobs to do.

Babies, kids, teens, and adults all have outer sex organs and inner sex organs. Some are located between our legs, on the outside of our bodies. The sex organs on the outside of a person’s body are often called the genitals. Some of our sex organs are located inside our bodies. The sex organs inside a person’s body are called the reproductive organs.

People have different sex organs. Some people have a vagina and ovaries. Some people have a penis and testicles. Some people have a mixture of male and female sex organs.

When the phrase sex organs is used in these ways, people are usually talking about our bodies’ reproductive organs, which are the parts of our bodies that can make a new human being—make a baby.
The dictionary tells us even more about sex. It says, 4: Sexual desire.

Sex is also the desire to be physically close to someone, as close as you can be.

Do you ever really want or crave something? That’s desire, like when you really want someone to be your best friend or when you really want chocolate ice cream.

You don’t know why you want these things. You don’t even think about why you want them. These are simply feelings of wanting—of desire.

Sexual desire is different from these desires—different from just wanting chocolate ice cream, or wanting someone to be your best friend, or even wanting to snuggle up to your parent, a friend, a pet, or a stuffed animal.

Sexual desire means you feel attracted to someone in a very strong way... like being pulled by a magnet. You want to be as physically close to that person as you can be.

Even though you may think about that person a lot, sexual desire is mostly the way you feel in your body about that person. Your body may feel excited or warm or quivery or tingly. And sometimes these feelings can be very strong.

For lots of kids, sexual desire can happen when one has happy, nervous, or exciting feelings about another person—feelings that you may even feel inside your body. Often it’s hard to stop thinking about that person and you may even think you are in love with that person. That’s called “having a crush” on someone. Having crushes is perfectly normal. Not having crushes is also perfectly normal.
Many, but not all, kids have crushes. Kids may have crushes on people they know, as well as on people they don’t know—like TV stars, movie stars, rap stars, rock stars, or sports stars.

Kids may have crushes on people who are the same gender they are or who are a different gender, on people who are the same age they are, or who are older, or younger.

The feelings and thoughts you may have about other people and their bodies can make you feel very excited. Some people call this “feeling sexy.”

Some of you are probably noticing the changes in your own bodies and the differences between your body and your friends’ bodies. Sex can also be about the many new thoughts and feelings you may have about what’s happening to you and your body as you are growing up.
The dictionary tells us one more thing about sex. It says,

5: Sexual intercourse.

Sex can also mean sexual intercourse. Some people call sexual intercourse “having sex.”

Most often, sexual intercourse happens when two people feel very sexy and very attracted to each other and may also have very loving and romantic feelings about each other. These feelings often make them want to or decide to be very close to each other in a sexual way. People can have these feelings for people of a different gender, or for people of the same gender, or for all genders.

One kind of sexual intercourse happens when a person with a female body and a person with a male body are so close to each other that the penis goes inside the vagina, and the vagina stretches in a way that fits around the penis. This kind of touching can make the whole body feel good—feel sexy. And when this kind of sexual intercourse happens, it is possible for a female body and a male body—once their reproductive organs have grown up—to make a baby.

Most people don’t have sexual intercourse only when
they want a baby. Most often, people have sexual intercourse because it feels good. People have sexual intercourse well into old age.

When a couple has sexual intercourse and does not want to make a baby, there are healthy ways, called birth control, that can help keep them from making a baby or from passing on an infection to one another.

Sometimes, a couple does not plan ahead or decide whether or not to have sexual intercourse. Planning ahead is most often the most effective way to keep a pregnancy from beginning.

People also call sexual intercourse “making love” or “lovemaking” because it’s a way of expressing love. But sexual intercourse is only one way of expressing love.

Another kind of sexual intercourse happens when the sexual parts of two people who have female bodies touch or when the sexual parts of two people who have male bodies touch. This kind of touching can make the whole body feel good—feel sexy. Since male bodies have only sperm cells and no egg cells—and since female bodies have only egg
cells and no sperm cells—the beginning cells of a baby cannot start to grow and a pregnancy cannot begin when two people of the same sex have sexual intercourse.

Hugging, cuddling, holding hands, kissing, and touching are other ways of expressing love. So is just being with someone you like a lot and telling that person, “I love you.”

There are some things about sex and sexual intercourse that are important to know and remember:

• It makes sense to wait to have sexual intercourse until you are old enough and responsible enough to make healthy decisions about sex.
• Every person, no matter what their gender or how young or old they are, has the right to say no to any kind of touching—even when one person is older, or a lot older, or stronger, or a lot stronger than the other person.
• A relationship that includes sexual contact often comes with exciting and good feelings. But sometimes, it may come with complicated feelings.
• Sexual intercourse—“having sex”—can involve the penis and the vagina, or the mouth and the genitals, or the penis and the anus.
• After sexual intercourse that involves the vagina and the penis, a pregnancy can begin. But there are many ways a person can protect oneself from becoming pregnant and having a baby.
• During sexual intercourse, serious infections such as HPV, a virus that can cause some kinds of cancer, and HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, as well as other infections that are serious and others that are less serious, can be passed from one person to the other. Some are very hard to cure and others are easier to cure. However, there are ways in which people can help protect themselves from getting or passing on these infections.
• Not every person will want to or choose to have sexual intercourse. Some may be interested when they are older. Others may never be interested.

So sex is a lot of things . . . even feelings . . . and thoughts.

Sex is the desire to be very close to someone.

Sex is touching the sexual parts of the body.

Sex is intercourse.

Sex is making babies.

Sex is the label most babies are given at birth depending on which sexual parts they were born with—female parts, or male parts, or a mixture of male and female parts.

Sometimes people use the word sexuality to talk about sex. When people use the word sexuality, they are usually talking about everything in our daily lives that makes us sexual human beings—our gender, our sexual feelings, thoughts, and desires, as well as any sexual contact, from sexual touching to sexual intercourse.
Straight, lesbian, gay, and bisexual are words that have to do with sex because sex is also about sexual desire—the sexual feelings we may have toward another person. The words sexual orientation are words that have to do with sexual attraction.

Being sexually attracted to another person has to do with those sexual feelings one has toward that person. People do not choose their sexual orientation. Often it takes time for kids and for adults to figure out their sexual orientation. And different people have different sexual orientations.

A person who is straight is someone who is sexually attracted to people of another gender—someone who is not the same gender as they are. Heterosexual is another name for a straight person. Heteros is the ancient Greek word for other.

In a straight relationship, two people of different genders—a male and a female—are sexually attracted to, and may have loving feelings for or fall in love with, or may have a sexual relationship with each other.

A person who is gay is someone who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex or gender. Homosexual is another name for a gay person. Homos is the ancient Greek word for same. Now most people use the word gay instead of the word homosexual. In a gay relationship, two people of the same gender—a male
and a male, or a female and a female—are attracted to, and may have loving feelings for or fall in love with, and may have a sexual relationship with each other.

A gay relationship between two females is also called a lesbian relationship. The word *lesbian* began to be used in the late nineteenth century. It refers to the time, about 600 BCE, when the great female poet Sappho lived on the Greek island of Lesbos. Sappho wrote about friendship and love between women.

The ancient Greeks thought that love between two men was the highest form of love. In the ancient Greek city-state of Sparta, in about 1000 BCE, it was hoped that if male warriors were in the same army regiment as their lovers, they would fight harder in order to impress each other. The Spartan army was one of the most powerful and feared armies in ancient Greece.

A person who is bisexual is someone who is sexually attracted to people of a different gender and is also sexually attracted to people of the same gender. Someone who is bisexual is attracted to, may have a crush on, may have loving feelings for or fall in love with, and may have a sexual relationship with both males and females. *Bi* means *two* and is also the ancient Greek word for *two*. People often use the word *bi* for bisexual.

There have been gay, lesbian, and bisexual relationships all through history, even before ancient Greece. How people feel and think about homosexuality and bisexuality has a lot to do with the culture and the times in which they live.
Scientists do not completely understand or agree on why one person is straight, why another person is gay or lesbian, or why another person is bisexual. In fact, there may be more than one reason.

But most scientists believe that being lesbian, gay, straight, or bisexual is not something you choose—just as you cannot choose what skin color you were born with or the sex organs you were born with. They believe that a person is born with traits—such as the biological makeup—and that those biological traits are what determine whether someone is a straight person, or a gay person, or a bisexual person.

Sometimes as kids are growing up, they become curious about other kids who are the same gender as they are or who are a different gender. They may even look at and even touch each other’s bodies. This is a normal kind of exploring and does not necessarily have anything to do with whether someone is or will be straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Dreaming about or having a crush on a person of the same sex also does not necessarily mean that a person is or will be straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Many people use the term LGBTQ+. These initials—L for lesbian, G for gay, B for bisexual, T for transgender, Q for queer or questioning, and + for plus—are ways of referring to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or who refer to themselves as queer or questioning, or who may use other words to refer to themselves. Queer is a word that some people use to describe their gender and/or their sexuality. In the past, some used the word queer as an insult. Now many people are proud to identify themselves as queer. Questioning is a word that is used when people may question who they are sexually attracted to—someone of the same sex or gender as themselves, someone of a different sex or gender from themselves, or both, or neither. The word questioning is also used when kids or adults question the feelings they have about their own gender.

Pansexual describes those who are attracted to people of all genders, not just to males or females.

Asexual is a word that is used to describe people who feel that they are not sexually attracted to anyone of any gender. The word ace is often used as a shorter way of saying asexual.

Gender is another word to describe who you are as a person. Gender can also be about the thoughts and feelings you have about who you are as a person.

There are many other things to know and many other words that have to do with gender. What is most important is to use words that are respectful when talking about gender. Chances are you have heard some of, but maybe not all of, these words. That’s because over time some words that are used to describe gender do change, even though other words to describe gender stay the same. And soon, there may be new words that we use to describe gender.
Cisgender is a word that has to do with gender. *Cis* is the Latin word for the phrase “on the same side.” A cisgender person is someone who feels or knows that the gender that was assigned to them at birth—female or male—was and still is their gender. The word *cis* is often used as a shorter way of saying the word *cisgender*. Cisgender people can be straight, or lesbian, or gay, or bisexual, or asexual.

Transgender is another word that has to do with gender. *Trans* is the Latin word for *across* or the phrase *on another side*. A transgender person is someone whose gender identity is different from the gender that person was assigned at birth and who transitions from the gender assigned at birth to a different gender. Transgender people can be straight, or lesbian, or gay, or bisexual, or asexual.

This means that a person who was born with a male body, but feels, acts, and knows she is female and may ask to be called a girl—or a person who was born with a female body, but feels, acts, and knows he is a male and may ask to be called a boy—is a transgender person. Some may feel this way all of the time and will feel this way throughout their lives. Others may feel this way for only a few months or a few years. And some may feel that sometimes they are one gender and other times they are a different gender.

Transgender people may change the way they dress or
their name to match the gender they believe they really are. They may also ask to be called “he” instead of “she” or “she” instead of “he.” And some who feel that they are male some of the time and female at other times may ask to be called “they” or “them.” It is always respectful and kind to ask people what name they want to be called and what pronouns—such as they, she, he, or them—they choose to use to refer to themselves and would like others to use when talking with or about them. It is also important to respect those who choose not to be identified or labeled by gender.

Oh-hhh . . . more words . . . to remember?

Say a word three times and you’ll remember it.

Gender. Gender.

You only said it two times.

Said what?

Gender.

There are even more words that have to do with gender. And you may have noticed that other people may use words about gender that are different from the words you may have heard or may use.

The phrase gender identity describes the gender people identify with—the gender they feel and know they are.

Gender expression is about the many ways in which people express their gender to others, such as by the clothes one wears or by one’s hairstyle.

Genderfluid describes those who feel they are not the same gender all of the time.

Pan-gender describes those who feel they are more than one gender. Pan is the ancient Greek word for all.

Binary, which means two, is a word that describes only two genders—female and male.

Non-binary is a word that can mean several things about a person’s gender identity. It can mean that a person identifies as neither male nor female, or identifies as someone who is in between male and female, or may be another gender.

There are some who disapprove of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning or call them offensive names, or tease, bully, or even hate them, or not want to be with them, only because a person is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. They may feel this way because they think LGBTQ+ people are different from them or that gay relationships are wrong. These people’s views are based on fears or misinformation, not on facts. People are often afraid of people they know little or nothing about or who are different from them in some ways.

Some feel that transgender people should not have the right to use the bathroom at school or other public places or should not have the right to be on a sports team that aligns with the gender they feel or know they are. Taking away an LGBTQ+ person’s rights only because of their gender identity or sexual orientation is more than disrespectful. Taking away or trying to take away one’s rights can make a person feel sad, even very sad or angry. Yet, when this happens, there are people, including kids, who speak out in support of what is respectful and decent to do. Also, there are bathrooms in several schools and public
places that have signs that say, all genders or gender inclusive or gender neutral. That means that anyone, no matter what their gender, may use the bathroom. And there are schools that allow kids, no matter what their gender, to choose the team they want to be on.

Some people feel that LGBTQ+ people should not have the right to marry. Many other people feel and have always felt that LGBTQ+ people should have the right to marry. They now have that right. On June 16, 2015, the United States Supreme Court voted five to four to make it legal for people of the same sex to marry each other in all fifty states. The name of this Supreme Court decision is Obergefell versus Hodges. Until that date, same-sex marriage had been banned in most states. There are other countries that have also made it legal for people of the same sex to marry.

If a person has any questions, thoughts, or concerns about their sexual feelings or gender, talking to someone they know and trust—a parent, relative, therapist, doctor, nurse, teacher, or clergy person—can often be helpful.

No matter what some people may think, it’s still important for every person to treat all people with respect. And it’s important to know that people’s daily lives—having fun, going to school, going to work, making a home, having friends, being in love, being single, being a partner, being married, raising children—are mostly the same whether someone is straight, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning.
WHAT IS SEX?