

Sorry, But I Don't Understand What It Means To Be Non-Binary.

When gender is not just pink or blue.



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et me preface this story by saying, I am in support of all gender identities. It's wrong to dehumanize or discriminate anyone on the basis of their gender identity.

That being said, the term non-binary is honestly confusing to me. Recently, celebrities such as Elliot Page and Demi Lovato identified as non-binary and revealed new pronouns — they/them.

What does it mean to be non-binary?

Turns out, it is not exactly pink or blue. Non-binary is an umbrella term that encompasses many points on the gender spectrum between pink and blue. First it is important to understand the concept of gender.

When we are born, the doctor checks our genitalia and ticks a box. We are assigned a sex/gender — male, female, or intersex. Gender identity on the other hand is our personal experience of that gender.

While gender is based on the anatomy between our legs, gender identity is based on what's between our ears—the brain. In your mind, do you feel like a woman or a man? There are more than 50 gender identities identified, many of which overlap.

Non-binary is freedom from being put into a box. It means not subscribing to the standard binary set up by society. Non-binary people say that their gender doesn't define them.

A **cisgendered** person identifies with the gender assigned to them at birth. A **transgendered** person on the other hand does not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.

Someone who is **non-binary** does not identify as either male or female. They may identify as agender, bigender, genderqueer, gender-neutral, or genderfluid. They may change their name to a more neutral name because their name is gendered.

So this is why I find the label non-binary confusing. It is very ambiguous. It has widely scattered points. It's neither here nor there. It almost seems like people are sitting on the gender fence.

It raises more questions than answers. Is gender static or does it change over time? Gender fluidity suggests that gender can vary with time.

Most transgender people are not non-binary. From a very young age, they are very clear about their preferred gender. They feel trapped in the wrong body. They transition socially and medically which is a difficult process both mentally and physically. It's a lengthy process and takes a lot of courage. My full respect to them.

Similarly non-binary people experience some sort of gender dysphoria, a feeling of disorientation in their bodies. This distress can lead to serious mental health issues, especially if it is not addressed through medical and or social transition.

The stigma associated with their gender identity makes them more vulnerable to abuse. Transgender and non-binary people experience staggering amounts of fatal violence and transphobic hate.

2021 has already seen at least 27 transgender or gender non-conforming people fatally shot or killed by other violent means. This is a crime on all levels.

According to a [study](#) by *Lancet Child Adolescent Health* —

Young people identifying as non-binary have poor mental health outcomes, with high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation that were found to be similar if not higher than in those who are transgender and binary.

One day it might be our own children struggling with their identity. We would want them to feel safe and accepted by society. Non-binary people need support and access to health services instead of discrimination and ridicule.

Through education, it is possible to change anti-transgender social attitudes and beliefs that support violence against transgender people.

In 2019, Mattel announced the launch of a new line of gender-neutral dolls to recognize that genders come in more than 2 options. The dolls come in a range of skin tones, two different hairstyle options — short and long — and arrive with a variety of clothing: jeans, skirts, tank tops, shorts, and so on.



The Creatable World lineup from Mattel. Source: Mattel

This is a move in the right direction, but there's a long ways to go. It's vital to emphasize the importance of inclusivity and acceptance of what is different to not only young children but even more to adults who tend to be more rigid in their thinking.

Now, if only race could be brought down to one box — Human. It would solve a lot of problems.

I still don't completely understand the complexity of non-binary gender. There is more to learn. But the bottom line is that I don't have to fully understand a person's gender identity to respect them.

All people deserve to be treated with respect irrespective of how they identify. It's everyone's prerogative to live life how they want, as long as they are not harming anyone.

All life is precious. Live and let live.