

10 things to never say...

1. Have you had “the operation”/“the surgery”/“are you pre- or post-op”?
Trans identities aren’t dependent on any sort of surgery or medical procedure. Their identities are just as secure before, after, or without medical intervention.
2. Which bathroom do you use?
Bathroom use is a personal issue that is inappropriate to bring up. Would you like anyone asking you about your bathroom habits?
3. If you _____ a certain way, you’d be more masculine/feminine.
This perpetuates a feeling of inferiority; no matter what the person does they will never be masculine or feminine enough by your standards. Also, trans people may not even want to be masculine or feminine. These aren’t the only two expressions of gender, nor are they finite.
4. When did you decide to become trans?
Identities aren’t decisions. While being curious about a trans person’s journey to acceptance is natural, asking about their *decision* paints it as something done spontaneously or arbitrarily.
5. You pass really well!
Trans people are not seeking approval for passing, and this statement could be problematic in a public place if they aren’t out.
6. You’re actually pretty normal.
As mentioned before, using words like “normal” make trans folk “other,” “freaky,” or “strange” by default. Saying they’re “actually normal” shows that you never thought they were beforehand.
7. How do you have sex?
Sex is another personal issue that is a discretionary topic of conversation. If a trans person wants to talk with you about sex, they will. However, steer clear of these personal issues out of respect for one’s privacy.
8. I can still see the woman/man in you.
Try not to force a trans person to focus on their past, or their assigned gender or sex. They spend much of their time trying to transgress these lines to better express who they are, the last thing they need is someone proclaiming that they are not successfully doing so.
9. Are you afraid that people will hate or want to hurt you?
Reminding trans folk about the dangers they face isn’t productive for their emotional well-being. Trans people are amply aware of the dangers they face, and reminders of this are slightly cruel.
10. What does being a man/woman mean to you?
Asking this question may sound like it is helpful, but really you are asking a trans person something you probably wouldn’t ask a cisgender person. It also implies that a trans person is not a man or a woman, and they may identify as one of these.