



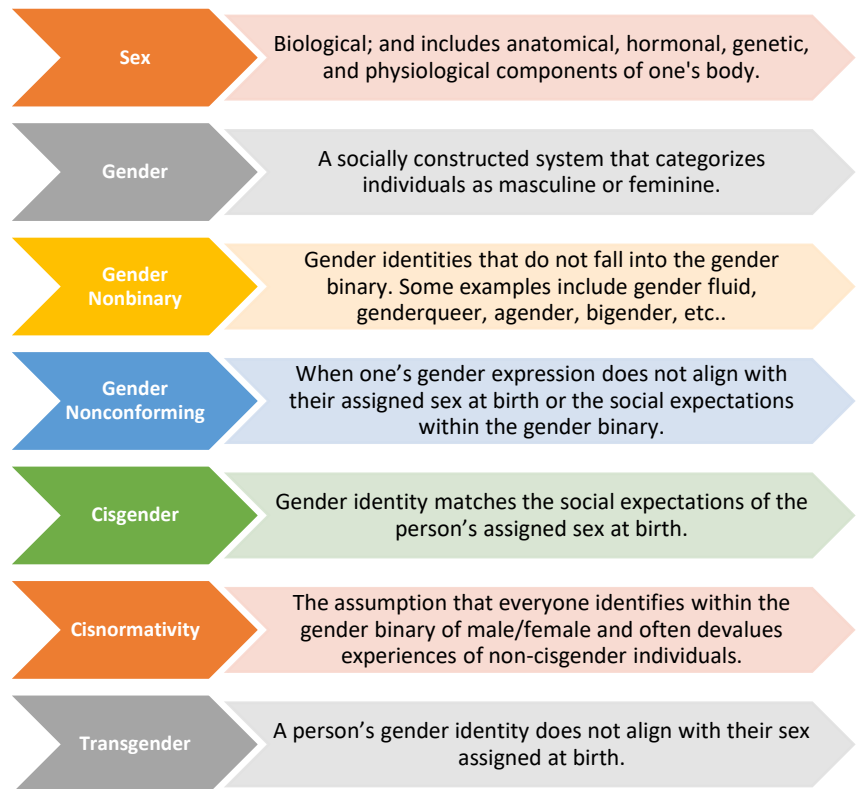
Gender Nonbinary in Sport:

Gender nonbinary is any gender identity that does not fall into the binary of male and female. For example, one may feel mixed genders, no gender, or may drift between genders and express more feminine or masculine qualities on any given day. Gender nonbinary identity is not a new concept. However, Western society, and sport, in particular, rely on the gender binary to categorize bathrooms, locker rooms, and athletic spaces (Katz & Luckinbill, 2017). The binary limits the visibility of nonbinary individuals, which may impact overall mental health (James, Herman, Rankin, et al., 2016).

More often than not, existing in athletic spaces means choosing between a woman's space or a man's space. LGBTQ inclusion policies within the NCAA and IOC are assumed to work for nonbinary individuals. However, these policies only ignore nonbinary experiences or include them as an afterthought. More importantly, these policies assume all trans and nonbinary individuals follow a similar identity development in their transition. In your role as a mental coach or therapist, allow the space for the individual to explore their transition and identity. Remain open to the possibility that individuals may find new possibilities in transitioning and that there is no one way to be gender nonbinary.

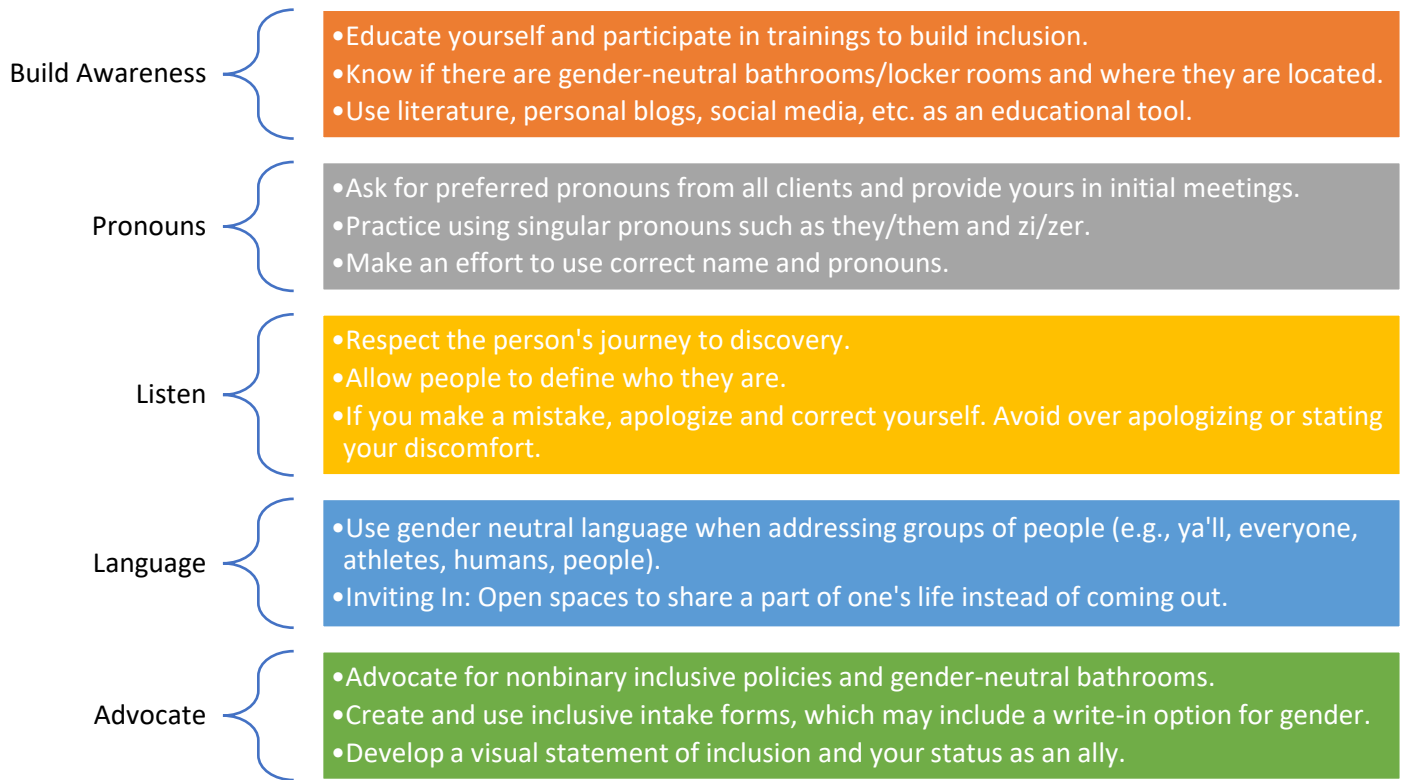
The lack of visibility and the assumption all nonbinary individuals must transition limits identity development of the individuals. Lauren Lubin (they/them), a former Division I athlete and founder of the We Exist Movement (<http://weexist.co>), states that **"recognition is the most fundamental step and our first major obstacle. You can't have hopes, dreams, and aspirations if you're not recognized...And sports, systematically, is the most entrenched [institution] in gender norms."**

The assumption in sports is that everyone falls within the binary. Sport constantly reminds nonbinary individuals that there is no place for them unless they abide by the transgender policies of the governing bodies. As mental coaches and therapists, it is critical we work to build inclusive spaces and ways of doing in our consulting because that might be the one space the athletes feel like they are safe and important.



An example of gender inclusivity in sport is the [USA Quidditch](#) league. [Title 9](#) ensures recognition of all individuals regardless of sex or gender identity. The strong belief that when all individuals can compete equally on the pitch, they learn to respect and value each other's abilities regardless of gender identity.

How Can I Support Gender Diverse Individuals?



Organizations to Check Out



Additional Resources

- [APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Non Conforming Individuals](#)
- [We Exist: Beyond the Binary](#)-documentary by Lauren Lubin, founder of the We Exist movement
- [APA Div. 44 Gender Nonbinary Fact Sheet](#)

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