

Non-Binary Activity: Workplace Version

A. Helena, a new hire in your area, identifies as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns. Because Helena is often stereotyped as feminine-presenting in their appearance, they are often incorrectly perceived as a cisgender woman and are treated as such.

- How do you think being incorrectly perceived would make Helena feel?
- How would you feel if you were treated as someone you are not?
- What are some things you could do to make sure you are respecting Helena's identity when working with them?

B. Grey recently came out to his work partners as a transgender man and has presented as a man to others. One employee, Lucy, who was close to Grey before he came out, has since acted distant and only addresses Grey with she/her pronouns and his deadname (i.e., the name he was given at birth but no longer uses). When Grey talked to Lucy about this, she minimized his concerns and talked about how hard it was to remember to use the "new" pronouns and names.

- What steps do you think Lucy should take to maintain a professional relationship with Grey?
- Should Grey have to accept that Lucy chooses not to make progress in recognizing his transgender identity? Why or why not?
- To ensure the safety and mental health of transgender people in the workplace, what protocols should the organization's leadership follow?

C. Alex was assigned male at birth. Although she now identifies as a woman, she has not shared this decision with most people in her life. Instead, she continues to present as more masculine for fear of her job security and personal safety. Alex works in a conservative workplace and often hears her managers make transphobic comments when news regarding the transgender community comes up. Alex never speaks up when her managers talk like this for fear that it would raise suspicion about her identity.

- What do you think it is like for Alex to hear her managers' comments? How would you feel in this situation?
- Do you think Alex's job security and safety concerns are justified? Why or why not?
- If you were Alex, what factors would make it easier or harder for you to speak up?

D. Tatum is 26 and identifies as non-binary. They recently explained the construct of "gender" to their coworkers. Tatum uses they/them/their pronouns and asked their coworkers to respect this. Tatum's coworkers were not willing to do so. They commented that Tatum is "one person" so using those pronouns is grammatically incorrect (because those pronouns are traditionally considered to be plural). They also said that Tatum was born a girl.

- How would you explain to Tatum's coworkers why Tatum uses they/them/their pronouns?
- How could Tatum's coworkers demonstrate their respect for Tatum's identity? Why is it important that their coworkers do so?
- How would you feel if your coworkers did not understand or accept of important part of your identity?