

# UNDERSTANDING CONVERSION THERAPY

*a glossary of terms*

## PART 1: DEFINING 2SLGBTQIA+ AND MORE

**2SLGBTQIA+:** An acronym that stands for Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and the plus represents how there are countless, affirming ways for individuals to self-identify their relationship to gender and sexuality.

**Agender:** Someone who does not identify as having a gender.

**Aromantic:** Someone who does not experience romantic attraction. Aromantic people can be in partnerships and form strong connections that have nothing to do with romantic love. Romantic attraction exists along a spectrum and can look different for everyone. Aromantic people are sometimes referred to as “aro.”

**Asexual:** Someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexual people may choose to participate in sex for a variety of reasons, and may or may not experience romantic attraction as well. Asexuality exists along a spectrum and can look different for everyone. Asexual people are sometimes referred to as “ace.”

**Assigned sex/gender at birth:** Assigned gender or sex at birth describes the label that you are given at birth, often based on specific sexual characteristics (i.e. genitalia). Most people are assigned male or female at birth. Assigned gender is often used to reinforce rigid gender norms on children and youth, through the expectation that all people assigned female at birth should be feminine, and all those assigned male should be masculine.

**Bisexual:** Attraction to multiple genders. Attraction to the same gender as oneself, and unlike oneself.

**Cisgender:** An individual's gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, someone assigned female at birth grows up to be a feminine girl, then a feminine woman.

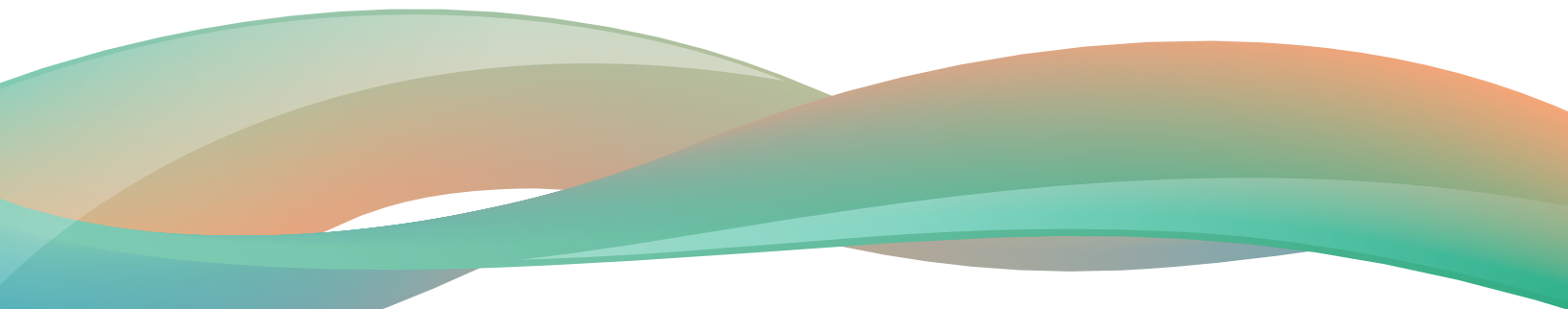
**Gay:** A person who is attracted to people of the same gender. This term is also widely used by people who experience lesbian attraction, or attraction to any gender.

**Gender Binary:** A socially-constructed category in which people are thought to be either "men" or "women" based on their sex assigned at birth. In the gender binary, there can only be these two options. Practically, the gender binary shapes how medical, academic, social, and cultural institutions categorize individuals, and this makes it difficult for people who do not identify within the gender binary to exist.

**Gender dysphoria:** An experience of distress in which an individual's sex assigned at birth, and their assumed gender, are not aligned with their gender identity. Gender Dysphoria can be a clinical diagnosis by a mental health professional, as well as a felt experience for a person.

**Gender Expression:** The ways in which all people express their gender through their name, pronouns, outward appearance, voice, body language, behaviour, and through other forms of expression.

**Gender Identity:** A person's sense of their gender. Sometimes an individual has a binary sense of gender that is related to their sex assigned at birth. We also know that an individual's sense of their gender occurs along a spectrum of gender identities and can change throughout their life.



**Gender:** The socially-constructed experiences, roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities of men, women, gender-diverse, and agender people. Gender is sometimes, but not always, associated with an individual's sex assigned at birth.

**Genderqueer:** An umbrella term for a person whose gender identity exists outside of the gender binary. For some, genderqueer is an active and dynamic self-identifier which represents the 'queering' of gender. This identification is deliberately invoking 'queer' in a political sense.

**Heterosexual:** Attraction to the opposite binary gender.

**Intersex:** "Intersex" is an umbrella term used to describe differences in sex traits or reproductive anatomy. There are many possible differences in genitalia, hormones, internal anatomy, or chromosomes within the Intersex umbrella. Intersex people may be born with these differences or develop them in childhood or adolescence. Being intersex is distinct from being trans. Some intersex people may identify themselves as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, while others may not.

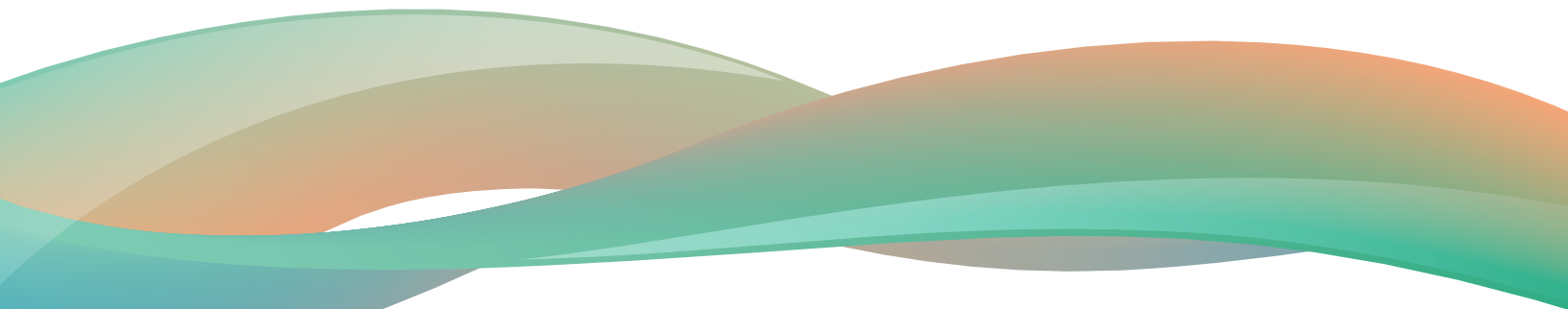
**Lesbian:** This usually refers to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation toward women. Some trans and non-binary people also identify with this term.

**Non-binary:** An umbrella term for a person whose gender identity does not fit wholly or completely within the traditional binary of man or woman. This can include identifying with no gender whatsoever, as a combination of multiple genders, or identifying outside of the gender binary completely.

**Pansexual:** Sexual, romantic, or emotional attraction to someone regardless of their gender.

**Queer:** "Queer" is a reclaimed slur, meaning that it has historically and to this day been used to denigrate members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. It has been reclaimed by many – but not all people – within the 2SLGBTQ+ community. "Queer" is now used as an umbrella term to describe diverse gender and sexual identities, and is often used as an alternative to the 2SLGBTQ+ acronym.

**Questioning:** A person whose gender identity, sexual orientation, and their corresponding expressions are all an ongoing process of self-exploration and discovery.

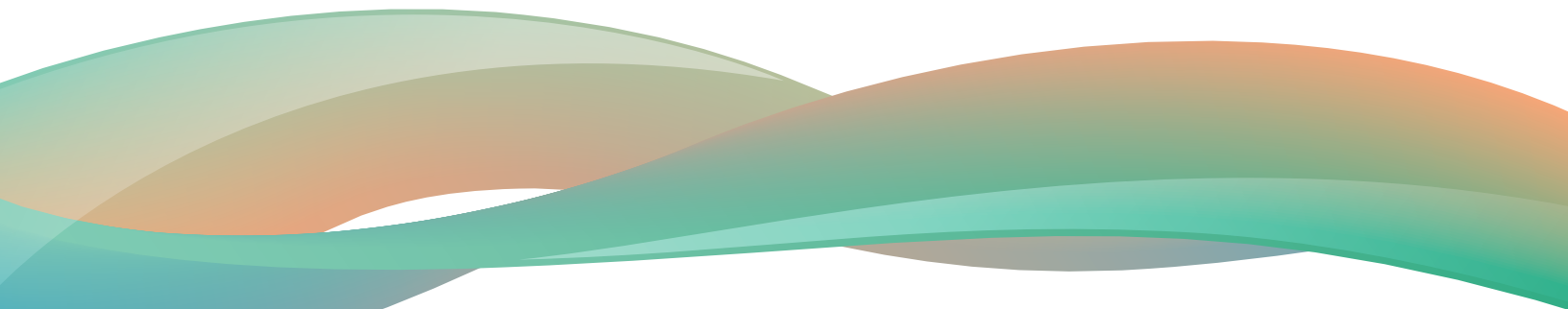


**Sex:** A biological classification of people as male, female, or intersex, that is assigned at birth based on a person's reproductive systems, physical characteristics, hormones, and other traits.

**Sexual orientation:** An individual's identity in relation to the attraction they experience, or do not experience. Attraction happens on a spectrum, so a person can experience their sexual orientation differently throughout their life.

**Transgender:** When someone's gender identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth. This includes trans men, trans women, non-binary people, and others who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Trans is an umbrella term meant to describe a wide range and variety of identities and experiences.

**Two Spirit:** Since 1990, the term "Two Spirit" has been used as a culturally-specific term for Indigenous people who experience gender and/or sexual diversity, and sometimes hold diverse traditional, ceremonial or community roles. There are several other spellings of this term, including "2 Spirit." "Two Spirit" is not the only Indigenous term for gender and sexual diversity, but is often used as an umbrella term to describe cultural gender and sexual diversity within Indigenous communities on Turtle Island (North America). Not all Indigenous LGBTQIA+ people identify as Two Spirit. You should only call someone Two Spirit if they use that term to describe themselves. A Two Spirit person may or may not identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ spectrum and community.



# PART 2:

## DEFINING CONVERSION THERAPY\* AND PRACTICES

**Aversion therapy:** A type of behavioural therapy that is intended to make a person give up a behavior or habit by having them associate it with something unpleasant. In the context of conversion therapy, this can look like exposing someone to queer imagery while simultaneously subjecting them to unpleasant physical stimuli such as electric shock or nausea-inducing drugs to make them associate queerness with those stimulants.

**Bill C-4:** Also known as “An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy).” This Bill aimed to denounce conversion therapy by criminalizing activities related to it, such as:

- promoting or advertising services related to conversion therapy;
- forcing persons or causing a child to undergo conversion therapy;
- removing a child from Canada to undergo conversion therapy abroad;
- and receiving a material benefit from the provision of conversion therapy.

Bill C-4 also added provisions to authorize courts to make certain orders related to the promotion of conversion therapy, such as requiring the removal of advertisements for conversion therapy services from computer systems and the Internet. Bill C-4 did not criminalize the receipt of conversion therapy services. This bill did not criminalize legitimate forms of counselling, mentorship, or support related to one’s sexuality or gender identity that are offered by mental health professionals, religious figures, friends, or family. Bill C-4 received royal assent and passed into law on January 7, 2022.

**Conversion therapy ban:** Refers colloquially to the passing of Bill C-4 into law on January 7, 2022. This “ban” received significant media attention and praise as it is the first of its kind to directly define different forms of conversion therapy, outline protections for children, and adopt a more comprehensive understanding of gender identity change efforts. Nonetheless, the fight to address the wide-reaching effects of conversion therapy still continues. Conversion therapy does still occur behind closed doors. Survivors of past conversion therapy practices still need access to support, community, and healing. And the attitudes and beliefs behind conversion therapy—that being heterosexual or cisgender is preferable to being 2SLGBTQIA+—are still influencing our lives and communities in many ways.

**Conversion therapy:** Any pseudoscientific practice that attempts to change a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression to align with heterosexuality and cisgender norms. Conversion “therapy” is an inaccurate descriptor because these practices have no therapeutic value and are not accredited by any reputable medical provider, clinician, or therapeutic regulatory body.

**Criminal Code:** Law that regulates criminal offences and procedures in Canada.

**De-transition:** De-transition refers to the stopping or reversal of transitioning which could be social (gender presentation, pronouns), medical (hormone therapy), surgical, or legal. A person may choose to undergo de-transition for a variety of reasons. Although they are sometimes mistakenly conflated as synonymous by anti-trans discourse, detransition and regret are different concepts that do not always, but may overlap in some people. De-transition can also be enacted non-consensually and forcibly as a form of conversion therapy. This can look like the enactment of legislation that prevents an individual from continuing to access gender-affirming care.

**DSM:** The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental is a publication by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) for the classification of mental disorders using a common language and standard criteria. It is the main book for the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders in the United States and North America more broadly, and is considered one of the principle guides of psychiatry.

**Duty to report:** In Canada, Under section 125 of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, every person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society.

**Electromagnetic shock:** A stimulant used to evoke a certain response in the recipient. In this case, electromagnetic shock was often used during conversion therapy to make the patient associate the painful stimulus with queer imagery.

**Ex-gay/ex-trans:** A primarily religious conversion therapy movement popularized by the phrase “pray the gay away.” Ex-gay/ex-trans organizations often overlap and portray being trans as inherently sinful according to conservative Christianity, or pathologize gender diversity.

**Gay cure:** An old pseudoscientific hoax in clinical and professional communities that considered homosexuality as something to be cured.

**Gender-affirming care:** Gender-affirming care, as defined by the World Health Organization, encompasses a range of social, psychological, behavioral, and medical interventions “designed to support and affirm an individual’s gender identity” when it conflicts with the gender they were assigned at birth. Gender-affirming care is not only accessed by transgender, non-binary, and genderqueer people, but also by any and everyone. For example, laser hair removal is a common gender-affirming care practice that isn’t usually regarded as such.

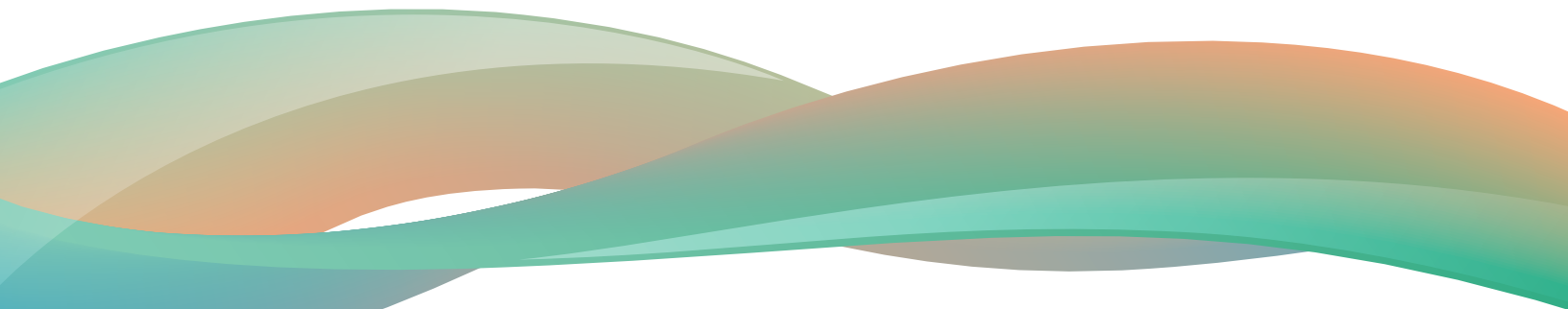
**Hypnotherapy:** Inducing a state of consciousness in which a person may lose the power of voluntary action and is highly responsive to suggestion or direction. In the case of conversion therapy, a practitioner may induce such a state of consciousness where the patient is agreeing to increasingly false statements that would suggest they are accepting changes to their sexuality or gender identity.

**Institutional heterosexism/homophobia/transphobia:** This refers to systems of oppression that target one’s sexuality and gender identity that are entrenched in the very institutions that make up our society. This can look like medical clinics that test women for STIs based on the assumption that they only engage in monogamous sex with men; or the exorbitant cost of IVF or surrogacy for same-gender couples; or the prevalence of airport security scanners that screen and flag transgender people as suspicious.

**Pseudoscience:** Practices, statements, or beliefs that allege they are adhering to an empirical and sound scientific method, but are actually not based in any factual or accredited scientific background.

**Psychosurgery:** A practice to “treat” conditions regarded as mental illnesses through surgical methods on a patient’s brain. In the context of conversion therapy, this has historically looked like lobotomies, or the implanting of electrodes in a patient’s brain to “cure” homosexuality.

**Reparative therapy:** This term can be synonymous with conversion therapy. Reparative therapy understands 2SLGBTQIA+ identities as a deviance from normal sexual and gender expression, and seeks to repair such individuals.



**SOGIECE:** An acronym that stands for “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression Change Efforts.” SOGIECE is being widely adopted by organizations and practitioners working to end conversion therapy and its practice.

**Testicular transplant:** A pseudoscientific, harmful conversion practice that sought to enhance the production of testosterone in gay men, which was believed to curb “homosexual urges.”

**Transition:** In this context, transition refers to a transgender person’s journey of affirming their gender identity through social processes (name, pronouns, dress), medical processes (hormone replacement therapy, laser hair removal, surgery), and/or legal processes (name change, gender marker change) and the like. Not all transgender people choose to transition and this process can look different for everyone.

