



Pronoun Resource

SCENARIO - USING INCORRECT PRONOUNS

You are giving a tour of your school/organization to someone new. When you greet them in the morning they introduce themselves as Riley and let you know they use they/them pronouns. A few times throughout the day you catch yourself accidentally referring to Riley with she/her pronouns. What do you do?

- **Apologize briefly and correct yourself.** If you know their pronouns, correct yourself and use the pronouns that they use. Ex. “And I was saying to someone that she’s a really good, sorry, they, that they are a really good painter.” If you don’t know their pronouns you may want to correct by taking the pronoun or implication of gender out of the sentence, “What can I get you ladies, sorry, what can I get you folks.”
- **Do not over apologize.** This is often the trickiest thing of all! Particularly when we know that someone has just transitioned or disclosed to us a new set of pronouns, we want to do our best to honor that person and their identity and feel really bad that we may not have done that. Over apologizing in the form of, “Oh gosh I am SO SO sorry, I really am. I know it’s wrong and this must happen all the time. Gosh pronouns are so difficult!” You’re doing a few things here. You are making the moment about you feeling better and not them. You are reminding them that this likely happens all the time. And you may even be implying that what they are asking you to do is really difficult/undue burden. And you likely don’t want to make them feel any of these things. So keep the apologies short.
- **Pronouns are difficult.** Challenging your lifelong habit of assuming pronouns having a history of using certain pronouns for a particular person is difficult. It takes practice. But it is important to challenge yourself to keep trying and to not make the challenge part of the apology. Practicing when that person is *not* around, when you are talking about them to other people, is a great time to retrain your brain, practice correcting yourself, and get yourself into a new habit.

SCENARIO - PRONOUN ALLY

You are teaching a class/facilitating a program and one of the participants, Jamie, has introduced themselves as non-binary and state that they use the pronouns they/them/theirs. Several other participants keep referring to Jamie as she/her. Jamie has not corrected anyone, but you can tell that the incorrect pronouns are upsetting to them and they have completely stopped participating in the class. How do you address this situation?

- **Correcting in the moment:** STUDENT: “What Jamie just said, I mean I just don’t agree with her.” YOU: “You don’t agree with what **they** said? Tell me what you disagree with.”
- **Address the misgendering:** “So before we get to what you disagree on, just wanted to remind you Jamie’s pronouns are they/them. Tell me more about what disagree on?”
- **Address the misgendering in follow up and mention it is a community effort to hold each other accountable:** “Hey, I heard you all talking about Jamie today and I wanted to remind you that Jamie uses they/them pronouns. I know it takes some getting used to and, you may have just misspoken. I just did want to flag it for you in case you hadn’t noticed.”
- **Follow up with Jamie** to let them know you heard the misgendering and are going to follow up with the student individually. Mention that you’d like to remind the class at the beginning of next week about respecting each other with names/pronouns but before you do that you wanted to check in and make sure that would that be okay with them.

Pronoun Worksheet - Sample Answers

Strategies for Introducing Pronouns

- **Role model:** “Hey everyone we are going to go around in a minute and I’d like to know your name and what pronouns you use. I’ll go first! My name is Meg and I use she/her for my pronouns.”
- **Role model and explain why you’re asking:** “Hey everyone in a minute here I am going to ask everyone to go around and share their name and pronouns. For example my name is Meg and I use she/her pronouns. It is important to me to know all of your pronouns so that I don’t make any incorrect assumptions and so we all know how we should refer to each other.”
- **Role model and explain what pronouns are:** “Hey everyone we are going to start with intros and I am going to ask everyone to go around and share their name and pronouns. For example my name is Meg and I use she/her pronouns. If you’ve never been asked your pronoun before it’s simply how people refer to you without your name. Common pronouns are he/him, she/her, and they/them.

“Why are you asking pronouns?”

- **Getting away from assumptions:** “The reason that I’m asking everyone to introduce pronouns is because while pronouns are something most of us have grown up assuming for ourselves and other people, there are a lot of folks for whom we make incorrect pronoun assumptions. There are also people who use pronouns we may not be aware of. In an effort to be more inclusive and to ensure we don’t make incorrect assumptions, we’re asking everyone to intro their pronouns.”
- **“I’m not making assumptions** that you *aren’t* [a man] or [a woman], I’m just not making assumptions in any direction, and I’m leaving it open for you to share with me how you identify.”
- **Attach it to the mission of the organization:** “As an organization we recognize that there are a lot of different ways to identify and that sometimes we incorrectly assume pronouns for folks. In an effort to create more affirming spaces we are asking everyone to introduce their pronouns.”

“I get it for those people but no one here is transgender.”

- “There is no way for us to know if someone is transgender or not, so the first thing to note is that someone could be or identify as trans but not be out to the group yet.”
- “All different types of people use all different types of pronouns. So I can’t tell by looking at you what pronouns you use, I could guess, I could assume, but **I can’t know for sure** which is why I ask you to share your pronouns.”
- “For a lot of people it’s likely that my assumption of how they would like to be referred to would be accurate. **I’ve been wrong before and I prefer to ask** rather than assume pronouns for anyone.”
- “I’m glad that you can understand why it would be important for some people to discuss pronouns, and rather than me guessing who those people are or calling particular attention to them, **I ask everyone to introduce their pronouns**. As you can imagine it might get frustrating for that person to always have to be the one to bring it up or advocate for intro-ing pronouns.”

INCLUDING GENDER PRONOUNS IN INTRODUCTIONS

3 STRATEGIES FOR GROUPS

#1 - ROLE MODEL + ASK.

"Hi, my name is Meg and my pronouns are she/her/hers. I'd like to go around and learn your name and pronouns."

#2 - WHAT + ROLE MODEL + ASK

"Hey everyone! During introductions we are going to introduce our name and pronouns. Pronouns are words that we use to replace names, some examples would be she/her/hers, he/him/his, or they/them/theirs. So for my intro I'd share that my name is Meg and my pronouns are she/her/hers. Let's go around and invite everyone to share their name and pronouns with the group!"

#3 - WHAT + WHY + ROLE MODEL + ASK

"Hey everyone! During introductions we are going to share our name and pronouns. Pronouns are words that we use to replace names, like she/her/hers, he/him/his, or they/them/theirs. We include pronouns in our introductions so we get away from the assumption that we can tell someone's pronouns by looking at them and so we can do our best to refer to each other accurately and respectfully. When we go around in a minute I'm going to invite you to share your name and pronouns. I'll start my name is Meg and my pronouns are she/her/hers pronouns."

Common Pronouns			
Female	she	her	hers
Male	he	him	his
Gender neutral & Non-binary (examples)	they	them	theirs*
	ze	zem	zirs

*they/them/theirs in this case is used as a singular pronoun. "I have a friend Alex and **they** are coming over tonight after **their** dance class."