allegheny children's initiative

Hope starts here

PRONOUNS

A pronoun is a word used to refer to someone without the use of their name. We use words such as "he, him, they, them, she, and her," to identify and label a person so that you can refer to them without using their name. For example, "Emily used her computer."

Sometimes people's preferred pronouns may not match with their gender identity. Let's say that "Emily" from the previous example dresses in a traditionally feminine way, wears makeup, and has a feminine sounding voice. One would assume based on Emily's appearance, Emily uses "she/her" pronouns. However, just because Emily has the appearance of someone who is referred to as "she/her" doesn't automatically mean Emily identifies as such. Additionally, people may use "she/they" or "they/he" pronouns, meaning they are comfortable with either pronoun.

When you meet someone new, you usually ask them what their name is. It is always a good idea to ask them what their name and pronouns are before continuing with the conversation. As an example, let's say I go to Emily's home and meet Emily's family for the first time. Even though it looks like Emily would go by "she/her" pronouns, I should not assume that those are the pronouns Emily uses. Instead of assuming, I should say the following phrase directly to Emily…

"Hello! My name is Sarah, I go by she/her pronouns. I understand that your name is Emily; is that your preferred name? What pronouns do you go by?"

Even though this may seem awkward, it is an important step for building a positive relationship. Referring to someone by their name is common courtesy no matter where you go.

For more information, please visit Pronouns.org

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Equity is Imperative