



What to Say: A Quick Affirming Language Guide

Key Principles

- Mirror the patient's words and terms
- Ask respectfully about names and pronouns
- Never assume gender identity, sexual orientation, or family structure
- Normalize asking SOGI questions respectfully
- If you make a mistake: apologize briefly, correct yourself, and move forward

Words to Use

Instead of...	Say this...
Preferred pronouns	Personal pronouns
Husband/Wife	Partner / Spouse
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	Significant other
Homosexual	Gay / Lesbian, etc.
Hermaphrodite	Intersex
Transvestite	Cross-dresser
Ladies and Gentlemen	Everyone / Folks / Colleagues / Team / Y'all
Tranny	Trans / Transgender person / Person of trans experience
He was a boy / She was a girl	Assigned male at birth / Assigned female at birth (or sex assigned at birth)

In Conversation

- Introduce yourself with your pronouns
- Use open-ended questions:
 - “Who would you like us to involve in your care?”
 - “How would you like me to refer to your partner or support system?”
 - “What name would you like us to use?”
 - “How would you like your information documented in your chart?”
- Respect chosen families and identities
- Be mindful of privacy and confidentiality, especially when discussing identity, relationships, or support systems
- Remind patients that these are questions you ask everyone so you can provide the best care possible

Sample Script

“Hi, I’m [Name], and I use [pronouns]. What name and pronouns would you like us to use for you today?”

Practice in Real Time

- Greet patients without assumptions
- Ask about names and pronouns respectfully
- Practice correcting a misstep with professionalism and care

If You Get It Wrong

- Don’t over-apologize
- Don’t explain your intentions
- Correct yourself and continue

Affirmation Pledge

“I pledge to affirm the identities, relationships, and humanity of every patient I serve. I will honor their names, pronouns, families, and stories without assumptions. I will affirm with my words, my actions, and my presence.”

Closing Line

Affirming care is not about perfection. It is about awareness, intention, and aligned action.

— Dr. Lulu