

FOREWORD BY PEGGY RAJSKI, FOUNDER OF THE TREVOR PROJECT

# Transgender Inclusion

ALL THE THINGS  
YOU WANT TO ASK YOUR  
TRANSGENDER  
COWORKER



BUT SHOULDN'T

A.C. FOWLKES, PhD

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*To Sherrie, the first boss I ever told that I was transgender*





# Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xi</i>
<b>PART I: TRANSGENDER BASICS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Getting to Know the Transgender Community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Experiences in the Workplace</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>PART II: CORE QUESTIONS ABOUT TRANSITION</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>3 A Basic Understanding of Transition</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>4 Questions About Medical Transition</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>5 Questions About Legal Transition</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>6 Questions About Social Transition</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>PART III: WORKPLACE DOS AND DON'TS</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>7 Taking Initiative</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>8 Using Gender Pronouns and Chosen Names</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>9 Respecting a Person's Individuality and Privacy</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>10 Establishing Policies, Practices, and Procedures</b>	<b>141</b>

<b>PART IV: BUILDING ON THIS FOUNDATION</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>11 What If My Question Wasn't Answered?</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>12 Conclusion</b>	<b>171</b>
<i>Appendix: 10 Things I've Learned During My Personal Journey of Transition</i>	<i>189</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>205</i>
<i>About the Author</i>	<i>207</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>209</i>

## ***Foreword***

A.C. Fowlkes – an experienced and highly respected consultant on DEIB (diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging) for corporations, institutions of higher education, the prison system, and psychiatric hospitals – has written a thorough, inviting, and highly informative compendium of answers to the most frequently asked questions about what it's like to be trans.

His thoughtful, nuanced answers are informed not only by facts and figures from highly reputable research and resources, including the U.S. Trans Survey and the U.S. Census Bureau, but also by the deft blending of A.C.'s own lived experience as a trans man. Examples of his first-hand experiences are clear, focused, and balanced in just the right places throughout the book.

The gift of this book is that it creates a comfortable, safe place for cisgender workers and associates to get many of their most pressing questions answered about transgender colleagues:

- It lays out the essential basics – and differences – among medical, legal, and social transitioning.
- It explains the various reasons why certain trans individuals might choose one or some – though not

necessarily all – of these three options (medical, legal, or social) to feel they have successfully accomplished their own personal transition.

- The book devotes several helpful chapters to “dos and don’ts” of workplace etiquette.
- The book helps readers appreciate why greater understanding of their trans colleagues makes them even more valuable players in the world’s increasingly diverse workplaces.
- While primarily focused on educating workers, the book is also an invaluable aid for managers, human resources, and other stakeholders in building a healthier, more effective, and ultimately more productive workplace environment.
- Framed as a guide for a cisgender populace, it can also be a useful reference for the transgender community in thinking about how to help their cisgender colleagues build better working relationships in the workplace.

This book will be a powerful, useful tool for years to come for cisgender workers and allies alike. Ultimately, I believe those who read the book thoroughly and take its points to heart can develop more comfortable, inclusive, and effective relationships both in and outside the workplace.

In fellowship and community,

—Peggy Rajski  
Founder/Interim CEO  
The Trevor Project

## ***Introduction***

Society as a whole is becoming increasingly aware of the transgender community. And while there is no shortage of opinions, there is a dearth of reliable, well-sourced information. To fill this gap, more and more companies are bringing in subject matter experts to demystify the process of creating an affirming environment for transgender employees and customers alike. Is bringing in a subject matter expert going to right every wrong? No. But it is a good place to start. I am one of those subject matter experts, and this book is my contribution to what is quickly becoming a robust conversation around transgender inclusion in the workplace.

Is it possible to create the safe and affirming workplace we so desire? I believe so. Is it possible to create a work environment in which you get it right 100% of the time? I'm not sure I would go quite that far. But, while I might fall short of believing in our ability to create a fully utopian workspace, I do believe we can do better than we currently are. And that process begins with the acquiring of knowledge, the furthering of understanding, and the application of both. It is my hope that this book will assist you in accomplishing just that.

## **Who This Book Is For**

You might be wondering who the intended audience is for this book. Is this a book for transgender individuals? Is this a book for allies? Is this a book for both? Neither? Who is this book for, exactly? Well, the answer to that question is this book is for everyone who desires to learn more about the transgender community in general and how we might better support and hold space for them in the workplace in particular.

I do not purport to know all of the answers (or questions, for that matter). I will, however, speak openly about my experiences and make recommendations that are rooted not only in those experiences but in my understanding as a subject matter expert. I have no interest in converting you. I'm not even particularly sure what that would mean. My only desire in writing this is for you to leave knowing more than you did before you read the book and for you to be better prepared to work alongside your transgender colleagues.

So I'll not ask you if you are transgender or cisgender, if you are an ally, an advocate, or an accomplice. I'll not ask you about your political leanings or your religious affiliation. I'll not ask you any of that. But what I will ask you is if you have the tools that you need to be the best version of yourself when interacting with your transgender colleagues. If the answer to that question is anything less than a resounding yes, then this book was written with you in mind. How so? Glad you asked.

This book is for anyone interested in learning about the three widely recognized forms of transition: medical, social, and legal. This book is for anyone who wishes to better understand what policies and procedures are transgender-inclusive. This book is for anyone who would like to better understand the importance of utilizing a person's chosen name and pronouns. This book is for anyone who recognizes that there is value in all of us, even those who have historically (and presently) been pushed to the margins.

Whether you are an LGBTQ+ subject matter expert or know nothing of the community at all, this book was written with you in mind with enough information to provide a rudimentary or foundational understanding of the transgender community and enough nuance to take on higher-order discussions of means, access, and discrimination. This book can be utilized across sectors in that the instructions provided are universal enough to be folded into existing systems, but also specific enough to meet the needs of the transgender community in particular.

Whether you are a supervisor or a supervisee, this book is for you. Whether entry-level or the president and CEO, this book is for you. Whether you're a diversity equity and inclusion expert or know nothing of the topic, this book is for you. Whether you have personal access to the transgender community or do not personally know any member of the community, this book is for you. Whether you are cisgender or even transgender yourself, this book is for you.

## **Why This Book**

What makes this book different is that it is written by a member of the transgender community who is a business professional and is currently undergoing the process of medical transition in the workplace. This book is not a nod to the hypothetical situations that one might find themselves in but is instead a direct reflection of my lived experience and the experiences of people I've had the great honor of working with. This book is different because it is written through a lens of belonging, and every recommendation I make will be to that end.

There are books on the market that focus on the transgender experience, but not many reflect on the transgender experience in the workplace. I have worked with some of the largest, most respected companies in the world. I have been brought into these organizations to answer questions about the transgender community in particular, and the LGBTQ+ community more broadly, and what I've brought to this book are some of the most common questions that I interface with, as well as some of the areas that I find people most often misunderstand.

So this book is your opportunity to learn from an LGBTQ+ sensitivity and transgender inclusion subject matter expert while also getting a chance to hear a little bit about my journey and what has been most effective for me along the way.

All of that said, this is not a memoir. This book will provide peeks into my personal experience, but it draws heavily on research and statistics, especially the U.S. Trans Survey



and U.S. Census Bureau, but also other sources. While this book is meant to assist you in better relating to transgender people in the workplace, it is also meant to broaden your understanding of the transgender community as a whole. We are more than our experiences in the workplace, and this book seeks to highlight that.

## **What This Book Covers**

This book provides a wide variety of information regarding the transgender community, from topics of frequent discussion and debate, such as what restroom a transgender person should be expected to use, to rarely discussed topics, like the impact that coming out as transgender has on the relationship between transgender individuals and their children.

After we discuss the transgender community more generally, we will dive into a discussion of the experiences of transgender individuals in the workplace. What's more, we will discuss frequently asked questions about transition, dos and don'ts in the workplace, and transgender-affirming policies and procedures. Lastly, we will discuss how to go about getting your questions answered if we didn't cover them in this book.

In terms of the structure of the book, Chapters 1 and 2 explore the transgender community and their workplace experiences. Chapters 3 through 6 examine the three types of transition (medical, legal, and social). Chapters 7 through 10 cover the dos and don'ts of transgender matters in the workplace, and Chapters 11 and 12 discuss how to build on all of this information and where to go from here.



*Part I*

# Transgender Basics



## *Chapter 1*

# **Getting to Know the Transgender Community**



I think one of the most difficult balances to strike as a transgender person is the balance between novelty and normalcy. We are very much like you and not at all like you at the same time.

The transgender community is often misunderstood. Part of our very nature is the inherent dissonance between who others think we are and who we know ourselves to be. The writing of this chapter is particularly difficult because, while I want to highlight some of what we've come to know about the transgender community as a whole, I worry that such efforts can cast too wide a net. So as you read this chapter, please keep in mind that while these statistics speak to the lived experience of many transgender individuals in the United States and around the world, we are not homogeneous. We are beautiful. We are vibrant. We are nuanced. And we are often misunderstood.

But before discussing what we know about this community from a demographic standpoint, we must ensure that we understand what it means to be transgender. To do so, you must first understand the difference between sex assigned at birth and gender identity.

## **"It's a Boy!"**

When a child is born, the sex assigned at birth is determined, and this determination usually takes place based almost solely on external anatomy. Whoever is in the room at the time of delivery, whether the doctor, the midwife, the doula, or whoever participates in the birthing process, is the one who determines the sex assigned at birth. Once a child is born, they look at the external anatomy, and they