In order to understand the difference between someone who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and someone who is transgender, you need to know the difference between sex and gender.

**Gender**
A socially constructed system of classification that ascribes characteristics of masculinity and femininity to people. These characteristics can change over time and are different between cultures. Most contemporary definitions stress how gender is socially and culturally produced and constructed, as opposed to being a fixed and coherent essence.

**SEX**
The biological and chromosomal features associated with maleness and femaleness in the human body, found

Individuals who are transgender may identify along a range of expression of masculinity and femininity. Gender is not a simple case of “either/or”. Gender is exhibited by countless signals, from articles of clothing to cosmetics, hairstyles, controversial styles, body language and much more.

Notice, however, that our gender “norms” are not symmetric. Women have won for themselves the right to a wide range of gender expression. Men have not made a corresponding effort. Most men live within a much narrower range of “acceptable” gender.

In general, it works best to think of all effects – sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual identity, and any others – as varying along a continuous spectrum of self-expression, rather than in just one of two or three ways.
Sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual identity are independent of each other. A person may express any variation of each of these in any combination. A person may be transgender or transsexual and identify their sexual orientation as straight, gay, bisexual, or queer.

**Gender Identity:** Refers to an individual’s innate sense of self as a man, woman, or other gender category. Gender identity may change over time and may not accord to dichotomous genders (e.g. strictly male or strictly female).

**Gender Expression:** How a person represents or expresses their gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, and hairstyles.

**Sex:** The cluster of biological and chromosomal features associated with maleness and femaleness in the human body, found at birth and developed during puberty.

**Sexual Orientation:** Refers to whom a person is physically, spiritually, and/or emotionally attracted to.
Cisgender: A person who feels comfortable with their sex and the gender identity they were assigned at birth.

Gender Non-conforming: A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

Intersex: A term for people who are born with external genitalia, chromosomes, or internal reproductive systems that are not traditionally associated with either a “standard” male or female.

Transgender: A range of behaviors, expressions and identifications which challenge the pervasive binary gender system in a given culture. This, like trans, is an umbrella term which included a vast array of differing identity categories.

Transgender Man (or trans man): A transgender individual who currently identifies as a man (female to male).

Transgender Woman (or trans woman): A transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman (male to female).

Transition: The period during which a person begins to live as their new gender. Transitioning may include changing one's name, taking hormones, having surgery, or changing legal documents to reflect their gender identity.