Let’s talk about *Pronouns*

What are Pronouns?
Pronoun: any of a small set of words in a language that are used as substitutes for nouns or noun phrases and whose referents are named or understood in the context - Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Why are Pronouns important?
As the definition demonstrates, pronouns provide understanding and context when speaking to others. Many also see pronouns as a label, and to use the correct pronouns when addressing someone shows respect. Neglecting to use someone's preferred pronouns can make that person feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, and alienated.

How do I use pronouns inclusively?
Pronouns often carry a categorization of gender. You might have heard these referred to as “masculine” and “feminine” pronouns such as: she/her/hers & he/him/his.

Many people do not identify as strictly masculine or feminine and it is best not to assume that you know someone's gender identity. Thus we need gender-inclusive pronouns such as: they/them/their.
In addition to they/them/their, there are many other gender-inclusive pronouns out there! Here are a few that you might hear...

**Tips!**

- **Introduce your pronouns first when meeting someone for the first time.** Putting yourself out there will allow others to feel comfortable to do the same.

- **Include pronouns on email signatures, nametags, and meeting introductions.** Incorporating inclusive language in your processes helps to create a culture of inclusion.

- **Do not assume you know someone’s gender identity and pronouns if you have never met them - use they/them/their or preferred name until you have gained their rapport and preferred pronouns are given to you.** Remember it is a privilege to not have to worry about what pronouns someone will use for you and not everyone shares that privilege.

- **You might be asking yourself “What if I make a mistake?”. We all slip up sometimes. The best thing to do if you use the incorrect pronouns is to apologize and use the correct pronouns moving forward.** Try not to make a big deal or bring extra attention to the situation.

- **Attend Safe Zone 101 - an interactive training designed to provide a foundational approach to LGBTQIA+ allyship.** Register through LOUIE > Self Service > Learning and Development.

Questions? Contact us!
Inclusion@nau.edu