



ellen krug
writer, lawyer, human

“Transgender 101”

Presentation Description: Persons who are transgender have become far more visible, which reflects greater societal acceptance. Still, of the letters in the “LGBTQ alphabet” (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer [or “questioning that I may be one of those letters”]), the “Ts” (transgender persons) more often face unique challenges relative to personal relationships, public interactions, and other things that many take for granted.

What does it mean to be a “trans” person? What can non-transgender people (the technical phrase is “cisgender”) do to make trans people feel welcomed and accepted? What actions or words should they avoid? How does “passing” or not “passing” or the absence of legal rights in many states play into a transgender person’s daily life?

Additionally, a new group of humans who identify as “Gender Nonconforming” are emerging in schools, workplaces, and families. Who are these folks? How can it be that someone doesn’t “identify” as either male or female? “Why do I have to use pronouns like ‘they’ or ‘them’ for ‘these people’?”

With Ellie’s “Trans 101” presentation, audience members learn the basics about what it means to be transgender or gender nonconforming (GNC) and get advice on how to be inclusive toward anyone who identifies as trans or GNC. The talk can also include Ellie sharing about her personal story, which is chronicled in her memoir, *Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change* (Stepladder Press 2013). (Note: some Sponsors ask for all of Ellie’s story; others seek a more limited approach—the presentation can be fashioned however a Sponsor desires.)

Why this Presentation Works: Being transgender herself, Ellie can speak firsthand about transitioning genders later in life (at age fifty-two), a process she describes as “gender correcting.” There’s nothing theoretical here: audience members learn the basics from someone who spent decades believing she could “choose” to remain male, only to discover that gender, like sexuality, artistic bend and a host of other human characteristics, isn’t something that someone can “choose.”

An added dimension to this talk is that Ellie’s personal story has something for almost every listener—human denial and suffering; realizing one’s mortality; lost love and security; achieving inner peace and authenticity; and earning a “do-over” in life. Ellie’s down-to-earth, self-deprecating style puts listeners at ease. She draws out commonalities so that audience members learn that transgender and GNC humans are really no different than anyone else.

Finally, Ellie doesn’t train from a soapbox. Certainly, she speaks about the legal and social challenges facing transgender and GNC humans but does so in a way that evokes compassion and understanding. This is not a political talk.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understanding the basics about what it means to be transgender— defining/discussing gender identity, gender expression, and social/surgical gender transitioning. This includes a discussion about whether gender identity is something that one can consciously “choose.”
2. Learning of the challenges facing transgender children and youth and how to be supportive as these humans make their way through the world.
3. Understanding that not only do transgender or GNC persons who come out in their “true” genders “transition,” but that family members, co-workers, intimate partners and others also “transition” in their thinking and interactions as well.
4. Appreciating the need for proper pronoun usage and “allyship” as ways of welcoming/being accepting of a trans or GNC person. This includes what not to say/what questions not to ask.
5. Understanding what it means to “pass” in one’s “true” gender and the challenges that both the trans person and cisgender people face when, like Ellie (due to her voice), a transgender person doesn’t “pass 100 percent.”
6. Education on what states/locales legally protect transgender persons and the business/personal ramifications of trans or GNC people being “legal” in only 22 states (as of 2019).
7. Ellie will provide an easy-to-understand tool on how to talk with those who still believe that one’s gender identity is simply a “choice.”

Mechanics: This is a lecture-type presentation where audience questions are encouraged. All attendees are presented with a handout. (Unless otherwise arranged, the Sponsor will bear the cost of copying/distributing the handout.)

Technical Needs: This presentation requires a small space for Ellie to “roam” as she speaks. (Ellie doesn’t utilize a podium or PowerPoint for her presentations.) If voice amplification is required, Ellie prefers a lapel mic over a handheld mic.

Duration: 60 minutes at a minimum; up to 120+ minutes depending on Sponsor’s goals and the extent to which Ellie is asked to share about her personal story. Can be expanded into a half or full day workshop that could include Gray Area Thinking® or other training.

“Perk”: Consider purchasing Ellie’s memoir in bulk at a discounted price as a “perk” for team members or attendees.

For additional information contact:

Ellen (Ellie) Krug

elliekrug@gmail.com

319-360-1692

www.elliekrug.com

www.humaninspirationworks.com

Book website: www.gettingtoellen.com

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