

Being an Ally

What does it mean to be an ally? An ally...

- Has worked or is working to understand homophobia/biphobia/transphobia, cisgenderism/heterosexism
- Is able to acknowledge and articulate how patterns of oppression have affected their life and how oppression exists in their environment, examines the effect sexual orientation and gender identity has on their lives and development, identifies how multiple identities shape their lives
- Actively self-educates through reading, screening, and attending events, takes responsibility for their own socialization, privilege, and prejudice
- Does not put down other groups of people on the basis of their race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, physical or mental abilities, physical appearance, social status, or religion
- Chooses to align with LGBTQ+ people and advocates for their needs
- Avoids/challenges derogatory remarks, jokes, and stereotypes about LGBTQ+ people—even when people from the target group are not present
- Is a “safe person” for LGBTQ+ people to speak to, providing support and maintaining confidentiality
- Expects to make some mistakes but does not use that as an excuse for non-action, can refer someone to another ally if they feel they can’t assist an LGBTQ+ person with their concerns
- Promotes a sense of community and knows that they are making a difference in the lives of others
- Does not assume everyone is heterosexual or cisgender, uses all-inclusive language (for example, avoid male/female, boyfriend/girlfriend)
- Does not assume that everyone is interested in having a partner
- Does not assume that unmarried people are single when in reality they may have a same-sex partner
- Does not assume that all parents are heterosexual, does not assume that all children live in families with a man-woman couple in parental roles
- Does not “out” someone
- Develops and uses official forms that allow for a designation beyond male/female, single/married
- Educates others through one-on-one discussions and group programs
- Does not expect an LGBTQ+ individual to be the expert on issues pertaining to their identity group, avoids tokenizing
- Posts LGBTQ+ materials in their workspace
- Explores ways to creatively integrate LGBTQ+ issues into their work

Four Levels in Ally Development

1. **Awareness:** Become more aware of who you are, how you differ from and similar to LGBTQ+ people, and your attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people.
 - a. Self-reflect.
 - b. Read about LGBTQ+ issues.
 - c. Attend workshops such as Safe Zones.
 - d. Have conversations with LGBTQ+ individuals.
2. **Knowledge/Education:** Begin or continue to acquire knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity and the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in your community.
 - a. Learn about the laws, policies, and practices in your community and how they affect LGBTQ+ people.
 - b. Educate yourself about LGBTQ+ cultures in your community.
 - c. Use the resources on the Safe Zones website.
 - d. Contact local and national LGBTQ+ organizations for information.
 - e. Read LGBTQ+ publications.
 - f. Attend LGBTQ+ events on campus and in the community.
3. **Skills:** Develop skills in communicating the knowledge you have.
 - a. Attend continuing education events.
 - b. Role play situations with friends.
 - c. Practice interventions or awareness raising with co-workers.
 - d. Develop support connections.
4. **Action:** The only way to affect social change is to act.
 - a. Support LGBTQ+ students and colleagues.
 - b. Challenge homophobia/biphobia/transphobia.
 - c. Organize events.
 - d. Work to support social justice and equality for all people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Benefits of Being an Ally

- Becoming less locked into sex roles and gender stereotypes that inhibit self-expression
- Enjoying the benefits of LGBTQ+ contributions of (alternative) family and relationship options
- Making a difference in the campus environment, allows LGBTQ+ people to be authentic selves
- Relieving oppression, which impacts everyone
- Developing stronger self-esteem and confidence from being an advocate
- Being able to form close/r connections with LGBTQ+ people