

How To Be an Ally

LEARN

- (1) Listen to the experiences and perspectives of LGBTQ people; (2) respect these experiences and perspectives; (3) acknowledge their validity (even if you don't understand them).
- Seek out information and opportunities to expand your understanding (learn through media, attend events, meet LGBTQ community members, and learn about local services and supports).
- Remember your learning is *your* responsibility – avoid asking LGBTQ people to answer all of your LGBTQ questions (not all LGBTQ people are comfortable acting in an educator role).

PRACTICE

- Intervene when you witness offensive behaviour or language.
- Use inclusive language to ensure everyone feels welcome and respected.
- Challenge policies, practices, and procedures that create barriers for LGBTQ people.
- Apologize regardless of intent. Everyone makes mistakes in an ally role, what matters is how you respond when it gets brought to your attention.
- Be courageous! Don't be afraid to learn, ask for more information and provide support!

REFLECT

- Be open to feedback about how your behaviour is impacting other people.
- Reflect on and question the stereotypes and negative assumptions held by yourself and others.
- Avoid assuming how people identify. Listen for, or politely ask, how someone wants to be identified.
- When talking about LGBTQ topics, assume there are LGBTQ people or people with LGBTQ loved ones in the room and consider how they might be impacted by the tone, spirit, and direction of the conversation.
- Observe the way other folks around you act as allies, even in the smallest ways.
- Remember, everyone's experience of gender and sexuality is different and it's impossible (and unfair) to ask one person to speak on behalf of a whole group!

Awesome Ally Responses

Want to be an ally but not sure what to do when you witness hurtful or offensive comments, jokes or behaviour? Here are some ideas on how to respond.

Tips for Responding:

- Identify the problem. Is it in behaviour, language, or attitude?
- Focus on the impact. It's not about what someone "meant" to do, it's about the effects it had on other people.
- Avoid character judgements. It's about behaviour, not about whether or not someone is a "good" or "bad" person.
- Keep cool. Use a non-judgmental tone and facial expression.

Direct Responses

- Clarify what you heard. "I think I hear you saying that all ____ are _____. Is that what you mean?"
- Ask for more information. "What do you mean?"; "I'm not sure I understand, can you explain?"; "How did you develop that belief?"; "What's so funny?"
- Appeal to common values and/or the principles that guide your organization or environment. "At our school, we learn to treat others with respect. I think that statement is disrespectful."; "In this organization, we don't talk about people that way."
- Refer to your own journey. "That was my first reaction too, but then I realized ..." or "I used to think the same thing, then I started to question why I thought/felt that way."

- Address the behaviour. "It is not okay to stereotype people"; "That comment is transphobic, here's why..."
- Explain the impact. "Your comment is hurtful to myself and others."

Indirect Responses

- Use non-verbal signals. Give a questioning glance, change the subject, or leave.
- Repeat the statement without the discriminatory language. Someone says "My day has been so crazy." You respond "Did you mean to say your day has been hectic?"

Adapted from: Ouch! That Stereotype Hurts, International Training and Development, LLC (2007) Aguilar, L. (Author), Lesko, J. (Producer-Distributor), SunShower Learning. For additional information see: www.OuchThatStereotypeHurts.com.