



WHAT IS AN ALLY?

LDIR defines an ally as someone who understands the many layers of oppression, can identify positions of privilege that they hold, and actively works to rectify inequity. This includes people who mutually understand and recognize each others' oppressions and work towards building coalitions in order to address inequity.

The Safe Schools Coalition's glossary defines an ally as "a member of a historically more powerful identity group who stands up against bigotry."

Source: <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/glossary.pdf>

The Anti-Racist Alliance describes a white ally as someone who names racism, recognizes unearned privileges and makes them visible, dismantles internalized dominance and the belief in the racial superiority of self as a white person, interrupts collusion with other whites who seek to maintain their power and privilege, takes personal responsibility, acts intentionally and overtly behaves as a change agent against white domination.

Source: <http://www.antiracistalliance.com/allychar.html>

The Gender Education Center defines allies to the transgender, lesbian, bisexual, and gay communities as "people who support us who may or may not be a part of our community. These are people who believe in the human rights of all people. They demonstrate that belief through their presence, actions, acceptance and celebration of diversity among people."

Source: <http://www.debradavis.org/gecpage/ally.html>

FOUR PRACTICES FOR BEING AN ALLY

People who experience some type of oppression also have ways to acknowledge privilege. Anyone can become an ally. Being an ally is not just for straight, rich, gender-normative, white, Christian, able-bodied men. It is for anyone who has any kind of privilege and understands that individuals and/or collectives can challenge systems of oppression that are used against other human beings.

Only allies can challenge oppression from a place of privilege; only people who are targets of oppression can do the work of resisting and challenging it from that place. Although they are not the same, both are vital.

Becoming an ally can be difficult. It's more than just calling yourself an ally; it is an on-going process and life commitment. The following four practices help describe this process. Choosing to be an ally is a responsibility to honestly engage in these four ways; each one is closely connected to the others.



1. Self-Awareness

- Awareness of self as well as issues of oppression, and how these two are interconnected.
- Noting your assumptions and asking how these assumptions formed.
- Examining the personal characteristics and perspectives that make allyship easy or difficult.
- Finding ways to self-reflect without requiring oppressed people to do the extra work of providing education.

2. Self-Education

- Many types of oppression have been documented or written about extensively by the people who experienced them. Accessing these resources will provide the foundation of your allyship.
- Familiarize yourself with the issues and histories of oppressed groups according to those groups and how these issues and histories relate to your own.

3. Creating an Open and Supportive Environment

- Acknowledge, appreciate, and celebrate differences among individuals and within groups.
- Encourage and promote an atmosphere of respect and trust – speak openly about the challenges and opportunities that differences between people can bring.
- Be open to criticism of yourself, organization, workplace, family, etc. And actively create safe space for them.
- Listen carefully and thoughtfully.
- Taking it upon yourself to figure out what you can do to move things forward, instead of expecting marginalized people to take the lead.
- Practice and be gentle on yourself. Make mistakes and learn. Then practice all over again.
- Do not speak or do things **for** someone or **instead** of them. You are not a placeholder, speak from yourself.

4. Action

- Once you start becoming an ally, help support others to become allies
- Share knowledge - work with other privileged people to help them understand your framework.
- Build partnerships with other privileged people and develop plans that promote cultural and structural change.
- Stand up in every-day ways.