
BECOMING AN ALLY

Who is an Ally?

An ally is a member of the dominant social group who takes a stand against social injustice directed at a group targeted by discrimination. (For example, heterosexuals who address heterosexism, white people who speak out against racism, men who oppose sexism.) An ally works to be an agent of social change rather than an agent of oppression.

Characteristics of an Ally

- ❖ Feels good about own social group members; is comfortable and proud of own identity.
- ❖ Takes responsibility for learning about own and the target group's experience, culture and how oppression either benefits or disadvantages one group in everyday life.
- ❖ Listens to and respects the perspectives and experiences of target group members.
- ❖ Acknowledges unearned privileges received as a result of dominant group status and works to change privileges into rights that target group members also enjoy.
- ❖ Recognizes that unlearning oppressive beliefs and actions is a lifelong process, not a single event, and welcomes each learning opportunity.
- ❖ Is willing to take risks, try new behaviours, act in spite of own fear and resistance from other dominant group members.
- ❖ Is willing to make mistakes, learn from them and try again.
- ❖ Is willing to be confronted about own behaviour and consider change.
- ❖ Learns and takes direction from target group members and encourages their leadership.
- ❖ Persuades other dominant group members to work to change unearned privileges.

Adapted from Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, ed. M. Adams, L. A. Bell and P. Griffin. New York: Routledge, 1997.