

What Can I Do?: Ideas for Allies **A Starter List of Things You Can Do to Be Supportive,** **Confront Trans/Bi/Homophobia, and Resist Heterosexism**

1. Refuse to tolerate anti-lesbian, -gay, -bisexual, -transgender, or -intersexual comments, attitudes, remarks or jokes.
2. Ask others that any anti -lesbian, -gay, -bisexual,-transgender or -intersexual humor displayed in common areas be removed completely or placed within private office or living spaces.
3. Report all harassment or discriminatory behavior to the appropriate officials.
4. Display positive materials in support of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual, queer or questioning (LGBTIQQ). If possible, post flyers on activities, support groups, programs, and resources for people who are LGBTIQQ.
5. Have available referral information for services which people who are LGBTIQQ might need. Become familiar with resources, including literature, support groups, organizations, individuals, etc., in your area so you can refer people when appropriate.
6. Do not assume that everyone you meet is heterosexual.
7. Use inclusive, non-gender specific language that does not assume heterosexuality in others. Use inclusive language in conversation and also in written materials, policies, forms, etc.
8. Educate yourself on issues and concerns for people who are LGBTIQQ. Take the initiative to obtain accurate information.
9. Attend events, meetings, or programs sponsored by or for people who are LGBTIQQ.
10. Gain insight by talking to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual or queer. Learn from their experiences.
11. Maintain a balanced perspective. Don't assume that the sexual orientation or gender identification of a person who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersexual is the most important aspect of that person. Remember that everyone is a multi-faceted individual whose sexuality and gender identity are only parts of their total life.
12. Don't assume that being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersexual (LGBTI) is so hard and presents so many problems that you should feel sorry for people who are LGBTI. They have the same problems as anyone else. They are just as likely to be well-adjusted, and just as likely to have difficulty coping with stresses in their lives. Because of prejudice and discrimination, however, they have to deal with some unique stressors.
13. Don't assume that being LGBTI doesn't matter; for example, thinking that "They're the same as everyone else and I treat all people the same." While everyone deserves to be treated equally, that is different from treating everyone the same. The experience of being LGBTI in a largely unaccepting society has a profound effect on how that person views himself or herself and how he or she experiences the world.
14. Respect confidentiality at all times. It is imperative that you can be trusted.
15. Examine your own biases and fears. You must explore your deepest feelings and beliefs concerning homosexuality and transgenderism. If you are uncomfortable with the issue, this will be communicated to others. Your ability to be open and accepting will be limited by unexamined beliefs and attitudes. Be willing to look at the areas with which you are uncomfortable. Be willing to talk about your doubts, fears, and uncertainties with others, so that you can address them.
16. Know your own limits. There may be times when an individual's needs or concerns are beyond your ability to help them. Know when you have reached the extent of your knowledge or patience and be prepared to seek out others with additional knowledge or expertise for assistance.
17. Don't be surprised when someone comes out to you.
18. Deal with feelings first. You can be helpful just by listening and providing someone a chance to talk about their feelings and their experience.
19. Provide positive reinforcement to people who are LGBTIQQ to help counter the messages of shame and guilt about homosexuality and transgenderism that are so prevalent in society.

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20. Assume that in any setting (e.g. workplace, organization meeting, residence hall, etc.) there are people who are LGBTIQQ who are wondering how safe the environment is for them. Provide safety by making clear your support of people who are LGBTIQQ.
21. Include LGBTIQQ issues and topics in training seminars, curricula, programming, professional development workshops, etc. when appropriate.
22. If people jump to the conclusion that you are LGBTIQQ because you talk about LGBTIQQ topics, because you are friends with LGBTIQQ people, because you are reading a LGBTIQQ publication, or because you are being affectionate with someone of the same gender or with someone transgendered: resist your urge to deny it. Challenge yourself to resist seeing such an assumption as an accusation, or as something that must be denied. Challenge yourself not to immediately retreat into the security of your heterosexual and fixed gender identity and heterosexual privilege.
23. Remember that people who are LGBTIQQ come from widely diverse backgrounds with a wide range of experiences. Treat everyone as a unique individual.

Source: Northern Illinois University Safe Zone Ally Handbook, Modified by CSUN Positive Space Program

Just as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersexual people may go through stages of "coming out," heterosexual and fixed-gender people also experience changes in attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities. Where are you in the process of becoming an ALLY?

1. Repulsion

Homosexuality and transgenderism is seen as a crime against nature. Gays/lesbians/bisexuals and transgendered people are sick, crazy, immoral, sinful, wicked, etc. Anything is justified to change them: prison, hospitalization, negative behavior therapy, violence, etc.

2. Pity

Heterosexual chauvinism. Heterosexuality is more mature and certainly to be preferred. Any possibility of becoming "straight" should be reinforced, and those who seem to be born differently should be pitied.

3. Tolerance

Homosexuality is just a phase of adolescent development that many people go through and most people grow out of. Thus, gays/lesbians/bisexuals are less mature than heterosexuals and should be treated with the protectiveness and indulgence one uses with a child. Gays, lesbians and bisexuals should not be given positions of authority because they are still working through their adolescent behavior. The same applies to transgenderism.

4. Acceptance

Still implies there is something to accept. Characterized by such statements as "you're not a lesbian, you're a person" or "what you do is your own business" or "it's fine with me, just don't flaunt it".

5. Support

Work to safeguard the rights of LGBTI. People at this level may be uncomfortable themselves but they are aware of the homophobic and heterosexist climate and irrational unfairness.

6. Admiration

Acknowledges that being LGBTI in our society takes strength. People at this level are willing to truly examine their homophobic and heterosexist attitudes, values, and behaviors.

7. Appreciation

Value the diversity of people and see LGBTI people as a valid part of that diversity. These people are willing to combat homophobia and heterosexism in themselves and others.

8. Nurturance

Assumes that LGBTI people are indispensable in our society. They view LGBTI people with genuine affection and delight, and are willing to be allies and advocates.

The Riddle Homophobia Scale. Taken from: Wall, V. (1995). Beyond Tolerance: Gays, lesbians and bisexuals on campus. A handbook of structured experiences and exercises for training and development. American College Personnel Association

Source from UCR LGBT Resource Center, Modified by CSUN Positive Space, 9/17/02

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