Who is an Ally?

“A straight ally is someone who is not... [LGBTQ] but personally advocates for equal rights and fair treatment. Straight allies are some of the most effective and powerful advocates for the LGBTQ movement. These allies have proven invaluable personally and politically, and are increasingly important in the fight for equality. Indeed, their voices often have been heard while those of LGBTQ people have been ignored.” – Human Rights Campaign

Our society is heterosexist, so most people grow up with unexamined heterosexist assumptions and attitudes. It takes time to overcome those assumptions, attitudes and the behavior to which they give rise. We call the process “becoming an ally” of non-heterosexual people. The movement from heterosexism to alliance is described in the following stages.

1. Active Oppression

This involves actively laughing at anti-LGBTQ jokes. Also, making fun of people who do not fit the traditional binary gender roles, as well as verbal or physical harassment of those perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer.

1. Indifference

Passively acts toward those who demean LGBTQ people and ignoring the topics of homosexuality, transgender, and queer in social and/or work settings.

3. Oppression Through Lack of Action

Recognizing the heterosexism or homophobia in others’ speech, but refusing to say or do anything about it. Avoiding participating in activities or programs because people might think you are LGBTQ yourself.
4. Confronting Oppression

Politely confronting anti-homosexual joke-tellers, but not pushing it. Deciding to participate in activities regardless of what others will think. Mediating discussions between people with differing opinions about gender and sexual identities.

5. Growing as an Ally

Work to safeguard the rights of LGBTQ. Reading books about homosexuality and being aware of and sensitive to issues which minorities face. Making yourself aware of individuals, organizations, agencies, staff, faculty, and courses that deal with issues of oppression. Joining organizations that support LGBTIQQ people.

6. Challenging Oppression

Educating friends and acquaintances about the LGBTQ community. Going into the community to present on topics about sexual minorities. Confronting not just obviously homophobic comments.

7. Joining an Ally Support Network

Joining groups of other allies, such as Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Creating a support group for allies on your campus or in your community. Encouraging and rewarding employees or students who are inclusive and respectful of differences among people. Promoting an atmosphere of respect on the job and in the classroom. Appreciating differences among individuals within groups.

8. Challenging the Heteronormative System

You can do this by working to change heterosexist institutional practices, such as: teachers working for an inclusive family life curriculum, administrators allowing live-in domestic partners for those with on-campus jobs, and employers extending benefits to domestic partners; emphasizing the importance of LGBTIQQ role models in the workplace and classroom; refusing to buy products and support corporations that do not have inclusive policies; and opposing candidates who oppose civil rights.

Source: UCR LGBT Resource Center, modified by CSUN Positive Space Program, 10/09/2002. Updated by CSUN Pride Center 8/05/2013