

What is an Ally?

...An ally is one who acts in opposition to oppression...

We believe that anyone can be an ally and interrupt acts of oppression or discrimination...

An ally to 'who'?!?

...One can be an ally to any oppressed group or target of mistreatment. One can be an ally to people of color, Muslim people, etc. It's also important to recognize that we all have multiple identities that intersect in unique ways. When we think about 'allies', we might consider ourselves to be allies to groups where two or more identities intersect, such as allying with 'women who are not US citizens', 'lesbians of color', 'Jewish alcoholics', etc...

Since oppression and mistreatment exists in several different areas, allyhood does as well. Allies exist in individual, institutional, and societal/cultural areas...

What if I'm not ready to be an ally?

Allyhood is a process, not an outcome. One never reaches a space of optimal allyhood, but is rather constantly challenged by one's own beliefs, bias, internalization of previous experiences, and general stereotypes and resistance.

As a developing ally, it is important to engage in self-reflection regarding the ways that we might perpetuate oppression and mistreatment, consciously or unconsciously...

The Four Basic Levels of Becoming an Ally

- ◆ Awareness: Explore how you are different from and similar to others. Gain this awareness through talking with others by attending workshops, and through self-examination.
- ◆ Knowledge/Education: Begin to understand policies, laws and practices and how they affect others. Educate yourself.
- ◆ Skills: This is an area that is difficult for many people. You must learn to take your awareness and knowledge and communicate it to others. You can acquire these skills by attending workshops, role-playing with friends or peers, and developing support connections.
- ◆ Action: This is the most important and frightening step. Despite the fear, action is the only way to cause change in society as a whole.

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Individual Area	Institutional Area	Societal /Cultural Area
◆ Attitudes	◆ Housing	◆ Values, norms, needs
◆ Beliefs	◆ Employment	◆ Language
◆ Socialization	◆ Education	◆ Standards of beauty
◆ Individual Behaviors	◆ Legal System	◆ Holidays
◆ Interpersonal Interactions	◆ Religion	◆ Gender Roles
	◆ Media	◆ Logic System
	◆ Government/Laws	◆ Societal Expectations
	◆ Health Services (physical and emotional)	◆ Definition of a family
		◆ Meritocracy
		◆ Definitions of good & evil
		◆ Definition of "normal"

Here is a list of ways we might resist thinking critically about this:

Individual Area	Institutional Area	Societal /Cultural Area
◆ Beliefs in agent supremacy	◆ Defense of power and privilege	◆ Engagement in culture of agent supremacy
◆ Lack of skill in intergroup communication	◆ Commitment to traditions and symbols	◆ Engagement in culture of individualism
◆ Ignorance of cultural differences	◆ Acceptance of status quo	◆ Engagement in culture of blaming targets of oppression
◆ Defense of privilege	◆ Concern about colleague's reactions	◆ Engagement in systemic privilege for agents
◆ Fear of conflict	◆ Concern about inefficiency /noise /conflict	◆ Acceptance of recorded history and traditions
◆ Fear of exposing ignorance and incompetence	◆ Perceptions of low reward for innovation/change	◆ Acceptance of imbalance in political power for agents

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