

# Become an Ally

- Acknowledge the privilege you experience based on being heterosexual and cisgender (among your other forms of privilege).
- Continue to take time to learn more about LGBTQ2S+ issues. A lot of homophobic and transphobic ideas are based in old thinking. Learning about LGBTQ2S+ history and the contemporary human rights landscape is important in being able to speak accurately to the less enlightened.
- Try to adopt language that is inclusive. Don't assume someone has a boyfriend/girlfriend, instead use terms like partner or significant other. Also respect pronouns. Politely correct others when they use incorrect terms.
- Respect the identity of trans men and women. Use the name they share with you instead of what may be on their identification (it costs a lot of money to legally change a name and there are a lot of hoops to jump through. Many trans youth can't afford the costs and the lack of a permanent address can make this nearly impossible).
- Avoid terms like "real" or "biological". Instead use the term "cis".
- Learn how to identify homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and how it is prevalent in our society. Develop strategies to challenge homophobic and transphobic comments when you hear them. Share your strategies with others.
- Respect the confidentiality of LGBTQ2S+ people you meet. Do not out them. Just because someone has shared their sexuality or gender identity with you does not mean it is common knowledge. Do not disclose someone's sexuality or gender identity without their consent. Many LGBTQ2S+ people are concerned for their safety and you may be one of the few people they have told. You should only share if it is relevant. For example, "I am taking Sally to the clothing room, because she is transgender" is not acceptable. "I need to refer a youth to a doctor that is trans-positive, can you recommend a clinic?" is acceptable.
- Be willing to have your ideas of sexuality and gender challenged. Acknowledge that your ideas are shaped by your experiences and that others may not share your views. Sexuality and gender identity are social constructs and are constantly evolving. For example, not all women want to wear dresses nor all men to play sports.
- Adopting inclusive language signals to LGBTQ2S+ people that you are aware of the issues they encounter every day and that you have taken steps to educate yourself to be an ally. You can still wear an ally button, but actions speak louder than slogans.
- Remember sexuality and gender are not the same thing. Sexuality is about who we find attractive and gender identity is about how we see our gender.
- Lobby for your workplace to be inclusive spaces. This is more than having posters of rainbows on bulletin boards.

*To learn more, contact:*

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