

Ally for Equality



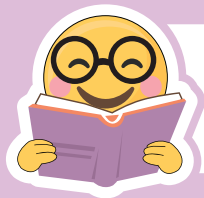
JOURNEY OF AN ALLY



The 'I don't know anything about LGBTIQ issues' Ally



The 'I'm getting it but still hesitant' Ally



The 'I'm willing to listen and learn' Ally



The 'I'm speaking up and talking about LGBTIQ' Ally



The 'Super Ally' - Let's make some effort and bring change

CONTENT

- ★ Context
- ★ Who are LGBTIQ?
- ★ Who is an Ally?
- ★ Why are Allies important?
- ★ How do you get started?
- ★ As an Ally,
what can you do to assist?
- ★ Equality Encyclopedia

Who are LGBTIQ?

Lesbian: A woman who is physically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to other women.

Gay: A person physically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to someone of the same sex. Usually used to describe men loving men and frequently used to identify the whole LGBTIQ community – as in 'Gay Community'.

Bisexual: A person physically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to both men and women.

Transgender: A person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

Intersex: A term to describe individuals born with any of several variations in sex characteristics including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones or genitals that do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies.

Questioning: A person who is questioning their sexuality or gender identity.

Queer: A word that describes sexual and gender identities other than straight and cisgender. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people may all identify with the word queer.



As Sri Lanka still regards sexual activity between two consenting adults of the same sex as a crime (Section 365 and 365A of the Penal Code 1883), the LGBTIQ community continues to face legal, political and social restraints. The laws and system might not change overnight, but small steps initiated by compassionate and positive Allies will surely make a huge difference.

Who is an Ally?

An Ally simply means one who realises the privileges of the majority and empathises with the struggles of the minority and advocates for equal rights and fair treatment. And when there is no cut-and-dry way of being an Ally, it means engaging in open conversations, asking questions, recognising your own biases and blind spots, and stepping out of your comfort zone.



Why are Allies important?

Allies are some of the most effective and powerful voices of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning/Queer (LGBTIQ) movement. They can be our siblings, our parents, relatives, our friends, teachers, co-workers and so on. However, it is important to understand that not only non-LGBTIQ persons, but also LGBTIQ persons can be an Ally for their fellow community members. Everyone gets to adopt the term 'Ally' in different ways... and that's okay!

The journey from being unaware of LGBTIQ issues to talking out loud about LGBTIQ and their rights doesn't happen overnight. This is a process where you continuously learn things, become comfortable with the uncomfortable issues and start taking steps towards a change.

Now go to the inside front cover of the booklet again and check out the 'Journey of an Ally' to find out where you are. No matter where you stand in the spectrum, remember; you are an Ally!

How do you get started?



Developing oneself as an Ally is a skill and you achieve this capability over time. Just remember *"Rome wasn't built in a day, but they were laying bricks every hour"*.

Here are some basic ideas, everyday changes that will assist you to be an admirable Ally.

Never hesitate to ask

Confused about terminologies and pronouns?

Don't know about LGBTIQ history and issues?

Unsure if you're about to say something that's going to offend someone?

Not sure what all of those rainbows mean?



The key is assume nothing and start asking questions whenever you are not sure about anything. Be willing to talk about your doubts, fears, and uncertainties with others, so that you can address them. Never let fear of misspeaking keep you from learning.

Remember! Strive to ask educated questions not cumbersome ones like *'What's your real name'?* Or *'What's your real gender'?* Someone's identity is not up for a debate, be respectful about that.

Do your own research, stay informed

2



In this era of smartphones and internet, everything is just a click away. You can just go online, do some research and learn about issues like gender and sexuality, LGBTIQ history, culture, inequality and what's happening with LGBTIQ rights around the world. It will help you to stay informed about these issues and you can easily initiate or take part in a conversation.

Understand the difference between being funny and offensive

3

Be always reflective about your language because often small comments grow into bigger problems. Avoid passing sexist comments and using derogatory terms like 'homo', 'so gay' and 'faggot' etc. It is easy to label these as 'just a joke' and get away with it, but these are not funny rather can be really hurtful for a LGBTIQ person.



Diversify your social network

4

Don't know any LGBTIQ person, friend or colleague personally? That's because we are uncomfortable with anything which is out of the box. Surely, we prefer and are comfortable with the people we love best and know most. But, sometimes we should distance ourselves from the comfort zone and unlearn prejudices to experience the wider world. And how do we do that and get comfortable with the differences? There is no quick fix for that. Just make a point of stretching your social circle and you'll be surprised at what you learn. As Tom Robbins said *"Our similarities bring us to common ground, and our differences allow us to be fascinated by each other"*.

While getting to know LGBTIQ persons, remember that there's diversity within the community as well. So, never let one person define or judge the entire community.

Speak up

5



If you witness any discourteous behavior, whether in the presence of an LGBTIQ individual or not, never let it pass. Instead, say something. Don't let your support be passive, rather be vocal about it. You don't have to be confrontational, just say, *'Hey, that's not OK'* or *'That's really uncalled for'* or *'I don't think that's true'*. There are others who may be thinking the same thing and will appreciate you speaking up, especially if they are LGBTIQ.

Respect people's privacy

If someone chooses to come to you and share their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression, it means they trust you. Honor their trust and try not to let them down. They may not be ready to tell others about it. Always check with them before telling anyone else what they have told you.

6





Understand the risk factors of online activism

7

We often notice that in support of LGBTIQ rights, online Allied activists, bloggers and others open Facebook pages, organise online events, upload LGBTIQ event photos and videos and write about LGBTIQ issues and challenges etc., with good intentions. However, most of the time, these actions could result in homophobic attacks online, cyberbullying, hate comments and expose LGBTIQ persons to different kinds of risks. So defending LGBTIQ rights from your privileged safety without taking actual queer lives into account, is toxic Allying. Be strategic and cautious while being vocal or showing support online!

As an Ally, what can you do to assist?

- Recognise your privilege, utilise it to make space for LGBTIQ people.
- Do more than just show up for Pride. Show your support in more personal ways through the language you use, conversations you choose to have and signals that you send.
- Don't make assumptions about people's sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.
- Speak out against homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and anti-LGBTIQ harassment and discrimination.
- Be supportive of anyone who chooses to come out.
- Wear or display LGBTIQ-friendly stickers, buttons or posters.
- Donate to LGBTIQ causes.

Additionally here are some suggestions →

If you are an organisation or company:



- Take initiative to formulate Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) policies
- Arrange sensitisation sessions on sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, dispelling myths about LGBTIQ population for the staff
- Ensure equal opportunities and benefits for LGBTIQ employees like: insurance policies, retirement, relocation assistance, approve leave if anyone's undergoing sex reassignment surgeries (SRS) etc.
- Take appropriate disciplinary actions against workplace harassment based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression

If you are in the education sector:

- Formulate anti-bullying policies to safeguard LGBTIQ students
- Have a certified counselor with whom students can have discussions about sexuality and gender issues
- Educate teachers about LGBTIQ issues
- Host or arrange sensitisation sessions for students



If you are involved in the tourism and hospitality sector:



- Educate your staff about sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression
- Train your staff to assist LGBTIQ travelers, for example: how to address them, don't show any discriminatory behavior etc.
- Ensure your staff can recommend LGBTIQ friendly attraction spots, restaurants and make them aware of any particular risk if any etc.
- Develop an inclusive website with reviews and photos from LGBTIQ guests

You may be the reason
a **friend, sibling, child,**
coworker, or someone else
you know finds
greater value in their life
and develops a
higher level of self-esteem.
So it's time to show
your **support and**
be a trendsetter!

In your ally journey, the Equality Encyclopedia is a small token of support

Equality Encyclopedia

Terms to Avoid 🙄

Homosexual

Homosexual couple/
Homosexual Relationship

Gay lifestyle

Sexual preference

Transsexual

Sex change

Boy friend/ Girl friend

Special rights

Terms Preferred 😊

Gay or Lesbian

Couple or Relationship

Gay lives or LGBTIQ lives

Sexual orientation

Transgender

Transition

Partner

Equal rights

Now you know the terms, put them to work!

If you wish to know more about how you can be of assistance, please do call us! If you wish to be a part of our Ally network island wide please send us your name and email/ WhatsApp/ Instagram/ Facebook contacts.



Contact Details

Tel: +94-11-2075121 / +94-11-4334279

Fax: +94-11-2075414

Email: equalground@gmail.com

Web: www.equal-ground.org

Web Blog: www.equalground.wordpress.com

Supported by



Kingdom of the Netherlands

EQU~~U~~L GROUND

