How to be an LGBTQIA+ Ally!

The definition of an
ALLY

| NOUN | a state of formally cooperating with another for a purpose |
| VERB | combine or unite a resource or commodity with (another) for mutual benefit |

Allyship is one of the most important tools in the human toolkit; it brings us together across all societal borders. It is a life-long learning process, teaching us the importance of building supportive connections that can dismantle prejudice, bias, and discrimination. We have collected the tips below from our very own (ISC)² LGBTQIA+ community as a guide to help us develop our allyship strengths.

1. Know what LGBTQIA+ means and understand the different identifications. There are many misunderstandings and confusions around LGBTQIA+ terminology. You may be surprised to learn that this is a diverse community, representing a vast intersectionality of people. By knowing the different identifications and their meanings we can de-mystify them and begin the road to connectedness.

So, let's break down the acronym:
L: Lesbian. G: Gay. B: Bisexual. T: Transgender/Transexual. Q: Queer/Questioning. I: Intersex. A: Asexual/Agender. + includes all the other gender and sexuality identities in the spectrum: Demisexual, Genderfluid, Non-binary/Genderqueer, Pansexual/Omnisexual, Polyamorous, Sapiosexual, Two-spirit and more!

If you haven't heard of some these, we encourage you to look them up to find out more. You might even identify with one of them!

2. Don't ask intrusive questions. Remember that it can be difficult for some people to talk about their identities and coming-out stories are incredibly private. Follow the person's lead. Being curious is a good thing, as is wanting to be educated, but it isn't the responsibility of your LGBTQIA+ colleague to teach you. If you do need to ask a question it's better to ask in private, rather than in a group setting. At the end of the day, you are in the workplace and treating each other with respect is of the utmost importance. If you wouldn't ask a straight colleague about their sex life – don't ask your LGBTQIA+ colleague.

3. Identify yourself as an active ally. Put your pronouns in your email signature to show support. Share allyship support on LinkedIn. Put a Pride flag on your desk. Familiarize yourself with the language and terminologies and adopt it into everyday speech – where appropriate. And remember you don't have to identify as LGBTQIA+ to support and be an ally of the community.

4. Speak-up if you hear discriminatory speech. There is nothing more affirming than having someone stick up for you. As an ally, take the time to educate those who are less understanding, make sure that everyone knows anti-LGBTQIA+ speech is not tolerated. It is also a good practice to learn the reporting processes in your workplace to make sure people are held accountable for their actions/words.

5. Use affirming language. When someone shares a piece of their personal journey with you it's because they feel trusting – the easiest way to affirm that trust is to respond normally. For instance, your lesbian colleague might say "my girlfriend and I are going skiing this weekend", instead of being awkward or overly enthusiastic, the normal response would be "cool, which slopes?". The LGBTQIA+ community wants to be able to feel comfortable in their workplaces and to feel a sense of belonging – the way you react plays a huge part.

6. Be careful of stereotyping. As with many underrepresented groups, LGBTQIA+ stereotypes are common. It's important to understand that the depictions of those within the community that are depicted in the media are not the single standard for all. For instance, not all gay men are camp and not all transgender women are drag queens. As with all forms of diversity, all humans have differences and similarities, it is our job as allies to embrace everyone regardless and not allow ourselves to project these stereotypes onto other people.

7. Be understanding and supportive. Being part of the LGBTQIA+ community means being on the lookout for those who might cause you harm – whether through microaggressions or verbal threats or violent acts. This type of background stress can present in many different forms. As an active ally, learn about the history of LGBTQIA+ activism, learn about the challenges the community is facing today and show up – get involved, stand up and show your support. (Just remember to leave space for those whose voices need to be heard.)

8. Be inclusive, always. Whatever your work is, there will always be a way to ensure you are being inclusive. When referring to a customer base or an ERG, use They/Them instead of He/Him/She/Her as common practice. Make sure everyone in your group has a voice, no matter their identities. Listen to what your LGBTQIA+ colleagues need and make actions based on that – don't just flag-ify your corporate branding or social media. Ensure that there is embedded support in your reporting lines and policies.

If in doubt, approach people with support, kindness, patience, and grace. When asked for help, listen to understand, and understand to provide or find support.

To learn more about our DEI Initiative and find more DEI resources, visit **www.isc2.org/dei**