

How to be an Ally to LGBT People

The Four Basic Levels of Becoming an Ally

Awareness: Explore how you are different from and similar to LGBT people. Gain this awareness through talking with LGBT people, attending workshops and self-examination.

Knowledge/Education: Begin to understand policies, laws and practices and how they affect gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Educate yourself on the many communities and cultures of LGBT people.

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 effect change in the society as a whole.

Five Other Points to Keep in Mind

1. Have a good understanding of sexual orientation and be comfortable with your own.
2. Be aware of the coming-out process and realize that it is not a one-time event. The coming-out process is unique to LGBT people and brings forth challenges that are not often understood.
3. Understand that LGBT people receive the same message about homosexuality and bisexuality as everyone else. Thus, LGBT people suffer from internalized homophobia and heterosexism. It is important to recognize the risks of coming out and to challenge the internal oppression.
4. Remember that LGBT people are a diverse group. Each community within the larger LGBT community has unique needs and goals.
5. Know at least basic information about AIDS/HIV in order to address myths and misinformation and to be supportive of those affected by this disease whether in themselves or in partners and friends. While AIDS/HIV is a health issue for all, those who live with the most fear and have lost the most members of their community are LGBT persons.



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