



How to Become an Ally (8 Ways)

From Syracuse University

How to be an ally has become an increasingly popular discussion this year, and an important one at that, but many are confused about what exactly it means to be an ally. This list is by no means comprehensive. Rather, think of this list as a jumping-off point to begin your journey into better understanding your role as an ally to Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) and other marginalized communities, and as with any important subject, I encourage you to go out and do more research on your own.

Research, research and more research!

Before you jump to action in any social justice movement, you need to know the history. Especially in cis-white communities, there is a lack of knowledge about racism and discrimination, but do not turn to your BIPOC colleagues and friends to explain these concepts to you. It is not their job. Rather, do your own research to learn the history of the movement you want to ally with. Learn what has been done before, what has worked, and what still needs to change moving forward. Movies and TV series are also good places to start if reading isn't your thing.

Listen!

To best understand how to help BIPOC, listen to what they are telling you. If there are local speakers on the subject, attend and be attentive. Podcasts are another great resource! Consider checking out NPR's "Code Switch" and Reni Eddo-Lodge's "About Race," about the experiences of BIPOC in America, or Marlee Silva's "Tiddas 4 Tiddas" celebrating indigenous female achievements. If your friends who are a part of marginalized communities decide to engage with you on the subject of discrimination, listen to them and offer support where appropriate. As an ally, your job is to listen and learn.

Don't practice "performative allyship."

If you were active on social media during the height of the BLM protests this summer, you've seen performative allyship in action, as floods of black squares all over your feed or celebrities insincerely using protests as a photo opp. Australian journalist Monisha Rudhran defines performative allyship as "the practice of words, posts and gestures that do more to promote an individual's own virtuous moral compass than actually helping the causes that they're intending



to showcase.” Basically, it’s using the struggles of others to make yourself look like a better or more moral person. Be more aware of the motivations behind your social media posts in the future. Ask yourself: are you posting this because it’s with the intention of being a true ally, or because it will make you look good?

Speak up in your own social circles.

As a person of privilege, you have access to social circles that BIPOC do not. Perhaps you have heard racist or derogatory language used by family members or friends? Take some time at your next family reunion to challenge peoples’ beliefs, and speak up for those who are not there.

Get comfortable being uncomfortable.

As humans, we are averse to change. If your life has been one of comfort, it is difficult to voluntarily give up that comfort. However, to work towards being a good ally, you need to forfeit it, as your comfort comes at the expense of others. By remaining in the status quo, you are directly benefiting from social structures that harm BIPOC and other marginalized communities. Now is the time to own up to your complicitness in discriminatory systems. So yeah, get comfortable being uncomfortable.

Learn from your mistakes.

Being an ally is an ongoing process, and you are bound to say or do the wrong thing at certain points. Sometimes, the best way to learn is through trial and error. The important thing is to acknowledge when you’re wrong, and to not make those same mistakes again. Essentially: welcome failure, but learn from it.

Amplify the voices and messages of BIPOC!

There are so many amazing speakers and writers from BIPOC and other marginalized communities with important stories and messages that need to be shared. In short, promote others’ voices and don’t center yourself in the conversation. It’s okay to feel bad about your role in an unjust and racist society, but as an ally it is necessary to realize that your role is one of support.



Show up!

Last, but certainly not least, make your actions match your words! Show up for BIPOC and other marginalized communities in ways that matter. Take responsibility for your actions, educate your peers, attend protests and marches, sign petitions, and donate, if you can! Another way – volunteer your time.

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