

You as an Ally

Since, under the present world conditions, everyone either is now, has been, or will be at some time a target of social oppression and injustice...and since everyone is now, has been, or will be in a non-target group in relation to some other group's oppression, alliance building is for everyone. Every one of us needs allies, and every one of us can take the role of an ally for someone else. The definitions, guidelines, and strategies below are based on this premise. They are equally applicable from the perspective of someone who is the target and someone who is not the target as it relates to any type of bias, exclusion, or oppression.

Definitions

An Ally is:

- Someone who is willing to act on behalf of, in support of, or in coalition with someone else. Someone who understands and draws the connection between themselves, their group and others/other groups.
- One whose personal commitment to valuing difference is reflected in a willingness to:
 - Educate oneself about discrimination, oppression and social justice;
 - Challenge one's own prejudices;
 - Learn and practice the skills necessary to interrupt statements, behaviors, policies and institutional structures that diminish, and exclude others.

Strategies

Be an Ally to:

- Yourself
- Target group members (those who are on the down-side of a power dynamic)
- Those on the up-side of a power dynamic who consciously or unconsciously engage in behaviors that perpetuate discrimination, exclusion, or oppression
- To Indiana State University

Guiding principles for being an effective Ally:

- Assume that you in particular are good enough and smart enough to be an effective ally. Assume that you have a perfect right to be concerned with other people's issues and that it is in your own best interest to do so and to be an ally.
- Assume that all people in the target group want members of your group, and you in particular are an ally. Assume that they recognize you as such – at least potentially – and that any appearances to the contrary (any apparent rejections of you as an ally) are the result of the target group's experience of oppression and internalized oppression.
- Assume that target group people are experts on their own experiences, and that you have much to learn from them. Use your own intelligence and your own experience as a target group member to think about what the target group people might find useful or helpful.

- Assume that making mistakes is part of the learning process of being an ever more effective ally. Be prepared for flare-ups of disappointment and criticism. Acknowledge and apologize for mistakes; learn from them, but don't retreat.

Adapted from Ricky Sherover-Marcuse, Ph.D *Strategies for Being an Effective Ally*.