

LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY & BELONGING

BECOMING AN ALLY

Building stronger communities through respectful action

ARTICLE 5 • BY MAGGIE LEAROYD



Becoming an Ally

Building stronger communities through respectful action

Supportive communities do not happen by chance. They are created through the everyday actions of people who choose to treat one another with kindness, respect and dignity. One of the most powerful ways to strengthen any community is through allyship—the willingness to support others, challenge discrimination and help create environments where everyone feels they belong.

Allyship is often associated with people who are not part of the LGBTQ+ community supporting those who are. While this is an important aspect of allyship, support also exists within the LGBTQ+ community itself. The community is incredibly diverse, and individuals may have different identities, life experiences, cultures, faiths, disabilities and perspectives. Supporting one another across these differences helps create stronger, more inclusive communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Being an ally does not require perfection or having all the answers. It begins with listening, learning and recognising that every person deserves to be treated with fairness and respect. Effective allyship is not about speaking over others or assuming we know what someone needs. Instead, it is about standing alongside people, amplifying their voices and helping remove barriers that prevent them from feeling safe, accepted and included.

This article explores what allyship means, why it matters and how small, consistent actions can contribute to healthier communities both within and beyond LGBTQ+ spaces.

What Is Allyship?

An ally is someone who actively supports the rights, dignity and inclusion of others.

Allyship involves:

- Listening with empathy.

Learning from different experiences.

Challenging discrimination respectfully.

Promoting inclusion.

Supporting equal opportunities.

Respecting people's identities.

Standing alongside others rather than speaking for them.

Allyship is an ongoing commitment rather than a label someone gives themselves.

Why Allyship Matters

Everyone benefits from communities where people feel respected and included.

Positive allyship helps to:

- Reduce discrimination.

Improve mental wellbeing.

Strengthen trust.

Increase confidence.

Promote equality.

Build safer environments.

Encourage belonging.

When people know that others will support them, they are often more confident expressing their authentic selves.

Allyship Within the LGBTQ+ Community

The LGBTQ+ community includes many different identities and lived experiences.

Being an ally within the community means recognising that experiences may differ depending on factors such as:

- Sexual orientation.

Gender identity.

Age.

Ethnicity.

Culture.

Religion.

Disability.

Neurodiversity.

Socioeconomic background.

Listening to one another with curiosity and respect strengthens the entire community.

Understanding Intersectionality

People have multiple aspects to their identity that shape their experiences.

For example, someone may identify as:

- LGBTQ+ and disabled.

LGBTQ+ and neurodivergent.

LGBTQ+ and from an ethnic minority background.

LGBTQ+ and living with a long-term health condition.

These overlapping identities can influence how people experience acceptance, discrimination and belonging.

Recognising intersectionality helps us avoid making assumptions and encourages more inclusive support.

Listening Before Speaking

One of the most important qualities of an ally is the willingness to listen.

Listening involves:

- Being open-minded.

Avoiding assumptions.

Respecting different perspectives.

Asking thoughtful questions.

Accepting that you may not fully understand another person's experience.

Listening builds trust and demonstrates respect.

Challenging Discrimination Respectfully

Allyship sometimes involves responding when we witness discrimination or exclusion.

This may include:

- Challenging stereotypes.

Addressing inappropriate language.

Supporting someone who has been treated unfairly.

Encouraging respectful conversations.

Reporting discriminatory behaviour where appropriate.

Speaking respectfully often creates opportunities for learning rather than increasing conflict.

Creating Inclusive Everyday Environments

Allyship is demonstrated through everyday actions.

Examples include:

- Using inclusive language.

Respecting names and pronouns.

Avoiding assumptions about relationships.

Including everyone in conversations and activities.

Welcoming new people.

Being approachable.

Treating everyone with dignity.

Small actions contribute to a culture of belonging.

Allyship in the Workplace

Inclusive workplaces benefit both employees and organisations.

Workplace allyship may involve:

- Supporting inclusive policies.

Challenging inappropriate behaviour.

Encouraging equal opportunities.

Respecting confidentiality.

Promoting psychological safety.

Supporting employee networks.

Inclusive workplaces allow people to contribute fully without fear of discrimination.

Learning Is a Lifelong Process

No one knows everything.

Being an effective ally means remaining willing to:

- Learn.

Reflect.

Ask respectful questions.

Accept feedback.

Adapt your understanding.

Continue growing.

Making mistakes does not prevent someone from being an ally if they are willing to learn from them.

Small Actions Create Lasting Change

Positive change often begins with ordinary moments.

Simple actions include:

- Checking in on someone.

Inviting someone into a conversation.

Correcting a mistake respectfully.

Showing kindness.

Supporting community events.

Encouraging inclusion.

Speaking up when appropriate.

Collectively, these actions help create communities where everyone feels welcome.

Supporting Future Generations

Inclusive communities benefit not only those living today but also future generations.

Young people who grow up surrounded by acceptance and understanding are more likely to:

- Develop healthy self-esteem.

Feel confident expressing themselves.

Build positive relationships.

Seek support when needed.

Respect diversity in others.

Creating inclusive communities today helps shape a more compassionate future.

Key Takeaways

Allyship is an ongoing commitment to respect, inclusion and equality.

Effective allies listen, learn and support rather than assume or speak over others.

The LGBTQ+ community is diverse, and different identities bring different experiences.

Recognising intersectionality helps create more inclusive support.

Challenging discrimination respectfully contributes to safer communities.

Everyday acts of kindness and inclusion make a meaningful difference.

Learning and growth are lifelong parts of effective allyship.

Final Thoughts

Becoming an ally is not about being perfect—it is about being willing to learn, listen and take thoughtful action. Every person has the opportunity to contribute to a more inclusive world through the choices they make each day. Whether that means challenging unfair treatment, welcoming someone who feels isolated or simply treating others with dignity and respect, these actions help create communities where everyone has the opportunity to belong.

Within the LGBTQ+ community, allyship also means recognising and celebrating the diversity of experiences that exist. By listening to one another with openness and compassion, communities become stronger, more connected and better equipped to support every individual, regardless of their background or identity.

Ultimately, allyship is about recognising our shared humanity. When people choose empathy over judgement, curiosity over assumption and kindness over exclusion, they help build communities where everyone can live more authentically, contribute more confidently and flourish together.