





How to practice allyship for the LGBTQ+ community

An ally is someone who supports or takes action in support of another person or group. And every day, we have the ability and opportunity to create a more accepting world for our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors. Even small acts of allyship can have a big impact on making others feel supported and accepted.

By reading this, you're taking the first step towards becoming a better ally. While there's no one way to be an ally, these tips should empower you to get involved and help you show your support.



1. Listen.¹

One of the best ways to be there for someone who is newly open about being LGBTQ+ or has been bullied because of their gender or sexuality, is to listen. Be open-minded¹ and ask your friend what you can do to be helpful.

2. Keep educating yourself.

Try to learn about the LGBTQ+ community's history, its key leaders, different identities, and what injustices people who are LGBTQ+ are currently facing. Ask questions. While learning more, do your best to confront your own biases, even when it's challenging. Here are a few resources to get you started:

- Take Love Has No Labels' [Interactive Quiz](#) to learn a few facts about LGBTQ+ history and trailblazers
- Review Human Rights Campaign's [Allyship Resources](#)

- Review GLAAD's [tips for being an ally to transgender people](#)
- Follow LGBTQ+ news organizations or organizations on social media and share their content, resources, and news articles with your network. On Twitter these outlets and organizations include @TheAdvocateMag @LGBTQnation @outmagazine @GLAAD @HRC
- Seek to understand the theme of this year's New York City Pride event, which is "The Fight Continues" and serves as a reminder of the ongoing discrimination, injustices and disparities facing the LGBTQ+ community. Below are a few stats and resources to help you understand these critical issues, including the impact of COVID on this community's mental health and access to healthcare, the alarming murder rate for trans people of color, laws that ban trans youth from sports and from accessing affirming healthcare, the community's rights being questioned at the level of the Supreme Court, and more:
 - Read GLAAD's [Accelerating Acceptance Report](#), which measures non-LGBTQ Americans' levels of comfort with LGBTQ people and issues
 - Understand the compounding marginalization faced by LGBTQ+ communities of color using [these resources](#) from the Human Rights Campaign
 - From the [Center on American Progress](#):
 - More than 1 in 3 LGBTQ Americans faced discrimination in the past year, including more than 3 in 5 transgender Americans.
 - To avoid the experience of discrimination, more than half of LGBTQ Americans report hiding a personal relationship.
 - Around 3 in 10 LGBTQ Americans faced difficulties last year accessing necessary medical care due to cost issues, including more than half of transgender Americans.
 - 15% of LGBTQ Americans report postponing or avoiding medical treatment due to discrimination, including nearly 3 in 10 transgender individuals.



3. Step in.¹

When you see someone in the LGBTQ+ community being bullied or treated unfairly, show support in any way you can. For example, you can send your friend a message of kindness, ask the bully to stop, or ask someone for help. If you hear someone making a derogatory joke, it also helps to say that you don't think it's funny regardless of whether an LGBTQ+ person appears to be present.¹ Consider stepping in on social media when bullying and harassment happen too, not just in-person.

4. Respect pronouns

Pronouns are how we refer to each other in everyday conversation when not using names; for example, 'This is Laura. She went to school with me.' Because pronouns often express gender (his, hers), it is important to use the correct pronouns for people that align with their gender identity. Many nonbinary and gender non-conforming people use pronouns that do not gender people, such as 'they' and 'them.' Using pronouns correctly is a way to signify respect, whereas misgendering someone and purposefully using the wrong pronouns conveys disrespect and even harassment.

If you are meeting someone new and you need to ask which pronoun the person uses, start with your own. For example, "Hi, I'm Laura and I use the pronouns she and her. What about you?" Then use that person's pronoun and encourage others to do so. If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun, apologize quickly and sincerely. A leader of a meeting can ask attendees to share pronouns to create a more inclusive environment. For example: "Before we begin, we'd like to go around and share our names and pronouns. My name is Laura and I use she and her pronouns."



5. Continue to be there.

It's important to remember that people still face discrimination today for being LGBTQ today for their sexual orientation or gender identity. For LGBTQ+ adults, this can influence jobs, housing, medical care, legal assistance and ability to receive financial loans. Sadly, some of that discrimination is still legal in some states. No matter how much progress you see being made, continue to be there and understand ongoing disparities and discrimination impacting the LGBTQ+ community.

This Pride Month, it's more important than ever to help support the LGBTQ+ community in any way you can. Understanding how you can practice allyship is a great place to start.



Glossary

Our gender identity refers to our innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. This is different from our sex, which is label that you're assigned at birth based on medical factors, including your hormones, genetics, and physical anatomy. Our sexual orientation refers to an inherent emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Note that an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity or sex.

Since our gender identity and sexuality are internal, they are not necessarily visible to others, and can be challenging, sensitive topics to approach. Sometimes our words can be hurtful, even if that wasn't our intention. Familiarizing yourself with this list of terms from the Human Rights Campaign² is a great way to learn about different LGBTQ+ identities, and help you to confidently engage in conversations surrounding the LGBTQ+ community today.

Androgynous

Identifying or presenting as neither distinguishably male or female.

Asexual

The lack of sexual attraction or desire for other people.

Bisexual

A person emotionally, romantically, or sexual attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

Cisgender

A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Gay

A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.

Gender-expansive

Conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system.

Gender-fluid

A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender; of or relating to a person having or expressing a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

Gender non-conforming

A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

Genderqueer

People who are genderqueer typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and sometimes,

though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as “genderqueer” may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

Intersex

Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, internal sex organs, hormone production, and more.

Lesbian

A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women.

Nonbinary

Describes a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Nonbinary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories.

Pansexual

Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

Queer

A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations. Often used interchangeably with “LGBTQ.”

Questioning

A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.



How to support someone who just came out

When a friend or family member tells you they are LGBTQ+ for the first time, it shows that they value your opinion and trust you a great deal. Because coming out can be a sensitive moment, it's good to think about what you can do to make it easier for your friend or family member. Here are a few basics to make someone who is newly out feel supported and loved.

1. Thank them.³

It often takes a lot of courage to share new details about your gender identity and sexual orientation with others, and people can experience personal issues with coming out for a long time before telling anyone, so thank your friend for speaking about who they are. The kind words will go a long way.



2. Tell them you love them no matter what.

Some people are worried about being disowned or losing the love of their families and friends when they come out.⁴ Even if you think they already know it, it's nice to vocalize your unconditional support.

3. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

If there's something that you don't understand or want clarification on, don't be afraid to ask questions and to research answers from trusted LGBTQ organizations and resources. The more information you know, the easier it will be to support your friend in the best way possible. Understand that they may not have answers to all your questions. This may be because they're still figuring it out themselves, and/or they might not feel comfortable sharing – remember that their boundaries should be respected.

4. Respect their privacy.

Just because someone comes out to you, don't assume that other people know. It's never okay to out someone and it's crucial to make sure you're careful with the sensitive, personal information that's been shared with you.

5. Don't change your friendship because of it.

Lastly, this friend is still the same person they were before you knew about their gender identity or sexuality.⁴ Be sure to treat them the same as you would any other friend. Do whatever you can to show your continued support.⁴

Remember, everyone's experiences are different. Be sure to think about which tips will work best in your situation and apply them as you see fit.

For more helpful information, visit
www.glaad.org and www.hrc.org

¹ <http://www.glaad.org/resources/ally/2>

² <http://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

³ <https://lgbtq.unc.edu/programs-services/safe-zone/if-someone-comes-out-you>

⁴ <https://www.belongto.org/youngpeople/advice/supporting-someone-coming-out/>