



The incredibly detailed honest forthright completely blunt shockingly simple wonderfully helpful and witty exposition on a topic that people often have questions about but really shouldn't because this compelling open and straight to the point (pun completely intended) little publication will demystify the secret world of LGBTQ+ people and be your tried and trusted

Guide to Being an Ally to LGBTQ+ People

Each of the stories in this publication has been taken from narratives submitted to the PFLAG National Learning & Inclusion team. In some cases, stories have been edited for brevity and names have been changed, but each one is real and represents one of the millions of critically important voices in this conversation.

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INTRODUCTION

What a difference nearly two decades of revisions can make.

A lot has changed since the first edition of this publication—then titled *the guide to being a straight ally*—was released in 2007. How we understand who allies are and what they do to demonstrate their support for the LGBTQ+ community has changed. Our expectations of allies are more nuanced and complex. We expect allyship to be action oriented, rather than performative.

Whether you're just getting started and still have questions, or you've been an ally with us for years, this guide is meant for you. Because we'll need your help to create a just, caring, and affirming world for our LGBTQ+ friends, family, neighbors, classmates, colleagues, and more. And while ally engagement still isn't focused on radical activists or peacekeeping the era of the "no politics" promise is over. The LGBTQ+ community is under attack and powerful anti-equality voices are hard at work destroying the progress we've made. Allies need to show up in school board meetings and city halls, in state houses, in Washington DC, in the voting booth, and sometimes even in the streets.

Have questions? We've got you covered. This fifth edition of our guide to allyship (2025) reflects much of the progress the community has made, the lessons we've learned, and the important conversations we still need to have. So as always, we're thrilled you're here.

LEARN MORE

Founded in 1973, PFLAG is the first and largest organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQ+ people and those who love them. You can learn more about PFLAG National and our work at pflag.org.

Straight for Equality is a national outreach and education program created in 2007 by PFLAG National to invite, educate, and engage non-family allies in the fight for LGBTQ+ human rights. You can learn more about this program at straightforequality.org

EQUALITY GUIDEPOSTS

Here are some nifty icons to help quickly identify things you might face on the way to becoming a stronger ally to people who are LGBTQ+.



Stumbling Blocks

Read a bit more about topics that even the strongest allies often have more questions about.



Phone-A-Friend

Get quick access to resources that can help you get past your stumbling blocks to allyship.



Your Invitation

Along the way, we'll invite you to try something new as an ally to LGBTQ+ people.

Equality Literacy

While you're reading this book, it's possible that you'll encounter terms you're not familiar with. We've tried to provide explanations along the way, but if there's a word that's unclear, check out the PFLAG National Glossary at pflag.org/glossary.



CHAPTER ONE: GETTING A GRASP ON THE BASICS

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, plus other identities

For some new and potential allies, learning about the complexities of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, AND all the words people use to talk about how they experience attraction and gender (or don't) can feel like learning an entirely new language. Which is why PFLAG National and its Straight for Equality program are here to help.



PHONE-A-FRIEND

If you ever come across a word that you're not familiar with or that you're unsure about, having a tool like the PFLAG National Glossary available can go a long way in making you feel more confident as an ally. And while we think pflag.org/glossary is a great place to get started, we encourage you to find the resource that works best for you.

Whether that is a similar tool from another LGBTQ+ organization, a book like *The Queen's English: The LGBTQIA+ Dictionary of Lingo & Colloquial Phrases* by Chloe O Davis, or something from your school or workplace, the tool you remember and turn to is what we'd recommend.



Sexual Orientation

When we talk about a person's sexual orientation, we're describing the sexual attraction they feel (or don't feel) toward other people.

"Straight" or "heterosexual" describes a person who experiences sexual attraction toward others whose gender is different from their own.

"Gay" and/or "lesbian," refers to a person who experiences sexual attraction toward others whose gender is the same as their own, with "lesbian" referring to women who are attracted to other women. Another word you may hear is "homosexual," though that is considered a very outdated term.

"Bisexual," "pansexual," and other terms that fall under the bi+ umbrella refer to a person whose sexual attraction can be felt toward those whose gender is different from, similar to, or the same as their own.

"Asexual," "ace," and other terms that fall under the ace umbrella refer to a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction toward others.

Everyone has a sexual orientation.

Gender Identity

When we talk about gender identity, we're talking about a person's deeply held core sense of self in relation to gender and how they understand their own identity. Gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex*. People become aware of their gender identity at many different stages of life.

"Cisgender" or "cis" describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.

"Transgender" or "trans" describes a person whose gender identity does not match the sex that was assigned to them at birth.

"Nonbinary" or "enby" describes people whose gender identity does not fall inside the gender binary. They might exist between or beyond the concepts of "man" and "woman."

Everyone has a gender identity.

**Biological or Assigned Sex refers to the sex assigned to an infant at birth based on the child's visible sex organs. Assignments include male, female, and intersex.*

Gender Expression

When we talk about gender expression, we're talking about all the ways we communicate our gender to others. It includes (but is not limited to) clothing, appearance, and mannerisms. This communication may be conscious or unintentional and might not reflect their gender identity. Someone's gender expression may or may not align with social expectations of gender identity.

"Feminine" describes qualities or appearance stereotypically associated with women or conventionally regarded as female.

"Masculine" describes qualities or appearance traditionally associated with men or conventionally regarded as male.

"Androgynous" describes qualities or appearance that has elements of both femininity and masculinity.

"Fluid" describes qualities or appearance that does not consistently adhere to femininity, masculinity, or androgyny and may change over time.

Everyone has a gender expression.

"I struggle most with terminology and how it changes. I grew up learning not to call people queer but now it is ok...sometimes. I also don't like messing up pronouns so y'all, comes out quite a bit."

—Liam H

PFLAG

the incredibly detailed honest forthright completely blunt wonderfully helpful and witty exposition on a topic that makes some people stress because they doubt they understand it or know enough about it but they'll soon be ready to talk because this compelling and transformative (pun completely intended) little publication will answer lots of questions and start to demystify the not-at-all secret world of people who are transgender and nonbinary and become your tried and trusted

guide to being an ally to trans and nonbinary people

LEARN MORE

Want to learn more about the complexities of gender identity and gender expression? Looking for specific advice to show up as an ally to your trans and nonbinary loved ones? Check out PFLAG's "*Guide to Being an Ally to Trans and Nonbinary People*," available at pflag.org/publications.



STUMBLING BLOCK

The word “queer”

The language that people use to describe sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are constantly evolving and there are many ways to understand the associated terminology.

For example, the word “queer” was traditionally a pejorative (insulting) term for people who are LGBTQ+. Today, it is a term that has been reclaimed or embraced by some LGBTQ+ people to describe themselves and/or their community because it is valued for its defiance, considered to be more inclusive, and/or feels more appropriate when describing fluid identities.

However, some people still dislike the word “queer.” Due to its varying meanings, we recommend that allies only use this word when talking with or about an individual who self-identifies as queer and/or in spaces where it is commonly used. And if you’re not sure whether it is appropriate to use, we encourage you to ask.

Well, but what about the acronym?

LGBTQ+? LGBTQIA+? 2SLGBTQIA+? SOGIE?

Just like words and terminology, the acronym that is used to describe the community of people who are not straight and cisgender has changed over time. Right now, at PFLAG we use LGBTQ+, which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, plus other identities that describe the diversity of people’s experience with attraction and gender. However, that doesn’t make “LGBTQ+” right or other acronyms wrong.

No matter which acronym you use, please be sure to explain it as you’re getting started so folks know what each letter stands for. And if you’re not sure which acronym to use, this is another moment where it is completely appropriate to start a conversation and ask.



YOUR INVITATION

Oftentimes when we talk about terminology and language, it can feel overwhelming. It can feel like there are So. Many. Words. To. Learn.

We're here to remind you that language is a tool we use to understand ourselves and those we care about. And while we should all strive to be on a lifelong learning journey, memorization is not the goal. Being kind and respectful is. Do your best to respect the words that LGBTQ+ people use—or don't use—to describe themselves and their relationships.

Being an ally is about people in real life, not just words.

“One of the toughest things for me to unlearn was assuming people’s gender or sexual orientation based on appearance or stereotypes. I realized that I had internalized societal norms that made me unconsciously make assumptions about people, and breaking that habit took intentional effort. It was challenging because those assumptions were so deeply ingrained in how I was taught to navigate the world. I had to actively practice using inclusive language, asking for pronouns, and being more mindful of the diversity of identities people hold. It wasn’t about being ‘politically correct’ but about showing genuine respect and care for others.”

—Charlie E

CHAPTER TWO: LET'S DEFINE ALLYSHIP

When we call someone an ally to the LGBTQ+ community, what do we mean?

We've already mentioned allies a handful of times, and the word seems simple to understand, right? But not so fast. Chances are that if you ask a group of 10 people what "ally" means, you'll get 10 different answers. Believe it or not, that's a good thing.

Before we get into what allies do, let's talk about what we mean when we say "ally."

We're not going to start with a list of five or 25 or even 150 things that you must do to be considered an ally. While lists are certainly aspirational, they are also exclusionary. And the all-or-nothing mentality means that when well-intentioned beginners see something they can't do (like donate time, talent, or treasure to queer-led organizations because they didn't have wiggle room in their budget) they figure they won't do anything. And...don't you think people are worth more than being reduced to a checklist or a set of rigid demands?

We think so.

"Being an ally to the LGBTQ+ community, for me, means that I am not silent in the face of adversity. It means that we offer a safe space to anyone who may need it. It means our little free library that sits at our home is stocked with LGBTQ+ books throughout the year. It means listening to the community and learning from them how best to support them. Being an ally means showing the people around me that I care, that they are recognized and valued, and that they matter."

—Xiomara P

Rather than developing a list of requirements for someone to be an ally, we thought about the qualities and characteristics that all allies possess. Here's what we know:

♥ **Allies want to learn more.**

They do what they can to ensure they understand the issues and challenges faced by people who are LGBTQ+. They possess intellectual curiosity, and they know that learning is lifelong. Allies use that spirit to stay on top of how conversations evolve over time.

♥ **Allies work on their barriers to being visible, vocal, and active in their allyship.**

Whether it's fear of saying the wrong thing or uncertainty about managing conflict, allies are up to the challenge.

♥ **Allies are actively supportive.**

And they know that "support" comes in many forms. It can mean something super-public, like covering yourself in rainbow glitter and heading to Pride with a sign reading, "PROUD ALLY." But it can also mean expressing support in more private and personal ways through the language they use, conversations they choose to have, and signals that they send.

♥ **Allies are diverse.**

They know there's no single "correct" way to be an ally and that we each bring unique backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences to this work ... and that's not only ok, it's also powerful.

The process of going from "not my issue" to "let's shift the culture!" rarely happens overnight. It entails learning more, building the confidence needed to have (and start) these conversations, knowing how to handle pushback, and being able to help others as they become stronger allies themselves.

Once we had a sense of the qualities and characteristics that allies possess, we decided to draw a picture. So, behold:

THE STRAIGHT FOR EQUALITY

Ally Spectrum



***The “I’m not
really an ally...
but I’ll listen”
Ally***



***The “I’m
starting to
get it”
Ally***



***The “I’ve got
a grasp on
the basics”
Ally***



***The “I’m
starting to
talk about
LGBTQ+ issues”
Ally***



***The “I’m
going to
be visible”
Ally***



***The “I’m
going to do
a deep dive”
Ally***



***The “I’m
going to
educate others”
Ally***



***The “I’m
going to get
involved
locally”
Ally***



***The “I’m going
to have tough
conversations”
Ally***



***The “Let’s
shift the
culture”
Ally***

Why is this spectrum useful?

First, it acknowledges that allyship is founded in action. From the people who are willing to listen, to those who use LGBTQ+ terminology confidently, to those who are getting involved in LGBTQ+ organizing in their community; allies are those who are willing and able to put in the work.

Second, it provides us all with a reminder that no matter what kind of ally someone is, they're on a journey. There are things to learn and things to do at every single point on the spectrum.

Finally, it gets rid of that icky feeling we get sometimes when we're forced to prioritize who people "should be" over the traits, backgrounds, and experiences that make them who they are.

So why is the word "ally" so important? Why the label?

Even super-brainy people have taken on this issue. Philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (ally status unknown) once wrote that, "Once you label me, you negate me," suggesting that labeling any individual compromises their individuality.

But to us, being an ally isn't a label—it's a term of empowerment. It is a whole rainbow of choices and opportunities. It's a state of being. It demonstrates who someone is and where their values lie. It says that they want to be identified by who and what they support, not who or what they're against. It communicates that LGBTQ+ issues matter to them in a powerful way. It's a vocal and positive stand that clarifies a crucial point: while I may not be LGBTQ+, things like feeling safe and respected matter to me.

But wait. Straight allies, and cisgender allies, and allies with no specifics ... why?

There's a lot of conversation about this, and it tends to sound something like this: if the point is that who you're attracted to and how you see yourself shouldn't matter, then why make a point of mentioning it when we talk about being allies?

Short answer: Because it does matter.

Consider this: From November 2023–October 2024, transgender advocacy organizations tracked the violent deaths of more than 309 transgender and nonbinary people worldwide. The number of Americans who support marriage equality and believe that relationships between consenting same-sex adults are "morally acceptable" have DROPPED in recent years. In 2024, state legislatures considered more than 550 anti-LGBTQ+ bills, and at least 46 of those bills were signed into law.

To change this, we need to have diverse voices fighting for justice. And that includes people who are not members of the LGBTQ+ community. Allies have a unique power to make the case that being seen, respected, and treated fairly—in our communities and under the law—are things that matter to everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Which brings us to our last point before we move on. Can someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual+, transgender, queer, or questioning be an ally?

The short answer? Yes.

The slightly longer answer? Yes, and we'd argue that not only can they be allies, they should be, both within their community and to other marginalized groups. We're on the right side of history and must work together.

Ok. But where do we go from here?

If you've started thinking about where you see yourself on the ally spectrum, what barriers have kept you from being more active in your allyship, or how you can help others get started, then we're on the right track.



STUMBLING BLOCK

Ever wonder if your support as an ally matters to people who are LGBTQ+? We can tell you it does, but some of these narratives from LGBTQ+ people really help illustrate the tremendous power that your contributions have, even if you don't see them.

Penny K

My older sister spent an hour with me on the phone asking me questions about my gender, so that she could get to know me better. This sounds so simple, and yet I swear, it was as if someone freed me from a cage. I couldn't believe I was being treated with such dignity and care. My sister really stepped up to see me, hear me, and learn from me. I'll never forget how much love I felt that day.

Steve L

Friends and colleagues who did not “out” me during my time in the military saved my career.

Keisha H*

When I finally updated my identity documents, it was because someone came to me and said, “To protect yourself, here are some options. What would you like to do?” They didn’t push, didn’t assume, just laid out a path in a system designed to work against me. With their help, I wasn’t just navigating bureaucracy— I was claiming my own space. Because of them, I didn’t just get a new ID—I got recognition and security.

Dallas B

As a queer person, it’s not the people that know the words, it’s the people that show up. When I was in college my mom was my biggest supporter. She showed up to the drag shows I helped organize. She sent me chocolates from my favorite queer-owned business. She showed up for me time and time again.

Sonia P

Having allies in my workplace, including my boss and supervisors, made my social and legal transition feel seamless. I’ve been lucky to have a safe workplace where I could fully be myself. I couldn’t have done this without that support.

**Keisha’s story references updates to her identity documents. This can be an overly burdensome and expensive process that is not without risk. At the time of this writing, 20 states make the process for changing the gender marker on an ID extremely difficult, ‘X’ as a gender marker is no longer available on passports issued in the US, and people who are trans and nonbinary have reported various forms of discrimination while traveling.*



PHONE-A-FRIEND

As you get started, finding resources designed with allies in mind can be extremely important. Our program resources live at straightforequality.org. There you'll find our publications, conversation starters, and book and film recommendations.

If you find yourself looking for more resources, events, and ways to get involved, check out some of our trusted partners:

- ♥ **Athlete Ally:** athleteally.org
- ♥ **The Ally Coalition:** theallycoalition.org
- ♥ **The Safe Zone Project:** thesafezoneproject.com
- ♥ **Solidarity Week:** glsen.org/programs/solidarity-week
- ♥ **Spirit Day:** glaad.org/spiritday



YOUR INVITATION

Throughout this publication we are explicitly talking about all the ways to show up as LGBTQ+ allies. However, the concept of allyship is not exclusive to the fight for LGBTQ+ equality. And while some of the skills that you gain here are great advice for being an ally for people who hold minority identities, there is always more to learn.

That is why we encourage you to take some time to learn more about what it means for men to show up as allies for women, for white people to show up as allies for BIPOC communities, and for the able-bodied to show up as allies to people with disabilities. Seek out resources, tools, stories, and advice from people who hold those identities and let that inform how you show up. The best place to learn about how to support any community is the community itself.

CHAPTER THREE: SHOWING UP AUTHENTICALLY

Now that you understand the Straight for Equality Ally Spectrum, you're probably wondering where you fit in. How can you show up as an ally to the LGBTQ+ community in an authentic way?

At PFLAG National and Straight for Equality we hope that every ally will get to the point where they want to get involved locally and help change the laws and cultures that unfairly target LGBTQ+ people—but we also recognize that for a wide variety of reasons, not everyone is suited to that style of activism.

For those of you who are just getting started, let's talk about what it means to be a **New Ally**. If you're a New Ally you probably want to learn more about the issues that affect the LGBTQ+ community, but you might feel awkward about talking about them or asking for more information. You might want to take action but not know where to start. You've seen social media posts about "being respectful and accepting," but perhaps you're not sure how that works. You'd like to overcome these challenges...you're just not always sure how to do it.

"The best way for me to show up as an ally is to learn as much as I can about the LGBTQ+ community. I do this through reading articles and books. When appropriate, I will ask the person/people directly. Accepting one another through love is the best way to show up for each other."

—Katie B

We have found that what a New Ally needs most is more information. Sometimes that comes in the form of resources and one-on-one guidance. Other times it's asking for a bit of grace as you try to get it right. Often it means listening to LGBTQ+ stories about realizing who they are and coming out or experiencing discrimination in their community. As a New Ally you'll probably listen a lot more than you talk—a surprisingly effective way to get a grasp on the basics.



PHONE-A-FRIEND

Personal stories. First-hand accounts. Memoirs. Biographies. There is a reason they're so effective at softening people's hearts and changing their minds. These stories help us find common ground, create empathy, and build stronger, lasting connections with one another. If you're a New Ally looking for personal accounts from LGBTQ+ folks to help you understand their experiences, there are storytelling archives that can help.

♥ **I'm From Driftwood:** imfromdriftwood.com

♥ **The TMI Project:** tmiproject.org

♥ **When I Came Out:** whenicameout.com

♥ **StoryCorps:** storycorps.org/voicesofpride

You can also turn to social media, where a number of LGBTQ+ people share their stories and experiences openly. Be sure you seek out people and stories whose experiences help illustrate the immense diversity within the LGBTQ+ community. The LGBTQ+ community is just as varied as any other group, and the experiences of a POC trans person will be very different from that of a white cis gay person. LGBTQ+ people are as diverse as every other group of people.



YOUR INVITATION

If you were asked to picture an LGBTQ+ person in your mind right now, what do you think of? Are you referencing stereotypes about what they look like, how old they are, where they live, or how much money they have? Did you hear about these stereotypes from what you've heard about them from your community, read about them in the news, or when you see them on TV? If so, you're not alone. But as a New Ally, you know you have some work to do to move past those stereotypes. And one of the ways to do that is with data.

World-renowned organizations like the Pew Research Center, Gallup, Inc., and think tanks like the Williams Institute and the Center for American Progress can help you to break apart those stereotypes and learn about the facts and realities of people's lived experiences.

“My son came out as transgender at age 14. In order to cope with my own awkwardness around learning to use his chosen name and new pronouns, I used to make little jokes about it. He would roll his eyes as teenagers do, but eventually he started letting me know it made him uncomfortable. At first I was defensive and wanted to be allowed to be silly. I didn’t see what the big deal was, as I thought I was just poking fun at myself for being awkward. But eventually I understood that it was disrespectful to him to continue joking around at his expense.”

—Devan S



STUMBLING BLOCK

When a New Ally is just getting started, they will likely make mistakes. When they're unintentional and done without malice, these sorts of mistakes are normal and mean nothing more than that we are human and learning. But whether that mistake is using an outdated word, telling a joke without thinking, asking a question the person you're asking considers inappropriate, or using the wrong pronoun, mistakes can still have an unintended impact.

In many (if not most) circumstances, LGBTQ+ friends will give you grace when you make mistakes. Especially when you're just getting started as a New Ally. They'll provide a gentle correction, encourage you to do better next time, and then move on.

But sometimes that's not what happens.

Sometimes the LGBTQ+ people in our lives will respond with frustration, exasperation, or anger. In those moments, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. It is likely that their reaction isn't entirely about you. You're unfortunately just taking the brunt of it because they've heard that joke or been misgendered one too many times—or maybe they're just having a bad day.
2. You're allowed to acknowledge that you're hurt by their reaction, but you shouldn't make the situation about you and how you're feeling. You made a mistake and need to apologize in a way that takes responsibility for your actions (more on this on page 32).
3. Don't let one unpleasant experience stop you from showing up for the LGBTQ+ community. Being an ally is about what we do, not what we feel.

For those of you who are already engaged and doing this work, let's talk about what it means to be an **Everyday Ally**. As an Everyday Ally, you may not be an expert in all things LGBTQ+, but you're willing to have tough conversations and celebrate the LGBTQ+ people in your life. You're probably looking for ways to be more visible with your allyship and recognize that visibility matters most when it is backed up by action. As an Everyday Ally, you're willing to educate yourself on topics of interest or importance.

We've learned that Everyday Allies need ideas that lead to action; Everyday Allies have the information they need and now they want to know what to DO. How to respond when someone comes out to them or invites them in; the small changes they can make when talking about individuals and relationships and families; what words and turns of phrase to avoid; ways to ask questions that are appropriate and respectful; how to speak up when someone else makes a mistake; or even how to start fighting for change.



PHONE-A-FRIEND

Are you an Everyday Ally looking for advice on how to show up for your LGBTQ+ loved ones in a more meaningful way? Consider liking and following LGBTQ+ organizations on social media and/or signing up for their email lists. They will regularly post information about how to get more involved, things that you can be doing, and ways to let elected officials know your feelings on the issues. Here are a few of our (national) favorites*:

- ♥ **Advocates for Trans Equality** - @transequalitynow
- ♥ **CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ+ Community Centers**
- @LGBTQCenterLink
- ♥ **GLAAD** - @GLAAD
- ♥ **GLSEN** - @GLSEN
- ♥ **GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing Equality** -
@GLMA_LGBTHealth
- ♥ **Human Rights Campaign** - @humanrightscampaign
- ♥ **National Center for Lesbian Rights** - @NCLRights
- ♥ **National LGBTQ+ Task Force** - @thetaskforce
- ♥ **Out & Equal** - @outandequal
- ♥ **Trevor Project** - @trevorproject

**Most of these handles are from Instagram. However, if you search for any of these organizations starting with the @ symbol, you will find information about their website, social media presence across a variety of platforms, and more!*



YOUR INVITATION

Being a visible ally isn't meant to be a pat on the back. Honestly, it isn't always the most fashionable choice. But visibility matters. It has an impact. It can be one action you take that is a part of your allyship toolkit. And Everyday Allies know that visibility matters in all the spaces that you spend time— and that visibility has even greater impact when it is backed up by action.

So, the next time you're in the market for a t-shirt, hoodie, hat, button, sticker, or even pet apparel that lets the world around you know that you're an ally to the LGBTQ+ community...

You can always go to shop.pflag.org to get started.

If you can't find what you're looking for there, why not use your quest to be a more visible ally to support locally owned LGBTQ+ businesses near you? The National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) works with more than 2,000 Certified LGBT Business Enterprise® Suppliers, 53 domestic affiliate chambers, and 24 international affiliate chambers that can help you learn more about LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs near you. Go to nglcc.org to learn more.

“My friends and family know that I have a t-shirt for everything. I wear many hats in my life as a mom, church elder, mental health therapist, so I love loudly by incorporating the rainbow into my daily wardrobe and accessory choices. I am always inviting a conversation about LGBTQ+ equality.”

—Andrea E

“I try to be a very visible advocate. This includes modeling behaviors – by using un-gendered language and asking people what pronouns they use; offering support to families with LGBTQ+ kids; and supporting the LGBTQ+ community who are legitimately scared and horrified at what’s going on right now.”

—Claire L



STUMBLING BLOCK

As Everyday Allies get more involved in the fight for LGBTQ+ human rights, concerns about psychological and physical safety are likely to come up. When you are educating others about LGBTQ+ issues, you’re taking the burden of explaining some of the basics off the shoulders of your LGBTQ+ loved ones.

But your safety comes first.

If you ever feel that showing up as a visible and vocal ally will put you or those you care about in physical danger, remove yourself from that situation as quickly as possible. If you’re working with a group, be sure you have a safety plan in place. Do what you can to develop situational awareness so you’re able to recognize when things are shifting from tense to dangerous; remember that no situation is 100% safe, but your awareness and pre-planning can make everyone as safe as they possibly can be; *safety is the most important thing.*

Psychological safety is just as important as physical safety, and you have no responsibility to let yourself be hurt for no reason. You don’t need to beat yourself up if you recognize a no-win situation and need to leave for your emotional well-being. If someone has made it clear that they’re acting in bad faith, have no interest in learning more, and make no indication that they’re willing to change their behavior, you’re allowed to leave.

Finally, for those of you who live and breathe your allyship, who have been doing this work for years, who know more people at Pride than your LGBTQ+ loved ones do—let us introduce you to the **Super Ally**. As a Super Ally, you probably have some subject matter expertise when it comes to LGBTQ+ issues that you feel most passionate about. You're probably looking for ways to get more involved with LGBTQ+ advocacy work in your community. Rather than shying away from tough conversations or potential conflict, you're finding space for dialogue that has impact and avoiding dead end debates. And you're aware that the era of the "no politics promise" for allies has ended, because your LGBTQ+ loved ones need you to show up in the fight for their rights.

We've learned that Super Allies need help to create conversations about LGBTQ+ rights that don't always center on crisis and trauma. Super Allies have the skills to have meaningful conversations, though they don't always know how to share their stories or where their voices are needed most. While Super Allies participate in their local PFLAG chapter, volunteer with their community's LGBTQ+ center, or are a supportive voice for the Gender-Sexuality Alliance at their children's middle and high-schools, they may have concerns about taking up too much space.



PHONE-A-FRIEND

One of the most useful skills Super Allies have is creating conversations about LGBTQ+ rights in spaces where those conversations wouldn't otherwise happen. Super Allies aren't waiting for the topic to come up or for someone to ask a question. Whether with friends and family, in the community spaces you're a part of, at work, online, or with elected officials— if you're a Super Ally, you're talking about treating LGBTQ+ folks fairly and kindly every chance you get.

But even the best of us need help sometimes. You need talking points, data, and the support of professionals to make your case. And that's where one of our favorite resources from the Movement Advancement Project enters the chat.

Visit lgbtmap.org/effective-messaging/talking-about-lgbt-issues-series where you will find an archive of a variety of topics, including guides to help you have effective conversations about anti-LGBTQ+ bills, family acceptance, and many of the issues impacting young transgender people.



YOU'RE INVITED

According to dictionary.com, a “hot-button issue” is defined as something “exciting strong feelings; highly charged; emotional.” Conversations about equality, fairness, kindness, and basic respect for our LGBTQ+ loved ones can certainly excite strong feelings and become highly charged.

As a Super Ally preparing to have difficult conversations about LGBTQ+ equality, please take some time to understand your personal hot buttons. Is there a specific word or turn of phrase that makes your blood boil? A “what-if” scenario that makes you want to shut down the conversation immediately and leave? A debunked study, newspaper article, public figure, book, or documentary cited as “proof” for anti-LGBTQ+ arguments that makes you roll your eyes? Those are your hot-button issues.

Even harder than identifying your hot button issues is then doing the work to own them. You may never get to a point where you just don’t react, and that’s OK. What we don’t want is for those hot-buttons to shut you down and take you away from the work you’re doing to create change. That person you’re having a tough conversation with isn’t responsible for your emotional response to a turn of phrase or a problematic source of information. They may not even know why you’re having a negative reaction.

Count to 10. Take deep breaths. Introduce people to the platinum rule*. Use the “ouch and educate” model. Differentiate between intent and impact; remember that what the person intended to get across might be impacting you differently. Gently correct the person. Request an apology. Excuse yourself for a moment. Do whatever you need to do to keep yourself at the table.

**The Platinum Rule goes beyond the Golden Rule; it says that we treat others the way they want to be treated, not the way we want to be treated.*

“When someone says or does something unkind, I normally try to start up a conversation with them in the most approachable way possible – if I feel safe to do so. Nowadays, it feels more unsafe every day.”

—Selena Q



STUMBLING BLOCK

When Super Allies find themselves in moments of disagreement with others, it can be easy to get defensive. How many times during a tense conversation have you heard someone (or even heard yourself) say “that’s not what I meant” or “you’re not listening” or “you’re twisting my words”? In those moments we all want the focus to be on the *intent* of what we said or did and not the *impact* that it had on you or someone else.

Unfortunately, in those moments what was intended doesn’t really matter all that much to whoever has been impacted in a negative way. If you find yourself in a situation where you’re pretty sure the impact of what you said or did had an unintended impact OR you’re trying to explain to someone how what they said or did impacted you in a way they didn’t intend, here is some guidance to keep in mind.

1. Don’t minimize the harm or argue. It wasn’t “just a comment.” Even if you didn’t mean it, someone is still hurt.
2. If someone brings an unintended impact to your attention, it’s not a personal attack. They probably *know* you didn’t mean it, which is why they brought it up.
3. Apologize for the behavior in a way that takes responsibility for your actions. (We’ll talk about this more on page 32, so get ready!)

Whether you are a New Ally, Everyday Ally, or Super Ally, it’s important to understand where you are on your ally journey and what will be most helpful for you as you take action. Hopefully, you’ve learned a few new things about how you can show up authentically as an ally, no matter where you started, where you are, and where you’d like to be.

CHAPTER FOUR: PUTTING IN THE WORK

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: encountering barriers to being the visible and vocal ally that you want to be does not make you a bad person or a sub-par ally; it just makes you human.

If this work were easy, PFLAG National wouldn't feel compelled to write the fifth edition of this book and you wouldn't be here on page 25 trying to figure out how to move past the barriers and challenges that you've experienced in the past.

Here are some insights into some common barriers that we hear about—and what you can do if you're facing one of them.

Barrier One: What if people think I'm...Not that there is anything wrong with that!

For some newer allies, a common barrier is that if they speak up in support of LGBTQ+ people and their human rights, other people will assume that they themselves are a member of the LGBTQ+ community. And it is not necessarily that they're offended by that. But they have no idea whether or how to correct people who make that assumption, without sounding offended or making it awkward.

Have you experienced this barrier before? Let's talk for a moment about why someone assuming you're a part of the LGBTQ+ community concerns you.

Is it because...

- ♥ LGBTQ+ people experience discrimination and harassment, and you don't want to run the risk that you'll be treated the same way?
- ♥ People have treated you poorly in the past because of assumptions they've made?
- ♥ You think those assumptions mean that people are being too rigid and binary in their understanding of gender and sexuality?
- ♥ You realize the power in fighting for change that won't directly impact you?
- ♥ You want to be seen for who you are?

No matter the reason, here's our recommendation if people assuming you're LGBTQ+ is enough to keep you from taking action: Lead with your allyship.

Rather than talking about what you aren't, talk about what you are. What does this look like?

Let's say you're in a situation where someone just said some really misguided things about the LGBTQ+ community. Rather than saying "I'm not LGBTQ+, but..." you could say something like "I like to think of myself as an ally to the LGBTQ+ community, so..."

Or perhaps you're pushing for policies that will benefit your LGBTQ+ colleagues. Rather than saying "Well this won't benefit me since I'm not LGBTQ+, but..." you could say something like "I'm a straight and cisgender ally involved in our LGBTQ+ employee resource group and that's why..."

It's more positive. It's less awkward. And it doesn't imply anything about anyone else. It also reminds others that conversations about equality and fairness affect everyone, not just those who are negatively impacted by the status quo.



STUMBLING BLOCK

You may be thinking to yourself, "Why don't/can't/won't I just let people make assumptions? What's so wrong with that?"

For a long time, the traditional wisdom in LGBTQ+ advocacy spaces was that allies should do just that—ambiguate and allow the confusion without ever specifying how they identify. For a lot of allies there is no offense taken when someone assumes that they're a member of the LGBTQ+ community, because there is nothing wrong with being LGBTQ+. You can't be offended by something that isn't offensive.

If that's where you're at, awesome!

But not everyone is there. And if you only have a couple of options—one of which will allow you to speak up and stick by your LGBTQ+ loved ones, while the others don't—the PFLAG National team is going to pick the option where you speak up. Every time.

There's no shame in wanting to be perceived accurately. Rather than attacking folks who self-identify as straight and/or cisgender, we should help them become stronger allies. If you do, maybe one day we'll see real equality and acceptance for all, no matter who they're attracted to or how they experience gender.



YOUR INVITATION

We still live in a moment where some people don't understand why allies are needed, why allies show up in the ways that they do, or what's "in it" for allies as they try to create change for their LGBTQ+ loved ones.

You can help by letting people know WHY you're an ally. When you're ready to get started, we have a tool that can help!

Here's how it works:

DOWNLOAD the "I'm an ally because..." card at straightforequality.org/allycampaign.

FILL IT OUT and print it, or purchase copies at the PFLAG National bookstore. Whatever works best for you. Really think about what motivates you to do this work.

POST YOUR CARD somewhere others will see it. Maybe in your cubicle at work? Use a PFLAG National magnet to put it on your refrigerator? Take a photo of yourself holding your filled out card and post it to your social media feeds?

CREATE CONVERSATIONS by answering questions when people want to know more. Start conversations about why you're an ally. Tell people about this book and share it with them (or get them their own copy). Talk about why being an ally is so important to you.

Barrier Two: How could I possibly learn everything I need to know?

For a lot of allies, recognizing that you don't know what you don't know is a hard reality to face. Feeling under-prepared, tripping over terminology, not understanding the acronym someone used, or being unaware of a new policy issue can stun a person into silence.

So, how about we start here: You do not need to know EVERYTHING about LGBTQ+ terminology and the issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community to show up meaningfully as an ally. In fact, no person knows absolutely everything about LGBTQ+ terminology and issues. As long as you understand that sexual orientation,

gender identity, and gender expression are all complex, nuanced, and sometimes fluid things and that people have the right to define who they are, you're on the right track.

Of course, being on the right track doesn't mean you're done. You should make the commitment to seek more information when you don't understand something. Don't let questions sit unanswered for extended periods, and don't rely on your LGBTQ+ friends and family to provide the answers to questions you never asked.

Heard a word or phrase you're not familiar with? See a flag, a sign, or a symbol that you don't recognize? Overhear a conversation about a policy issue that you don't understand? Go online and access trusted resources from PFLAG National (at pflag.org) and our Straight for Equality program (at straightforequality.org). Do some research and look for vetted, peer-reviewed data. Ask questions of affirming friends and family. Reach out to other allies who might have grappled with the same challenge. Have LGBTQ+ friends? You can also ask for their help.*

Learning is one of the core characteristics of allyship. And honestly? Learning never stops. We've already talked about the ways that language evolves, and new issues emerge, which doesn't even account for new out, open, and unapologetic celebrities rising to fame. Other pop-culture moments and landmark political changes will continue to happen around you. Game-changing moments in history that we're all a part of. That commitment you made to learn more? It is lifelong.

**Not everyone is comfortable speaking about some issues, their individual experiences, or being your go-to resource. Remember that "no" is a complete sentence when you are asking for someone else's emotional labor. Be sure that you are putting in your own independent effort to learn beyond just asking your LGBTQ+ friends and loved ones.*



YOUR INVITATION

As an ally, you're making a commitment to lifelong learning. Of course, that doesn't mean you need to be an expert in all things, all the time. That's an impossible ask.

You can specialize, like picking a trade or a major in college. One topic that you're going to spend more time learning about, that you're going to put extra effort into and do a deeper dive on. That topic may be based on your personal experience or something you're already passionate about, or it could be something you've recognized you are totally clueless about.

Need a few examples?

Let's say your best friend's kid just came out as nonbinary and pansexual. You may do your deeper dive to develop expertise on bisexual+ identities and nonbinary gender identities so that you can better understand their experience.

Let's say you're really into comic books. (Or video games. Hiking. History. Sports. TV and Movies. Reading. You get the picture). You may take the time to learn more about how LGBTQ+ figures have impacted that field or what they achieved in that space.

Or let's say you've always thought of yourself as apolitical, but after a book ban was debated in your local community, you want to get involved. You may put some extra effort into learning about censorship and how to fight back.

“It was, and is, tough for me to truly understand what it’s like being someone who is LGBTQ+ in our society. I can be supportive, I can be an example for soon-to-be allies, I can read and watch and learn...but I haven’t grown up in a world that treats me worse than others purely because of who I am or who I’m attracted to. I will continue to read, watch, and learn about LGBTQ+ experiences to understand more deeply.”

—Jed C



STUMBLING BLOCK

If you are an ally who is concerned about what you don't know, the alarming amount of mis- and dis- information about LGBTQ+ people can feel overwhelming. These sensationalized stories and “debates” are meant to divide us, and they spread fast enough to make your head spin.

So what's an ally to do? If you're trying to learn more about the experiences of people who are LGBTQ+, how do you differentiate between a reliable source of information and a bad one? Let us introduce you to the dog whistle.

In this context, dictionary.com defines a dog whistle as “a choice of words, coded communication, or other symbolic aspect of self-presentation that is superficially unobjectionable or neutral but conveys a secondary message aimed at those who affiliate with a controversial group or fringe ideology, usually signaling one's own affinity for such beliefs.”

In other words, a dog whistle is a word, phrase, or sometimes a topic that's used as a mask for what the person or group is *actually* talking about. Effectively, it's a political euphemism, meant to cover up a divisive or bigoted message.

Common anti-LGBTQ+ dog whistles are words or turns-of-phrase that question the validity of LGBTQ+ identities, convey images of self-harm, or associate LGBTQ+ people with criminality. Organizations like GLAAD have lists, including one available online called the *Guide to Anti-LGBTQ Online Hate and Disinformation*, that can help you identify the most common and aggressive dog whistles that you will see in traditional and social media (content warning).

Once you know what to look for, it will make it easier to recognize harmful content, misinformation, and disinformation while you're educating yourself on the basics, doing a deeper dive, or looking for resources to help educate newer allies in your life.

Barrier Three: I don't want to take up too much space as an ally.

For more advanced allies, a common barrier comes from a really good place, which is the recognition that the goal should not be to speak on behalf of a whole community but rather to be in solidarity with and to create space for LGBTQ+ folks to speak for themselves. Allies don't want to "straightspain" or "cissplain." And that is honorable.

But. (You knew there was a "but" coming, right?)

If this is an experience that you've had, you need to do the work to move past it. Because there are absolutely places around the world and in the US— spaces that we occupy all the time—where LGBTQ+ people may not feel safe enough to be out, let alone fight for their own rights. There are more than 60 countries where consenting adults in same-sex relationships can be found guilty of a crime. In at least 10 of those countries the punishment for that crime can be the death penalty. In the US, LGBTQ+ adults report experiencing discrimination in housing, while accessing healthcare, in their local community, and at work.

So, if people who are LGBTQ+ are not able to speak for themselves and you're not going to speak up because you're afraid of taking up space, who's left to speak at all?

This is the moment to act. Take up space. Be loud and visible and talk about LGBTQ+ issues as often as you can. In everyday conversations, in your community, and at the voting booth. Because the LGBTQ+ community is under attack in local communities, state houses, and the country at large. Even better, take up space and then give it to others to continue the conversation.

"I show up as an ally by following my daughter's lead, throughout her journey, at every turn. Even when things shift and change; even with uncertainty and discomfort; when we're faced with fear or when things don't go as planned. Allyship means speaking out on her behalf to advocate, educate, and serve as a resource; to serve her truth, both when she's in the room and when she's not."

—Faith W



STUMBLING BLOCK

In chapter three, we acknowledged that sometimes allies make mistakes. And that's OK, we just need to know how to apologize effectively. But we didn't talk much about how to do that. So, now's the time.

You may have found yourself in a situation where you're taking up space as an ally and you are doing your best to stand by people who are LGBTQ+. But you've made a mistake by using an outdated term, getting a policy fact wrong, or mistakenly using a name someone no longer goes by. What now?

1. Acknowledge your mistake.
2. Apologize* and correct yourself.
3. Commit to doing better.
4. Move on.

Seriously, it's as easy as that. Do your best to catch yourself when something goes awry and own it. And remember, there is a difference between "I'm sorry that I hurt you" and "I'm sorry that you were hurt." One takes ownership and accountability, while the other does not.

**Not every LGBTQ+ person wants to hear an apology every time someone makes a mistake. For some people, focusing on the mistake feels bad and reminds them of past hurt. For others, an apology puts the responsibility on the harmed person to offer forgiveness. If someone lets you know they don't need or want an apology when you make a mistake, believe them. Don't linger on it—just put in the work to do better.*



PHONE-A-FRIEND

You know how in chapter two we said we weren't going to give you a list of five or 25 or 150 things you had to do to be considered an ally? We fibbed. A little.

It's not a list of demands in a "do it or else!" way. But we also recognize that allies who are concerned with taking up too much space may be on the lookout for ideas of appropriate and meaningful ways to show up. Which is why we've developed our series "Leading With Love..."

Go to straightforequality.org/leadingwithlove to find our top actions for allies to put into practice. You'll find general recommendations for allyship, and more specific recommendations for being stronger allies to people who are trans and nonbinary, people who are bisexual+, people who are asexual, and even how to show up as an ally to LGBTQ+ people in your faith community.

Barrier Four: I don't do conflict. Like at all.

Since the launch of this program, allies' fear of and distaste for conflict has been a constant. People simply do not like to get into arguments or debates for a variety of reasons. Some allies feel ill-prepared. Others don't have the bandwidth. Some simply recognize a no-win situation.

And we'll admit it. With the resurgence of loud, aggressive, and sometimes violent anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments, moments of potential conflict are more nerve-wracking than they've been in quite some time, especially as we're told that our rejection of their intolerance is just as bad as their intolerance.

Which is why we need to reframe our mindset a little bit. Expecting spaces to be affirming and welcoming for our LGBTQ+ friends and family is not creating conflict. It's not asking for a fight, talking about politics, or infringing on someone else's religious freedom. It is simply asking people to treat others fairly. Kindly. Respectfully even.

So, the next time you're doing your thing as an ally and someone accuses you of trying to start an argument, or debating politics, or not being respectful of someone else's beliefs, remember that you can set the frame and tone of the conversation. Correcting outdated language or harmful misinformation is not arguing, it's creating space where everyone feels welcome. Mentioning that LGBTQ+ people don't have basic protections from discrimination in the United States is not "debating politics," it's sharing information with people. Asking someone to treat others with respect and kindness is not attacking their beliefs, it is setting an understanding about how everyone is expected to behave.

“I often have a difficult time knowing what to say when someone is being hurtful or spreading misinformation or outright lies. It’s easier to come up with a comeback from the comfort of my sofa, but not as easy when I’m face to face with someone and I’m caught off guard by what they are saying. One practice I’ve developed is to ask questions. This disrupts the negative energy, makes the other person think for a moment, and gives me more time to gather my thoughts.”

—Shawna C



YOUR INVITATION

You’re probably thinking “if only it were that easy,” right? You know that even when we do our best to keep our conversations centered in kindness and respect, there are going to be moments where people in our lives dig their heels in and refuse to budge. In those moments, here is some general advice:

Take a Deep Breath.

Remember those hot buttons we talked about? If someone has said something that’s gotten you really heated, take a few moments to calm down so you can consider what comes out of your mouth next.

Don’t Make Assumptions.

Sometimes people are jerks. But sometimes they simply don’t know any better. In tense conversations and debates, give people the time they need to clarify what they mean.

Use the “ouch and educate” model.

When somebody says or does something that upsets you, you take the time to pause, explain how and why something impacted you (ouch), and provide suggestions for how to do better in the future (educate).

Pick the right time and place.

No one enjoys being called out or embarrassed in front of a large group of people. When appropriate, have difficult conversations one on one.

Address the behavior (not their character).

People will be less inclined to change their behavior if you've called them names or made broad generalizations about who they are based on a single action.

Give them space to respond.

These aren't one-sided conversations. After you've told someone what upset you and how to avoid things like that in the future, give them space to share their thoughts.

Set your expectations for the future.

You're not going to "win" every time you have a tough conversation. Sometimes you will have to agree to disagree (anticlimactic, we know). Just remember, agreeing to disagree does not mean that you can't set expectations for how that person will behave while you are together.

Say thank you.

Gratitude can go a long way in letting a person know that you can see the effort that they are making, that you'll be a resource for them if they have questions, and that your relationship isn't irreparably damaged by one challenging moment.

"I grew up in a conservative Christian family and just accepted that same sex relationships were not 'what God designed'. When my daughter came out, I had a real crisis of belief, because I knew my daughter's heart. I wasn't sure where to start "deconstructing" that teaching. My daughter gave me a reading list to get me started, and the more I read, the more at peace my heart became. It took me two and a half years of intense study and prayer, but now I am a strong ally and advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. I know my daughter is exactly who she was meant to be, and that is wonderful."

—Taylor K



PHONE-A-FRIEND

There is an assumption that a lot of people make. And that is that you can't be a person of faith AND an ally to the LGBTQ+ community or a member of the LGBTQ+ community yourself. So of course, any conversation with a person who has strong religious convictions would most certainly lead to an argument.

These organizations are just a few examples of how and why that is not always the case. And how for some people, their support and affirmation of the LGBTQ+ community is because of their faith, not despite it.

♥ **Affirmation:** affirmation.org

♥ **Desi Rainbow:** desirainbow.org/faith-family

♥ **Dignity USA:** dignityusa.org

♥ **Interfaith Alliance:** interfaithalliance.org/lgbtq-equality

♥ **Keshet:** keshetonline.org

♥ **Muslims for Progressive Values:** mpvusa.org/lgbtqi-resources

♥ **Q Christian Fellowship:** qchristian.org

This is not a comprehensive list, but it is a starting point to help you understand, and communicate to others, that the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and religious identity won't always lead to the argument you might expect.

You can learn more about many other organizations doing work at the intersection of LGBTQ+ and religious identity at pflag.org/resource/pflag-national-faith-resources.



STUMBLING BLOCK

When you find yourself in moments of potential conflict, it is generally a good practice to assume good intent from the people you are having tough conversations with (for the most part). That's why you're putting yourself out there and doing the work. But how can you tell if someone is acting in good or bad faith?

People are likely acting in good faith if they are:

- ♥ Asking questions in an open way and actively listening to your response.
- ♥ Expressing that they don't know much about a particular issue.
- ♥ Centering people rather than abstract concepts.
- ♥ Keeping to themselves any assumptions they've made in the past.
- ♥ Staying on topic.
- ♥ Expressing gratitude.

People are likely acting in bad faith if they are:

- ☹ Repeatedly asking the same inappropriate question of multiple people.
- ☹ Voicing skepticism, even when they admit to knowing very little.
- ☹ Making the same mistake in conversation over and over again.
- ☹ Using red-flag language and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric.
- ☹ Citing problematic resources, even after being corrected.
- ☹ Focusing on hypotheticals and "what ifs" rather than people.

If you've determined that someone is acting in bad faith, what happens next is up to you. There may be value in continuing the conversation; you may want to hit pause and come back to the conversation with cooler heads. There may be value to shutting it down and setting a firm boundary. But hopefully these guidelines will help choose the path that is best for you.

CHAPTER FIVE: BE AN ACTIVE ALLY

All right, allies. You're feeling confident with terminology, you understand where you are and where you aspire to be on the ally spectrum, and you've figured out how to work through some of the barriers you experience when it comes to being the best ally that you can be.

Now what? What are you supposed to do? When are you supposed to do it? How are you supposed to show up for your LGBTQ+ loved ones?

Would you be surprised if we told you there's no easy answer to those questions?

So many allies are looking for that checklist of things they can DO, but as we've said: it's not that simple.

“Sometimes, fear of conflict or not knowing the ‘perfect’ response can make me hesitate. I worry about making things worse, especially if the person is defensive or unwilling to listen. I remind myself that silence can be seen as agreement, and even a simple ‘that’s not true’ or ‘that’s not OK’ can make a difference.”

—Drew N

Sure, you can commit to speaking up whenever you hear an anti-LGBTQ+ joke or slur being used (and please do!) but being an ally is so much more than those moments. It's finding ways to signal that allyship—that you are a safe space for your LGBTQ+ loved ones—every day and in moments where there might not even be any members of the LGBTQ+ community present. Allyship becomes a part of who you are 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, not just when it feels necessary. And remember, even if you have the best of intentions, when you stay silent to keep the peace, that can feel a lot like agreement. And rejection.

“Being supportive isn’t just about big actions but also consistent, everyday choices. I show up as an ally by using inclusive language, respecting pronouns, and advocating for LGBTQ+ rights in my personal and professional spaces. I support LGBTQ+-owned businesses, amplify queer voices, and ensure my marketing work reflects diversity. I step in when I hear misinformation or harmful comments, even in uncomfortable situations.”

—Marcus W

Why? Because it’s rough out there. Stereotypes about LGBTQ+ people that had seemingly disappeared from the public discourse are seeing a resurgence. There’s misinformation about LGBTQ+ people being spread in the media and online at alarming rates. “Debates” on the validity of LGBTQ+ lives are happening in state houses and at the family dinner table. High-profile voices are on record questioning the very existence of our LGBTQ+ loved ones. Repeatedly, research shows that even the simple fact that these “debates” are *happening* make people feel unsafe. These conversations impact the physical and mental health of LGBTQ+ young people and adults.

Which is not to say you must constantly be on your soapbox and talk about nothing else. But it does mean you should be putting time and energy into using inclusive language in conversations, seeking out LGBTQ-inclusive media, and being visible and vocal in your allyship. It means you should strive to demonstrate your allyship in various aspects of your life, like at home, in school, at work, in your community, and at your place of worship. It means that you should support local efforts to ensure that LGBTQ+ people have what they need to live life with dignity. It means you should seek out LGBTQ+ organizations in your city, state, or region to get involved and vote for candidates at all levels of government who will fight for the rights of your LGBTQ+ neighbors.

This is our call to action.

One exciting thing about this call to action? You get to make your own path, in many ways. You have immense power in the communities that you’re in, whether it’s your town, your county, or your state. Or maybe you’re in communities that are harder to define: maybe you’re in a sports league or a community theater group. Maybe you’re a member of the PTA or a chamber of commerce in your town. Whatever communities you’re a part of, your voice for inclusion has an impact.

An unfortunate fact of the matter is that when LGBTQ+ people are targeted, it is never *just* LGBTQ+ people who are going to be targeted. Policies that put LGBTQ+ people at risk, like limiting access to informed affirming healthcare or censoring LGBTQ+ inclusive content, have consequences that also affect other marginalized communities. Bans on affirming healthcare for transgender people often overlap with limitations placed on reproductive healthcare or access for people with disabilities. Book bans that censor LGBTQ+ inclusion also censor discussions of racial and religious identity. Marriage equality still doesn't exist for people with disabilities, who often lose critical benefits when they legally marry their partners. The message is clear: marginalized people are going to sink or swim together.

This is where your allyship and your power are vital. Communicating the nuances of these issues in different communities is going to be the only way we can achieve unity. And you don't always know when or where you could have the most impact.

Maybe you'll take action by speaking at a school board meeting and lead them to vote against a book ban. Maybe you'll volunteer at an LGBTQ+ drop-in center. Maybe you'll take action by pushing a sports team you're on to form an inclusion statement for LGBTQ+ people. Or maybe your action can be as simple as talking about a TV show with a queer character in the group chat with your friends, leading others to want to learn more.

The path towards acting is wide open, and the power will come from you choosing what steps are best for you.

But, as an ally, you must act.



YOUR INVITATION

Get involved with your local PFLAG chapter!

There are nearly 350 volunteer-led PFLAG chapters in communities across the country. And they need you!

If you're newer on your ally journey you might participate in a support group meeting (in-person or virtually) to learn more about the lives of LGBTQ+ people and their parents and families in your community. If you're a bit further along on your journey you could attend an educational event or participate in an advocacy action with the chapter. And if you think of yourself as a Super Ally, you could volunteer to become a support group facilitator or volunteer your time, talent, and treasure in some other way.

You can find information about the PFLAG Chapter Network at pflag.org/find.

CONCLUSION

This is where we say goodbye.

But really, this isn't the end. Or at least we hope that it isn't. We hope that this is just the beginning.

Fingers crossed that, as you were reading this publication, there were new ideas, topics, and issues that you're going to consider more deeply. Actions that you're planning to incorporate into your day-to-day life.

As you consider your next steps, connect with PFLAG National, our Learning & Inclusion team, and our Straight for Equality program online, and engage with all of the great information and resources we've created (our contact information is on the inside of the back cover of this publication). You can also share this book and start a conversation with someone you know who is just starting out on their ally journey.

The important thing is leading with love.

We hope to see you again on your road to active and engaged allyship.

About PFLAG

PFLAG is an organization of LGBTQ+ people, parents, families, and allies who work together to create an equitable and inclusive world. We are hundreds of thousands of people and hundreds of chapters from coast to coast who are leading with love to support families, educate allies, and advocate for just, equitable, and inclusive legislation and policies.

Since our founding in 1973, PFLAG works every day to ensure LGBTQ+ people everywhere are safe, celebrated, empowered, and loved. Learn more, find support, donate, and take action at [PFLAG.org](https://pflag.org).

Our Mission. To create a caring, just, and affirming world for LGBTQ+ people and those who love them.

Our Vision. An equitable, inclusive world where every LGBTQ+ person is safe, celebrated, empowered, and loved.

Straight for Equality™ is a program of PFLAG National.

Guide to Being an Ally to LGBTQ+ People

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