

TRANS/GENDER ALLYSHIP

UNDERSTAND

- ❖ Gender does not determine sex and sex does not determine gender
- ❖ Transgender is part of human diversity. It is not something to be fixed and it is no less "normal" than non-transgender identities. (really, there is no such thing as "normal"...))
- ❖ The transgender community is amazingly diverse; it includes people of all races, sexualities, sexes, classes, sizes, religions, ages, kinds of ability, political convictions, etc. Transgender individuals and communities can never be represented by just one individual or generalization.
- ❖ Gender identity is not the root of all other issues for an individual; gender identity is neither more or less important than other identities such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, religion, nationality, etc.
- ❖ Not all trans people are interested in hormones or surgery
- ❖ You do not have to be a transgender person or an expert on transgender issues to support transgender people; transgender people need allies in the same way that all oppressed and marginalized communities need allies.

Do

- ❖ As often as possible, ask politely what pronouns and name a person prefers you use when referring to them. "What would you prefer to be called?" "What pronouns do you prefer?"
- ❖ Respect the rights of transgender people to define themselves.
- ❖ When in doubt:
 - Use "crossdresser" instead of "transvestite"
 - Use "intersex" instead of "hermaphrodite"
 - Use "two-spirit" instead of "berdache"
- ❖ Educate yourself on issues that are of importance to transgender individuals and communities.
- ❖ Educate other potential allies about transgender issues and allyship.
- ❖ Ask questions respectfully; recognize that it make take a lot of energy and courage for transgender people to hear and answer your questions and they are justified in not answering any questions that make them uncomfortable.
- ❖ Be open to discussions about gender and how it affects situations in your life and in the lives of those around you.
- ❖ Be supportive and a good listener.
- ❖ If you don't know the answer, try to find someone who does (you can always start in the Multicultural Resource Center... ☺)
- ❖ Take transgender people and their concerns seriously, even if you do not understand their concern or why it is so important to them.

- ❖ Challenge gender assumptions and transphobia whenever possible.
- ❖ Accord transgender people the same credibility, privacy, respect and courtesy that you would desire.
- ❖ Incorporate transgender issues and individuals into your conversations and work.
- ❖ Be a visible ally by using trans-friendly language, such as "he, she or they," or "men, women, and trans people."
- ❖ Be prepared ahead of time to address the concerns of transgender individuals, including questions about resources, facilities, policies, etc.
- ❖ Focus on accommodating the situation to the person, rather than the person to the situation (for example, not "what should we do with you on this hall" but "what kind of hall situation would give you the same quality of life and positive atmosphere that all students should have?")
- ❖ View transgender as a positive identity rather than a tragic or confused situation.

DON'T

- ❖ "Out" a transgender person without their express permission.
- ❖ Assume an individual's sex or gender identity based upon their appearance.
- ❖ Refer to a transgender person as "it" or as a "he-she" or "she-he," unless the individual has specifically asked you to refer to them in such a manner.
- ❖ Put the chosen name, chosen pronouns, or self-identification of a transgender person in quotation marks; this conveys a belief that the individual's chosen name, pronoun or identity is ultimately invalid or false.
- ❖ Ask transgender people about their body, genitalia or sex lives in any situation where you would not ask a bio boy or genetic girl about their body, genitalia or sex life.
- ❖ Assume that, because you cannot visually identify anyone in a room as transgender, there are no transgender people present.
- ❖ Question a transgender person's assessment of their identity or experience, or question a transgender person's assessment of whether an incident was transphobic; it is highly likely that they are much more practiced than you are in recognizing transphobia and its impact on their life.
- ❖ Place labels on individuals; mirror their language and self-identification instead.

A REMINDER...SOME GENERAL ALLYSHIP DO'S AND DON'TS

Do

- ❖ Know that the past is not your fault, but the present and future are your responsibility.
- ❖ Demonstrate your ally role through your actions rather than trying to convince others of it through your words.
- ❖ Work together and support other allies.
- ❖ Join with other agents to further understand their collective power and privilege, while working together to bring about individual and social change.
- ❖ Seek to understand all the different forms of oppression.
- ❖ Let your actions speak louder than your words.
- ❖ Accept that others may stereotype you.
- ❖ Take ownership in your own conscious and/or unconscious participation in oppression.
- ❖ Don't get stuck feeling guilty for the oppression of the past.
- ❖ Use examples that don't exclude a particular group's experience.
- ❖ Challenge the norm.
- ❖ Try to acknowledge your own prejudices and baggage.
- ❖ Be comfortable with criticism and feedback.
- ❖ Know there are different ways of doing and seeing everything.
- ❖ Walk your talk.
- ❖ Do it because it's the right thing to do.
- ❖ Don't expect external rewards for your work as an ally - feel good and be proud about the work you do.
- ❖ Respond with acts of kindness.
- ❖ Don't buy into stereotypes.
- ❖ Keep the faith and hope alive.
- ❖ Believe that there are always possibilities for alliance building.
- ❖ Highlight the commonalties between the various targeted groups.
- ❖ Notice the numerous intersections between different forms of oppression.
- ❖ Go out on a limb.
- ❖ Know that your work is never done.
- ❖ Provide support and assistance to those in need when requested, don't assume neediness.
- ❖ Accept that none of us are experts in diversity.
- ❖ Be inclusive.
- ❖ Recognize that no one form of oppression is more significant than another - there is no hierarchy of oppressions.
- ❖ Don't assume to know what support they want and what's best for them.
- ❖ Support people in the manner they want to be supported.
- ❖ Remember to speak only from your own experience.
- ❖ Don't expect someone else to represent an entire social group.
- ❖ Never speak for an entire group's experience or try to represent an entire group.
- ❖ Believe that everything is a never-ending process.
- ❖ Interrupt offensive jokes.

- ❖ Learn from someone who is different from you
- ❖ Speak up for those voices not present.
- ❖ Educate yourself and others.
- ❖ Read up on social justice issues.
- ❖ Read books/articles on people different than yourself.
- ❖ Reflect on your own experiences and how you might be a better ally in the future.
- ❖ Interact and find support from other allies.
- ❖ Vote for change.
- ❖ Don't assume to completely know someone else's experience.
- ❖ Try to empathize not sympathize.
- ❖ Don't judge others.
- ❖ Keep an open mind.
- ❖ Understand your own privileges.
- ❖ Acknowledge the power bestowed upon you based on your social group membership.
- ❖ Don't deny your privileges.
- ❖ Utilize your power to bring about social change that benefits all people, especially those underprivileged.
- ❖ Vote for candidates who promote social justice issues.
- ❖ Help others understand their own privileges.

DON'T

- ❖ Accept the status quo.
- ❖ Collude with the existing system of oppression
- ❖ Don't acknowledge your own position of power.
- ❖ Deny your privilege.
- ❖ Believe society is colorblind and that no differences or inequalities really exist.
- ❖ Assume that everyone has equal rights.
- ❖ Ignore acts of discrimination
- ❖ Believe that we are all responsible for our position in society.
- ❖ Be complacent.
- ❖ Deny your role in oppression.
- ❖ Get stuck feeling guilty for your personal and group's actions in the past.
- ❖ Be defensive.
- ❖ Perpetuate stereotypes.
- ❖ Tell oppressive and/or inappropriate jokes.
- ❖ Believe that you can experience being oppressed too.
- ❖ Be a bystander.
- ❖ Assume that we are "done" dealing with diversity and discrimination in our society.
- ❖ Show pity and sympathy for the targets of oppression.
- ❖ Blame others for their position in society.
- ❖ Believe that working against oppression only benefits the targets of oppression.
- ❖ Consciously or unconsciously help perpetuate the system of oppression.
- ❖ Benefit from being an individual and not having to represent your whole group without seeing how others do not have this advantage.