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How to Be a Good Ally

By aristhought

It isn't about you.

I'm not straight, or cisgender, or white. But amongst other things, I am able-bodied and comfortably middle class. Due to my position in life, I exist in both places where I am vulnerable and marginalised and places where I experience privilege and am still learning to be a good ally.

From my experiences, here are some (non-conclusive) points on how to be a good ally to marginalised groups.

- Listen to marginalised people, instead of speaking over or for them.
- Use your privilege and platform to promote the voices of the marginalised. Give marginalised people the space to speak for themselves.

- Recognise and learn about your privilege. It is often invisible to you.
- Hold other privileged people in your community responsible. For example, if you are cisgender, it is far less dangerous for you to challenge transphobia than it would be for a trans friend next to you.
- Be a good ally even if nobody is around to listen or see you doing it.
- Allyship isn't conditional on your feelings—you don't just revoke allyship and solidarity if someone of a marginalised group is rude to you.
- It is your responsibility to educate yourself more so than it is the job of the marginalised to educate you. Although there are people who would be willing to, it can be exhausting emotional labour (for example, placing all the burden on people of colour to explain racism to you).
- “Ally” isn't just a title to flaunt, it's action. Being a good ally is ongoing, not just a finish line to reach. It is consistent thought and action.
- It is not up to you to define what racism is to a person of colour, homophobia to a non-heterosexual person, and so on. Those who live those experiences will always have a clearer perspective than someone who doesn't.
- Keep an open mind and keep learning. Apologise if you slip up or make mistakes, and continue educating yourself. Stay accountable for your actions and words and take responsibility for your behaviour.

To reiterate, being an ally isn't about you. It's about standing with those who are in more vulnerable and marginalised positions in society than you.

Of course, this list is nowhere near conclusive. Everything is an ongoing learning process, and there is no perfect way to be a good ally.

Despite this, it is all of our jobs to continue to listen to others with respect, and to grow through listening to and learning from different groups of marginalised people and their experiences.

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