



10 GREAT WAYS TO BE AN LGBT+ ALLY

A lot of people ask us: “How can I be a better ally to LGBT+ people?” We’ve therefore compiled this list of 10 ways to be a great ally.

We have thought about what makes a difference for us – and small things can have a huge impact.

We also realise that – as in all areas of inclusion - a big chunk of the issues are shared across all diversity strands. Many of these ideas will be helpful to make us better allies of the Embrace group for example.

- 1 Realise how important you are as an ally.** Never forget how important you are. The support which LGBT+ people provide for one another can be amazing. We feel known, seen, and understood by each other. When a straight ally expresses support it’s less expected and can be very powerful.
- 2 Listen.** Having someone to talk to can make a huge difference when you are in a minority. You can be proud that someone sees you as their trusted ally. Be sure to listen well without interruption or distracting questions before responding and think carefully about your response. Affirming, reassuring and encouraging words mean so much more to someone who may be struggling with how they fit in. Please try to avoid responses that erase what you have heard and therefore the person saying them.
- 3 Empower yourself - Get to know a bit more about the LGBT+ community.** This should be fun! There is a huge range of fascinating, easily accessible ways to find out about queer history and culture. Websites, TV, Netflix, films, books, stand-up and pretty much anything else you can think of are great to engage with. Learn the differences between L, G, B, and T as well as Q, I, A, P and N-B – the alphabet soup as it’s described! Learn about the history of protest and political struggle. Learn about how people with AIDS were treated like lepers in the 80s. Dip into whatever you fancy and use what you find to engage with straight and queer family and friends on anything you find interesting. Come along to events which interest you and become more visible as a supporter. You will be welcome.
- 4 Speak up – Empower your LGBT+ colleagues.** A survey found 57% of colleagues who heard anti-LGBT+ discussions were too scared to say anything. What will you do when you hear homophobic comments? What do you need to do about banter? The real hope is to change hearts and not just to call out. It’s demeaning for part of your identity to be the punchline of someone’s joke. Speak up when a person uses slurs or insensitive or racially charged language. Allies speaking up if they hear anti-LGBT+ comments can make a huge difference.
- 5 Be Visible.** Create a more inclusive environment within the workplace and openly show your support by sending everyday signals. Wearing network lanyards,

organising events that are more inclusive and speaking up for LGBT+ colleagues all demonstrate an inclusive environment. Allies send out lots of small signals in everyday conversations. A small example from the last few weeks: if someone says they watched 'It's a Sin' and mentions that they were moved by it or shocked at how people were treated then, that registers: they are an ally and LGBT+ colleagues feel safe and welcome when they hear this.

Two years ago 67% of our own LGBT+ team said in the Stonewall Survey that they were not comfortable being out to everyone at work. You don't know if there are people at work or at home who aren't out because they don't feel they can be, but allies having those conversations around them creates a much more inclusive culture and says we value diversity here.

- 6 Support LGBT+ campaigns being fought now.** There has been huge progress in recent years, but there is so much more to do to make LGBT+ people accepted and welcome. This can be around the intersection of identities where people experience double discrimination (LGBT+/minority ethnic, LGBT+/disability etc), or the fight to ban conversion therapy – where misguided charlatans try to somehow turn people straight. Stand up for trans rights and the abuse from the media that trans people have to live with. Simple acts like writing to your MP saying you are an ally and that you support a specific campaign are powerful. Asking your bank, GP or other institution about inclusivity, when it does not affect you personally, might be what it needs for them to take notice. The voice of an ally can resonate louder than the voice of those of us directly affected.

- 7 Don't worry about saying the wrong thing when you are trying to say the right thing.** This is something we all worry about when we are unfamiliar with a community. We don't mind if you say the wrong thing when you are trying to say the right thing. We love it that you are involved. We only mind when people say the wrong thing deliberately and to hurt. It's not hard to tell the difference.

- 8 Allow yourself to feel uncomfortable from time to time.** Feeling uncomfortable from time to time is a natural part of continual learning. It's fine.

- 9 Educate your children to be inclusive.** Diversify your bookshelves – don't leave it to the kids of queer parents to enlighten their own peers about gay parents and families. There are many books for children that show how normal and loving LGBT+ families are. It is really important that children learn about diversity and accept difference. It comes completely naturally to them.

- 10 Normalise sharing your pronouns.** Add your pronouns to your email signature, next to your name in video calls and in your social media biographies. At Mazars you are encouraged to add your preferred pronouns to your email signature. This helps show you care about people's preferences and identities and recognise that not everyone is binary in their identity. Examples to use include he/him; they/their and she/her. It helps transgender people show the world the pronouns they'd like to use, and for non trans people it helps normalise discussions about gender.