



The Keys to Allyship: Understanding What an Ally Is and the Role They Play in an Inclusive Workplace

As we continue to build on the foundation on DEI at Jefferson Lab, Allyship is another important topic that is core to creating a culture of Belonging.

What is Allyship and Why is it Important?

Broadly speaking, allyship is when a person from a privileged group works in conjunction with a marginalized group to help remove systems that challenge their basic rights, equal access and ability to thrive in society. It is also the practice of emphasizing inclusion by members of an 'in' group, to advance the interests of a marginalized 'out' group.

Allyship is a lifelong process that involves building relationships anchored in trust, accountability and consistency in interactions with marginalized groups. People are only allies when the group(s) they seek to be an ally for begin recognizing them as such. In other words: Allies are not self-identified.

Additionally, allies possess a level of self-awareness. They own their mistakes and look to educate themselves to become a better ally, along with being a good listener, identifying their own biases, acknowledging systems of oppression and their participation in them, and being open to the truth about the history of the struggle oppressed groups have faced.

Allies are important for several reasons. One crucial component involves recognizing their own circumstances and using it to influence inclusion and call out or challenge behavior perpetuating bias based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and ability.

How can we emphasize Allyship?

Education: Listen and Ask Questions

You might be tired of hearing it, but education matters in this conversation. In many cases, people honestly don't know what they can do to change it. Listen to others. Listening is often difficult for people who haven't seen or experienced the dynamics of microaggressions, cultural appropriation or racism. Recognize that members of an underrepresented group won't all have the same experiences. Ask questions and stay alert to inequities and disparities.

Practice Accountability

While intentions to become an ally may be pure, they can be meaningless if they fail to have any impact. Facing that can be difficult and invite criticism that is hard to hear, but true allies use it to learn from mistakes and improve their efforts moving forward. The work of allyship can be overwhelming and at times frustrating.

Set a Tone and Accept Feedback

Since allies often have the power to amplify, helping to set standards for inclusive language, creating a culture of openly engaging people and debunking stereotypes. As an ally, deliberately seek feedback from marginalized groups and establish trusting relationships. Receive their comments as a gift and show that you value their feedback.

Plan to Act, Become a Confidant

Ultimately, accountable and effective allyship requires action. Encourage aspiring allies to take inspiration from and collaborate with marginalized groups to develop a support system for each other's goals. Make yourself available, listen generously and try to empathize with and validate other's experiences.

We all have an opportunity – and a responsibility – to create an environment where everyone feels they belong. **I encourage you to be an Ally today!**

[10 Things You Can Do to be an Ally](#)

Resources:

DiversityInc Best Practices

Harvard Business Review

YWCA Greater Harrisburg