



Marking a Century of Women's Suffrage
Commémorer un siècle du droit de vote des femmes

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Making Change: Allyship

Making Change is a collection of skill-based education modules, created to equip young women for a variety of political engagement.

These toolkits have three objectives:

1. To **engage and educate** women on a variety of issues that affect their daily lives in work and day-to-day
2. To **enable** women across Canada to explore different pathways to make change and engage in politics and policy on these issues
3. To **provide** policy options, strategies for engagement, and tools of empowerment to allow women to participate in the political and policy process in Canada



What does it mean to be an ally?

To be an ally is an active way of life where you help to bridge-build to ensure equality, inclusion and opportunity of all people despite differences of gender, sex, disability, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and/or race by evoking empathy in those around you. Being an ally means that you are working towards creating a socially just world where marginalized communities no longer have to lead excruciating conversations about survival. Allies actively work to end the system which gives them an inherent privilege. However, it's important to remember that as an ally you stand behind or next to marginalized communities, but never in front of, as allies amplify the voices of the marginalized, not speak for them.

Remember - Always learn more! Seek out authentic sources of stories, media, etc. from these groups (read news media, books, movies, podcasts, etc. from these groups).

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality requires looking at social identities and understanding how identities, such as our ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, gender, sex, (dis)abilities, and socioeconomic status, are not isolated, but rather are interrelated. Oppression and marginalization is not confined to one identity at a time, instead they interact and are often compounded creating complex systems of discrimination or disadvantage. For example, Maclean's recently pointed to research by two researchers, Sheila Block and Grace-Edward Galabuzi who find that "racialized women earned 55.6 cents for every dollar non-racialized men earned in 2005. . . Racialized men made 77.9 cents for every dollar non-racialized men earned. The gap narrows even further when comparing racialized and non-racialized women. Racialized women earned 88.2 cents for every dollar that non-racialized women earned." In this case, race and gender are not operating separately to contribute to two pay gaps, they are interacting to put racialized women an even more marginalized and unjust position.

Check out this incredible Ted Talk by Kimberlé Crenshaw to learn about [intersectionality](#). Or you can read this article in the [Washington Post](#). Read the Maclean's article on the gendered *and* racialized wage gap check out this [here](#).

What is privilege?

[Everyday Feminisms](#) defines privilege as **the opposite of oppression** - "set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group".

"Society grants privilege to people because of certain aspects of their identity. Aspects of a person's identity can include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, geographical location, ability, and religion, to name a few.



Being an Ally vs. an Accomplice

Some have advocated for a move from allies to accomplices, denoting the need for more learning, action, and support, and to shift the focus from the individual as an ally to an accomplice who focuses on dismantling oppressive institutions and systems. You can read more about it at the [Huffington Post](#) or from [Teaching Tolerance](#).

How can I be an ally?

The first step of being an ally is by looking within and figuring out what pieces of us represent marginalization and what pieces of us represent privilege. Look at your identity in terms of your race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, education, socioeconomic status, health, ableism, etc. Our identities are complex so we are on a spectrum of privilege and marginalization. The pieces of you that represent marginalization means that you have the right to fight for your people, but also the right to thrive and survive. However, the privileged aspect of your identity is responsible for being an ally as you should be working towards dismantling the systems that you are apart of that oppress marginalized communities. Becoming an ally involves critically thinking about your own identity and how it relates to your membership in majority and minority groups. You must be aware of your own oppressive beliefs, and connections to injustices with a willingness to be confronted about them.

Once we figure out where we lie on the spectrum, we can work towards being allies. Allies work in different systems through service, self-help, education, advocacy and direct action. Depending on the system and the type of action you take, it's important to remember 5 things:

- **Caring:** Be empathetic towards issues by recognizing that there is marginalization and privilege in the world and that you want to do something about it.
- **Learning:** There needs to be constant stance of humility as an ally. Allies will never completely know the struggles of marginalized communities. By being humble you are constantly working on yourself and learning in order to unlearn systems. Furthermore, the way you learn is just as important as what you learn.
- **Acting:** Our actions need to be filled with consideration and respect.
- **Influencing:** Understand the power we have on people around us is key with allyship.
- **Maintaining:** Allyship is a lifestyle, so while allyship is hard and exhausting, you need to maintain your position as a bridge-builder.



Barriers to Allyship

There are barriers to allyship, being aware of them can help you continue to educate, learn, and grow, in order to overcome four different barriers.

Fragility

Allies can be sensitive to digest their privilege, thus can be defensive. However, privilege and power doesn't make you a bad person, it just means that you have a responsibility to work towards shared humanity.

Guilt

Many people of privilege become "stuck" in the feeling of guilt. However, feeling guilty means there is self-awareness, but by not moving on, there isn't any progress for social justice. Guilt is a gateway emotion, so using it in a proactive manner instead of wallowing

Tears

Although empathy is critical for allyship, there is a difference between crying with and crying on marginalized people. Allyship is hard work, thus having a community is needed for support. However, marginalized people cannot uptake your burden, as they are the ones that are actually suffering from the oppressive systems.

Saviour

People tend to accidentally fall into the trap of making social justice about them, rather than the marginalized. In allyship you should stand next to, or behind communities, but never in front of. As allies we are trying to amplify the voice of others, not speak for them.



18 Ways To Be An Ally - useful tips for beginners!

Anne Bishop outlines 18 ways one can be an ally in her book "Becoming an Ally" which are useful for beginners:

1. Be a worker in your own liberation struggle- learn and reflect on the patterns and effects of oppression.
2. Help members of your own group understand oppression
3. Listen!
4. Think structurally rather than individually- understand your participation in the oppressor group
5. Separate guilt from responsibility- don't take on the weight of history, rather accept the challenge of working to change the situation.
6. Don't be defensive! When people point out your oppressive attitudes or language- believe it. Ask questions and learn
7. Count your privileges.
8. Speak up against oppressive comments or actions.
9. Recognize when being an 'ally' results in your own mistreatment.
10. Avoid the trap of 'knowing what is good for others'- make room for their leadership.
11. Don't take credit for an oppressed group's action- you are not the spokesperson.
12. Do not expect every member of an oppressed group to agree.
13. Learn everything you can about oppression.
14. Support the process of unlearning oppression with other members of your group
15. Remember that you will have to make extra effort to connect with members of an oppressed group.
16. Try not to look to the oppressed group for emotional support- their energy is needed for their own struggle.
17. Be yourself. Dig into your own roots. The oppressive history of the group you belong to is a burden you carry.
18. Assume that you are a learner. Good learners are open.



When to intervene and “Shut down”

There are both indirect and direct ways to shut down oppressive exchanges and actions.

If you are comfortable intervening directly, your response should initially be calm and assume good intentions. Some people do not realize the significance of their comments or actions, therefore first identify the problem and give the individual the opportunity to learn and modify it themselves. Avoid judgement, name-calling, and labelling, this can make individuals defensive and less likely to accept new information and make changes.

For example in a situation you can try responding directly by:

- Clarifying what was said by saying something like “I think I hear you saying all ___ are _____. Is that what you mean?” before explaining what is problematic in their actions.
- Asking for more information. If it is a derogatory joke, you can ask why the individual thinks it is funny.
- Finally, explaining the impact of comments, jokes, statements, etc., like the one you heard.

If you are not comfortable addressing the problem directly you can try other approaches, such as:

- Using signals such as a questioning or confused look, changing the subject, or simply leaving the conversation
- You can try repeating the statement without the oppressive/discriminatory language. For example, if you hear someone say “I feel like the low man on the totem pole” you can respond with something like “Did you mean to say that you feel unimportant?”
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How can I teach others what it means to be an ally?

When expressing to others what it means to be an ally, explain that work needs to be done towards creating a socially just world where marginalized communities have equal opportunities for success, and feel safe to live and love. Allyship is working towards “shared humanity” where allies are motivated to disrupt oppressive systems and implicit bias by amplifying marginalized voices.