

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ALLY? FACTSHEET

Institution of
**MECHANICAL
ENGINEERS**



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WHAT MAKES A GOOD ALLY?

Introduction

Being an ally is essential when increasing inclusion and belonging, and true allyship is about creating space for individuals and groups of people who are underrepresented, to be seen heard and treated fairly. Allyship is not about seeing and agreeing that there are social injustices throughout our societies and workplaces, it's about taking action and consistently doing so.

It is a lifelong role that means that we are intentionally promoting and advancing cultures of inclusion whether that be at work, in our membership duties, in our social lives or a mixture of these things.

It is about proactively standing out from the crowd helping underrepresented groups and/or individuals who may have not had the same access to unearned inclusion that perhaps others have because they are in the 'majority'.

Being an ally is all about real action, we cannot call ourselves allies – our actions must do that for us.

Being a good ally means that we accept the privileges we didn't ask for and use them to help break down systems that keep others from having the same opportunities.

Who can be an ally?

We all can be active allies to others, as privilege is multidimensional, and we each must accept the privileges we didn't ask for to enable us to utilise our platform.

Privilege is intersectional, so different people are able to be allies to different people, e.g., women and non-binary people can find allies in men, the LGBT+ community can find allies in cisgendered and/or heterosexual people and of course Black people can find allies in the white majority, especially in the UK.

We don't have to entirely grasp what it's like to be oppressed if we are in the majority (and we may never know that), however, as allies we should want to understand how to help dismantle inequalities and create fairer spaces in our society and in organisations.

How to become an ally

To become an active ally, we must match our actions and words. We must use our voice, platform, and access to those that hear us, (especially in an organisational setting) to advocate for the less privileged and take action by getting involved.

Successful allies have a toolkit of different strategies to help create the space and support needed for to create true inclusion and create organisations where everyone feels they belong.

Here are some strategies to help you do that...

- Recognise your own and other people's micro-aggressions and correct them (see Module 1 resources for further explanation)
- Listen, validate someone's experience, and don't assume because you don't understand it that it couldn't possibly have happened
- Call out inappropriate behaviour – when we are senior or very experienced in our organisations, we have more power to call out non-inclusive behaviour with less of a fear of repercussion as those from a less privileged position

- Expand your circle, get to know people in the organisation that are different to you and help to bring them into projects, conversations, meetings etc.
- Ensure that their voice is amplified over your own – when there is only space for one voice, let it be theirs over yours

Finally, take a moment to think about the last time you called out non-inclusive behaviour, if you can't remember the last time then you are missing opportunities to be an active ally. Something to think about and a starting point to get your active allyship practice off to a start.