

# ALLYSHIP PRIMER

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## ALLYSHIP

*an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person with privilege seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group of people*

- Allyship is not an identity—it is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people
- Allyship is not self-defined—our work and our efforts must be recognized by the people we seek to ally ourselves with
  - It is important to be intentional in how we frame the work we do, *i.e. we are showing support for..., we are showing our commitment to ending [a system of oppression] by..., we are using our privilege to help by...*

### Responsibilities:

*We are not acting out of guilt, but rather out of responsibility*

- **We actively acknowledge our privileges and openly discuss them:** we recognize that as recipients of privilege we will always be capable of perpetuating systems of oppression from which our privilege came
- **We listen more and speak less:** we hold back on our ideas, opinions, and ideologies, and resist the urge to “save” the people we seek to work with as they will figure out their own solutions that meet their needs
- **We do our work with integrity and direct communication:** we take guidance and direction from the people we seek to work with (not the other way around), and we keep our word
- **We do not expect to be educated by others:** we continuously do our own research on the oppressions experienced by the people we seek to work with, including herstory/history, current news, and what realities created by systems of oppression look, feel, smell, taste and sound like
- **We build our capacity to receive criticism,** to be honest and accountable with our mistakes, and recognize that being called out for making a mistake is a gift—that it is an honour of trust to receive a chance to be a better person, to learn, to grow, and to do things differently
- **We embrace the emotions that come out of the process of allyship,** understanding that we will feel uncomfortable, challenged, and hurt
- **Our needs are secondary to the people we seek to work with:** we are responsible for our self-care and recognize that part of the privilege of our identity is that we have a choice about whether or not to resist oppression; we do not expect the people we seek to work

with to provide emotional support

- **We do not expect awards or special recognition** for confronting issues that people have to live with every day

## **Roles:**

*We act out of a genuine interest in challenging larger oppressive power structures*

- We are here to support and make use of our privilege for the people we seek to work with
- We turn the spotlight we are given away from ourselves and towards the voices of those who are continuously marginalized, silenced, and ignored; we give credit where credit is due
- We use opportunities to engage people with whom we share identity and privilege in conversations about oppression experienced by those we seek to work with

It is important to talk about allyship in this way, as much confusion has come out of problematic ideologies of “being an ally”. These may be well-meaning, but they often recreate the same oppressions or perpetuate new ones.

Allyship is greatly valued and a huge step towards challenging oppression, however, we must understand possible feelings of resentment, bitterness, and even resistance towards us from the people we seek to work with. These feelings are not personal to us, but are reflective of peoples’ experiences with allyship with others like us (past and present.) Building trust takes time, so we must recognize that what we can offer may not always be immediately needed or accepted.

In the meantime, **we have opportunities to practice allyship every day:**

- How much space are we taking up in conversations? In rooms? In organizing?
- How do we actively improve access to our meetings? Our actions?
- How are our identities taking up space? Physically? Verbally?
- How much do we know about the people we seek to work with? What are our assumptions and from where did they originate?
- Who are we leaving behind?

(In particular to colonization, take special effort to acknowledge the original peoples of the area/region/location and connect with your local indigenous communities to involve them from the start, including elders, chiefs, and youth.)