

LGBT ALLIES

ARE YOU AN ALLY?

The 2015 International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia campaign highlights the crucial role of allies in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people.

WHAT IS AN ALLY?

An ally is generally a heterosexual person who supports people of different sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, with an eye to contributing to their well-being or to a greater acceptance of their realities. Allies can also include LGBT people who support one another or who take part in ally groups (Brooks and Edwards, 2009).

For example, an ally might be a heterosexual person who supports a gay or bisexual person or a lesbian who supports a trans person. An ally can be a father, a friend, a brother, a co-worker, a teacher or any other person who is in contact with an LGBT person. One commonality is that allies advocate for social justice and the well-being of LGBT people. To varying degrees, allies take action against homophobia and transphobia.

ANECDOTES ABOUT ALLIES

Mathew is a secondary-school teacher. He regularly hears students use words such as "fag", "fairy" or "butch". The problem has persisted despite his many interventions. He decides to inform the school's administrators. He also recommends that an LGBT/straight alliance be established in the school and that the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia be observed.

When her co-workers talk about their children during lunch break, Rachel doesn't mention that her daughter is a lesbian, fearing that the topic will make them uncomfortable. One day, unable to contain her joy, she decides to announce that her daughter and her partner are getting married. The reactions are positive and she answers the questions of her fellow employees, who are not very familiar with this reality.



WHY BE AN ALLY?

As sexual and gender-identity minorities, LGBT people often feel alone in dealing with homophobia and transphobia. All too often, those who witness homophobic or transphobic acts or language don't dare to intervene (Denis and Berthelot, 2014). But homophobia and transphobia affect everyone. In fact, these types of discrimination tend to:

- discourage certain people from being friends with LGBT people;
- erode cohesion within families, schools, work environments and sports teams;
- encourage people to hide the LGBT reality from close friends and family members;
- undermine the efforts of those who are committed to equality;
- help sustain the culture of the "closet", which discourages any admission of differences in sexual orientation or gender identity or expression;
- reinforce stereotypes of masculinity and femininity;
- encourage society to deny diversity.

Allies play an indispensable role, as their support aims to counter discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes in different environments. In addition, on a personal level, becoming an ally can be an enriching experience which allows one to:

- be open to people who are different from oneself;
- engage in authentic relationships with others;
- participate in enhancing cohesion within families, schools, workplaces and sports teams.

WILL OTHERS THINK I'M GAY, LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL?

In certain settings, a person who becomes an ally may end up experiencing homophobia or transphobia by association. If this is your case, make it clear that you are an ally. Also, arm yourself with patience and understanding, and be confident about the long-term benefits of asserting yourself as an ally. It is possible that the heterosexual people around you need time to open up to certain realities that they were never made aware of. But the actions of allies will gradually bear fruit and have a big impact on the lives of LGBT people.

HOW TO BECOME AN ALLY?

Becoming an ally takes a fair amount of courage, because it means speaking up when others don't. But it is possible to support LGBT people by actions, big or small, that correspond to your own reality and personality. Here are a few ideas:

EVERYDAY ACTIONS

- Become informed about LGBT realities;
- Take a critical look at your own opinions about LGBT realities;
- Refrain from presuming the sexual orientation of a person;
- Respect a person's gender identity or expression;
- Demonstrate openness and inclusion towards LGBT people through your language and actions;
- Refrain from trivializing the use of words such as "fag", "gay", "butch" or "fairy" and from making tasteless jokes about LGBT people;
- React when you witness discrimination against LGBT people;
- Refrain from forcing LGBT individuals to "come out of the closet"; rather, listen to them and support them in their personal development.



RALLYING ACTIONS

- Create an LGBT/straight alliance at your school or workplace;
- Become a member of an ally network;
- Create a welcoming, safe space for LGBT people in your school or workplace;
- Encourage school administrators or workplace managers to adopt measures that are inclusive of LGBT people;
- Participate in LGBT pride celebrations;
- Hang up posters that educate people about LGBT realities and that aim at preventing homophobia and transphobia;
- Let it be known that you are an ally and be a model for those who are hesitant about being one.



RESOURCES

GUIDES AND TOOLS FOR BECOMING AN ALLY

Canadian Labour Congress, "To Our Allies: Everything you ever wanted to know about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Issues" www.canadianlabour.ca

Canadian Federation for Sexual Health, "How to Form a Gay/Straight Alliance in Your School" <http://www.cfsh.ca/>

Pride at Work Canada, "How to Be an Ally" <http://prideatwork.ca>

Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), 10 Ways to Be an Ally & a Friend www.glaad.org

Mosaik, "Guide d'implantation – La mobilisation d'alliés contre l'homophobie en contexte scolaire secondaire" www.ecoleensante.inspq.qc.ca

My Gay Straight Alliance, "Setting up a GSA" www.mygsa.ca

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) National, "Coming out as a supporter" www.hrc.org

Réseau Access Network: "Creating Safe Spaces: A Gay Straight Alliance Resource Guide for Northern Ontario" www.accessaidsnetwork.com

You Can Play, "Gay athletes. Straight allies. Teaming up for respect." www.youcanplayproject.org

VIDEOS

Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) National, "Coming out as an ally" www.glaad.org

Groupe de recherche régional d'intervention sociale, "Alliées, Alliés! Ensemble contre l'homophobie" www.grischap.qc.ca

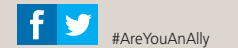


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INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA



An initiative of Fondation Émergence

courrier@homophobie.org
www.homophobiaday.org



Fondation Émergence inc.
We fight prejudice

P.O. Box 1006, Station C, Montreal (Quebec) H2L 4V2
Telephone: 514 866-6788 / Fax: 514 866-8157
courrier@fondationemergence.org
www.fondationemergence.org



INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST **HOMOPHOBIA** AND **TRANSPHOBIA**

The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, observed every year on May 17th, marks the culmination of the annual campaign against homophobia and transphobia.

Despite increased recognition of LGBT individuals in several countries, homophobia and transphobia are still present and have judicial manifestations in the death penalty and discriminatory laws. In other countries, in spite of legal equality, LGBT rights are not a reality in everyday life. Social equality has not been achieved. This is why it is important to continue raising awareness about LGBT realities in all settings, in order to demystify prejudices and stereotypes.

WHY MAY 17TH?

May 17th is a symbolic day for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Long considered a disorder, homosexuality was withdrawn from the list of mental illnesses on May 17, 1990, by the World Health Organization (WHO).

HOW CAN A PERSON PARTICIPATE?

In addition to performing the actions suggested under the heading “How to become an ally?”, here are ways of participating in the fight against homophobia and transphobia in the context of our campaign:

- Use the campaign’s promotional material available on the internet and circulate it on social media platforms, in blogs and in e-mails;
- Order, free of charge, the campaign posters and brochure and circulate them in the workplace or at school;
- Organise activities, seminars and lectures, including public personalities and inviting the media to participate;
- Organise rainbow-flag-raising ceremonies;
- Recommend articles for publication in newspapers;
- Encourage key players of civil society to recognise the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia and to take part in the campaign.

SEXUAL DIVERSITY

Sexual diversity or sexual minorities are expressions used to designate lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) persons.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation refers to a person’s sexual attraction to people of the opposite sex, the same sex, or both: heterosexuality, homosexuality or bisexuality.

TRANSIDENTITY

Transidentity refers to people who do not identify with their biological gender, but who identify instead with the opposite gender.

TRANSPHOBIA*

Any negative attitude that could lead to directly or indirectly rejecting, or discriminating against, a trans person (transsexual,

transgender or transvestite) — in other words, any person who does not conform to standards and representations of gender and sex.

HOMOPHOBIA*

Homophobia refers to any negative attitude that could lead to directly or indirectly rejecting, or discriminating against, gay, lesbian or bisexual people, or any person whose appearance or behaviour fails to conform with stereotypes of masculinity or femininity.

* *Inspired by the Government of Quebec’s Action Plan to Fight Homophobia, 2011-2016.*

ACTIVITIES

On Fondation Émergence’s website, you’ll find activities that took place in a variety of settings over the course of the last campaigns. Tell Fondation Émergence about your initiatives so that we can add them to the website.

REFERENCES

Brooks, Ann K., Edwards, Kathleen, “Allies in the Workplace: Including LGBT in HRD” in *Advances in Developing Human Resources* Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2009, pp. 136-149.

Denis, Catherine, Berthelot, Pierre, Gouvernement du Québec, Mosaik, “Des outils de promotion et de prévention en matière de sexualité jeunesse”, Guide de l’intervenant, 2014, 46p.

Gai Écoute offers services related to sexual orientation and gender identity: Québec, Mosaik, “Des outils de promotion et de prévention en matière de sexualité jeunesse”, Guide de l’intervenant, 2014, 46p. <http://ecoleesante.inspq.qc.ca/mosaik-scolaire.aspx>



ALLIES



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Helpline and information centre for people concerned about sexual and gender diversity.

The services are bilingual, anonymous, confidential and offered free throughout Canada, seven days a week.

Greater Montreal
514 866-0103
Toll-free
1 888 505-1010
Chat support
www.gaiecoutte.org



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MAY 17

INTERNATIONAL DAY
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