



# Being an Ally

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A guide to becoming the ally your team mates need, not the one you think they need.





# Being an Ally

Allyship has quickly become one of the hottest new terms. Against the stark backdrop of riots, protests, and plagues; what does allyship look like? What can you do to reach out to a friend or family member in need of an ally? The most important part of 'being an ally' is to remember that the term is earned with time and respect from the community rather than a given label.

The first step to allyship is educating yourself and those around you about the different identities and lived experiences of marginalized communities. 'Being an ally' is expressed on a spectrum. Some express their allyship by joining activist movements, while for others, it is acknowledging their privilege and listening to marginalized communities' thoughts and feelings. 'Being an ally' involves taking the time to understand and care about the issues that may or may not affect you directly, but mean the world to others.

Definition of allyship: an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person in a position of privilege and power seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group.

- Allyship is not an identity—it is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or group 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...

References: The Ant-oppression Network (<https://theantioppressionnetwork.com/allyship/>)

# Implicit Bias

The deep seated bias of which they are completely unconscious of that are often discriminatory

References:

Mason, Betsy: Knowledgeable Magazine: Curbing Implicit Bias, What works and what doesn't (<https://www.knowledgeablemagazine.org/article/mind/2020/how-to-curb-implicit-bias>)

## Implicit Bias Shows Itself As:



Hiring Practices



Student Evaluations



Law Enforcement



Criminal Proceedings

## How to conqueror Implicit Bias as an Ally

'Being an ally' is not a simple flip of a switch, and absolutely no one can just decide to stop having implicit biases. Like any habit, we must work at it and be diligent. 'Being an ally' means a willingness to listen, learn and be corrected. It is as simple as stopping and asking yourself how the recipient of your words may be effected.

It is about the immediate associations we make with good and bad.

## Why Do We have Implicit Bias?

Implicit Bias to the untrained bystander may appear as a joke or compliment. But what you may think is kind gesture, may have more sinister origin. It is the othering effect that these comments have in their recipient and what this implies about a group of people. Implicit bias is learned over years of cultural and environmental exposure.

The key to implicit bias is understanding why this kind of discrimination happens. Implicit bias is believed to have evolved to assist our brains in categorizing and understanding our environment. For example, early humans needed a fast decision on whether those blue berries were safe to eat or were the red ones? They quickly learned which to avoid and which to eat, and since the color of the berry is unlikely to change, neither would our brains bias towards red berries. There was no need for our evolving brains to learn how to unlearn.

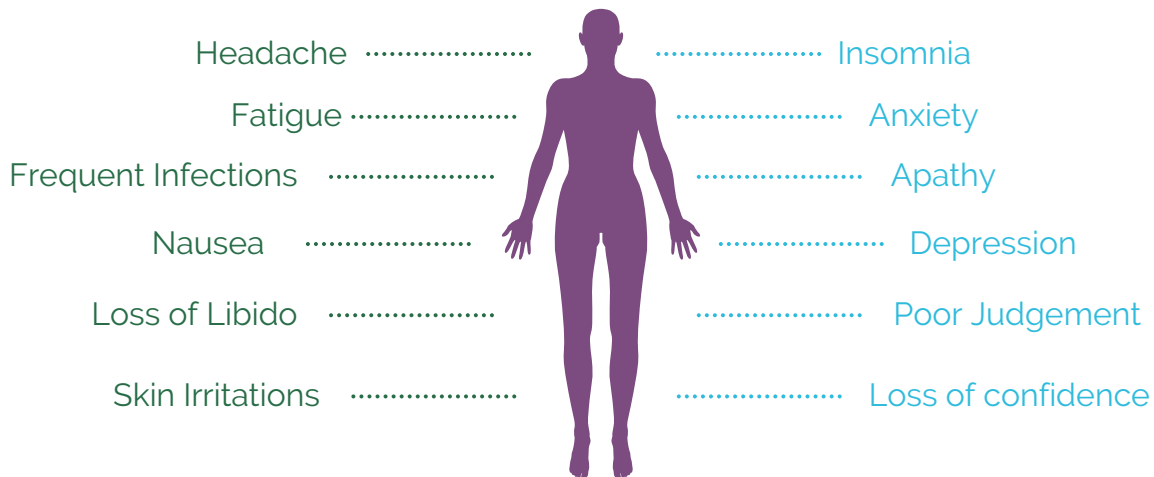
# Microaggressions

## References:

Desmond-Harris, Jenée: Vox: What exactly is a microaggression (<https://www.vox.com/2015/2/16/8031073/what-are-microaggressions>)

Microaggressions build on the thoughts of implicit biases. This is when those unconscious biases turn into verbal or physical communications. Microaggressions are small comments or body language that would suggest someone is different or unwelcome. This can come as a compliment on a person of color's proficiency in English, suggesting that they are alien despite speaking English as a first language. Or, a woman employee's idea being stolen by a male colleague who gets credit for the idea. Though these comments may not appear harmful, studies have shown the long term physical and mental harm microaggressions and a lack of acceptance can do to a person. That is why in our rapidly adapting society that scorns blatant discrimination people use microaggressions are the newest front in the fight for equality.

## Physical and mental effects



## How to correct microaggressions

- Be constantly vigilant
- Seek Interactions with People Different Than Yourself
- Do Not Be Defensive
- Open yourself to criticism

**Be An Ally**



# How To Be an Inclusive Team Member

## References:

Forsey, Caroline; Hubspot: How to Use & Promote Inclusive Language at Your Organization (<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/inclusive-language>)

Creating an inclusive environment and culture takes firstly time. These kinds of culture corrections are not instantaneous or easy for team members to make. This kind of change requires diligent and rigorous attention to vocabulary and actions. There are two major ways to begin the journey to an inclusive team; advocate and do no harm. Using these two pillars of inclusivity, your team will thrive when all members feel included and accepted.

## Advocate

- Intervene when you hear discriminator language, no matter who is in the room
- Invite BIPOC to speak at your events
- Encourage everyone to reach their goals
- Sponsor a BIPOC and champion them

## Do No Harm

- Monitor mircoaggressions
- Attribute ideas and collaborate
- Listen and learn how someone introduces themselves

## 6 Ways to Be More Inclusive Today

- Explain Your Acronyms
  - Your team should not have to frantically google the meaning of TL;DR to understand what you are saying
- Avoid Ethnocentric Metaphors
  - 'Hit it out of the ballpark' may be a common phrase in North America, but can be confusing to other cultures
- All theoretical people should be they/them
  - Do not assume gender based on stereotypes of a position or name
- Company images should reflect diversity
  - Everyone wants to be reflected in a company's image, customer or employee. Ensure branding is inclusive to all
- Do not assume someone's family structure
  - Not all family have a similar structure
- **Ask!**
  - They will be happy that you asked rather than assuming

# How to Support a Black, Indigenous, Person of Color (BIPOC) Conversation Ground Rules



**Be open and transparent, willing to make mistakes**

**Assume positive intent**



**Hold yourself and others accountable for cultural humility**

**Engage in dialog, not debate**



**Embrace the power of humble listening**



**Discomfort is OK**



**Have conversations that matter**



# How to be an Ally

References: The Ant-oppression Network (<https://theantioppressionnetwork.com/allyship/>)

## Listen more, speak less

At the end of the day, being an ally is about mutual trust and respect. People need trust to speak freely; and to understand and respect them, you need to listen.

## Do not expect the spotlight for your efforts

Allyship is founded in the fight for equality. The spotlight is only aimed at the extraordinary, and equality is not extraordinary.

## Support and make use of your privilege

You are waiting on no one to start changing yourself. Change happens one person, one act of kindness, at a time.

## Engage in education

Learn about the challenges different kinds of people face, educate yourself with conversations and literature in hope that you can one day have the opportunity to educate someone else.



## About Veza Global

Veza Global is an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) organization advocating for equity and equality for underrepresented groups with a focused lens on the leadership journey of people of culturally diverse backgrounds. Diversity of Thought and Inclusive Culture are the pillars of the approach that Veza takes to build capacity for organization to execute on their EDI strategy. Veza offers EDI Assessment and Audits, EDI strategy development and Inclusive Leadership Training and Coaching. Through Veza's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment tool, companies can identify under an hour where they are on the EDI Maturity Model and receive a list of detailed recommendations and actionable next steps for their EDI strategy to move forward to a more inclusive organization.

### **Veza Global**

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