

ANTI-RACISM TOOLKIT

Practice allyship

Allyship is the active and lifelong practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person in a position of privilege and power acts in solidarity with a marginalized group. Allies actively work to end oppression, seeking to create more equitable environments for all people and dismantle systemic racism. This guide focuses on exploring the role of an ally and how we can each play this role, showing up and using our privilege to break down oppression, because as Dr. Ibram X. Kendi has observed, “an ally is someone who gets into good trouble.”

What is it

Fundamentally, practicing allyship is about taking action to effect real, tangible change. Allies use their voices and relatively advantaged positions to educate fellow advantaged group members who may not be aware that they are unfairly benefitting from inequitable systems. Allies speak up for others, challenging and changing institutional policies that perpetuate inequality. Allies also use their access to resources and their social capital to support and advocate for people in less advantaged positions.

Source: [3 Myths About Allyship and What Research Says Instead](#) (NLI)

According to Amélie Lamont’s [Guide to Allyship](#), to be an ally is to:

1. Take on the struggle as your own.
2. Transfer the benefits of your privilege to those who lack it.
3. Amplify voices of the oppressed before your own.
4. Acknowledge that even though you feel pain, the conversation is not about you.
5. Stand up, even when you feel scared.
6. Own your mistakes and de-center yourself.
7. Understand that your education is up to you and no one else.

To “transfer the benefits of your privilege,” you need to understand what privilege is, and how we all have privileges that afford us special access and immunity that others may not have. Through allyship, we can begin to close that gap by strategically using our privileges to address inequity, advance racial justice, and bring about positive change.

Privilege, and in particular white privilege, should be viewed as a “built-in advantage, separate from one’s level of income or effort” (source: [Tolerance.org](#)). White privilege is defined as “unearned rights and benefits afforded white people in Western society because of the color of their skin.” The term was first coined in 1988 by Peggy McIntosh. White privilege is the idea that as a white person, you receive opportunities that others who may have the same or better qualifications and who are not white, would not have received (source: [Forbes](#)).

In other words, we need to practice allyship because we need people who face *fewer* risks to take on *more* risks to disrupt the harm caused by systemic racism. Allies are people with privilege who take on the burden of challenging the *status quo*, so those without privilege aren’t the only ones fighting the battle. In order for us to achieve equity, justice, and freedom for *everyone*, we need to work in solidarity and practice allyship against all forms of oppression. (Source: [Medium](#))

Why do it

As people managers, you play a critical role in moving toward an environment where: “diversity of thought, experience and approach is represented in all sectors of our education and research enterprise; all members of the campus community feel they belong and are supported regardless of their background, identity, or affiliations; and all members of the campus community have broad access to the opportunities and benefits of Stanford.” (Source: [Stanford Diversity Statement](#))

So working through the complexities of privilege and becoming a better ally directly supports our core values, and your role puts you in a key position to embrace these ideals in practical ways.

How to do it

STEP 1. USE THE LEAP FRAMEWORK TO BECOME A BETTER ALLY

Developed by Stephanie Creary, a professor at the Wharton School of Business, the LEAP Framework is designed to help people from different backgrounds build stronger relationships in the workplace, including standing up as allies to others. LEAP is based on the idea that noticing, connecting, valuing, and responding to others' needs results in more effective working relationships.

L

Listen and learn from your Black colleagues' experiences.

Instead of dampening your Black colleagues' voices and experiences, you can look for opportunities to listen to and learn about their experiences at work. Participating in town halls focused on race in the workplace is one good option. Attending your employee resource group (ERG) meetings for Black employees is another.

E

Engage with Black colleagues in racially diverse and more casual settings.

Since Black employees often feel like they [need to over-perform at work](#), gaining deeper insights into their experiences may be more feasible in non-evaluative settings where other Black employees are present. This is echoed in research which reveals that Black employees are [less likely to open up at out-of-the office social events](#) where they are in the minority but are more likely to share their experiences [when they are around other people of color](#). You may learn that Black colleagues are not getting the support that they need from their direct manager. Stanford's [Black Staff Alliance](#) is a great place to start. While the BSA and other ERGs/affinity groups are specifically designed to address the needs of Black employees, membership and related activities are typically [open to all employees from all racial backgrounds](#).

A

Ask Black employees about their work and their goals.

Inquiry can be a powerful tool to create connection. However, when done without care — for example, by focusing on perceptions of others' racial backgrounds, personal lives, or their physical appearance — inquiry [can feel overly invasive](#) and harmful to Black workers.

To improve the quality of your relationships with your Black colleagues, ask them about their actual work, including what they are hoping to accomplish, any concerns they have about doing that, and how you might be able to help them reach their vision.

P

Provide your Black colleagues with opportunities, suggestions, encouragement, and general support.

To support your Black colleagues, amplify their experiences – the good and the bad. Recommend them for highly visible opportunities. Introduce them to influential colleagues. Openly acknowledge their accomplishments to others. Reward them for doing DEI work alongside their formal work. And most, of all, share their more challenging experiences with those who have the capacity to create systemic change.

Source: [How to Be a Better Ally to Your Black Colleagues](#) (HBR)

STEP 2. PRACTICE THE STOPLIGHT METHOD

The Stoplight Method of Allyship is another helpful framework for you to keep in mind and practice.



LISTEN
when BIPOC are sharing their stories and experiences

AMPLIFY
the messages of BIPOC so their thoughts and ideas are heard in their own voice

SPEAK UP
when you witness injustice or have an opportunity to educate and/or advocate

Source: @OhHappyDani

How to do it *continued*

STEP 3: REMEMBER THAT ALLYSHIP MEANS ACTION

As a manager, small steps can have a big impact, and you can be an effective ally through your personal actions. Here are some of the roles you can take on as you act as an ally:

- **Become a Sponsor.** Champion someone from an underrepresented community to support their career growth. Recommend them for stretch assignments and learning opportunities. Share their career goals and aspirations with influencers in the organization. Advocate for more people of color and members of other underrepresented groups as speakers and panelists.
- **Serve as an Amplifier.** Ensure that marginalized voices are both heard and respected. When someone proposes a good idea, repeat it and give them credit. Invite members of underrepresented groups within the organization to speak at staff meetings or take on other visible roles.
- **Leverage your Influence or Power.** Use your power and influence to shine a light on peers from underrepresented groups. Advocate for them to be invited to career-building opportunities. Offer to introduce colleagues from underrepresented groups to influential people in your network.
- **Be an Upstander.** An upstander acts as the opposite of a bystander. If you witness wrongdoing, take action to combat it. Push back on offensive comments or jokes, even if no one within earshot might be offended or hurt. Always speak up if you witness behavior or speech that is degrading or offensive, and explain your stance so everyone is clear about why you're raising the issue. Take action if you see anyone being bullied or harassed.
- **Behave as a trusted confidant.** Create a safe space for members of underrepresented groups to express their fears, frustrations, and needs. Simply listening to their stories and trusting that they're being truthful creates a protective layer of support. Believe others' experiences. Don't assume something couldn't happen just because you haven't personally experienced it. If you are a manager, hold open "office hours" that encourage all of your team members to speak with you about issues that are troubling them.

STEP 4: REMEMBER THAT ALLYSHIP IS A JOURNEY

Allyship is a process and a journey. It starts with listening deeply, with empathy, and seeking to understand different perspectives. It depends on thoughtfully asking others about their lived experiences. It requires showing up: being present, engaged, and committed, all of which sets you up to speak up as an advocate, elevating and amplifying marginalized voices, and evangelizing your allyship with others.

As managers, we have the opportunity and the *responsibility* to be purposeful role models of effective allyship.

Think about ...

Questions to consider when engaging your team:

1. Consider an experience in which you saw discriminatory or inappropriate behavior and didn't step in or speak up. What held you back?
2. Think about your professional and personal networks. Are they "just like" you? Think about gaps and how a more diverse network could have a positive impact on your professional goals.
3. What microaggressions do you witness or experience on a regular basis?
4. How are we at Stanford set up to attract diverse candidates? What could be improved?
5. Some seemingly harmless phrases and words can actually be insulting, discriminatory and hurtful. Do you feel comfortable stepping up and asking that they be eliminated or replaced?
6. Are you now or have you been a mentor to someone with less experience? How about someone with less experience and a very different background, lifestyle, or identity than you?
7. What action will you take going forward to create a more inclusive workplace?

Source: [Better Allies Book Club Guide v2](#)

Talk about ...

Consider these ideas. Start by answering them for yourself, and then bring them to a team conversation for discussion:

Imagine your privilege is a heavy boot that keeps you from feeling when you're stepping on someone's feet or they are stepping on yours, while the oppressed people wear sandals.

- If someone wearing sandals says, "Ouch! You're stepping on my toes!" how do you react if you are the person wearing the boots?
- Continuing with the boot and sandal analogy, think about these statements from the perspective of boots and sandals:
 - "I can't believe you think I'm a toe-stepper! I'm a good person!" (**putting yourself in the center**)
 - "I don't mind when people step on my toes." (**denial that others' experiences are different from your own**)
 - "Some people don't even have toes, why aren't we talking about them instead?" (**derailing**)
 - "All toes matter!" (**refusal to center on those impacted**)
 - "I'd move my foot if you would ask me more nicely." (**tone policing**)
 - "Toes getting stepped on is a fact of life. You'll be better off when you accept that." (**denial that the problem is fixable**)
 - "You shouldn't have been walking around people with boots!" (**victim blaming**)
 - "I thought you wanted my help, but I guess not. I'll just go home." (**withdrawing**)
- How would you rewrite the sentences as an ally?

Source: [The Guide to Allyship](#)

Additional Resources



- [Better Allies – Everyday Actions to Create Inclusive, Engaging Workplaces](#) (book/newsletter by Karen Catlin, related [website](#) includes resources such as [Allies Inclusion Bingo Card](#))



- [Guide to Allyship](#) (open source guide created by Amélie Lamont and amélie.studio)
- [Allyship](#) (web resource from The Anti Oppression Network)
- [So You Call Yourself an Ally: 10 Things All 'Allies' Need to Know](#) (*Everyday Feminism* article)
- [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) (Peggy McIntosh)
- [Understand the Meaning and Power of Allyship](#) (Salesforce/Trailhead)
- [Focus on Allies](#) (Frame Shift Consulting/training materials by Valerie Aurora)
- <https://justiceinjune.org/> (and related [Washington Post](#) article)



- [Speaking of Psychology: The invisibility of white privilege with Brian Lowery, PhD](#) a podcast featuring Stanford GSB professor of organizational behavior and a social psychologist by training
- [That's Not How That Works on Apple Podcasts](#)



- [Three Ways to be a Better Ally in the Workplace](#) (TEDTalk by Melinda Epler)
- [Stanford Social Psychologist on How White Allies Should Respond To Racism](#) (KQED)