



Speaking Up: Some Tips for Allies

"I want to be supportive but I don't know how."

"I don't know how to break the silence."

"I'm worried I'll say the wrong thing."

Understanding the need to speak up.

Many LGBT people feel like they must separate their home life from their work or school life because they are not sure they will be supported if they come out. Can you imagine what that would be like? No family photo on your desk. Evasive responses to questions like, "What did you do over the weekend?" Excuse after excuse for why you can't attend work parties. Often times LGBT people are looking to their co-workers and fellow students to show signs of support so they know it is an LGBT friendly environment.

Using the correct words shows respect.

Remember being gay is not a preference, a choice or an "alternative lifestyle." It's a sexual orientation. The only choice is whether or not to live openly and honestly.

Use gender neutral words whenever possible. For example: "Is there someone special you would like to bring to the party?"

Remember not to label people. Some terms like "homosexual," "tranny" and "queer" can be highly offensive to people.

Improve your knowledge of LGBT culture by reading, going to films or attending diversity courses.

Learning how to speak up.

Always assume there is an LGBT person or someone who cares about an LGBT person in the room.

Always speak up, even if the person making the comment is an LGBT person. Our silence can be interpreted as consent.

Personalize your comment. Say "I don't find that funny" or "that's not ok with me."

Don't blame. Be clear. Don't back down.

Practice. Practice. Practice. It can be scary at first, but speaking up is so important. The more you do it the easier it gets. Once you start speaking up you'll be surprised at how many of your coworkers/fellow students support you.

** Portions of this flier came from the Anyone Can Be An Ally video with Brian McNaught*

"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change the yourself." -Andy Warhol