



How To Be An Effective Ally

Dr. Meg Warren (she/her), Associate Professor, Western Washington University

Who is an ally?

“A member of the ‘dominant’ or ‘majority’ group who works to end oppression in their personal and professional life through support of, and as an advocate for, the oppressed population” (Washington & Evans, 1991)

A member of a dominant group who leverages their strengths to reduce the suffering and support the professional and personal wellbeing of marginalized group members

(Warren & Bordoloi, 2021; Warren, Bordoloi, & Warren, 2021; Warren, Sekhon, & Waldrop, 2022; Warren & Warren, 2021)



Experiences of Exclusion that Call for Allyship

- Target of overt or covert bias
- Achievements go unnoticed
- Don't receive due credit
- Forced to make 'impossible choices'
- Feel isolated

When you think of allyship, what sorts of actions come to mind?

What acts have you witnessed allies do?



Allyship Strategies

- Confronting Bias

“That’s a little sexist, don’t you think?”



Allyship Strategies

- Confronting Bias
- Highlighting Strengths and Achievements

“Lakeisha really goes the extra mile to show how our work serves clients’ needs. On the last project, she did hours of homework learning about the needs of a potential client even before the first meeting. They were so impressed, they hired us right away.”



Allyship Strategies

- Confronting Bias
- Highlighting Strengths
- Voicing Support

“Linda, these are such interesting and novel ideas. Why don’t we all give these ideas some more careful thought and discuss each one.”



Allyship Strategies

- Confronting Bias
- Highlighting Strengths
- Voicing Support
- Checking in

“That must have hurt! Are you ok?”

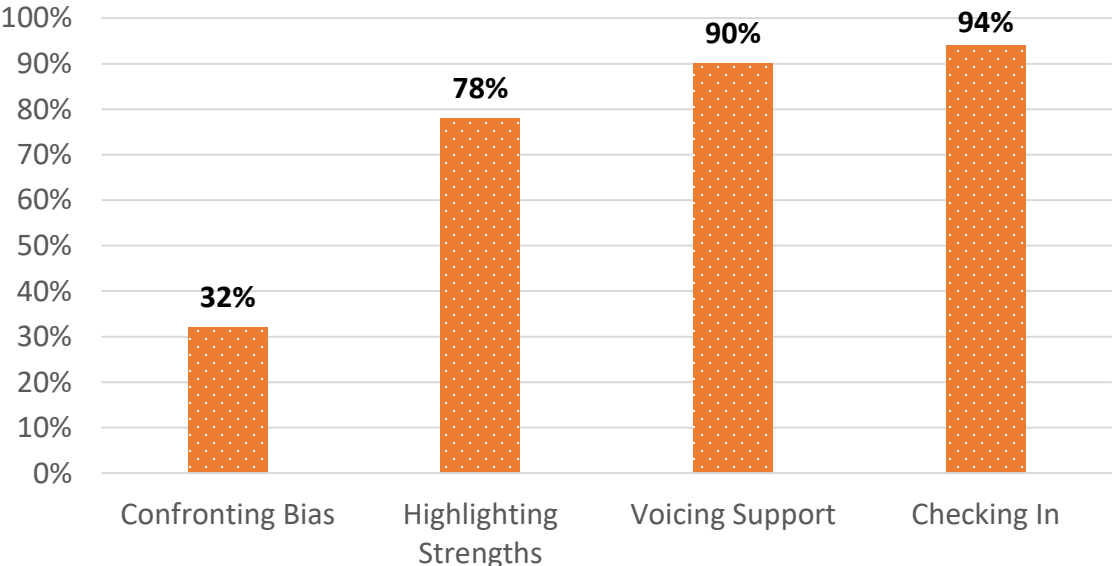




How comfortable do you feel enacting these allyship strategies?

~3850 out of ~4600 men from 97 countries valued gender equality (i.e., 84%)

Comfortable Enacting the Allyship Strategy



A network diagram consisting of several brass pins of varying heights on a dark, textured surface. Thin, light-colored string is stretched between the pins, creating a web of connections. The central pin is the tallest and has the most connections, radiating outwards to other pins of varying heights. The background is a dark, slightly blurred blue-grey color.

Group Discussion: Mini-Case Scenarios

Scenario 1

At a meeting, a female colleague is attempting to recruit some of the senior male colleagues to join a project. You notice a couple of male colleagues being uncharacteristically resistant, talking over her, and throwing up unnecessary and irrelevant complications to derail her.

Discussion questions:

What would you do to be an effective ally?

If you were the woman in this situation, what would you hope an ally would do?

Scenario 2

In a three-way conversation, a male colleague dismisses a professional topic that a queer colleague cares deeply about, in effect calling their work useless - an opinion you do not share. The queer colleague ends the conversation and leaves abruptly.

Discussion questions:

What would you do to be an effective ally?

If you were the queer person in this situation, what would you hope an ally would do?

Scenario 3

A female colleague feels that the annual evaluation process in her department is constructed in a way that is unfair to her. She had been encouraged by her supervisor to take on a number of obligations, many related to promoting women in STEM, and then those activities were not counted towards her performance evaluation.

Discussion questions:

What would you do to be an effective ally?

If you were the woman in this situation, what would you hope an ally would do?

Scenario 4

A presumed able-bodied male student disrespects one of your female colleagues in class because of her disability. You were not present for the action. The colleague comes to you after the incident and is infuriated by what has transpired. You are infuriated yourself after hearing her story.

Discussion questions:

What would you do to be an effective ally?

If you were the woman in this situation, what would you hope an ally would do?

Optional

- If you are witnessing a situation at work and you would like feedback around how you can be a better ally, please feel free to discuss this with your group.
- If you are experiencing a situation at work where you would like to be allied with, and would like feedback on how you can ask for support from allies, please feel free to discuss this with your group.

You do not need to share these out with the whole room later!

Sustainable allyship

- Vast majority of individuals already possess allyship intentions
 - Removing barriers to sustainable allyship
 - Organizational – time pressure, lack of training
 - Interpersonal – lack of trust, cross-group learning, forgiveness
 - Individual – Lack of fit with personality, strengths
- (Warren, Warren, Bock, & Smith, 2022)
- Allyship is a marathon!



Action Steps: Becoming an Effective Ally

1. Consider one meaningful yet achievable action you want to take to be an effective ally when you get back to your workplace
2. Imagine one positive outcome that can result from this action
3. Anticipate one possible barrier that might hinder your ability to implement this action
4. Create a plan to overcome this barrier



Thank you!

For additional resources, research papers, brief articles, and videos, please visit:

www.MegWarren.com

Email: meg@megwarren.com