

大成 DENTONS

Allyship Playbook

Inclusion & Diversity

Grow | Protect | Operate | Finance



In a world where discrimination and unequal treatment surround us, it takes courage, hard work and the collective commitment of each and every one of us to make a real difference.

— Elliott Portnoy, Global CEO



Allyship is about making a choice to use your power to pull others up, not to push others down. It means taking action to support others, promote equity and open doors and drive greater inclusion and better outcomes for everyone.

— Kate Broer, Global Inclusion and Diversity Officer

Aim of Allyship Playbook

The Allyship Playbook serves as a guide to all of us in our individual and shared allyship journeys. Featuring the experiences and perspectives of Dentons colleagues from around the world, the Allyship Playbook provides insights on the importance of allyship; the role of allyship as part of the broader inclusion, diversity and equity agenda; and includes practical advice and guidance on how to be an effective ally.

We embrace hard truths and welcome difficult conversations.

We listen to understand and connect.

We acknowledge and learn from our mistakes, and when it is our turn, we speak with passion.

When we value different perspectives and work together, we are better.

— Dentons Courage Commitment



As a member of a majority group, I hadn't previously felt the ability to be engaged or, in some ways, entitled, to be part of this kind of discussion. The presence of an inclusive policy isn't enough to achieve an organization's goals or really make a difference. I've seen evidence that diversity increases productivity, engagement and wellbeing, and to me it is that, in addition to our collective happiness, that should be the driving force behind effecting real change.

– Senior associate, White, man, UK

Chapter 1

Inclusion, Diversity and Allyship

Ultimately, allyship – between and amongst colleagues – forms the foundation of inclusion, diversity and equity.

I. DIVERSITY

“Diversity” is all of the unique characteristics, qualities and traits that make us who we are. This can include our physical characteristics – our gender, our age, our race or ethnicity. But of course, we are each much more than those things. Who we are is also other personal characteristics like our religion, our gender identity, our sexual orientation, our geographic location, our educational background, work experience, marital status, or our status as parents or caregivers and so on. We are also each affected by global dimensions and dynamics including the official languages spoken where we live and work, our ability to function in those languages and the technology around us and our ability to use it.

When we start to look all around us, we begin to see a very complex picture of what diversity means. When we consider all of these characteristics, traits and identities that overlap and intersect in each of us, we quickly realize that none of us is defined by a single characteristic, trait or identity and none of our identities defines us more than another.

A word cloud of diversity-related terms. The words are arranged in a cluster, with 'Race' being the largest and most prominent word in the center. Other large words include 'Gender', 'LGBT+', 'Experience', and 'Nationality'. Smaller words include 'Age', 'Faith', 'Ethnicity', 'Disability', 'Indigeneity', 'Religion', 'Industry', 'Intersectionality', and 'Years of experience'. The words are in various shades of teal and green.

Gender Years of experience
Intersectionality
Age Race Religion
Faith Industry Experience
Ethnicity LGBT+ Nationality
Disability Lived Experience
Indigeneity

We need to create diverse teams, not just in the sense of race or gender, but also diversity of skills. Often just by having a different background or a different skill set, we approach a problem differently. That doesn't mean that we go on experimental journeys of putting random people into teams; it must be thought out. Truly the smartest person in the room is indeed the room.

– Asian, man, partner, Africa Region

II. INCLUSION

“Inclusion” is about creating an environment and culture where we strive for equity and we respect, accept and value the unique characteristics, differences and perspectives each of us brings. It is also about the behaviors each of us practice that make everyone feel welcome and allow each of us to contribute to our fullest capability. Respect is the foundation of inclusion.

For years I thought inclusion and diversity was “just another area” of an organization. But, what I’ve realized is that this whole concept of being good allies is crucial if you want to have real, long-lasting and effective change in your organization. It is incumbent on everybody to take a role. If you don’t, then you just have a few people trying to push a certain message, and that doesn’t create change. Change has to involve everybody.

– White, man, partner, Canada

Communication
Accountability Understanding
Learning
Empathy
Support
Respect
Awareness
Collaboration

III. ALLYSHIP

Broadly speaking, an “ally” is a member of a social group that enjoys a privilege of some kind and works to end the marginalization of others through self-education and action-oriented support. “Allyship” is the behavior associated with being an ally. Being an ally, and practicing allyship, are foundational to furthering inclusion and diversity in your teams and across your organization.

Allyship is about action. Allies leave passivity at the door and stand up and speak up and out for the benefit of others.

Being an ally is not always easy. It can require hard work, dedication and a willingness to embrace discomfort. However, through a collective commitment to allyship, where everyone pledges to be an ally, the occasions for discomfort diminish.

Allyship also requires a sense of humility. An ally recognizes they are on a continuous journey and does not claim to “know it all.” They understand that there is always more that they can learn and do.

Effective allyship is about taking action alongside others to bring about positive change for individuals, for the community, and for society as a whole.

Importantly, allies are NOT saviors – saviors come to dominate, allies come to participate.

Being an ally requires more than just a sincere belief that a marginalized person or marginalized community shouldn't be treated differently; it actually involves action, not just being a spectator. Desmond Tutu has a quote that says, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” That has always resonated with me in being an ally.

– Black, woman, partner, US

We all enjoy some degree or dimensions of privilege. We need to resist the temptation to use that privilege to be a “savior”. There is a big difference between an ally and a savior – allies come to listen, saviors come to talk; allies actively participate, saviors come to dominate; allies join in the conversation and saviors seek to control the conversation. An ally knows it is not about them, it is about the community. We need to use our privilege to listen, understand and work alongside [under-represented groups] as allies for inclusion.

– White, man, straight, able-bodied, senior partner, Global Team

When we talk about allies, allyship, and the choice to act as an ally, we’re talking about people who choose to use their power to pull others up, not to push others down.

– White, woman, partner, Global Team

Chapter 2

Who Needs Allies, and Why?

Allyship is inextricably bound to concepts of privilege, power, oppression and marginalization. To understand who needs allies, and why we need them, it is important to first have a basic understanding of these concepts.

I. PRIVILEGE

“Privilege” is an unearned advantage given by society to some people, but not all. We can also think of “privilege” as a “benefit” or “advantage.” Privilege is something that people have that comes to them as a result of good luck or good fortune which gives them an advantage in life (e.g. being born into a wealthy, majority group family). Privilege is not something we have much control over. It cannot be assigned to someone else and it cannot be taken away. Privilege does not make anyone a bad person; and no one should feel badly about the privileges they enjoy. However, allies reflect on the privileges they may have, recognize their privilege and use it to support others who may enjoy fewer privileges in society.

II. OPPRESSION

“Oppression” is the systemic, pervasive inequality that is present throughout society that benefits people with more privilege and harms those with fewer privileges. Oppression leads to marginalization.

III. MARGINALIZATION

“Marginalization” is the process by which individuals or groups are excluded from full participation in social, economic and political life. “Marginalized people (or groups)” are people or groups who do not enjoy the same privileges as the rest of society. “Marginalized groups” can also be referred to as “non-majority groups”, “under-represented groups,” or “equity-seeking” or “equity-deserving” groups.

Sources of Privilege or Advantage

- ☒ Part of the dominant ethnic and/or racial group
- ☒ Male
- ☒ Masculine
- ☒ Cisgender (your gender identity is the same as the sex assigned to you at birth)
- ☒ Straight
- ☒ Able-bodied
- ☒ A legal resident or citizen where you live
- ☒ Speak the dominant language, especially with high-status accent
- ☒ Neither “too young” nor “too old”
- ☒ Certain height/size/shape
- ☒ Not a mother/primary parent
- ☒ Not a caregiver
- ☒ From an upper or middle class family

With thanks to @frameshiftllc

We need to think about the people that are fundamentally different from us in terms of privilege – the people who have not all had the opportunities that we have had in terms of education, family support, place of birth, language, genetics, etc.

– Afro-Caribbean, man, business services professional, Europe Region

IV. POWER

“Power” is the ability to control circumstances or access to resources or privileges. When we have fewer privileges, we also have less power.

Some of us, through no fault of our own, enjoy fewer privileges than others in our society. This may be because of our gender, the social status of the family we are born into, the color of our skin, our sexual orientation or because we do not speak the dominant language where we live as our first language.

Those who belong to marginalized or under-represented groups may enjoy fewer privileges than others and have less power as a result. They often have less ability to control the circumstances around them, less ability to access resources, and often are more in need of allyship than others.

Work in solidarity with people. Use your privilege for good; use your privilege to help marginalized communities. The best way to bolster your allyship skills is to build relationships with people from marginalized communities. Knowing how to take actions and what actions to take are a product of listening and trying to understand the best way that you can use your privilege to work on behalf of, with, and for marginalized communities. Sometimes it can be difficult or awkward, but being an ally means standing up even when it's hard.

– Black, woman, partner, US



Sources of Power and/or Privilege

- ☒ Educated.
- ☒ Technically experienced.
- ☒ Wealthy (compared to peers).
- ☒ Management position.
- ☒ Professor, teacher, supervisor, teaching assistant, etc.
- ☒ Parent or family leader.
- ☒ Any position in a hierarchy that is not the bottom of the hierarchy.
- ☒ Widely recognized as an expert.
- ☒ Large audience (social media following, fans, etc.).
- ☒ Access to media (reporters, TV shows, editors, etc.).
- ☒ Respected by powerful people.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

With thanks to @frameshiftllc

When people from marginalized groups work to make change to benefit marginalized groups within organizations, they may not only encounter more difficulty, but they are often discouraged in their efforts.

For all the talk about how important diversity is within organizations, white and male executives aren't rewarded, career-wise, for engaging in diversity-valuing behavior, and nonwhite and female executives actually get punished for it. The challenge of creating equality should not be placed on the shoulders of individuals who are at greater risk of being crushed by the weight of this goal.

– Stefanie K. Johnson and David R. Hekman, March 23, 2016,
Women and Minorities are Penalized for Promoting Diversity,
Harvard Business Review

Case Study on Power and Marginalization

A study by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) found that women leaders are penalized if they demonstrate diversity-valuing behaviors in the workplace.¹ Analyzing 360-degree data collected from executive leaders' colleagues, CCL found that women leaders demonstrating diversity-valuing behaviors received lower competency and performance ratings than their male counterparts whose competency and performance ratings were not affected if they advocated for greater diversity in their organization.²

Researchers from CCL asked two groups of working adults to evaluate the competency of a hiring manager who was interviewing candidates for a senior position. One group was told by researchers that the hiring manager chose a white male candidate because he "had the highest scores." The other group was told that the hiring manager chose a woman because she "had the highest scores and hiring her would increase the racial and gender balance of the leadership team."³

When the study's participants were told the hiring manager was a man, his competency ratings were not affected by his decision to hire the candidate if he was depicted as motivated by "increasing the racial and gender balance of the leadership team" (i.e. displaying diversity-valuing behavior). When the hiring manager was depicted as a woman who exhibited the same diversity-valuing behavior, her competency rating dropped drastically. As CCL puts it, "There seemed to be a perception that when a woman advocated for another woman, she was somehow showing favoritism," and she was viewed negatively for it.⁴

This case study demonstrates why *allies* need to play a leading role.

Impact of diversity-valuing behavior on competency ratings	Woman Man	
	Woman	Man
• Leaders who openly value diversity in the workplace	↓	↑
• Individuals who promote racial and gender balance on team	↓	↔

"Women pay a price for Promoting Other Women." Center for Creative Leadership.

1 Zhao, S., Foo, M-D. 2016. *Queen Bee Syndrome: the real reason women do not promote women*. Center for Creative Leadership.

2 Ibid.

3 Center for Creative Leadership. *Women Pay a Price for Promoting Other Women*.

4 Ibid.

You might hear someone from a marginalized group decline to participate in or lead an inclusion and diversity discussion or initiative. If you dig further and ask for an explanation for their reluctance, they may tell you that they are concerned that their participation will distract from their competence in their professional role.

– White, woman, partner, Global Team

I was very much of the view that, ‘I’m a lawyer first,’ and I would like to be regarded for being good at my job, irrespective of the fact that I happen to be Asian and female.

– Asian, woman, partner, UK

Because people from marginalized or under-represented groups are often penalized for engaging in diversity-valuing behaviors, it is even more important for people from majority groups – that is, groups that enjoy more privilege and power in society – to act as allies and actively work to end the marginalization of those who have fewer privileges and power.

V. INTERSECTIONALITY

Privilege and marginalization exist on a continuum. Belonging to a marginalized or under-represented group does not automatically preclude you from enjoying privileges. Each of us has multiple identities that intersect and interact with one another.

Sometimes we may have identities that fall within more than one marginalized group. For example, we may be a woman and have a disability. Where an individual has overlapping identities like this, this is called “intersectionality.” The term was originally coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw.

People belonging to a marginalized group because of one aspect of their identity (e.g. they are a racial or ethnic minority), may still enjoy privileges when it comes to a different part of their identity (e.g. they are heterosexual).

Intersectionality:

the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.

[Kimberlé] Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality, the idea that when it comes to thinking about how inequalities persist, categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct.

— Adia Harvey Wingfield

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Belonging to an under-represented, non-majority or marginalized group does not deny one the ability to act. Looking at the whole person, an individual may hold other privileges and power that they can use to be an ally to others and make change, even if only in small ways.

There are parts of my identity where I enjoy privilege: I am cisgender, I am heterosexual, I speak the dominant language, I am in good health, I have a professional license and I am highly educated. But I am also a Black woman, and that's an area where I don't necessarily enjoy privilege. I can be an ally using the privileges that I have, and also need allies for the areas where I do not enjoy privileges.

– Black, woman, partner, US

"I was born in India to a family that was economically well-off. I had private school education and was surrounded by people who looked like me for 23 years of my life. I went to law school in India and I became a lawyer there, never experiencing any kind of a situation where I was the minority. I thought I was one of the most privileged people there could be. And then I moved to Canada at the age of 23, and all of a sudden, my world view shifted because now I was not part of the majority, I was part of the minority. I also started work, which brings its own challenges of being a woman in the workplace. And now, I had an accent. I spoke English since I was born, but I spoke it the way an Indian person would speak it, I didn't have an accent that a North American person would have. So, I have learned to appreciate some of the differences that anyone would have who isn't in a majority group and developed my own sense of privilege that I have now. Your environment sometimes makes you reflect on what privilege/s you have and how you can use them. I thought I had way more privilege, then I thought I had less, then I realized that the privileges I do have, I can use them."

– South Asian, woman, partner, Canada

Reflecting on your identity, the environment in which you find yourself, what that means in terms of the privileges you do (or do not) enjoy, and how you might be able to use your privilege to effect change, form the cornerstones of the allyship journey. An ally does not necessarily have to be from a majority group, but they do have to enjoy some privilege—however small—and be willing and able to help others who might have even fewer privileges.

Because privilege, power and marginalization are fluid, over the course of our lives we may find that at certain times, we need allies, while at other times, we may not need them as much. To advocate for one's own inclusion and advancement, if and when one belongs to a marginalized group, is especially difficult. For this reason, allies are particularly important; they play an enormous role in bringing about positive societal change.

Takeaways

- On your allyship journey:
 - Reflect on your identity and the environment in which you find yourself;
 - Understand the privileges you do (or do not) enjoy;
 - Learn how you can use your privilege to effect change; and
 - Take action to further change.
- An ally does not necessarily have to be from a majority group, but they do have to enjoy some privilege—however small—and be willing and able to help others.
- Privilege, power and marginalization are fluid. Over the course of our lives we may find that our need for allies changes over time.
- Advocating for one's own inclusion and advancement as a member of a marginalized group is especially difficult. This is why allies are so important.
- Allies play an enormous role in bringing about positive, societal change because those who are oppressed or marginalized are unlikely to be able to do it alone.

Questions to Ponder

Explore Your Own Privilege

- What social identities (race/ethnicity, class, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion etc.) of yours hold privilege?
- How do you currently use your privilege? Who benefits?
- Are you willing to use your privilege to educate others who **also** have your same privilege/s but are unaware of it?
- What's your first memory of your privilege? Is it easy for you to recognize your privilege in everyday situations?

With thanks to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

Chapter 3

Allyship Motivators

As we have seen in the previous section, social justice is a powerful motivator for allyship. There are also many other good reasons and motivators for allyship including: (1) a strong sense of fair play; (2) it makes for a better workplace and is good for business; and (3) it matters to our clients too. None of these motivators is mutually exclusive and most people will find they are motivated allies for a variety of different and overlapping reasons.

I. FAIR PLAY

A strong sense of equity and fair play can be a powerful allyship motivator. People with a strong sense of fair play are highly attuned to issues of fairness or unfairness, or equity and inequity, in the world. Higher awareness of bias and inequity is associated with a strong sense of fair play, and allows us to more easily recognize instances of inequity or inequality in the world around us.⁵ An ingrained altruistic sense of wanting everyone to be treated fairly can motivate those who have a strong sense of fairness to act when they witness unfairness or inequality. That is allyship.

One's sense of fair play is activated through witnessing instances of inequity or inequality. Understanding systems of oppression and marginalization and being able to recognize inequities is an important part of developing a sense of fair play. Through self-education, learning from others and engaging in self-reflection, our sense of fair play can be enhanced to make us better allies through greater awareness.

5 Prime, J., Moss-Racusin, C., 2009. *Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: what change agents need to know*. Catalyst.

II. “THE BUSINESS CASE” – BETTER WORKPLACE AND GOOD FOR BUSINESS

In an organizational context, “the business case” for greater inclusion and diversity refers to the business benefit that is derived from having greater inclusion and diversity in the workplace, both of which can be activated by and through allyship. Allyship can empower us to realize tangible business outcomes. Study after study has shown that more diverse organizations perform better: they better understand their target audiences; they are better at retaining talent; they are more productive; they are more creative and more innovative; they exhibit enhanced decision-making; and they manage risk better. Organizations that are more diverse also have better reputations, drive better financial performance and are more profitable. These are just some of the benefits that greater diversity, properly enabled through inclusion and allyship, can bring.

Diverse companies are more likely to financially outperform their peers

Difference in likelihood of outperformance of 1st vs 4th quartile

 Gender



15%

2014



21%

2017



25%

2019



Ethnicity



35%

2014



33%

2017



36%

2019

Hunt, V., Dixon-Fyle, S., Prince, S., Dolan, K. 2020. *Diversity Wins: how inclusion matters*. McKinsey.

Many reports say that more diverse companies perform better. I know intuitively that is true, but I broke that reasoning down a bit to help me understand the “how,” the “why,” and the result. And I would say that if you have a diverse body of persons together, they tend to think better. I believe that if you think better, your decision-making process is improved, and if you have a better decision-making process, you will have a better outcome.

– White, woman, partner, Europe Region

III. THE CLIENT EQUATION

More diverse teams drive greater client happiness.

Client motivators for greater inclusion, diversity and equity can be as varied and wide-ranging as the motivators that drive each of us to engage. Clients may be motivated by a personal commitment to social justice or equity, shareholder interests, other stakeholder interests like those of investors or their employees, or simply by the knowledge that more diverse teams generate better solutions and outcomes for them.

Regardless of a client's specific motivation, what we do know is that more diverse teams are better performers and drive higher client satisfaction.

BENEFITS OF DIVERSE TEAMS



Improved overall
performance



Better
value



Better
relationships



Improved
efficiency



More
responsive



More
commercial

Takeaways

- People can be motivated allies for different and overlapping reasons.
- Some motivators for allyship include:
 - a sense of fair play;
 - better for business;
 - client equation.
- “Fair play”: having an ingrained altruistic sense of fair treatment for all.
- “Better for business”: better financial performance and a better reputation in the market.
- “Client equation”: clients and customers are increasingly demanding that the organizations they work with provide them with diverse and inclusive client teams.

Questions to Ponder

- What motivator for allyship resonates with you the most? Why?
- What motivates you to be an ally in the workplace?
- Can you think of a time when you witnessed a tangible business outcome resulting from a diverse and inclusive team?
- Have you experienced client requests for information about inclusion and diversity efforts? What questions did the client ask?

Chapter 4

The Client Imperative

Without a doubt, inclusion, diversity and allyship are the right thing to do and we have a shared moral imperative to support our colleagues and team members at our organization and to speak up and take action when we witness unacceptable behavior.

We also need excellent talent and an engaged team to provide great client service and solutions. A more inclusive culture where everyone feels supported and valued contributes to how well we are able to do our jobs, work together and, ultimately, respond to the needs of our clients and other stakeholders.

**Why am I not bringing my unedited self to work?
Why am I keeping back about 30% of the real me?
Doesn't everybody deserve to be their authentic selves
at work? Doesn't the Firm deserve to tap into that?
Maybe in that 30% that I am keeping back, there is
that spark of a conversation or idea that leads to the
development of a new product or a safe space for
somebody else.**

– Black, woman, senior business services professional, Africa Region

Clients also expect this of us. Many clients may ask questions about what we are doing to advance inclusion and diversity and many have specific inclusion and diversity requirements.

Client motivators for these questions can be, and are, as varied as what motivates each of us. As discussed in the previous chapter, client motivators for inclusion and diversity might include a personal or organizational commitment to equity, social justice and a “right thing to do” mindset. Or they might have motivated by and have an expectation that we invest in our people to set them up for success so that they can feel confident working with the teams we provide them.

Clients are people, just like us. They have their own personal interests in inclusion and diversity. Their interest could be driven by their own experiences, their own personal commitment to social justice or the interest of their business. All of these things influence them, just like us. Clients are business leaders and have a responsibility to every one of their shareholders; they are being watched and they’re under scrutiny. So we have the opportunity, I believe the obligation, to be allies outside of our organization as well as inside the organization. We share accountability and we work together to make a difference.

– White, woman, senior counsel and former general counsel, US

We need to fully engage ourselves and embrace the reasoning behind why inclusion matters. We should do so because it’s the right thing to do and it increases our productivity and drives innovation. But more important than anything, it will create a better culture where we treat each other with more respect and where we ultimately achieve more.

– White, man, senior associate, UK

Clients and other stakeholders also expect us to innovate, develop new ways of working and find winning solutions for their complex problems. Diversity of skillsets, backgrounds and lived experiences brings the different perspectives and tools we need to deliver on these expectations. Inclusion and allyship are the keys to unlocking the power that diversity brings by empowering everyone to speak up, share their ideas and invite full participation that allows everyone to contribute to the conversation in a meaningful way.

What we know is that more diverse and inclusive teams are more engaged, more innovative, and they deliver better solutions and outcomes for our clients. Our clients know this, and they're committed to holding us accountable for delivering more diverse talent on their matters.

– Elliott Portnoy, Global CEO

THE EQUATION

More diverse teams...



Through their questions and expectations of us, clients are also giving us the opportunity to engage in allyship with them to advance inclusion and diversity. Through a shared commitment, collaboration and partnership with them to advance inclusion, diversity and equity, we have the opportunity to build deeper and more meaningful relationships and connections, deliver better results in our work and drive positive change together.

We're prioritizing inclusion and diversity because it's the right thing to do, not just because clients are asking for it. But, clients are asking for it. So for us, it can be a real differentiator in our relationship and relevance to the client.

– White, man, regional CEO, New Zealand

Takeaways

- Inclusion, diversity and allyship are “the right thing to do” and there is a strong client imperative to further inclusion, diversity and allyship.
- Clients and other stakeholders expect us to find innovative solutions for their complex problems. Diverse and inclusive teams and diversity of thought and perspectives helps us deliver on these expectations.
- Clients may also have specific inclusion and diversity requirements of our organization; they hold us accountable for driving inclusion, diversity and equity across our organization.
- Allyship is important in building, maintaining and growing client relationships, not just for business, but because clients share an interest in and commit to doing the right thing and advancing greater equity and inclusion.

Questions to Ponder

- Can you think of your own clients or stakeholders who would be interested in having a discussion about inclusion, diversity and allyship, not only in the context of your organization, but more broadly?
- Do you feel comfortable being the way you would like to be at work? Why or why not?
- Reflect on your team dynamics. What is the impact on your team’s work output when all your team members feel valued and like they belong?

Chapter 5

How To Be an Ally


Definition of an ally:

An ally is a person that enjoys a privilege of some kind and acts alongside others to end marginalization through self-education and action-oriented support.

I. SELF-EDUCATION

Self-education is a critical component of allyship. True allies understand that their journey is never complete. They consistently work to improve themselves, find new ways to reflect on their privilege, and take the time to learn about groups of people different from themselves. An ally understands that it is not someone else's job to educate them about the marginalization of others. Rather, an ally educates themselves. This does not mean that an ally cannot engage directly with a member of a marginalized group to learn more about their personal experience or engage in a discussion about what they may have read or learned in their own self-education process. However, an ally should not assume nor expect an individual who happens to be a member of a marginalized group to educate them.

Self-education can sometimes be a difficult and uncomfortable process as we engage and learn about the experiences of others, sometimes for the first time. You may experience a number of emotions on your self-education journey including discomfort or guilt. An ally does not dwell on these feelings but converts them into action aimed at ending marginalization, inequity and injustice.



I decided to re-educate myself, and I did that by engaging in active and sometimes uncomfortable conversations with friends and family, while reading absolutely everything I could. That process allowed me to reflect on my perceptions of racism and privilege and the importance of taking action right now. As a result, I am committed to being an ally and moving this agenda forward.

– White, man, senior associate, UK

"I started from a place of ignorance. I grew up with a lot of different friends from different backgrounds, and I never really thought too much about some of the marginalized groups and racism. I thought that as long as I loved all people equally, that was enough, and I thought most people felt the same way. So, I was sort of living in a bubble for the first years of my life. And then came the next phase of my journey: where I saw some terrible acts of racism and prejudice and injustice that were shocking to me. I thought that in 2020, surely this cannot be what people are thinking and doing. What was more surprising is that as the dialogue continued, I talked to my friends who come from different backgrounds and they said that they had experienced some of these same situations. So, the second phase of my allyship journey was a realization. The third phase for me was shame: thinking to myself that I am in a position of privilege and power in some instances, being a white male. My ignorance to what was going on around me sort of allowed some of these events to actually take place and I felt terrible about it—particularly for the people who were in my inner circle who were experiencing this and I was not doing a lot about it. So, I went through an ignorance phase, a realization phase and a shame phase. Then I moved to a fear phase, where I thought, "I know this stuff is going on, but I haven't been involved in diversity and inclusion, nor read all the literature." I was completely out of my comfort zone. I shifted to a point where I saw how much pain was happening, and the last thing I wanted to do was to add more pain. So, I sort of just shut down and thought that, clearly, I don't know what I'm doing. I thought maybe we should just pass on this mantle of diversity and inclusion to people who are in a far better position than I am to be able to move this forward.

The part of the journey I'm in now though is a more enlightened phase. When I say "enlightened," it has nothing to do with any kind of intellect on my part. I mean that I recognize there's millions of people out there that are feeling the same shame, anxiety, fear and confusion that I did, and if you don't harness those emotions and actually try to make a difference, then nothing's really going to change."

– White, man, partner, Canada

II. ACTION

While self-education is an important part of allyship, education on its own does not make you an ally. As we explored in the previous chapter, allyship is all about taking action. Allyship actions can be big or small. Often it is small gestures repeated over time that make the biggest difference. This next section will focus on the practical actions you can take in your day-to-day work life to be an ally in your team and to your colleagues.

All of us have a role to play, and we each have the power to take action. For those of us who are in a majority group – whether defined by race, ethnicity, gender, or by virtue of some other personal characteristic – we have a particular responsibility to ensure that people from under-represented groups are included, a responsibility to drive positive change by speaking up, and more importantly, to speak out against discrimination and in support of inclusion and diversity.

– Elliott Portnoy, Global CEO

Whilst it's important to have a diversity quota or target, an inclusive policy is not enough to change a day-to-day experience for an individual in an organization. To do that, we need to fully engage ourselves and embrace the reasoning behind why inclusion matters. It will create a better culture where we treat each other with more respect and where we ultimately achieve more.

– White, man, senior associate, UK

III. SUPPORTING OTHERS

Allyship is all about supporting others. But how can we best go about supporting others in our teams and at our organization more generally?

Allyship support can be broken down into three “types” of actions:

1. giving others ample **airtime**;
2. **amplifying others’ voices**; and
3. **advocating on behalf of others**.

Everyone can practice these allyship actions, no matter your role or position.

TOP TIPS

Airtime



Focus on all our people

Make I&D a regular agenda item

Give everyone speaking time

Diversify teams

Amplification



Use your voice to acknowledge and promote others’ ideas

Talk about the good work of others publicly

Put others in the spotlight and give them the chance to shine

Repeat + summarize what others have said – give credit

Advocacy



Make an effort to reduce status differences

Be a mentor and sponsor

Actively ask for different viewpoints

Practice empathy – think what it feels like to be someone else

1. Airtime

An ally gives ample airtime to others. They give others the chance to speak and voice their thoughts, opinions, worries and successes. The simplest way to do this is to **listen more, and talk less**. To facilitate conversation, you can ask open-ended questions of others, resist the urge to fill “awkward silences” and actively ask for others’ opinions or viewpoints. Stay focused on the individual speaking, avoid multi-tasking, and ask follow-up, clarifying questions if you are uncertain about what is being said.

Airtime



Focus on all
our people

Make I&D
a regular
agenda item

Give
everyone
speaking
time

Diversify
teams

I’m a real champion of listening more and talking less. I think it’s really important to take the time to listen. Not to think about what you’re going to say next, but to really listen to that person in front of you.

– White, woman, partner, UK

Some of us may be more comfortable voicing our thoughts than others. Giving someone the opportunity to speak does not mean waiting for someone to raise their hand. It is important to **actively invite and ask for people's participation and contributions**. An ally also understands that not everyone always wants, or feels the need, to speak. An ally does not command someone to speak. The key is to offer people opportunities to speak; it is up to each person whether they wish to take those opportunities.

I consciously keep track of whether everyone in the meeting has had a chance to speak. There's always people that are more prepared to speak out than others, but I invite all individuals to share their viewpoints. What I've introduced both with my clients and within my own teams is that, in each meeting, have one individual – it can be either a junior or senior person, anyone can be chosen—for that meeting who has the responsibility to make sure everyone has the opportunity to speak and to contribute.

– White, woman, partner, UK

Putting skills into action

You may have observed that in group settings, there are often individuals who dominate the conversation. An ally recognizes this and does their best to facilitate dialogue between and amongst all group members who wish to speak. They may do this using a number of different techniques.

If you are leading a meeting, you naturally have a great deal of influence in the meeting dynamics. Use this to your advantage. If you notice one person talking much more than the others, you can always politely interject and say something like, “Thank you, those are great points. Does anyone else have other thoughts?” This opens up the discussion to others and moderates against the “dominant speaker.”

In using this approach, you will need to be careful not to make your invitation too general. This could lead to no volunteers. One approach that is often taken is to choose someone at random and ask them to contribute to the conversation, but this may make them feel “put on the spot.” An ally tries to avoid putting people on the spot. A better way to elicit contributions can be to specifically address two or more members of the team directly: e.g. “[Name] and [Other Name], we were discussing this topic a few minutes ago, do you want to share with the group what your thoughts on this were?” By asking two people to speak, you minimize the chance that someone will feel singled out and you increase the likelihood that at least one other person will contribute. The best case scenario, of course, is that both individuals feel empowered enough to speak, and both contribute.

Sometimes there’s a tendency to pick the people who are the loudest, but we have a duty to look at others in our team and facilitate those whose voices aren’t necessarily ‘out there’.

– Asian, woman, partner, UK

What I find important is to make sure that everyone on my team feels included and has an equal chance to contribute; I'm very focused every day on making sure that everyone can have that meaningful impact. That ranges from client meetings to our daily virtual coffees and I try to actively include people in the conversation, even if that means that you sometimes have to ask others to not speak at that moment. What you can also do is assign speaking roles to more junior members of the team, for example, in client meetings and presentations.

– White, man, partner, Europe Region

Even if you are not the leader of a meeting, an ally is always attuned to the body language and reactions of the people around them. If you notice that someone is eager to say something (for example, on virtual calls, you may see that they have “unmuted” themselves), you might address that person as soon as the person speaking finishes. You could say something like, “[Name], were you about to say something?” More often than not, your instinct will be correct and they will be happy you gave them the opportunity to speak. However, if they would prefer not to say anything, it is okay if they voice that too. **An ally opens doors for people to speak, to get their airtime, but they do not push them through the door.**

A specific allyship action we can take is to consciously keep track of whether everyone in the room is participating in the discussion. For example, if anyone is silent, maybe actively invite them to share their perspectives with the group. As leaders, I also believe we should speak less.

– White, woman, partner, Latin America and the Caribbean

2. Amplification

Allies also amplify others' voices. Amplification is an art. It does not mean repeating others' thoughts and ideas and passing them off as one's own. It does not include reiterating someone else's thoughts and ideas to an empty room. Amplification as allyship means making the conscious decision when, where and how to amplify someone's voice.

You can only be aware of someone else's contributions if you give them the opportunity to voice their contributions. **An ally creates opportunities for conversation**, actively listens to the conversation, and by actively listening is acutely aware of what has been said. In subsequent meetings, an ally circulates the contributions of others among other colleagues, making sure to attribute those contributions to the people who made them. If leaders are present, an ally will proactively mention the idea and give credit to the person who had it, so that others will know about their great work.

Amplification



Use your voice to acknowledge and promote others' ideas

Talk about the good work of others publicly

Put others in the spotlight and give them the chance to shine

Repeat + summarize what others have said – give credit

Often, the answer to a problem or issue we're facing comes out of an interaction where everyone has had the chance to contribute their thoughts and opinions.

– White, woman, partner, Latin America and the Caribbean

Putting skills into action

Amplification is not just about using your platform to promote others' contributions, always with attribution, it's also about promoting the person themselves. Allyship is about using your voice to give other people opportunities to progress in their careers by giving them chances to interact with clients/ customers and leaders in the organization; take the lead on projects; appear on pitches and presentations; run meetings; and take center stage.

Sometimes, the amplification of others requires that, as an ally, you fade into the background to give others the chance to shine. This is especially true if you are a leader at an organization. An ally is comfortable not always being the dominant personality in every meeting or group setting. In fact, a good leader does not want to dominate a meeting because domination can silence the voices of others and we risk losing the valuable contributions that others bring.

Further, no task is "beneath" an ally; they do not stereotype others, for example, assigning the task of taking meeting minutes to the sole woman in the room or asking the women in the team to plan social events.. They do not subscribe to ideas like there are some in the team who must be "seen and not heard."

But why is it important to amplify someone else's voice? Can't they just speak for themselves? A key component of understanding the importance of amplification is empathy and the ability to understand the experience of others, the ability to "put yourself in someone else's shoes" and understand how they might be experiencing a certain situation. An ally works hard to understand someone's experiences, even if they have not had those same experiences themselves. Through empathy, an ally can learn why it may not always be easy for others to speak up.

I have often been the only Black person to walk into the room, and certainly the only Black woman. Put yourself into someone like my shoes and ask yourself, “What does it feel like to be the only one walking into the room that looks different from everybody else?” Sometimes, being the only one in the room, you have that added pressure of not only performing well for your own sake but also performing well for the sake of your race. You might think, “If I mess up on this client meeting or client call, the next Black woman who applies for the job won’t get the job.” So, having that feeling of empathy in terms of thinking what it means and how it feels to be the only one in a room—that goes a long way in terms of allyship.

– Black, woman, Regional C-Suite, Canada



3. Advocacy

Having empathy for others is an important part of allyship, but being an ally is about more than just empathy – it's about action.

An ally finds ways to use whatever privilege or power they may enjoy to advocate for others, particularly for those from historically under-represented or marginalized groups. The more privilege or power you have, the greater your ability, and responsibility, is to advocate for others.

Advocating for your colleagues and members of your team means putting them forward for big projects; introducing them to important clients or influential members of the organization; promoting their strengths to others; and building them up rather than tearing them down.

Advocacy



Make an effort to reduce status differences

Be a mentor and sponsor

Actively ask for different viewpoints

Practice empathy – think what it feels like to be someone else

When I have a meeting with a client or with colleagues, I intentionally take it upon myself to pour the tea and coffee in that meeting for everyone. I think it sends a strong message that everyone is equally valued.

– White, man, partner, Europe Region

Putting skills into action

Advocating as an ally might mean putting yourself forward to mentor or sponsor someone. Take the opportunity to join an official mentorship or sponsorship program, or make it your personal goal to mentor or sponsor someone who doesn't look like you or comes from a different background, independent of a program. The impact that you can have on a person you mentor or sponsor can change the course of their career. Effective mentorship or sponsorship offers an incredible reciprocal learning opportunity for you. It is also a great place to practice skills like active listening and empathy and can help propel you in your own career. If you dedicate time and energy to this allyship action, you have a responsibility to ensure that your reasons for participating are rooted in a genuine desire to contribute to greater equity and inclusion.

At its core, allyship is about action. Although there are countless actions that a good ally can take in their journey to support others, some actions allies can take in the workplace include giving people airtime, amplifying their voices and advocating on their behalf.

The successes I've met with both professionally and personally have been deeply influenced and affected by allyship that others have given to me. I ask myself, "Why did those people want to help me out?" Fundamentally, I think it's because they all share one common characteristic, and that's a certain selflessness; they feel good about helping other people achieve their personal and professional goals and be that person who makes investments in others. They want to see other people succeed, even in advance of themselves.

– White, man, partner, US

I'll never forget, I was about a two-year qualified lawyer. I was a small member of a very big team, and we were at a post-deal team meeting when the head of our group, who led the deal, made a point of saying to everyone that he had worked with me on particular aspects of the deal and then he shared with the group what he had learned from me. The way he framed that in the environment and the stage I was at immediately propelled my credibility and my confidence. I learned really early on that my views matter.

– Asian, woman, partner, UK

A New Way of Thinking About Sponsorship

Sponsorship is not an either/or role. It's a spectrum of different kinds and degrees of support.



Ibarra, H., von Bernuth, N. (2020). **Want More Diverse Senior Leadership? Sponsor Junior Talent.** *Harvard Business Review*.

Advocacy can take many forms; it can mean getting very involved as a mentor or a sponsor, but it can also be very straightforward and require a seemingly small amount of time and effort. It can be as simple as telling someone that you believe in their ability—you believe in *them*.

When I was a law student in Scotland, I was one of only two Black students in a class of 100 or more, and maybe unsurprisingly, I didn't really feel like I belonged there; a lot of the time I was absent from classes. Even though I ended up with a really good degree, graduating near the top of my class, I didn't feel confident to apply for or work for an international law firm. I went to a recruitment event one day because a friend of mine encouraged me to come along, and someone from a large firm came up to me and told me I should apply. Through that I started the long journey to begin to see myself as someone who would work for an international law firm, who would belong at an international law firm. Sometimes all it takes is a friendly face to feel like you belong, like you're part of the in-crowd and that you deserve to be there.

– Afro-Caribbean, man, business services professional, Europe

One final note about advocacy. **Say nice things to and about people.** If you are asked to provide feedback about a person, speak or write about their strengths and offer constructive suggestions about what you believe should be the next step for their career at the organization.

Takeaways

- At its core, allyship is about action.
- Some actions allies can take in the workplace to support others are: giving others airtime, amplifying their voices and advocating on their behalf.

Questions to Ponder

- Reflect on what sorts of allyship actions you can take in your teams or with your colleagues that will make them feel supported and valued.
- Were there any allyship tips in this section that particularly resonated with you? Why or why not?
- Think about the allies you've had in the past. What allyship actions did they engage in that stuck out to you. How could you replicate this with your team or colleagues?

Active and enthusiastic allyship in the workplace creates an environment where your transgender and non-binary colleagues feel safe to be themselves and fosters a fairer place to work.

– White, non-binary, business services professional, UK

Chapter 6

Speaking Up and “Calling In”

A critical action that allies take in day-to-day life is speaking up when they witness unacceptable behavior or injustices. An ally is not a passive observer of an injustice; they are not a bystander. Allies are “upstanders.” They take an “anti-discrimination” stance. When an ally witnesses an injustice, they say or do something to stop the injustice and work to protect against it happening again in the future. We discuss what it means to have an “anti” stance in the next section.

Putting skills into action

Speaking up when you witness an injustice can be a scary idea, but speaking up does not necessarily need to be confrontational. There may be times when confronting someone head on about their behavior is the most appropriate course of action. More often, however, you may find other strategies and techniques more effective.

“Calling in” takes a compassionate and inquisitive approach rather than an accusatory one, and is aimed at raising awareness and lessening the chance that the person exhibiting the bad behavior will become defensive. The less defensive someone is, the more likely they will be to listen. This increases the chance they will understand why their behavior is inappropriate and that they will change their behavior in the future.



Awareness
raising



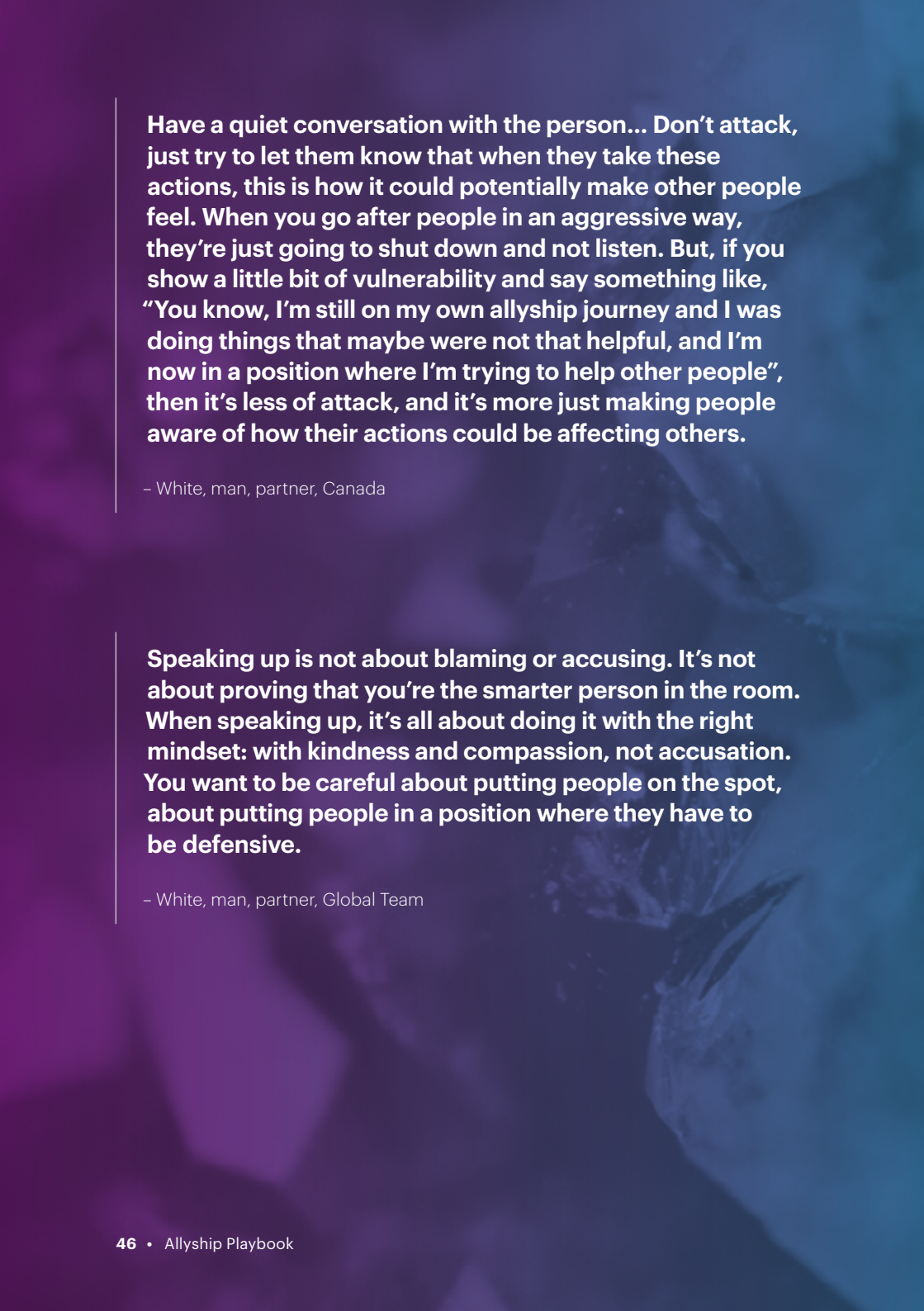
“Call in” vs
“Call out”



Create space
for constructive
dialogue



Never let anyone
sit alone



Have a quiet conversation with the person... Don't attack, just try to let them know that when they take these actions, this is how it could potentially make other people feel. When you go after people in an aggressive way, they're just going to shut down and not listen. But, if you show a little bit of vulnerability and say something like, "You know, I'm still on my own allyship journey and I was doing things that maybe were not that helpful, and I'm now in a position where I'm trying to help other people", then it's less of attack, and it's more just making people aware of how their actions could be affecting others.

– White, man, partner, Canada

Speaking up is not about blaming or accusing. It's not about proving that you're the smarter person in the room. When speaking up, it's all about doing it with the right mindset: with kindness and compassion, not accusation. You want to be careful about putting people on the spot, about putting people in a position where they have to be defensive.

– White, man, partner, Global Team

I might witness or hear something...instead of calling it out in the moment, I can do it offline; finding a time to pick up the phone, rather than email, and have that one-on-one conversation with the individual. You don't have to stand up and call someone out in front of the crowd.

– White, man, Global C-Suite, Global Team



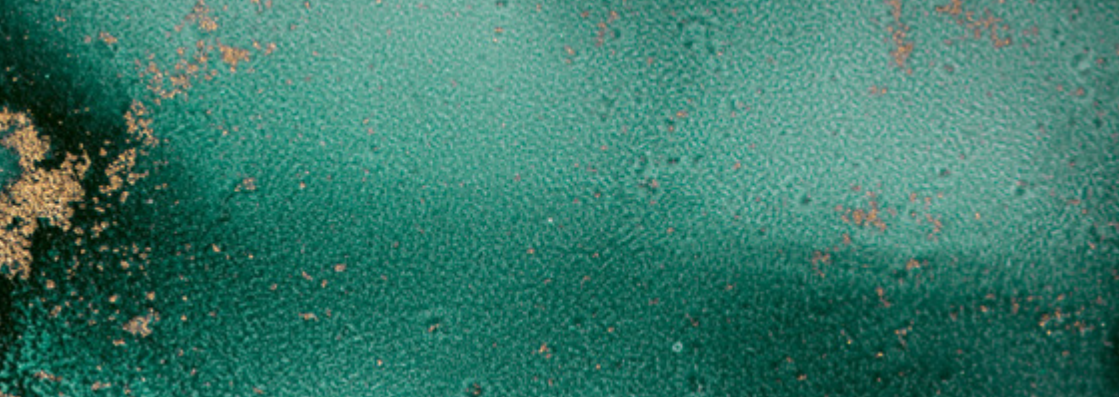
I. MICROAGGRESSIONS

Sometimes bad or unjust behavior may not have been done with ill intent. The term “microaggressions” refers to indirect, subtle and often unintentional verbal or nonverbal expressions of discrimination that we might classify as bad behavior.

Some examples of microaggressions include:

- Somebody from a non-majority group where they live is complimented for speaking the dominant language even though it is their first language.
- At the beginning of the meeting, a colleague introduces all of the men around the table using their first and last names and then introduces the women using their first names only.
- Using terms like “grandfather clause” which have become commonplace colloquial language in many places but have racist and discriminatory histories.
- Referring to being LGBT+ as a “choice” or a “lifestyle.”

These examples of microaggressions show us that sometimes, unconscious behavior or language can look like bad behavior, but the person exhibiting that behavior may not even realize the impact of what they have said on others. Lack of intention, however, does not mean that the behavior should go unaddressed. “Calling in” in an effort to educate others, is an effective way to set the right tone and properly address microaggressions.



I am a first generation Korean-American and for the early part of my life I spoke with a fairly thick accent, one that I had to work hard to get rid of. I realized that people would make a very quick judgment about you based upon that initial impression on how you spoke English and how you interacted with them. For some people, I was the “right kind” of Asian American, so I was given some opportunities I may not have had. This was in the 80s and 90s, so you may think that we have gotten past all of that. But even today, I still get comments like, “You speak English so well,” even though I have been in the US for a very long time. This speaks to how powerful these micro biases can be and how hard you have to fight against them.”

– Korean-American, man, partner, US

I think language is really important. The names we keep, the things we speak and the words we use... It’s no longer, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” Words can hurt and making sure the right words are used in communications, between people and also within the Firm, is so important. I really do think that the little things end up adding up to a big thing.

– White, woman, partner, Australia

Putting skills into action

Sometimes, particularly with behavior that seems overtly discriminatory, more than a microaggression, it is necessary, and completely appropriate, to set boundaries in the moment with that person around what they have done or said. In other situations, it may be okay to wait and follow up at a later time. What is key, however, is to follow up. Allyship is all about action, but being an ally does not necessarily mean you must always act in the moment. Depending on the circumstances, sometimes it is best to reflect on what you have just witnessed, and consider next steps.

It can be particularly difficult when you are the most junior person in a room and you have witnessed someone say or do something inappropriate. While some of us might be quite comfortable speaking up in those circumstances, many of us might find speaking up almost impossible. Pausing, reflecting and regrouping is an effective course of action. After regrouping, the solution you might think is best is to seek help from someone else. Seeking help from others is an important part of speaking up. Speaking up does not always have to involve you personally confronting someone. Asking for help is a form of speaking up and is an allyship action.

Sometimes you just need to give yourself the time and space to think. Sometimes we hear or see something and it can be overwhelming to us. We need to consider our next steps, we need to think about how to engage. In circumstances like this, it's okay to give ourselves time to think and regroup.

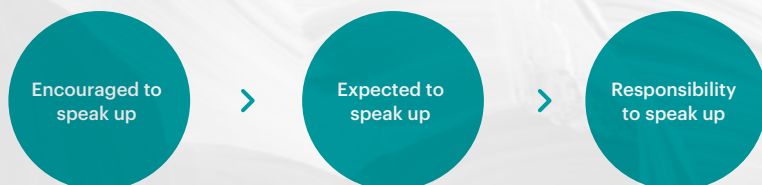
– White, woman, partner, Global Team



With seniority comes more comfort in speaking out, and that's entirely natural. If you're a more junior person in the room, I think it's entirely natural for those with more seniority to help us, to really be the allies we need.

– White, man, partner, Global Team

If you are in a leadership position and someone comes to you with a concern, you are not only encouraged, but likely expected, to take action. As a leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that your team members are treated fairly and with respect. A great way to cultivate a speak up culture in your team is to be proactive about approaching your colleagues and inviting them to raise with you any questions or concerns they may have about their life at work.



There are some people who are very comfortable with speaking up. But there are others who are not as comfortable; I certainly came from that culture. One of the things that I do, given the history that I have, is to reach out to people, to not wait for someone to complain. Rather, I actively go to people and ask: “Are you doing okay? Is there anything that you want to talk to me about?” It’s about not waiting for people to come knock on my door.

– Korean-American, man, partner, US

III. STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKING UP

One more thing. It is important to remember that regardless of whether a member of a targeted, marginalized group is present in the room to hear what is said when an inappropriate comment is made, a sexist, racist or discriminatory comment is still sexist, racist or discriminatory. An ally never lets anyone sit alone and will speak up in all cases.

Now that we understand the importance of speaking up and why inappropriate comments should never go unaddressed, here are some strategies you can use to speak up and engage.



Seek clarity:	"Tell me more about _____."
Offer an alternative perspective:	"Have you ever considered _____."
Speak your truth:	"I don't see it the way you do. I see it as _____."
Find common ground:	"We don't agree on _____ but we can agree on _____."
Give yourself the time and space you need:	"Could we revisit the conversation about _____ tomorrow."
Set boundaries:	"Please do not say _____ again to me or around me."

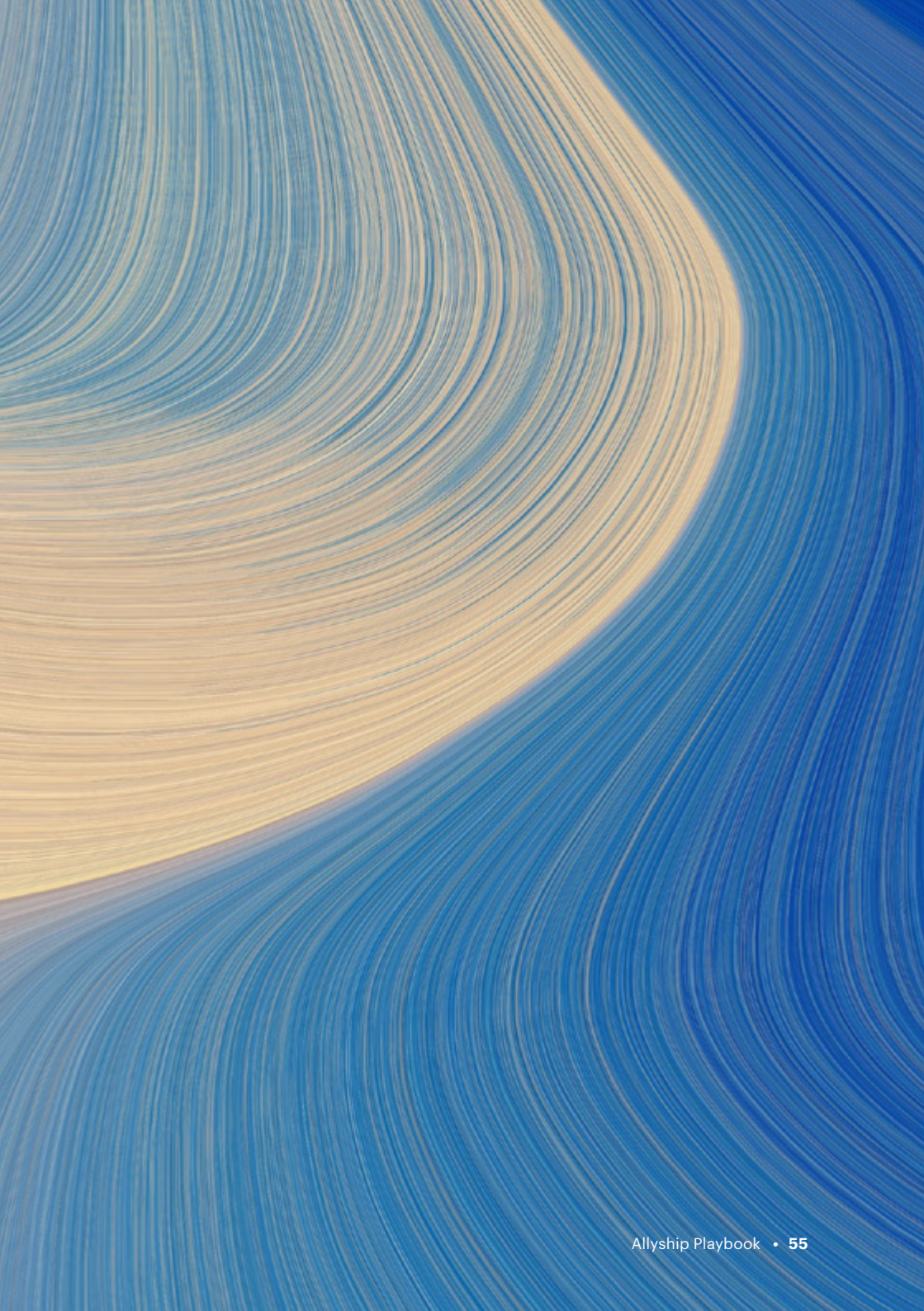
National Museum of African American History and Culture. *Being an Anti-Racist.*

Takeaways

- Speaking up on behalf of others and “calling in” bad behavior you’ve witnessed, are core elements of allyship.
- “Calling in” takes a compassionate and inquisitive approach rather than an accusatory one (e.g. “calling out”).
- Sometimes, using these strategies for speaking up and calling in are necessary when you witness microaggressions.
- Microaggressions are subtle, indirect and often unconscious forms of discrimination. Often the person exhibiting the microaggressions doesn’t have bad intentions, they are just uninformed.
- There are some behaviors that are clearly unacceptable.
- All of us are expected to take action in some way if we see or hear something that makes us uncomfortable. If speaking up or calling in is not an available strategy in the moment, share what you witnessed with a trusted supervisor or manager.

Questions to Ponder

- Can you recall a time where either: (1) you “called in” when you witnessed bad behavior; or (2) you were on the receiving end of being “called in”? What did you/the other person say?
- What other strategies for speaking up and “calling in” can you think of?
- Reflect on the types of situations where you might feel more or less comfortable speaking up. Why?



Chapter 7

Facing Adversity in Your Allyship Journey

As we discussed in the previous section, the actions allies take do not always have to be big or grandiose, but they do need to be present. An ally is not only aware of injustices, they actively try to do something or say something to stop the injustice. When we translate our allyship commitment into action, this is often where we experience challenges or potential barriers to allyship.

I. “ANTI” VS. “NOT”

We often hear people say, “I’m not a racist,” or, “I’m not sexist.” This is very different from an “anti-orientation.” When we have a “not orientation” (e.g. “I’m not racist”), we might be aware of the effects of racism, but perhaps we stay silent; we might feel empathetic with people from non-majority racial or ethnic groups, but we may still allow injustices to occur by being a bystander and not speaking up. When we have a “not orientation,” we might also avoid discomfort and prioritize our own comfort.

When we move to an “anti” stance, not only are we aware of injustices, but we also speak up and take other actions to stop injustice. We are not just aware of injustices and feel empathy towards those who experience them, but we engage and have uncomfortable conversations about what is happening because we recognize and are committed to improvement and to making positive change together. Allies are “anti” in their orientation; they make a conscious choice to be active and not passive.

The Difference Between and “Not” and “Anti”

“Anti” sexist/racist/discriminatory

Aware, and speaks up

Takes action to stop injustices “upstander”

Welcomes discomfort (uncomfortable conversations)



“Not” sexist/racist/discriminatory

Aware, but stays silent

Feels empathy, but allows injustices to occur “bystander”

Prioritizes comfort, avoids discomfort



II. BARRIERS TO ACTION

It is quite common to be apprehensive about taking action as an ally. Some, entirely understandable, fears and concerns that allies experience and that may act as barriers to action are discussed below.

1. Negative repercussions

It can be common to be fearful of negative repercussions. That could include a fear of being ostracized by those perpetuating the bad behavior or injustice if you speak up or say something to challenge their actions. This fear might come from experiences you have had in the past, seeing or hearing people saying or doing things that are unacceptable, or the belief that if you do speak up or take action, you will be excluded in the future. This fear can cause you to do nothing.

2. Making mistakes

You might also be worried that if you speak up or take action, you might say or do the wrong thing, potentially making the situation worse. You might also fear that you'll be negatively perceived as a savior for stepping in, so to avoid embarrassment, you decide it is better to do nothing.

3. Finding yourself in a combative culture

You may also find yourself working in what feels like a combative culture, where a quest to dominate others and compete for power, authority and status lends itself to a ruthless competition-type environment. Combative cultures can devalue and undermine collaboration and empathy, which are critical aspects of allyship. In a combative culture, you may worry that you will be perceived as weak or you'll be looked down upon by others if you speak up. So, you do nothing.

4. Futility and “culture of silence”

Perhaps the most discouraging of all potential barriers is the belief that speaking up or taking action won't have any impact and will not lead to real change; that speaking up will be a futile exercise. This can lead to a “Why bother?” attitude, or worse, feelings of despair. Where these barriers are present and where we allow them to overcome us, they can contribute to what is called a “culture of silence” that further discourages people from speaking up, speaking out and taking action. If a silence culture is allowed to take over, it can have serious negative consequences.

Focus on silence culture effect

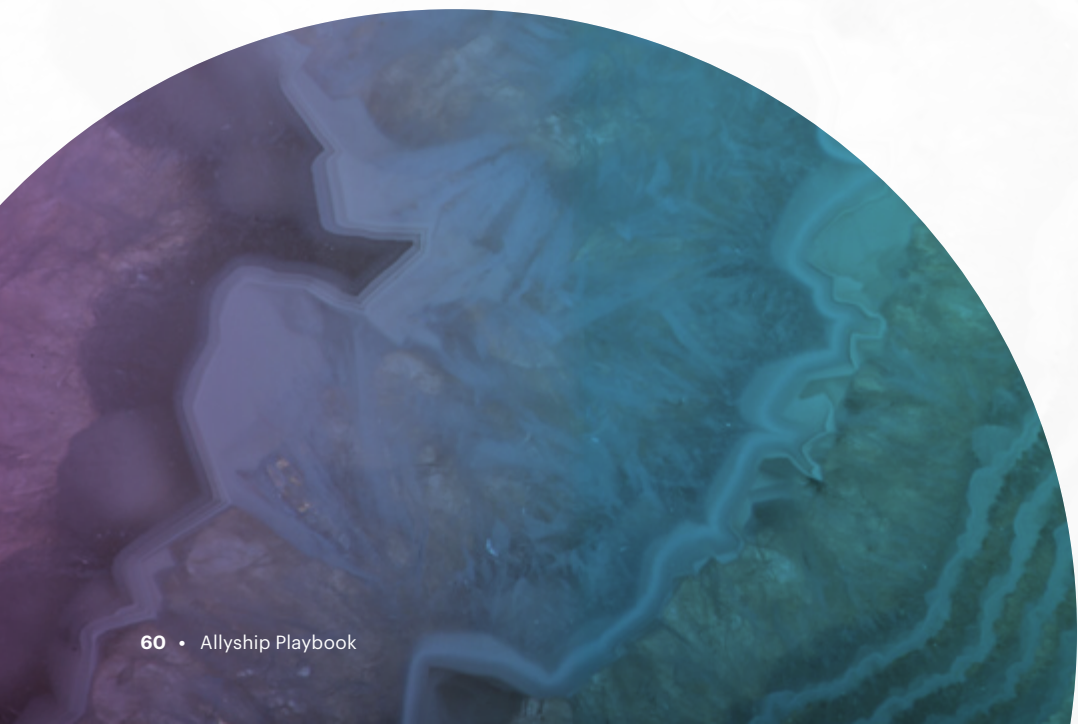
In a 2020 Catalyst study looking at men's commitment to interrupting sexist behaviors in the workplace and their willingness to speak out against gender inequities, 86% of study participants expressed a commitment to interrupting sexist behaviors (Shaffer, E., Sattari, N., Pollack, A., 2020. **Interrupting Sexism at Work: How Men Respond in a Climate of Silence**. Catalyst). However, only 31% of the participants felt confident in their ability to actually speak up. This gap was exacerbated where the men interviewed worked in "silence cultures". In silence cultures, men were 50% less likely to be committed to interrupting sexist behaviors in the workplace and 40% less confident in their ability to speak up against sexist behaviors at work. Men in silence cultures were also 30% less likely to question colleagues and 35% less likely to comment on inappropriate comments or behaviors. Where participants experienced higher levels of silence in their organization, they felt they needed to suppress their commitment to speaking up for fear of being labeled "complainers," "overly sensitive" or "troublemakers." Expressed differently, these men were reluctant to speak up because they feared negative repercussions, being ostracized and they experienced feeling a sense of futility.

We know that fears about speaking up can be powerful, but the benefits that come from speaking up and taking action can only lead to a better outcome for everyone. Speaking up gives us greater confidence and encourages others around us to speak up more. It gives us the opportunity to build new and better relationships with one another, and helps us not to be complicit in perpetuating systems which are oppressive or which marginalize others.

Inclusion and diversity is a moral imperative, it's the right thing to do, and we must make it part of a broader global challenge of achieving social justice. When we confront that challenge within our organization, we no longer are only concerned about compliance.

We must also cultivate a culture of participation. A culture of participation is a multi-year journey, yet the challenges we confront arise every single day and sometimes by the minute. These challenges will happen in the soft conversations, the microaggressions and, the day-to-day interactions which are a lot less obvious but just as pivotal. As the expression goes, 'The worst behaviors are the ones which leaders are prepared to walk by.' If we don't address those behaviors, they manifest and become cancerous, they grow, they multiply, they become prejudicial.

– Asian, man, partner, Africa



III. MISTAKES HAPPEN

The fear of making a mistake when you try to say something or do something to contribute as an ally can be a big barrier for some.

We all make mistakes. That's a fact of life. Allyship is hard work, and many of us are anxious about the mistakes we might make. It is important to remember that allyship is a journey, and mistakes will be made along the way by each of us. We cannot let feelings of anxiety and uncertainty have the unfortunate effect of hindering us from taking allyship actions. Rather, we can approach mistakes as an opportunity to learn, which step us forward on our journey towards improvement.

Being an ally can be daunting work. For many of us, we're wading into unfamiliar waters. The fear of making mistakes is not an excuse not to do the work. We all make mistakes. When you do, apologize, correct your mistake, and move on.

– White, woman, partner, Global Team

If you are unsure about something, ask questions, do some self-guided reading or spend some time looking at the materials cited in this Playbook before you engage. This will help you feel better informed and more confident, and you can take what you learned and discuss it with others to demonstrate that you are: (1) genuinely interested in making a change; and (2) you are humble and not professing to know everything.

Asking questions of others can only work in your favor, if you have good intentions. Intention is something that people can quickly pick up on, and intention often differentiates an easily forgivable mistake from a not-so-easily-forgivable mistake.

Just as you value having the room to learn and grow on your allyship journey, it is important that you do not expect others to be perfect. An ally cultivates a culture of acceptance around them; they make sure their colleagues and their team members know that courage and curiosity are encouraged and that mistakes are expected and allowed.

Allyship is not easy work, but it's rewarding work. If we all work to create a culture of acceptance at our organization, we will build stronger relationships with our colleagues and our stakeholders and ultimately, achieve greater interpersonal and professional success.

If you come to the situation with good intentions and the opportunity to be open and share information, I think you can never go wrong. Giving others that opportunity and being open helps a lot.

– Black, woman, Regional C-Suite, Canada

We walk this earth living and operating in our own bubbles most time unaware of what is truly going on in our neighbor's yard. It's ok to peep over the fence. Use that as an opportunity to get to know them as another human being on the planet. Ask questions to understand. Knowledge and understanding can break down the barriers one could have running in their head. We can make this a better place to live if we just take a moment to share with one another. You would be surprised how much commonality exists in the world. While this is not an easy road, taking these steps can help along the way.

– Black, woman, business services professional, US

Sometimes some of the things I thought I was doing which were positive, were maybe interpreted as being negative. But as long as you try to do things with the right intent, people will recognize your intentions and they'll be okay with you making some errors. What's not acceptable is just sitting on your hands and doing nothing.

- White, man, partner, Canada

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