



Faith, Gender & Sexuality: A toolkit

Resources for faith practitioners

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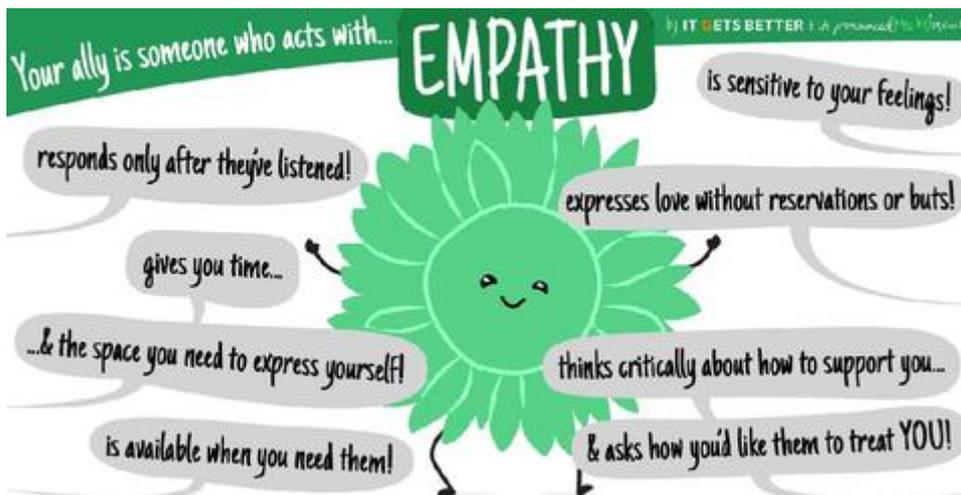
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Being accountable, becoming allies

This module explores ways that **faith leaders and communities can be effective allies in advancing human rights:**

- What it means to be an ally in broader struggles for human rights and social justice.
- Why issues related to sexual minority rights and equality are 'everyone's' issues.

Principles of allies



Cartoon of a flower and words around empathy

Sam Killermann/It Gets Better Project

What is an ally?

- An ally is someone who cooperates or joins with another for a common purpose
- An ally to the LGBTI community can be defined as someone who supports LGBTI people and/or is part of the community. These people believe in the human rights of all people and demonstrate this through their actions, their acceptance and celebration of diversity
- A social justice ally is a person of one social identity group who stands up in support of members of another group; typically a member of a dominant group standing beside member(s) of a group being discriminated against or treated unjustly. Their personal commitment to fighting oppression and prejudice is reflected in a willingness to:
 - Educate oneself about different identities and experiences.
 - Challenge one's own discomfort and prejudices.

- Learn and practice the skills of being an ally.
- Take action to create interpersonal, societal and institutional change.

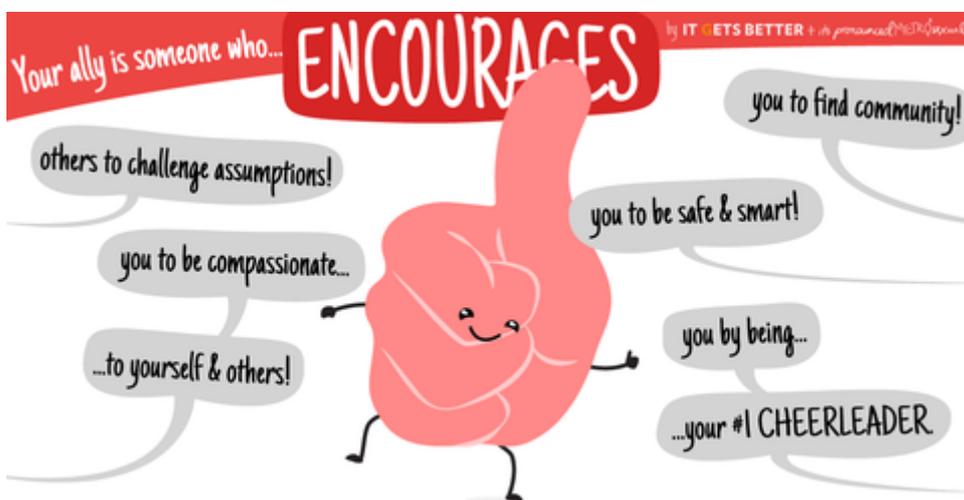


Cartoon of an ear and words about good listening
Sam Killermann/It Gets Better Project

Core characteristics

A social justice ally should aim to:

- **Be self-aware.** This means knowing who we are and what we believe.
- **Know about the issues.** This includes basic facts, statistics, laws, policies etc.
- **Be open.** Allies promote respect, they acknowledge and celebrate differences.
- **Take action.** Allies share what they know and realise that to change society they must take a stand for human rights.



Cartoon of a thumbs up and words representing encouragement
Sam Killermann/It Gets Better Project

What does it mean to be an ally?

Allies offer support and share a common interest in the cause of those they are allied with. In social justice issues, being an ally to another person or group of people is a key component in challenging oppression and privilege.

When people form an alliance to speak out against prejudice and discrimination, **people who are the target of that prejudice are not the only ones who benefit.** All of us, regardless of our identity, benefit when any of us take steps toward eliminating prejudice and discrimination in our society. We all benefit from our collective efforts to create a better

educated and more understanding world that treats each of us with dignity, respect, and equality.



Cartoon light bulb and words around inspiration

Sam Killermann/It Gets Better Project

Being an ally is more than being sympathetic towards those who experience discrimination. It is more than simply believing in equality. It means being willing to act with and for others in pursuit of ending oppression and creating equality.



Cartoon of bricks and words around confidence

Sam Killermann/It Gets Better Project

How to defend LGBTI rights

Defending LGBTI rights is not only a concern for LGBTI people. It is a human rights issue that should be defended by any social justice campaigner. Even campaigns that do not specifically address discrimination and violence against LGBTI groups should ensure that they: avoid using heteronormative language or excluding the needs and interests of LGBTI people. They should also try to prevent violence against all people irrespective of sexuality.

Addressing LGBTI rights in campaigns

- **Draw the attention of wider society and stakeholders to the concept of universal human rights**, including the respect of LGBTI rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in international law. LGBTI people are not asking for extra rights, they just want to enjoy those rights that everyone else benefits from.
- **Provide information and training** for officials, police and healthcare providers about the nature and legitimacy of

LGBTI work. They may be more inclined to cooperate if they know and understand the work and the reason for undertaking it. If people are trained on how to interact with and meet the needs of LGBTI people, especially in relation to health services, it will improve LGBTI's wider accessibility to legal protection and HIV treatment.

- **Limit your work objectives to match the political space of your work.** Some types of work make you more vulnerable than others, so you have to make sure your objectives match your situation and protection capacities as much as possible – for instance when engaging in policy advocacy to pressure governments to appeal laws, your own freedom and personal safety may be put at risk.
- **Establish alliances widely with as many social sectors as possible.** Find a balance between transparency in your work, to show that you have nothing to hide, and the need to avoid giving out information that could compromise your work or security.
- Where relevant, **use action-based frameworks rather than identity-based frameworks.** As some individuals who practice same-sex intimacy or gender non-conformity may not identify as LGBTI, it is sometimes more effective to talk not about how people identify – as gay, lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, transgender, etc., but about what people do – men who have sex with men, people who break gender norms, women who have sex with women, etc. Action-based frameworks that focus on what people do can be much more effective in communities that do not talk often about the LGBTI community.

Taking action

The action continuum

The action continuum focuses on ways of dealing with oppressive behaviour. The continuum describes a range of actions and clearly shows which actions/choices progress social justice and which work against it. This continuum can be used in any setting.

Actions which can work against social justice

- Actively join in negative behaviour
- No response

Actions that can work towards social justice

- Educate yourself
- Interrupt negative behaviour
- Interrupt and educate
- Support other's proactive response
- Initiate proactive response

Practition actions

Allies must listen to the communities they wish to assist, and ask what is needed before pursuing action plans. A common mistake made by those wanting to be allies is that they put plans into action that do not actually serve the needs of the communities they wish to represent. These mistakes can have grave consequences, especially in places where sexual minorities are criminalised. In not taking a sensitive approach, one could actually expose vulnerable groups to further harm. The diagram below by 'It's pronounced Metrosexual' clearly shows why outcomes are more important than intentions.

To avoid harmful outcomes allies should:

- Assume the LGBTI community members themselves are experts on their own experience.
- Avoid speaking on behalf of people from the LGBTI community.
- Become experts on the issues.

- Not expect gratitude.
- Be a 100 per cent ally; no deals, no strings attached.
- Consult with groups that one wishes to ally with, ask what they need, what they are already doing, what their ideas are for taking advocacy forward.
- Consider inviting someone from said group to speak to members of your community who you feel will be receptive to them.

Intentions vs. Outcomes Matrix

by its pronounced **METROsexual** owner

intention: not that wrong

We spend a lot of time in any given day thinking about intentions. Interpreting intentions is like laying on your back on lush green grass and pointing out animal shapes in the clouds. Was that text message meant to be rude? Does that big corporation really care about the environment? Is that politician evil or just stupid? Here are some (hopefully) new or different ways of thinking about intentions, with the intent of making you a happier person (see what I did there?)

What Murder Law Teaches Us About Intentions

		Outcomes	
		Good	Bad
Intentions	Good	G	B
	Bad	B	B

Homicide
I intended to kill someone (bad) and I succeeded in killing them (bad)
Rest of Life in Jail

Attempted Homicide
I intended to kill someone (bad) but they survived (good)
7.5 Years in Jail

Involuntary Manslaughter
I didn't plan on killing someone (good) but acting irresponsibly I totally did (kinda bad)
10 - 16 Months in Jail

Killing in Self Defense
I didn't plan on killing someone (good) but I had to so they wouldn't kill me (good enough)
No Punishment

Lesson: You're better off being a well-intended murderer than an unintentional non-murderer

not actually intentional

not intentional murder

What Relationships Teach Us About Intentions

		Outcomes	
		Good	Bad
Intentions	Good	G	G
	Bad	G	B

Your goal was to make me sad (bad) and feeding my Tamagotchi sandy continuously until it got toothaches and died made me really sad (bad)
Friendship. Over.

You got me a cat (see you know I love cat videos (good)) but you didn't know I'm allergic to cats and if this thing lives in my house I will suffocate (bad) (good)
I Can Haz A Luv

You were trying to be a jerk (bad) by playing 'Seasouth' on repeat in your car, but I freaking love 'Seasouth' (good) (sucker!)
You're An Allstar

I intended to give you a hug (good) and you enjoyed the hug I gave you (good!)
Sentence: Another Hug

Lesson: It's the thought that counts!

you take the pain pill - you keep living a life where intentions are more important than outcomes

How We Should Start Thinking About Intentions

		Outcomes	
		Good	Bad
Intentions	Good	G	B
	Bad	G	B

You were trying to do something good, or maybe you were trying to do something bad. Really, it's impossible for us to know, but either way what we got was something bad.
Please Stop.

You were trying to do something good, or maybe you were trying to do something bad. Really, it's impossible for us to know, but either way what we got was something good.
Please Don't Stop.

you take the pain pill - you keep thinking that these matrices are somehow related to 'The Matrix'

Lesson: outcomes are more important than intentions

Activities

These activities, adapted from the Hineini Curriculum Resource Guide, encourage participants to explore how they can be effective allies and what responsibility they hold for others in their community.

Activity 1: The role of allies (30-45 minutes)

In this activity participants define the word 'ally' and examine what it means to be an ally to others. It involved group exploration and talking about personal experience.

[Download the pdf of this exercise \[7\]](#)

Activity 2 (30 minutes)

This activity practically demonstrates actions that progress social justice and those that go against it. Participants take part in a role play in order to explore different scenarios. They then share with the group how the activity has helped them gain new understanding of what it means to be an ally and make commitments to steps forward in create change in their community.

[Download the pdf of this exercise \[8\]](#)

Case study: The KwaZulu Natal Declaration

Read more: [Global Faith and Justice Project' 'Because you are, therefore I am'](#)

[9]

In August 2014, over 30 faith leaders from ten African countries gathered for a historic consultation on human sexuality, religion and equality. Committed to changing the narrative in Africa from persecution of LGBTI persons and their families to acceptance, the event published the following statement:

We, African religious leaders, scholars, and members of civil society are highly concerned with the well-being of our beloved continent and with the demonization and criminalization of sexual minorities on the continent,

We, African religious leaders, scholars, and members of civil society met for a consultation in KwaZulu Natal on August 28-31, 2014, in response to the recent contentious debates regarding human sexuality on the continent. Recognizing that we are part of the global community, we met in South Africa, a country with a constitution that recognizes and protects the rights of sexual minorities,

Aware of the traditional leadership roles that academics, religious institutions, and churches in Africa have played in promoting social justice and human dignity,

Troubled by the misuse of religion to further marginalize and exclude sexual minorities from society and faith communities,

Noting the recommendations on human sexuality from the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly to the Central Committee, and the subsequent approval of the Terms of Reference for the Human Sexuality Reference Group to walk

together in a pilgrimage of Justice and Peace from 2014-2021,

Observing the resolution on violence and other human rights violations based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa issued in April 2014 by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights,

Acknowledging the deaths and threats of death, the violence, discrimination, that sexual minorities, women, and children face on the continent,

We call on all religious institutions, especially Christian Churches

- To care for the least amongst us as Christ has done,
- To create safe spaces for encounter with the sexual diversity within the body of Christ,
- To talk openly about sexual diversities and adversities in human sexuality,
- To break out of the vicious cycle of shame, secrecy, violence, and silence that demeans, demonizes and kills,
- To openly condemn violence against sexual minorities.

We call on all African scholars and academic institutions

- To take full responsibility to reflect and produce credible scholarship on human sexuality,
- To conduct research that gives momentum to African local institutions, the Church, and indigenous knowledge and practices to further the understanding of human sexuality,
- To incorporate issues regarding human sexuality in the development of knowledge,
- To guide the public in understanding sexual diversity.

We call on all our governments in Africa

- To take seriously the mission of the state to protect all citizens, including those with disabilities, and all communities affected by, and living with HIV and AIDS,
- To seek legislative and social reforms that further the protection of and improvement of the livelihoods of sexual minorities,
- To dialogue with African local traditional, political and religious institutions to promote human dignity,
- To eliminate colonial sodomy laws and to oppose attempts to further criminalized sexual minorities.

We call on all Africans on the continent and in the diaspora

- To respect the human rights of all people including sexual minorities,
- To oppose and desist from violence directed toward sexual minorities, and to support families and communities of sexual minorities.

We call on the international community and partners

- To respect while supporting Africa's journey and processes towards a better understanding of human sexuality and socio-economic, political and religious inclusion of sexual minorities,
- To denounce all misleading information on issues of human sexuality.
- To support our commitment to produce and disseminate scholarly and general publications throughout Africa and beyond.

We, African religious leaders, scholars, and members of Civil Society assembled in this KwaZulu Natal consultative gathering commit to uphold these recommendations. We also commit to share this vision with all partners and Africans across the continent and the diaspora and to be inclusive in our journey toward a better understanding and respect of the diversity of human sexuality through research, advocacy, publications and consultations.

Further reading

Additional resources

Selected readings from book: Readings for Diversity and Social Justice

'How to interrupt oppressive behavior', by Mary McClintock.

In Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology on racism, sexism, Anti-Semitism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. (New York: Routledge, 2000).

- McClintock, M. 'How to Interrupt Oppressive Behavior'
- Love, B. 'Developing a Liberatory Consciousness'
- Sherover-Marcuse, R. 'Working Assumptions and Guidelines for Alliance Building'

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[5] <http://spl.ids.ac.uk/file/ally4jpg>

[6] <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/12/the-intentions-vs-outcomes-matrix/>

[7] http://spl.ids.ac.uk/sites/spl.ids.ac.uk/files/module_6_activity_1.pdf#overlay-context=sexuality-gender-faith/sexuality-and-gender-diversity/activities

[8] http://spl.ids.ac.uk/sites/spl.ids.ac.uk/files/module_6_activity_2.pdf#overlay-context=sexuality-gender-faith/sexuality-and-gender-diversity/activities

[9] <http://www.lgbtglobalfaith.org/because-you-are-therefore-i-am/>