

# **Things You Should Know as an Ally**

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## **The Four Basic Levels of Becoming an Ally**

- 1. Awareness:** Explore how you are different from and similar to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. Gain this awareness through talking with LGBT people, attending workshops, and performing self-reflections.
- 2. Knowledge/Education:** Begin to understand policies, laws and practices and how they affect LGBT people. Educate yourself on the many communities and cultures of LGBT people.
- 3. Skills:** Learn to take your awareness and knowledge and communicate it to others. You can acquire these skills by attending workshops, role-playing with friends or peers, and developing support connections.
- 4. Action:** Put your acquired skills into action. Despite any fears you may have, action is the only way to effect change in the society as a whole.

## **Other Points to Keep in Mind**

1. Have a good understanding of sexual orientation and be comfortable with your own.
2. Be aware of the coming-out process and realize that it is not a one-time event. The coming-out process is unique to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and brings challenges that are not often understood by all.
3. Understand that LGBT people receive the same messages about homosexuality, bisexuality, etc. as everyone else. Thus, LGBT people sometimes suffer from internalized homophobia and heterosexism. It is important to recognize the risks of coming out and to challenge the internal oppression.
4. Remember that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are a diverse population. Each group within the larger LGBT community has unique needs and experiences.
5. Know at least basic information about AIDS/HIV and other sexually transmitted infections in order to address myths and misinformation and to be supportive of those affected by these ailments whether in themselves, in partners, or friends.