

Being An Ally

What is Allyship?

“Allyship is a lifelong process of working to advance inclusion through intentional, positive, and conscious actions. An **ally** is a person who acts, listens, builds trust, advocates, and amplifies the voices of marginalized people.”

In this document, we refer to allyship as it relates to supporting women and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

You can be an ally by supporting the women in your life, supporting survivors of GBV, standing up to perpetrators of violence, modelling positive behavior, and engaging other men and boys to act as allies to end GBV.



How to be an Ally in Daily Life?

As an ally, you can help combat GBV and harmful gender norms in society. Below are some ideas.

- Openly share your feelings and life experiences with your friends and family. We often hear statements like, “boy’s don’t cry”. Normalize to men that talking about feelings is okay. Encourage your friends to do the same.
- Call out comments that disrespect women. When you hear rape jokes or victim blaming or the promotion of harmful gender norms, like “act like a man”, speak up. Ask questions.
 - I’m curious, what did you mean by that?
 - How would you feel if that happened to you or someone you love?
 - What problematic messages do boys hear about being a man?
 - Do you ever turn off your feelings? Do all men do the same?
 - How do these harmful messages impact your life?
 - Do you really believe in that [insert harmful message]?
 - Do you think you’re the perfect “man”?
 - What does a real man look like?

- **Call out comments related to gender-based violence.**
 - What are some relationship red flags?
 - Do you really think it's her fault if she does not leave the abuser? Why doesn't she leave?
 - If your friend was abusing his wife/girlfriend, what would you do?
 - Why don't more men say something when they see abuse? What stops them from speaking out?
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- **Talk to your friends about their relationships.** If you notice red flags, like your friend being controlling or talking down to their partner, bring them up.
 - **Talk to your partner about your relationship and how you can support them.** Discuss your feelings, how you both communicate and navigate conflicts, your parenting styles, and workloads. Ask them how you can be a better partner and support them better. Ask them about which behaviours and attitudes upset them.
 - **Talk to your partner about household duties.** Try to work out an arrangement that is best for everyone. Divide parenting and caring responsibilities.
 - **Ask open-ended questions.** If you are watching or reading something together with your friends, and the topic of harmful gender norms or GBV comes up, ask people to share their opinion. "Wow, that was really powerful, what did you think about it?"
 - **Share your experiences.** If you recently read a book or attended a workshop on GBV, use this to introduce the topic. "I just attended a workshop on this issue, I learned that....What do you think about this topic?"
 - **Use "I" statements.** The topic of gender norms and GBV can bring up a lot of feelings. Share your opinions by starting with "I feel.....what do you think about this?" Encourage others to share their thoughts.
 - **Use a call-in approach** – Invite men to be a part of the solution rather than judging them.

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- **Focus on accountability** – Hold men accountable for their actions and speak against harmful behaviour.
 - **Use Personal Stories** – Stories of people affected by family violence can help men understand the causes and consequences of violence.
 - **Start the conversation at your social activity group, sports club, place of worship, etc.** Discuss the roles played by women vs. men at the club. Talk about how your club treats its members and how things can be improved. Talk about whether the club is accessible and available to both men and women.
 - **Be a role model to other men who look up to you.** Behave and talk in ways that reflect your own values. Do not use derogatory comments. Show them through your words and actions how you treat the women in your life. Mentor boys and teens in your life.
 - **Be critical of the messages you receive through movies, TV, and social media.**
 - **Watch your language.** Do not use swear words or other language that put down women.
 - **Encourage self-expression.** Talk, dress, or act in a way that you feel comfortable rather than what is expected by society. Let boys know its okay to wear pink or hug their friends.
 - **Be aware of how your male friends interact with women.** This is especially important at settings such as parties and pubs. Watch for indicators of sexually predatory behavior especially when people are intoxicated.

- **Engage the men in your life to become active allies.** Host a movie viewing party, a podcast, or reading group on a topic related to GBV. Share a PSA or post on social media. Some examples from Western and South Asian media include:
 - Thappad (2020 - Hindi) film challenging the normalization of physical violence.
 - Because We are Girls: <https://www.nfb.ca/film/because-we-are-girls/> (Documentary about three Indo-Canadian sisters)
 - White Ribbon Campaigns: <https://www.whiteribbon.ca/campaign?lng=en>
- **Talk to your kids about gender norms and GBV.** Talk about what caring and healthy relationships look like, discuss consent when it comes to sex. Talk about GBV and gender norms. Some ideas to try with your kids include:
 - Encourage your kids to take parents on date nights and model respectful behaviour
 - Talk to your kids about healthy relationships, consent and sex education
 - Discuss gender roles and norms
 - Talk about bullying and their experiences at school and clubs
 - Introduce the concept of GBV
 - Conversation Guide to talk to your kids: <https://www.respect.gov.au/conversation-guide>

