

## **Ally Skills Workshop handout**

This handout is a reference for people to use during discussions in the Ally Skills Workshop, and for learning more after the workshop.

### **Basic concepts**

- **Privilege:** an unearned advantage given to some people but not all
- **Oppression:** systemic, pervasive inequality present throughout society that benefits people with more privilege and harms those with fewer privileges
- **Target:** someone who suffers from oppression
- **Ally:** a member of a social group that enjoys some privilege that is working to end oppression and understand their own privilege

### **Workshop discussion guidelines**

- You may leave or return at any time, for any reason, without explanation
- Anonymize any sensitive stories if you repeat them
- **Focus on what an ally can do** in this situation, not the target
- There are no trick questions

### **Guidelines for responding to oppression**

- Be short, simple, and firm
- Humor usually backfires, avoid it
- Pick your battles
- Play for the audience
- Practice simple responses
- Don't be sexist, homophobic, transphobic, racist, ableist, classist, ageist, body-shaming, or make fun of people for being sexually undesirable, unattractive, etc.

### **Guidelines for future ally work**

- Set specific goals for yourself for next week/month/year
- Treat ally actions as bare minimum expectation
- Follow and support leaders from target groups
- Follow your discomfort: if something makes you feel bad, find out more and understand why before reacting
- When you make a mistake, apologize, correct yourself, and move on

## **Terminology**

Using the right words and keeping up with changes is important ally work. If you make a mistake, that's fine! Just apologize, correct yourself, and move on. Also, members of a marginalized group can agree to call themselves anything they want.

## **Gender**

- Cis: your gender is the same as the gender that was assigned to you at birth
- Trans: your gender is different than the gender that was assigned to you at birth
- Non-binary or genderqueer: "male" or "female" doesn't describe your gender accurately
- Use men for cis and trans men, women for cis and trans women, non-binary people/folks, cis men/women, trans men/women, people of all genders, folks, people, everyone, all, y'all, all y'all, yinz...
- Don't use "girls" for women 18 years of age and over, "females" for humans, "guys" for groups that are not all men, "ladies", "transsexual", "people with [BODY PART or CHROMOSOME]" instead of "men" or "women"

## **Sexuality**

- Use straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual/pansexual (attracted to people of all genders), asexual (little or no sexual attraction to anyone), queer: catch-all term for anyone who is not a straight cis woman or man

## **Racial and ethnic groups**

- Avoid abbreviated forms of names of racial or ethnic groups
- Use Wikipedia to find preferred terms for racial or ethnic groups
- Don't use "ethnic," "urban," "inner city" or other euphemisms to designate people of a particular race or ethnic group

## **Disability and neurodivergence**

- Use "abled person," "disabled," or "person with disabilities"
- Only use respectfully in cases of self-disclosure: ADD/ADHD, Autistic, autism spectrum, schizophrenic, bipolar, etc.
- Don't use "lame," "dumb," "retard," "stupid," "crazy," etc. - instead use "foolish," "wild," or a specific adjective like "crowded" or "disorganized"
- Don't use names of specific disabilities as metaphors or similes to indicate badness

## **Body size**

- Describe body size using neutral descriptions: "higher weight," "lower weight," "larger body," "smaller build," "medium size"
- Don't use medicalized or value-judgement terms for body size like "healthy weight," "obese," "struggles with his weight", "normal weight," "overweight"

## **Religion, class, age, family role, etc.**

- Speak respectfully about religious or spiritual beliefs, with the exception of any bigotry or intolerance that is part of those beliefs

- Don't use stereotypes about working class people (e.g. janitor), adults of particular ages, people with family roles (mother, grandparent, etc.), or caregivers
- Don't use "politically correct" in a serious or literal way - it is a derogatory label created to criticize and deride the concept of "treating people with respect"
- Use "undocumented" not "illegal immigrant" or "illegal"

## Resources

The slides and handout for this workshop are available at:

<http://frameshiftconsulting.com/ally-skills-workshop>

<http://www.suffolk.edu/campuslife/27883.php> A dictionary of social justice terms.

<http://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender> A guide to writing or speaking about transgender people or issues.

The Wikipedia pages on names for racial and ethnic groups are remarkably useful.

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/08/size-discrimination-facts/> Information on body size discrimination

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradox\\_of\\_tolerance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradox_of_tolerance) Useful explanation of why a tolerant culture must be intolerant of intolerance (a favorite troll argument).

<http://geekfeminism.wikia.com> The Geek Feminism Wiki is an intersectional feminist resource for questions related to women in geek fields.

<http://adainitiative.org/> The Ada Initiative has specific advice in the areas of running conferences, codes of conduct, and areas relevant to women in open technology & culture.

<http://captainawkward.com/> The Captain Awkward advice blog has great tips for how to say uncomfortable things to people, enforce boundaries, and similar skills.

<https://danceswithfat.wordpress.com/blog/> The Dances with Fat blog explains what's wrong with how our culture talks about body size and includes specific advice for allies.

[http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Charles%27\\_Rules\\_of\\_Argument](http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Charles%27_Rules_of_Argument) Charles' Rules of Argument are useful to avoid wasting your time and energy.

[http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Tone\\_argument](http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Tone_argument) Resources for identifying and responding to the tone argument (hint: usually involves the word "tone").

<https://frameshiftconsulting.com/speaking/#meeting> Effective and just meetings have people filling four specific meeting roles: gatekeeper, facilitator, note-taker, and timekeeper.

<http://nyupress.org/books/9781479835454/> What Works for Women at Work: Four Patterns Working Women Need to Know by Joan C. Williams and Rachel Dempsey

<http://www.sirc.org/publik/drinking4.html> How societal attitudes affect response to alcohol.

<http://biasinterrupters.org/> Specific bias interrupting techniques for the workplace.

<http://www.issamenecessary.com/> How to use shame ethically and effectively in the service of social justice.

[http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Community\\_anti-harassment](http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Community_anti-harassment) Resources for developing a community code of conduct.

## Relevant papers and articles

"Does valuing diversity result in worse performance ratings for minority and female leaders?" by David Hekman, Stefanie Johnson, Wei Yang, Maw Der Foo

<http://amj.aom.org/content/early/2016/03/03/amj.2014.0538.abstract>

"Research: Vague Feedback Is Holding Women Back" by Shelley Correll and Caroline Simard

<https://hbr.org/2016/04/research-vague-feedback-is-holding-women-back>

"The one word men never see in their performance reviews" by Kathleen Davis

<http://www.fastcompany.com/3034895/strong-female-lead/the-one-word-men-never-see-in-their-performance-reviews>

"Alcohol and Inclusivity: Planning Tech Events with Non-Alcoholic Options" by Kara Sowles

<https://blog.valerieaurora.org/2018/03/30/cross-post-alcohol-and-inclusivity-planning-tech-event-s-with-non-alcoholic-options/>

"Inclusive offsites" by Sara Smollett, et al.

[http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Inclusive\\_offsites](http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Inclusive_offsites)

"What Google Learned From Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team" by Charles Duhigg (psychological safety)

<http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-the-perfect-team.html>

"No more rock stars: how to stop abuse in tech communities" by Leigh Honeywell, Valerie Aurora, and Mary Gardiner <https://hypatia.ca/2016/06/21/no-more-rock-stars/>

"The Al Capone Theory of sexual harassment" by Leigh Honeywell and Valerie Aurora

<https://qz.com/1043588/the-al-capone-theory-of-sexual-harassment-can-help-silicon-valley-stop-hiring-horrible-people/>

"A post-election guide to changing hearts and minds" by Valerie Aurora

<https://captainawkwad.com/2016/11/21/guest-post-a-post-election-guide-to-changing-hearts-and-minds/>

"How to Respond to an Offensive Comment at Work" by Amy Gallo

<https://hbr.org/2017/02/how-to-respond-to-an-offensive-comment-at-work>

"How 'good intent' undermines diversity and inclusion" by Annalee Flower Horne

<https://thebias.com/2017/09/26/how-good-intent-undermines-diversity-and-inclusion/>

## License and attribution

This handout is licensed Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 Unported (CC BY-SA 4.0) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

© 2016 - 2018 Frame Shift Consulting LLC <http://frameshiftconsulting.com>

© 2016 Dr. Sheila Addison <http://www.drsheilaaddison.com/>

© 2011 - 2015 The Ada Initiative <http://adainitiative.org>

Lead author: Valerie Aurora