Welcome to the online Ally Skills Workshop!

We're so happy you could join us today! A few requests:

1. Please use headphones if at all possible!
2. **Rename yourself:** click on "Participants," mouse over your name, click on "Rename," type in the name and pronouns you want other people in the meeting to use. Example: "Valerie (she/her/hers)". If you aren't sure what you want people to use, you can opt-out.
3. Download the files at [https://files.frameshiftconsulting.com/asw/](https://files.frameshiftconsulting.com/asw/)
4. Feel free to turn off your video, use your favorite virtual background, or show us your pet!
Format of the workshop

• 20 minute introduction
• 2.5 hours group discussion of real-world scenarios
• 10 minute wrap-up and Q & A

With a 10 minute break every hour and a 90 second stretch break every 30 minutes
Thank you for helping with the pilot workshop

We need your help and feedback to find what works for Xero

Ally skills are general principles; details depend on your local culture

The facilitators will share what we know and hope you will do the same!
Today's co-facilitators

Naomi Jones in Auckland

Jane Nosworthy in Melbourne

Phil Crothers in Auckland

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Valerie Aurora

Founder Frame Shift Consulting

Taught ally skills to 3000+ people in Spain, Germany, Australia, Ireland, Sweden, Mexico, New Zealand, UK, South Africa, and across the U.S.

Linux kernel and file systems developer for 10+ years

Valerie Aurora (she/her/hers)
Let’s talk about technical privilege

We are more likely to listen to people who "are technical"

... but we shouldn’t be

"Technical" is more likely to be granted to white men

I am using my technical privilege to end technical privilege!

https://frYERZelic.kr/p/ CC BY @sage_solar
What is an ally? Some terminology first:

**Privilege:** an *unearned* advantage given by society to some people but not all

**Oppression:** systemic, pervasive inequality that is present throughout society, that benefits people with more privilege and harms those with fewer privileges
**Terminology**

**Marginalized person:** a member of a group that is the primary target of a system of oppression

**Ally:** a member of a social group that enjoys some privilege that is working to end oppression and understand their own privilege

**Actions**
Ally is a verb, not an identity

Being a marginalized person takes no action - it is an identity

Acting as an ally is about action - it is not an identity, which is why we talk about "ally skills" instead of "allies"

Depending on what is most relevant about you to the situation, you may switch between being marginalized and acting as an ally
Example

**Privilege:** The ability to interview for a job and have the interviewer assume that if you have children, you will continue doing a good job at work

**Oppression:** Family expectations that mothers do more childcare, belief that mothers don't want to do paid work, financial systems unwilling to extend credit to mothers, laws that put more burdens on mothers than fathers, paying men more than women...
Example

**Marginalized person:** Any woman who wants to work for pay for an employer, regardless of her plans for children

**Ally:** A man who takes on significant childcare responsibilities, donates to women’s causes, votes for feminist candidates and laws, speaks up at work against stereotypes about mothers, reads news articles about privileges fathers enjoy and mothers don't...
Why focus on ally skills?

In an experiment, researchers found that when marginalized people work to increase diversity, supervisors give them worse performance evaluations.

But when more privileged people work to increase diversity, it does not harm their performance evaluations (and may improve them).

Does valuing diversity result in worse performance ratings for minority and female leaders?
http://amj.aom.org/content/early/2016/03/03/amj.2014.0538.abstract
Exercise: Identify your power and privilege

Privilege and power are often invisible to people who have them, but identifying them helps you act as an ally.

This exercise is voluntary - you do not have to do it.

If people assume you have a privilege that you do not, you can make your own decision about whether to include it.

What did you think?

Do you have more or less power than you thought?

Do you have more or less privilege than you thought?

Any surprises or things you hadn't thought about before?

https://flic.kr/p/H2cL7F
CC BY-SA jason gessner
What this workshop is not

A certification, an apology, or a "get-out-of-jail-free card"

Representing anyone's employer or giving legal advice

Time to discuss whether oppression exists, is bad, should be stopped, etc.
Basics of ally skills

Be short, simple, firm
Don't try to be funny
Play for the audience
Practice simple responses
Pick your battles
While you're trying to help one group, don't be:

- sexist
- homophobic
- transphobic
- racist
- ableist
- classist
- ageist
- body-shaming
- and don't describe people as sexually undesirable, unattractive, etc.
Awkward...
What if I make a mistake?

Apologize, correct yourself, and move on.
Help us create a safer space

You may leave or return at any time, for any reason, without explanation

This workshop is not recorded

This workshop is designed to be voluntary

Please anonymize if you repeat sensitive stories

Share at the level of people you just met at a conference
Preparing for group discussion

Each group will choose a moderator to interrupt people who are speaking too much and invite others to speak.

Feel free to moderate the moderator.

Choose someone to take notes and report what you talked about, and rotate this person each scenario.

Joining groups is optional.
A few more tips for group discussion

There aren't any trick questions.

If you're not sure of the situation, pick one (or more) interpretations and discuss it.

Focus on how someone could act as an ally in this scenario, not as a marginalized person.

"You" in the scenario description is a theoretical person who could act as an ally, not a literal "you"
Scenarios & group discussion
Scenario: What could an ally do?

In your weekly team meetings, you notice that women don't speak nearly as often as men. When women do speak, you notice that they are interrupted more often than men.

(Reminder: pick your note-taker and moderator!)
Tip: Create psychological safety

Psychological safety means an environment in which people feel safe and take turns sharing information.

Google study showed the most productive and profitable teams have psychological safety.

Two elements: sensitivity to others' feelings, and conversational turn-taking.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_safety
Tip: How to create psychological safety?

More structure: agenda, moderator, reserved speaking time, hand signals to request speaking time, etc.

Praise and reward when quiet people speak up more

Discourage shaming, humiliation, dominance

Reduce hierarchy (switch up who takes notes, change meeting leader, powerful person gets coffee, etc.)
Who is speaking in your group?

Who is speaking most in your group?

Is someone having difficulty being heard?

Are there patterns related to gender, race, age, or anything else?

How do these discussions compare to ones you have in other contexts?
Scenario: What could an ally do?

You are in a meeting about how to raise your organization's low rate of promotions of people from a marginalized racial group. A colleague of yours says, "I'm all in favor of fairness and equality, but let's be careful not to lower the bar."
Reframe the discussion

**Assumption:** at present, everyone has equal access to promotion, regardless of race or ethnicity

**Reality:** People from marginalized racial/ethnic groups face a much a higher bar than people of dominant race/ethnicity, who often get exceptions to the process

**Reframe:** "Actually, the problem is that marginalized people have to pass a higher bar, and we need to fix that."
Scenario: What could an ally do?

One of your direct reports avoids speaking to another of your direct reports. When you ask, they say it is because that person is gay and homosexuality is against their religion and not acceptable where they grew up. When you push back, they say that you should be more considerate of people from other cultures.
"Paradox" of tolerance

A tolerant society must be intolerant of one thing: intolerance itself (otherwise intolerance takes over)

Multiculturalism means including and welcoming different cultures - except parts that harm or exclude people

Company culture takes precedence over other cultures in this case

Scenario: What could an ally do?

You are eating lunch in the employee kitchen when a group sits down near you. One person comments loudly “If I ate that, I’d be as big as a house!” A higher-weight coworker is sitting nearby and can clearly overhear.
Tip: Weight discrimination at work

“Fat talk/diet talk” can be used as a form of bonding but creates a hostile environment

Higher weight people face workplace discrimination, particularly women, regardless of ability to do the job

Body size is falsely equated with virtue: self-control, hard worker, in good health

Workplace “health initiatives” often discriminate against higher weight and disabled employees and don't work
Scenario: What could an ally do?

In a meeting you attend, several people disagree strongly but productively over a technical decision. Later, one of the other people in the meeting tells you they were disturbed by your report's tone in the meeting. Your report was the only person of a marginalized race/ethnicity in the meeting. This is not the first time this has happened.
Tip: tone policing/the “tone argument”

When members of marginalized groups advocate for themselves or their ideas, it violates expectations that marginalized people should be submissive and quiet.

The same behavior in a person with a lot of privilege may be described as "passionate" or "committed".

May be strengthened by specific stereotypes, e.g. mythical "anger gene" for Māori, "angry Black man," etc.
Scenario: What could an ally do?

A woman on your team has been successfully filling in for her direct superior after he left. After 6 months, she asks to be formally promoted to the position. Instead, your director hires a man from outside the company with less experience to fill the position and asks her to train the new hire. When you ask why, your director tells you that the new hire has a lot of potential.
Tip: What Works for Women at Work

By Joan C. Williams and Rachel Dempsey

Four patterns of subtle bias, varying by race, ethnicity, appearance, etc.

1. Prove-it-again
2. The Tightrope
3. The Maternal Wall
4. Tug-of-war
Goal-setting exercise

http://files.frameshiftconsulting.com/asw/goals.pdf
Advanced ally skills

Treat ally actions as bare minimum expectation

Follow and support leaders from marginalized 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
Ally Skills Workshop
http://frameshiftconsulting.com/ally-skills-workshop

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