

A GUIDE FOR ALLIES: PRACTICAL TIPS ON SUPPORTING QUEER COMMUNITIES

Safety & Wellness Guides for Queer Zimbabweans

Being an ally to marginalised communities is an important role in creating inclusive, accepting, and supportive environments. Allies can be loving and supportive communities that help amplify marginalized voices, challenge harmful stereotypes, and advocate for the rights of those who identify as sexual or gender minorities. By educating yourself, you'll avoid making assumptions, asking intrusive questions, and unintentionally perpetuating stereotypes. Subscribe to our monthly newsletter to get recommendations for resources that could help you and the queer people you know. This guide has practical tips to help you support queer+ individuals and communities

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Understanding the basics of LGBTQIA+ identities, terminology, and issues is key to being an informed ally. Take the time to learn about the following:

- Sexual Orientation: Who someone is attracted to (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual).
- Gender Identity: How someone identifies in terms of gender (e.g., cisgender, transgender, nonbinary).
- Gender Expression: How someone expresses their gender through clothing, behavior, etc.
- SOGIESC: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression Sex Characteristics .

Check out our social media pages for infographics on some common terminology and definitions.

USE THE CORRECT NAME AND PRONOUNS

- Ask for a person's preferred name and pronouns. If you're unsure, it's okay to ask respectfully.
- Respect their choices: If someone shares their preferred pronouns, it's important to use them consistently.

Practice: If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun, apologize briefly, correct yourself, and continue the conversation. Avoid making a big deal out of the mistake, as it can make the person uncomfortable.

STAND UP AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE

- **Speak out when you witness homophobia, transphobia, or any form of discrimination.**

Whether it's a subtle comment or a blatant attack, addressing it can create a safer environment for your queer counterparts. This can be in person (when safe to do so) or online.

- **Challenge stereotypes:**

When you hear or see harmful stereotypes or jokes, challenge them. Many queer people experience microaggressions on a daily basis, so being proactive can make a huge difference.

RESPECT PRIVACY AND BOUNDARIES

- **Don't out someone:**

It's important never to disclose someone's sexual orientation, gender identity, or any related personal information without their consent.

- **Avoid invasive questions:**

Do not ask queer individuals about their sexual practices or personal experiences unless they volunteer that information. Similarly, avoid asking trans/gender fluid/non binary people about their bodies or whether they've had certain medical procedures.

- **Avoid starting debates about sexuality and identity:**

While you may have questions and curiosities, debates for allies are just that - debates. For queer people they may end up being a negotiation about their lives and their humanity. Many times active listening is the best way to learn about the communities we want to support.

LISTEN AND BE EMPATHETIC

- **Be present:**

If a person confides in you about their experiences, listen without judgment. Be an empathetic listener and provide support without offering solutions unless they ask for advice.

- **Acknowledge their experiences:**

Recognize that queer people often face challenges such as discrimination, microaggressions, or rejection. Validate their feelings and let them know that their struggles are real.

BE AWARE OF INTERSECTIONALITY

- **Recognize that identity is complex:**

Understand that a queer person's experiences are shaped by multiple aspects of their identity, including race, ethnicity, class, religion, and disability. Acknowledge and respect these intersections, as different people within the queer community face unique challenges.

SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- **Check in regularly:**

Sexual and gender minorities, particularly those who are part of marginalized groups, may experience higher rates of mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety, due to discrimination or social isolation. Check in on their mental health and offer a supportive, non-judgmental space.

- **Encourage professional support:**

If needed, encourage seeking therapy or counseling services, particularly those specializing in queer issues. Our other guides share more mental and health and wellness.

DON'T ASSUME OR GENERALIZE

- **Avoid stereotypes:**

Every queer individual is unique, so don't assume someone's experience based on their identity. For example, don't assume all lesbians are the same or that all gay men behave a certain way.

- **Allow for self-definition:**

People may identify in ways that don't fit neatly into categories, so respect their personal definitions. Terms like "genderqueer," "pansexual," or "nonbinary" may have meanings specific to individuals.

CELEBRATE LGBTQIA+ CULTURE

- **Support LGBTQIA+ artists, writers, and creators:**

Promote and engage with LGBTQIA+ culture through books, films, music, art, and performances. Celebrate Pride Month, but remember to be involved throughout the year in showing support.

- **Learn about LGBTQIA+ history:**

Understanding the historical struggles and milestones of the LGBTQIA+ community helps you appreciate the importance of allyship. Learn about pivotal events such as the Stonewall Riots, the AIDS crisis, and the history of queer rights movements.

BE HUMBLE AND KEEP LEARNING

- **Acknowledge your privilege:**

Recognize your position as an ally and be open to learning from LGBTQIA+ individuals. Avoid centering yourself in conversations about LGBTQIA+ issues.

- **Accept feedback:**

If you make a mistake or say something unintentionally hurtful, be open to feedback. Apologize and use the opportunity to grow.