

HOW TO BE A GOOD ALLY: NEUROAFFIRMING EDITION

Whether you're a neurotypical ally, a parent, carer, partner, or family member of a Neurodivergent person, or Neurodivergent yourself, we can all learn how to be better neuroaffirming allies!

WHAT IS ALLYSHIP?

To be an ally means actively supporting and advocating for marginalised or underrepresented groups, often by challenging systemic biases and discrimination, and working towards equality and inclusion.

An ally is someone who is not a member of a marginalised group but chooses to stand in solidarity with and support those who are.

What do allies do?

- **Advocacy:** Speaking up and challenging discriminatory language or behaviour.
- **Education:** Learning about different perspectives and biases, and sharing that knowledge with others.
- **Empowerment:** Creating safe spaces for marginalised groups to share their experiences and needs.
- **Action:** Taking concrete steps to promote equality and inclusion, such as volunteering, donating, or participating in activism.

It's an ongoing process:

- Allyship is not a one-time event, but an ongoing commitment to learning, listening, and taking action.

Monique Mitchelson AuDHD Clinical Psychologist
Anna Clarke AuDHD Psychologist

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LEARN FROM NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE:

- ☐ What neurodiversity affirming training have you done? Was it by Autistic or ADHD people? If not, was it co-produced and co-facilitated with equal power and profit shared? Or was consultation done as an afterthought or tick-box activity, rather than true co-production from the start of the project to the end with full credit for their contribution?
- ☐ Have you had supervision from Neurodivergent mentors/professionals?
- ☐ Have you read books/listened to podcasts/bought resources written by Neurodivergent people?
- ☐ Do you follow Neurodivergent creators, advocates and professionals on social media?
- ☐ Do you put the burden of educating yourself on those who are more marginalised or do you take responsibility for educating yourself proactively? Ask yourself — Is this something I can google? etc. Constant advocacy, education and dealing with micro and macro aggressions, stigma, prejudice and discrimination just for simply existing is exhausting!

DO YOU MAKE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO DECONSTRUCT BIASES IN YOUR LANGUAGE AND USE AFFIRMING LANGUAGE INSTEAD?

- ☐ On your reports/documents/processes
- ☐ On your website
- ☐ When presenting/speaking/training
- ☐ In everyday life/at work/with friends/around strangers

If you are annoyed at the effort this requires, stop and think about those who are disabled and have made this effort.

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DO YOU KNOW YOUR POWER AND PRIVILEGE? DO YOU SHARE YOUR POWER AND USE YOUR PRIVILEGE TO:

- ☐ Do you share your power and privileges with those more marginalised than you for the purpose of furthering inclusion and opportunities?
- ☐ Have you asked, am I the best person for this opportunity? Or is there someone who belongs to that marginalised community that is better suited?
- ☐ Do you consider the ethical ramifications of your words and actions and acknowledge harm caused? Allies outside of a community can unintentionally cause harm when trying to 'help'. For example, consider the impact your actions have had over your good intentions.
- ☐ Do you consciously address your biases? Do you evaluate the biases in the systems that you trained in and what you have learned about neurodivergence?
- ☐ Are you also an ally to other marginalised communities, not just the Neurodivergent community? Remember, Neurodivergent people may have other intersecting identities that increase barriers and discrimination. For example, research shows Autistic and ADHD people are more likely to identify as gender diverse, trans and queer.
- ☐ Do you actively encourage and foster co-design and co-facilitation?
- ☐ Do you actively consider the communication needs and accommodations needed for true inclusion?
- ☐ Do you consider the impact of the double empathy theory and learn to communicate in a neurodivergent-preferred manner?
- ☐ Do you understand that your lived experience as a neurotypical parent/carer/family member/partner/friend is different to having lived experience of being Neurodivergent? There are appropriate times/spaces to share your lived experiences, but have you considered when you speak over those with lived experience of being Neurodivergent and the impact that may have?

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DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEURODIVERGENT COMMUNITY?

- ☐ Have you given free time? Emotional labour? Contributed free resources? Volunteered? Supported? Advocated? Encouraged? Mentored? Listened?
- ☐ Have you advocated to have more Neurodivergent people in rooms/positions where decisions are made?
- ☐ Do an audit of your workplace, friendship circle, community spaces etc. How many openly Neurodivergent people, especially those with intersecting marginalised identities, are there in your networks/circles? If there are none or few, what can you do to change this?

You should be doing this before you profit from the Neurodivergent community to maintain ethical and moral standards and equity/fairness. If you honestly reflect and have not contributed to the community, your actions may be viewed as exploitative and tokenistic.

BEING A TRUE ALLY

Being a true ally takes courage, curiosity, openness to learning, self-reflection and change, emotional flexibility and emotional maturity.

- ☐ Can you sit with the uncomfortable feelings that come up if/when your good intentions are challenged without becoming defensive or attacking those from the marginalised community?

It is a process of continual learning, growth and listening.....

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MY SELF REFLECTIONS:

CONCRETE ACTIONS/STEPS MOVING FORWARD:

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