

Being an ally

Take action. Before everything else, the mark of an ally is taking action against inequality or mistreatment.

Listen/Learn. A gift of alliance is finding out, from people of color's experience, how the world is perceived and experienced by someone whose life is different from yours, providing information that has been withheld from you by the conditioning you received. A first act of alliance is to make space for people of color, with unconditioned support from you, to define the issues with which they grapple, the structure of racism from their own experience. A companion act of alliance is to research and discover in detail how racism works: statistics, facts, and history you can pass on to others.

Use your privilege. As an ally you identify the resources you have and use your resources on behalf of people of color, gaining them access and opportunity.

Support people of color's leadership. True alliance means getting out of the way of people of color, supporting them in taking charge of their lives and making their own decisions about what must be done. To rescue, or attempt to rescue, or take over removes the power once again. Conversely, to step out of the way without offer of support or tactful guidance is to abandon.

Go after other white folks. Folks of color, engaged in their own work, need you to intervene with and educate other white people. Moreover, your intervention must be from the standpoint of support, not differentiating yourself as better than the others of your group. To the extent you reject or push them away, you are pushing away part of yourself.

Take a chance; make a mistakes. Expect to make mistakes, and to agree to fix them when you do. Alliance work is built upon trying things, making mistakes, and going on.

Take care of yourself. Alliance is a lifelong activity. It can't be sustained unless you are rested, replenished, and hopeful. So, in light of that:

Get support, accept support.