

Three Simple Ways to Be a Better Male Ally



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To understand allyship is to recognize our responsibility of supporting and advocating for equality.

Simply believing that allyship is important is not enough though; we must also take action to make it a reality. But I get it — transitioning from a belief to tangible action is easier said than done. The good news is that you do not have to overhaul your life in order to be an effective ally.

Here's my starter list of things you can do today, this month, this year, and onward to be an active ally for women.

Use Your Privilege as a Superpower

As a kid, I never liked Batman. To me, he had no special gifts like other superheroes; he was just rich and privileged. Decades later, perhaps Batman was actually the ultimate ally. A privileged guy spending his time fighting for the equality of others? I don't know his character arc, but I do know that privilege is not a bad thing. In fact, if privilege is used to help others, it actually becomes an elite super power.

The truth is, everyone has some privilege throughout life. It could stem from social constructs such as our race, gender, nationality, age, intelligence, or beauty. Privilege can also come from less obvious areas, such as feeling physically safe at work, never being questioned if you're in the right room/meeting, having a partner who shares household and family responsibilities, or even having headcount to hire/grow your team.

Now imagine if you used your privilege to:

- Elevate the company's harassment and code of conduct policy
- Welcome new faces before starting a meeting
- Ensure work expectations did not extend beyond work hours
- Remove bias questions from your interview questions and candidate debriefs.

Use it, Don't Lose It

The cool thing about privilege is you *usually* can't lose it. If you benefit from male privilege and you use it to open opportunities for non-male colleagues; you don't actually lose anything by using it in service of others. My parents used to say "money doesn't grow on trees" when I would ask for things as a child (not Batman toys, obviously.) Well guess what, privilege *does* grow on trees and you just happen to own a privilege tree. So share those leaves, my guy.

Share Opportunities

Speaking of sharing, the easiest thing you can do as a male ally is share opportunities with your female (and non-binary) counterparts. Often, when men think about allyship and making an impact, we tend to focus on how we can do more. However, we can also have a major impact by doing less.

- When you have an opportunity to present to the company, speak on a panel, lead a project, or drive a presentation for any audience, pause and ask yourself: "Am I the right person for this opportunity?" By simply recommending a woman to replace you in these moments, you're reversing centuries of systemic erasure of women's impact on society (Look at you, you revolutionary!)
- I'm not talking about giving out unearned handouts. I mean, recognizing the important contributions of women and ensuring the spotlight is shared appropriately.

But there's a twist. I don't just mean **sharing the cool stuff**. I mean also sharing the workload and non-promotable tasks as well. (Every team has non-promotable tasks that need to be done, including tasks like *taking notes, scheduling the next meeting, planning offsite events, organizing happy hours, or driving presentation slides, etc.*)

- Did you know that on mixed gendered teams, women assume the non-promotable tasks nearly 80% of the time, on average? However, on all male teams, non-promotable tasks are evenly distributed or rotated amongst the male team members. (So we *do* know how to share!)
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Be Visible

One of the more effective things you can do as an ally is be visible. Now I'm not saying you have to livestream from the frontlines of every protest or write LinkedIn articles for ally points (**#awkward**) I'm just saying, you want women to tell you that "you ARE an ally" versus asking you "are you an ally?" Here's my CliffsNotes on visible allyship: (Is CliffsNotes even a thing now or does Gen Z just use OpenAI instead?)

Donate to woman-forward, woman-run causes

- No explanation needed. No Instagram post needed. Just donate.

Normalize tough conversations

- When it comes to encouraging more men to become allies, visibility matters. This means embracing tough conversations about gender and not avoiding email, Slack or Teams chats when conversations get uncomfortable.

Call out systematic inequalities and acknowledge microaggressions

- Silence is complicity and only perpetuates the cycle. If you notice there's few or no women in the meeting with you, publicly, ask why. You're in an employee performance review session and you hear criticism of a woman that was not given to her male peer — ask your colleagues why.

Model different ways of being

- Model behavior that is authentic and vulnerable. That gives others permission to do so as well, and subconsciously signals that they don't need to perform or show up in a particular way in order to engage and seem credible.

Celebrate women's accomplishments

- Regardless of your title/position, make a point to acknowledge the accomplishments of women in important meetings or group discussions. These kinds of small gestures can greatly increase the odds that a woman's work will get noticed by the right people.

If you find this helpful and applicable to your work life, share it with a friend or colleague. I'll even give you one bonus tip: **Start at home** with your family and friends that are women. Ask them, "How can I be a better ally to you?" Then believe them and do what they ask. Practicing allyship outside of work allows us to show up as allies at work in an authentic way.

