

Gender Ally

Anna 02's Story

Facilitator's Guide

Story Videos can be viewed at:

<http://onmyplanet.ca/mundo/genderally/themes/human-rights-and-advocacy/anna-02>

Developing Empathy – Inform on trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming issues through personal story.



Acknowledging the Territories

Find out which Indigenous peoples inhabit the land that you are on. Try to find the traditional names of the Nations and Bands in your area as opposed to names given to them by colonists. Time permitting and if the group is committed to doing the whole series – this could be a group exercise/project. The acknowledgement at the head of the introduction document can be used as an example – it is termed for the local area where the materials were developed. The Anti-Violence Project at the University of Victoria has an excellent resource page for identifying and acknowledging Indigenous Communities on Vancouver Island and in BC.

<https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/about/territory-acknowledgement>

Safer Space Guidelines

It is important to establish a working agreement or contract with the students while discussing this type of sensitive subject matter. Time permitting: engage the group members in establishing their own agreement – asking what they think they would need to feel safe to discuss their feelings and/or this type of subject matter. Write the items down on a flipchart or similar so that you can refer back to the established agreement during the session or for subsequent sessions. There is a list of questions below that may help in establishing what a safer space might look like for your group. It is also important to discuss accountability for situations where participants do not follow the group agreement.

The following is a list of Safer Space Guidelines that is commonly used by LGBTQ2 support groups. It was initiated by TransAction in 2010 and edited by Homospun in Victoria, BC, in 2013.

Each individual in the group is asked to:

- Respect your own physical, mental and emotional boundaries
- Please communicate your needs and speak up if you are uncomfortable
- Remember you are welcome to take space away if you need time alone/away/quiet
- Respect the physical, mental and emotional boundaries of others – ask for consent before engaging in physical contact
- Avoid making assumptions about the identity, experiences, and/or histories of other people
- Respect the confidentiality of information and narratives shared with you
- Remember, everyone makes mistakes
- Try to speak with “I” statements and avoid personal attacks when communicating with others about mistakes they made
- Assume that others are acting and speaking from a place of positive intent
- Be aware of the impacts of your own behaviour and take responsibility for what you say and do
- Be open to being approached and talked with if you make a mistake
- Remember that we are gathered to share an open and engaging environment

Participants can add to or change these guidelines. If the group is going to do the whole series of workshops, spend the time to develop the guidelines with the group. Alternatively, you can provide a few and ask for others from the group or simply review the guidelines provided. A verbal agreement, a show of hands or similar, cements the contract. We urge both facilitators and participants to help maintain the group agreement. Once established, the group agreement should promote learning for all involved using respectful communication and discussion. Discuss, establish and record as part of the guidelines, what should happen if someone does not follow the agreement.

Questions To Help Establish A Safer Space

- What do we need to feel safe to share our questions and stories with this group?
- How do we tell the difference between 'not knowing' and 'disrespect'?
- What does it look like to show respect to the person in the video? To your peers?
- What happens to the group when someone doesn't follow the agreement?
- What are our options if we feel someone is being disrespectful?
- What should happen when a group member does not follow the agreement?

The group may agree to choose 5 or 6 key points from the guidelines provided above to review at the opening of each session.

Definition of Ally

- After introducing the purpose of working with the materials - developing empathy, building understanding and taking action - ask each person to write down one or more words that define the term 'ally'.

Group Introductions

Going around the room each participant tells the group their name and their pronouns. Depending on the group this could extend to any other identifier that the participants feel is important to share about themselves (establish this beforehand). This gives everyone a chance to identify themselves as opposed to accepting/enforcing an expected (often binary) identity. It reduces assumptions about gender identity and encourages respect for how individuals expect to be seen and addressed. The facilitator will need to model: "I'm ____ and I go by she/her, ze/hir, they/them. What about you?" An individual may choose more than one. You may indicate that this comes up in conversation normally and using everyone's specified pronouns demonstrates allyship. Someone's pronouns may change over time so it is important to ask everyone and ask frequently.

Witnessing people (most often cis-gender people) jokingly play with their gender can be difficult. Be attentive to how the group responds to their pronoun identification. If you suspect that someone is using a pronoun or gender identification in a disrespectful way – trying to make a joke out of the exercise – we suggest that you investigate this with the group. For example, if someone says that their gender is 'cupcake' or 'dog', to diffuse the situation, you can take this seriously with a question such as: "I'm not familiar with that, can you elaborate on how that works?" or "I'm not quite understanding that one, can you use that in a sentence?"



Icebreaker Activity

This type of exercise is helpful when the group is new to each other. There are a number of other sample Icebreaker activities in the Activities List if you would like to choose a different activity.

Looking For Similarities

- Starting in pairs, participants talk until they find something that they have in common (it has to be a less obvious thing, not that they live in the same city or that they are in the same class).
- Once they find something in common they join with another pair, creating a group of 4 and continue to find something they all have in common.
- Once they find something they all have in common they join with another group of 4 to make a group of 8 and continue until they are sitting with the whole group.
- Once in the whole group more obvious things may be cited if no other common denominator can be found.

Video Viewing

Anna's Story – Synopsis

Anna is a dyed-in-the-wool political butch dyke. She talks about getting politicized, becoming a feminist, coming out, and working in the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre in the 80s. She has continued working as a community activist since then, noting the similarities between LGBTQ2 issues and other social justice causes.

Talking Points

Content Warnings (Themes)

Butch/Femme

Feminist

Bathhouse Raids

Rape Crisis Centre

'Date' Rape

Lesbian

Misogyny

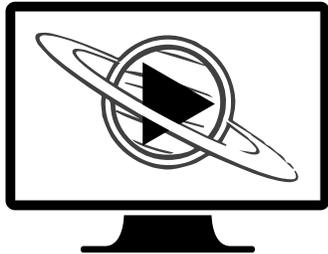
Dyke

Non-Monogamy

Patriarchal

Queer Liberation

'Other'



Watch Anna 02's Story Video

Exercise For Identifying Themes

- Participants pair off and spend 4 minutes talking about their reactions to the video story.
- While in pairs, ask the participants 3 questions:
 1. What stood out to you - visually or emotionally?
 2. What are you curious to know more about?
 3. What experiences can you relate to from the story?
- One member of each pair presents the reactions that came up in the pair's conversation.
- Record themes brought up by each pair. Ask about themes identified above if themes do not emerge from participants' conversations.

Building Understanding — Provide a safe container in which to discuss pertinent issues and practice difficult conversations.

Discussion Topics

1. Anna describes herself as 'butch by birth', yet still identifies as a woman. What does 'Butch' mean in this situation? Do you consider Anna to be gender variant or gender-queer? How does she stretch the stereotypical gender roles of women?
2. As a feminist, Anna identifies potential misogyny in the characterization of butch/femme. How would you describe misogyny, what behaviors might be an indicator?
3. Another issue was non-monogamy, defining the institution of marriage as 'patriarchal'. Recently, LGBTQ2 individuals have fought for and won the right to marry. What underlies the shift, is it acceptance in the mainstream? Or have LGBTQ2 people become less radical? What changed in the analysis of marriage as 'patriarchal' or has it changed?
4. Anna describes Queer Liberation as gender expression that is visible, accepted and celebrated. What do you see in your community that celebrates gender expression?
5. Queer Liberation, according to our speaker, was 'born out of taking risks, doing something different'. This is a call to activism. What do Pride celebrations have to do with activism?

Activities for the Discussion Topics

If time is running short, cut down the discussion section (e.g. one activity instead of two) to insure that the 'Ally Practices' section is included.

There are a number of other sample exercises to use with the discussion topics in the Activities List if you would like to use different exercises.

You can also use the themes and reactions that came up in the previous exercise to create your own questions for the following exercises.



Activity 1

Gestures

- Use a topic from the video that has feeling qualities – sad, mad, glad, afraid. e.g. What does born butch look like? A misogynist gesture? Being at a rally you support? A celebration?
- Ask participants to stand in a circle and make a gesture that is representative of the different feelings.
- Participants imagine they are the person in the video: How do the feelings express in gestures?
- Debrief – does it shift how you relate to the person in the video? A journal assignment following may be appropriate.

Activity 2

Speed Charting

- Using a series of flip charts, each flip chart has a different assigned discussion question.
- Two people at each flip chart, write (point form) answers to the discussion question on the flip chart.
- At the end of the set time (2 mins), each person moves to a flip chart they haven't responded to yet and to a different flip chart than their previous partner.
- Each new pair/individual adds to what others have written. Each conversation is limited to 2 minutes.
- Review and discuss the flipcharts at the end, point out trends.

Taking Action – Assist participants in identifying ways to practice allyship with trans, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming youth.

Allyship Practices

In this section the empathy and understanding established with the video story and discussion is connected to ally practices. There are a number of ways to practice allyship; educating yourself and others, being inclusive in both your language and your actions, being supportive, standing up, calling out, calling in and others. It is important to understand that allyship involves not just an initial learning curve but ongoing self-education and practice. Becoming informed and developing awareness are the first steps to practicing allyship.



Present the info graphic, discuss the two lists of tips for interactions and go through the examples of Allyship Techniques, before engaging the group in the discussion questions for this section.

There are several good "How to be a Good Ally" lists and documents out there. A few are listed here and there are more in the resources list. "Being An Effective Trans Ally", from the 519 Community Centre in Toronto, outlines a number of elements of allyship quite succinctly (makes a great handout). The info graphic can be downloaded here:

<http://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/trans-inclusion-matters/creating-authentic-spaces/being-an-effective-trans-ally>



Present the info graphic to the group and invite discussion.

Points to Cover in Discussion:

- 'Ally' is not an identity. Too many 'allies' claim the label and don't necessarily do the work, so the term 'ally' should be treated as a verb. An ally is only an ally while they are practicing allyship.
- Allyship is never perfect nor will it ever be complete.
- An ally isn't in it to be thanked or even recognized and will never be able to rest on their laurels.
- The reason allies are allies is because understanding your own privilege, learning about people that are different than you, helping others understand their privilege, standing up for equality, and using the right pronouns are the right things to do.
- Ally techniques let the people around you know that "...you want to help change the world for marginalized communities, even if you are not a part of a particular group." (Being an Effective Trans Ally — link below)
- The more people know about and practice allyship, the better it will be for everyone.

If the group is doing more than one workshop segment, a good homework assignment for participants to familiarize themselves with the elements of allyship between sessions is to download and read the entire pdf info graphic. This should significantly improve the discussion.

Gender Ally

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The following list of things to remember for Trans Allyship is based on 'The Basics' at [Transequality.org](http://www.transequality.org). The full pdf can be downloaded here:

<http://www.transequality.org/issues/resources/supporting-the-transgender-people-in-your-life-a-guide-to-being-a-good-ally>



Discuss the following lists of tips:

- There is no one way to be a 'perfect' ally.
- You don't have to understand someone's identity to respect it.
- You can't always tell if someone is trans simply by looking at them (and do you really want or need to?).
- There is no 'one right way' to be trans, Two-Spirit or gender non-conforming (GNC).
- Continue to educate yourself.

Interacting with Transgender people

- Use the language a trans person uses for themselves.
- Ask everyone and ask often. Pronouns can change, asking regularly is always a good idea.
- Be careful and considerate about what other questions you ask.
- Someone's gender identity is their private information to share, or not.
- Avoid compliments or advice based on stereotypes about transgender people, or about how men and women should look or act. (e.g.: comments about looking like a "real woman or man").

The following techniques outline the first steps of allyship and draw an effective path toward activism:

Examples of Allyship Techniques

1. **Active Witnessing** — making your presence known in the situation.
2. **Supportive Actions** — correcting pronoun/language use when the person in question isn't present, discouraging discriminating conversation or put-down comments when the person in question isn't present etc., regularly including someone in an activity, sitting with or talking to a person who is being bullied.
3. **Standing Up** — calling someone out, telling someone when you witness bullying or discrimination (friends, teacher, parent, counsellor or someone you trust).
4. **Calling In** — calling someone in is very similar to calling someone out in that you are calling attention to oppressive beliefs and behaviour, but it's done with a little more compassion and offers a conversation and some education on the topic. The following article describes the process of Calling In:

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in>

Some discussions may be emotionally challenging or difficult for some participants. While many facilitators are able to provide appropriate support, if you feel unprepared or out of your depth, consider inviting a counsellor or other supports (i.e. an Elder, a community youth leader, etc.) to join the discussion for the first session or for sessions that are anticipated to be more intense.



In pairs or small groups identify things an individual can do in each of the areas listed below.

Relating Video Discussion Topics and Allyship Techniques

1. **Self-education** — How can you find out about the history of queer liberation in your community?
2. **Active Witness** — You likely witness multiple incidents of misogyny everyday. Start writing them down.
3. **Supportive Action** — Lately, feminism has been seen by some as a negative thing. Ask around - do you or your friends consider yourselves to be feminists? How can you help people understand that feminism is about gender equality not about discriminating against anyone else?
4. **Standing Up** — When someone makes a disparaging remark that involves someone's gender or stereotypical gender roles, what can you say or do to help prevent it from happening again? If you don't feel comfortable speaking to the person directly, who is in your immediate surrounding that could you tell about the incident?

Practicing allyship is usually uncomfortable and will undoubtedly involve some failure. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, it's bound to happen sooner or later. Best practice is to listen when what you've done has had a negative impact, be accountable for your mistakes without getting super defensive, apologize and move on. This article from Everyday Feminism describes some common mistakes made by trans allies (and praises them for sticking with it):

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/06/6-common-mistakes-trans-allies/0>

Using Additional Clips

Additional shorter clips may be available to focus attention on a particular topic – e.g. Two-Spirit, gender identity, bullying, inner conflict and coming out to a parent. Not all videos have additional video clips. The additional clips can reinforce or deepen the conversation about a topic or be provided as an assignment.



Anna O2's Story – Back When I Was an Activist

1. Anna speaks of grassroots activism, organizing demonstrations, and using old technology from the 80s. She also describes it as exciting and somewhat unsafe. As a self-identified butch dyke, her appearance is commonplace today. She talked about 'having friends at your back', i.e. community. How are you an activist? What community are you a part of that takes action when discrimination is evident? What kind of 'actions' do you take part in?

Research and Larger Projects

Discussion topics can be used by individuals or small groups to do further research or complete a follow-up assignment. Use the Resources List and Glossary to support the work.

Closing the Session

At the end of each segment, remind the participants of some of the key elements of your safer space group agreement, and/or some key ally practices e.g.:

- Respect the confidentiality of information and narratives shared with you.
- Avoid making assumptions about the identity, experiences, and/or histories of other people.
- Assume that others are acting and speaking from a place of positive intent.
- Be aware of the impacts of your own behaviour and take responsibility for what you say and do.
- Remember that we are gathered to share an open and engaging environment.
- You don't have to understand someone's identity to respect it.
- Continue to educate yourself.

Definition of Ally

- At the close of the session, ask each person to write down how the definition of 'ally' has changed as a result of working with the materials.

Terms and Definitions

1. **Dyke** — An historically derogatory term for lesbian. Dyke was reclaimed by some lesbian feminists in the 1970s and used to denote a commitment to a radical/revolutionary (often separatist) political position. Dyke is still considered to be derogatory depending on the context, but beginning in the late 70s, in some circles, 'dyke' was and still is the preferred term over 'lesbian'.

2. **Misogyny** — is the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or girls. Misogyny can be manifested in numerous ways, including social exclusion, sex discrimination, hostility, androcentrism, patriarchy, male privilege, belittling of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification. Misogyny can occasionally be found within sacred texts of religions and mythologies, and various influential Western philosophers and thinkers have been described as misogynistic.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Misogyny>

3. **Patriarchy** — is a term used in sociology and feminism to identify a social system in which males hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. In the domain of the family, fathers or father-figures hold authority over women and children. Some patriarchal societies are also patrilineal, meaning that property and title are inherited by the male lineage.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriarchy>

4. **Queer** — A term becoming more widely used among LGBT communities because of its inclusiveness. 'Queer' can be used to refer to the range of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender people and provides a convenient shorthand for 'LGBT'. It is important to note that this is a reclaimed term that was once and is still used as a hate term

and thus some people feel uncomfortable with it. Not all trans* people see trans* identities as being part of the term 'queer'.

<https://qmunity.ca>

Queer is also used to describe non-normative (i.e. anti-heteronormative and anti-homonormative) identities and politics. Academic disciplines such as queer theory and queer studies share a general opposition to binarism, normativity, and a perceived lack of intersectionality within the mainstream LGBTQ2 movement. Queer arts, queer cultural groups, and queer political groups are examples of expressions of queer identities.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queer>

5. Queer Liberation

"Queer Liberation is the struggle for liberation of all people who do not fit into mainstream society's idea of sexuality or gender. From gays and lesbians to trans and gender variant people; Queer Liberation supports all those who fight against the oppressive patriarchal heteronormative system.*

It rejects the false binary of gay/straight or male/female to create a movement that is inclusive of everyone, regardless of how they choose to present themselves. Queer Liberation realises that there is a big difference between your assigned sex, your gender identity, gender expression, gender role and sexual orientation. We are not defined by what is between our legs.

Queer Liberation involves itself in the struggle for greater freedom for those who fall outside society's rigid definition of gender or orientation. It often rejects the mainstream gay rights

call for equal rights with straight people in marriage, right to join the army, etc. as it sees these privileges to be inherently oppressive and seeks for the liberation rather than assimilation into mainstream society of all people."

<https://baringteeth.noblogs.org/queer-liberation>

Resources

Articles, websites, services and books (available at the library) to provide additional information.

1. **Why Pronouns Matter For Trans People** — Video on pronoun use from BuzzFeed featuring some of the who's who in the trans world: Kate Bornstein, Buck Angel, Kat Blaque, and Ian Harvie

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_yBGQqg7kM

2. **Toronto Bathhouse Raids** — compilation of images, articles and videos from Xtra Magazine about the Bathhouse Raids of 1981.

"On Feb 5, 1981, 30 years ago, more than 150 Toronto police descended on that city's gay bathhouses, arresting more than 300 innocent men. It was part of a deliberate and organized campaign by government and police to push gay baths and bars out of business, to silence the gay press and to remove gay voices from public discourse."

<https://www.dailyxtra.com/the-1981-toronto-bathhouse-riots-34317>

3. **Trans Vancouver Island** – A resource and information site for transgender and gender diverse people and their allies on Vancouver Island.

<http://www.transvancouverisland.ca>

4. **Translifeline** – is an American non-profit dedicated to the well being of transgender people, based in San Francisco, CA. Canada

Phone: 1-877-330-6366.

<http://www.translifeline.org>

5. **Island Sexual Health** – “Beyond the Talk”, resources for youth.

<http://beyondthetalk.ca/resources> or <https://www.islandsexualhealth.org>

6. **QMUNITY, BC’s Queer Resource Centre**

<http://qmunity.ca/get-support/youth>

7. **Amber L. Hollibaugh** – The LGBTQ Movement's Radical Vision, The Laura Flander's Show, Youtube Video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqNrCMG4tjI>

8. **Gay Rights are not Queer Liberation** – Article on Autostraddle.com

<https://www.autostraddle.com/gay-rights-are-not-queer-liberation-the-nation-interviews-amber-hollibaugh-140431>

9. **LGBT Rights in Canada** – Article from the Canadian Encyclopedia
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-rights-in-canada>

10. **Queer Culture History in Canada** – Article from the Canadian Encyclopedia
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/queer-culture>

11. **Transmisogyny** – Two articles on transmisogyny
 - Trans-misogyny Primer by Julia Serano;
<https://www.juliaserano.com/av/TransmisogynyPrimer-Serano.pdf>
 - Transmisogyny 101 by Laura Kacere at everydayfeminism.com;
<http://www.everydayfeminism.com/2014/01/transmisogyny>