

Gender Ally

Lily's Story, Part 1

Facilitator's Guide

Story Videos can be viewed at:

<http://onmyplanet.ca/mundo/genderally/themes/transition/lily-01>

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.

<http://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.

Ball toss

- Group stands in a circle. While holding the ball one member of the group tells the group something about themselves that other people may not know and then throws the ball to another person in the circle.

Video Viewing

Lily's Story Part 1 – Synopsis

Lily talks about becoming aware of her gender at an early age and receiving negative attention around it. From this experience she learned to suppress her feelings, which in turn caused her to keep 'emotional distance' from family and friends. Lily developed (self-acknowledged) transphobia and spent a lot of time researching trans women only to confirm to herself that she was not "like them". Lily creates a fun and relatively safe situation to explore her "real self" and eventually comes out (again) to her brother, her parents and gradually to the people around her. Lily goes to her first Pride celebration and discovers people like herself for the first time – describing them as the warriors that are changing the world for the better. Lily is also dealing with immigration issues and we see at the end of the story how this could impact Lily's life.

Talking Points

Content Warnings (Themes)

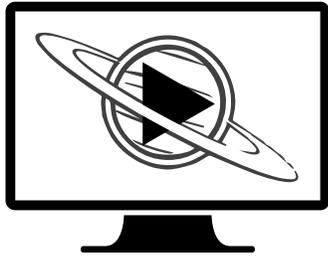
Self-acknowledgement

(Internalized) Transphobia

Coming Out or Not

**Creating Space For Self / Gender
Exploration**

Immigration



Watch {Title} 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

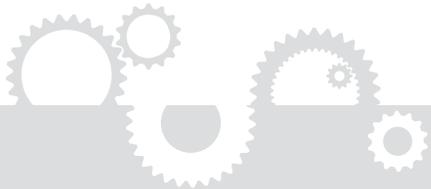
1. Lily describes feeling like she was hiding what she thought of as 'The Real Me'. Describe a time when you might have had a similar experience — where your insides didn't match your outsides.
2. How are oppression and suppression related?
3. How does Lily create a safe space for herself to come out? Why was that necessary? What advantages and disadvantages do you see in coming out? What are the consequences of not coming out?
4. How and why did Lily develop her feelings of transphobia? What's it called when a trans person is transphobic? (Internalized Transphobia) How did she overcome them? Why do you think she struggled with these feelings? Compare Lily's experience to Jack's.

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

Caption Making – Offers opportunity to engage participants in a conversation about appropriate language, and challenges their assumptions about people's experiences.

- In small groups, participants devise slogans, titles, headlines, advertisements, and verbal encapsulations that summarize what they discussed in one of the discussion topics.
- Share with the rest of the class. Write on a board, and have open, meaningful conversations about each one, allowing participants to question each other and correct each other's use of language in a gentle, non-judgmental way.

Activity 2

Gestures

- Use a topic from the video that has feeling qualities – sad, mad, glad, afraid. 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.

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.

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The following list of things to remember for Trans Allyship is based on 'The Basics' at 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** — Do you think coming out and reconciling your gender would be harder for someone like Lily who is new to Canada? What can you find out about organizations in your area that provide support and advocacy for LGBTQ2 immigrants?
2. **Active Witness** — When you see someone who is trans, GNC, or Two-Spirit being mistreated, how can you be an active witness? Who would you report an incident to?
3. **Supportive Action** — What can you do to support the trans and gender-diverse people that are in your community (with or without them being involved)? If you were a student at Lily's school how could you be supportive of her coming out process?
4. **Standing Up** — What can you do to help hold space for trans and GNC people to express their needs? How can you add your voice, action or support to advocacy organizations for trans, GNC, and Two-Spirit immigrants?

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>

5. **Calling Out/In** – How does it make you feel when you see someone say or do something that is noticeably transphobic, homophobic, racist or sexist?

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.



Lily's Story – My Brother is Awesome

1. Lily's brother accepted her from the outset. Why is his asking if he should refer to Lily as his sister important? Give a couple of other examples of the brother's behavior that makes Lily think he's awesome.



Lily's Story – Telling Mom

1. The conversation with Lily's mom takes place over a number of years starting with her first response that it is 'not acceptable' and 'against our religion'. When Lily became more definite the conversation became more serious. Why do you think they feared the same things? What is the meaning of her mom asking Lily what jewelry she would like?

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. **The Real Me** — In Lily's story, she refers to her female self as "the real me" that she kept hidden for so long, prior to coming out as a trans woman. This is in contrast to those who (as a form of discrimination) deliberately misgender trans folks by asking for their "real" name or gender identity and are referring to birth names and assigned sex.
2. **Suppress** — To prevent the development, action, or expression of a feeling, impulse, idea, etc.; restrain.
3. **Oppression (Social Oppression)** — Social oppression is the socially supported mistreatment and exploitation of a group of individuals. Social oppression is based on power dynamics, and an individual's social location in society. Social location, as defined by Lynn Weber, is "an individual's or a group's social 'place' in the race, class, gender and sexuality hierarchies, as well as in other critical social hierarchies such as age, ethnicity, and nation."
4. **Transphobia** — The fear and dislike of, and discrimination against, trans people. Transphobia can take the form of disparaging jokes, rejection, exclusion, denial of services, employment discrimination, name-calling and violence.
5. **Transition**

"Transition is the term commonly used to include the steps a transgender, agender, or non-binary person takes in order to align aspects of their life to be consistent with their gender identity. This term can be misleading, however, as it implies the person's gender is changing from one gender to another; in actuality the person's gender remains relatively stable. It is others' understanding of that gender that shifts. What people see as a "transition" is actually an alignment in one or more

dimensions of the individual's gender, as they seek congruence across those dimensions. A transition is taking place, but it is often those associated with the person (parents and other family members, support professionals, employers, etc.) who are transitioning in how they see the individual's gender, and not the person themselves.

Thus we prefer the term seeking congruence or congruence measures. A person can seek congruence in any or all of the following ways: social congruence - through changes of social identifiers such as clothing, hairstyle, gender identity, name and/or pronouns; hormonal congruence - through the use of medicines such as hormone "blockers" or cross-hormones to promote gender-based body changes; surgical congruence in which an individual's body is modified through the addition or removal of gender-related physical traits; and legal congruence through changing identification documents such as one's birth certificate, driver's license, and passport."

<http://www.genderspectrum.org>, posted by Justin Clark

6. **Transmisogyny** (sometimes trans-misogyny) – the intersection of transphobia and misogyny. Transphobia is defined as "the irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender or transsexual people". Simply put, misogyny is defined as "a hatred of women". Therefore, transmisogyny includes negative attitudes, hate, and discrimination of transgender or transsexual individuals who fall on the feminine side of the gender spectrum.

Resources

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

1. **My Gender Workbook** – (1998) by Kate Bornstein. Specifically the chapter Who's On Top? Pg. 35 and the Gender/Identity/Power Pyramid Pg. 44. Kate Bornstein is a trans author, playwright and performance artist, whose seven books are taught in over 120 colleges and universities around the world.
2. **Transmisogyny** – Two articles on transmisogyny
 - Transmisogyny Primer by Julie Serano
<https://www.juliaserano.com/av/TransmisogynyPrimer-Serano.pdf>
 - Transmisogyny 101 by Laura Kacere at everydayfeminism.com
<http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/01/transmisogyny>
3. **KidsHelpPhone.ca** – Youth phone line/mental health resources
1-800-668-6868 phone line and live chat with a counsellor
<http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/InfoBooth/LGBTQ.aspx>
4. **Trans* Ally Workbook *Getting Pronouns Right and What It Teaches Us about Gender*** – free, downloadable workbook by Davey Shlasko
https://www.pitzer.edu/academics/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2017/07/trans_ally_workbook_pdf.pdf
5. **The Gender Bread Person Graphic**
<http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums>
6. **The Sexualitree Poster** – Demonstrates how people experience sexuality in different ways.
<http://www.sexualitree.org/resource/sexualitree>

7. **Gender Spectrum.Org's Teen page** (American Website)

"Resources to help teens, between the ages of 13 and 19, navigate their Gender Identity at school or home, with their doctor, and even their friends."

<http://www.genderspectrum.org/explore-topics/teens>