

Gender Ally

Lily's Story – Part 2

Facilitator's Guide

Story Videos can be viewed at:

[http://onmyplanet.ca/mundo/genderally/themes/
transition/lily-part-02](http://onmyplanet.ca/mundo/genderally/themes/transition/lily-part-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.

<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 2 – Synopsis

Lily talks about the process she and her parents, particularly her mother, went through to get to accept that Lily is now a daughter. She speaks about her mother telling other relatives about Lily, and their supportive reactions. While in Canada, her parents attend Pride and her mother goes to a trans support group with her and shares her experience. Finally, Lily's immigration papers come through and she is ready emotionally and psychologically to proceed with hormonal transition.

Talking Points

Content Warnings (Themes)

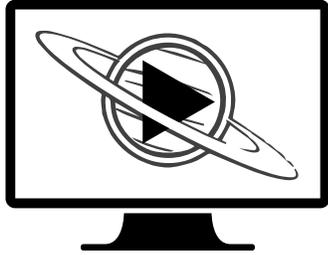
Transition

Process of Acceptance

Coming Out to Relatives

Trans Support Group

Immigration



Watch Lily's Story, Part 2 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 the intensity and the duration of the process she and her parents went through to arrive at acceptance of Lily's gender. What kinds of things can parents do to understand and accept the gender identity and expression of their gender non-conforming children?
2. When Lily's mother helps her with her new scarf, Lily feels like a 'missing piece' of herself falls into place. What is that? Why might a simple act such as helping a daughter adjust an item of clothing be so profound?
3. Her parents go to the Pride parade and festival, wanting to share in the experiences of Lily's life in Canada. Why might a Pride parade trigger emotion in her father?
4. Going to a trans support group with Lily, her mom becomes emotional sharing her experience. How might a support group help both Lily and her parents?
5. When Lily's immigration papers come through, Lily decides to begin her hormonal transition. How has the intense process with her parents helped Lily prepare for transition?

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

Postures

In pairs, stand a couple of feet apart. Participants take turns in the following positions, silently holding each position for 15 seconds. While holding each position consider what it would be like to come out (LGBTQ2) to the other. Notice what emotions arise in each position:

- Face-to-face
- One face forward, the second turn 90 degrees to one side
- One face forward, the second turn 180 degrees so your back is to the person
- Face-to-face, one standing and one sitting
- Face-to-face, one sitting, the stander turns away from the sitter

Debrief first in pairs then in the group: how does your inner response change based on the position? When someone turns away or is at a different 'place', what feeling comes up?

Activity 2

Small Group Discussion

- In groups of 4, each group discusses the same assigned discussion topic/question.
- Discuss the topic/question for a set period of time (7-8 mins).
- Two participants move to different groups and share what was discussed and deepen the discussion (5 mins).
- This exercise is good for moving the participants through the whole group. By the end of the exercise everyone will have been in two different groups.

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>

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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.

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 is 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** — Why does immigration status matter when someone is wanting to transition?
2. **Active Witness** — What might you learn from (respectfully) listening in at a trans support group?
3. **Supportive Action** — All Pride celebrations have an army of volunteers — consider volunteering for your local Pride organization.
4. **Standing Up** — You might see people expressing negative attitudes about immigrants. What supports and services exist for new Canadians in your community? What can you do to help these organizations? Are there any services specifically for LGBTQ 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>

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, Part 2 – Starting Hormones

1. Lily describes starting hormones as puberty 2.0. How does this description help you to understand her experience? Have you ever felt like you were 'looking in on something' as opposed to 'living in it'?

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. 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."

www.genderspectrum.org, posted by Justin Clark

2. **Pride** — Gay pride or LGBT pride is the positive stance against discrimination and violence toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people to promote their self-affirmation, dignity, equality rights, increase their visibility as a social group, build community, and celebrate sexual diversity and gender variance. Pride, as opposed to shame and social stigma, is the predominant outlook that bolsters most LGBT rights movements throughout the world.

en.wikipedia.org

3. **Hormones** (for Transition) — Hormones are chemical messengers produced by the glands. They are released into the bloodstream, where they direct the activities and development of other cells. Hormones affect the appearance and growth of body fat, breasts, hair, reproductive organs and skin. More on the use of hormones for masculine and feminine transition:

<http://www.revelandriot.com/resources/trans-health>

4. **Gender Policing** — The imposition or enforcement of normative gender expressions on an individual who is perceived as not adequately performing, through appearance or behavior, the sex that was assigned to them at birth. Gender policing can also happen within the trans community — where someone may be pressured to perform or express a more normative or binary gender during or after transition.

5. **Trans Support Group** – Support groups bring together people facing similar issues, and offer a different dynamic than online support. Support groups offer help from people outside your immediate circle and can make you feel less isolated as you make connections with others facing similar challenges. Benefits of participating in support groups may include:

- Feeling less lonely, isolated or judged
- Gaining a sense of empowerment and control
- Improving your coping skills and sense of adjustment
- Talking openly and honestly about your feelings
- Reducing distress, depression, anxiety or fatigue
- Developing a clearer understanding of what to expect with your situation
- Getting practical advice or information about treatment options
- Comparing notes about resources, such as doctors and alternative options

Canadian Trans Men (transmen.ca)

Resources

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

1. **Trans Care BC services page**

<http://transhealth.phsa.ca/services>

2. **Trans Care BC Support Group listing**

<http://transhealth.phsa.ca/support/bc-support-groups>

3. **Trans Vancouver Island** — Resources website for Vancouver Island

<http://www.transvancouverisland.ca>

4. **PFLAG** (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) — There are chapters across Canada

<http://pflagcanada.ca/pflag-chapters>

5. **Canadian Trans Men** — A resource website for Canadian trans men. Includes a national map of GRS coverage, gender identity and expression laws, and other useful links.

<http://www.transmen.ca>

6. **barbara findlay QC** — ms. findlay is a distinguished BC lawyer who has worked on LGBTQ2 and social justice issues for most of her long career. This link provides a list of links for trans services from changing ID to information about transitioning. Her website also includes a Case Chronology — a legal history of LGBTQ2 advancements over the years. There is also a resources list of more general articles.

<http://www.barbarafindlay.com/transgender-issues-a-work-in-progress.html>

7. **Resources for LGBTQ2 Refugees**

<http://www.rainbowrefugee.com>