



## **IATSE PRIDE**

### How to Be an Ally

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## About This Guide

The IATSE Pride Committee has put this guide together using resources from GLAAD and Pride at Work. It is only meant to illustrate some of the ways you can help be a better ally to the LGBTQ+ community. There are many ways to be supportive, but reading this guide is a great place to start and shows that you are interested in being a true ally.

Throughout the guide you will see the term “GSD” which stands for “Gender and Sexual Diversity”. This refers to all the diversities of sex characteristics, sexual orientations and gender identities, without the need to specify each of the identities, behaviours, or characteristics that form this plurality. For the purposes of this guide, it is interchangeable with LGBTQ+.

## Stand-Up

As an ally you should be willing and ready to stand-up for your LGBTQ+ kin whenever necessary. When you are in a position of privilege, you should use it to stand up for those who are unable to do so themselves. Some ways that you can do that include:

### Reframe your beliefs

Believe that all people, regardless of gender identity, expression or sexual orientation, should be treated with dignity and respect. Make sure to communicate this sentiment to others in your life. Sometimes beliefs are passed on, and unless presented with an opportunity to reframe them, they may not realize that their beliefs are affecting others.

### Defend your LGBTQ+ friends against discrimination

If you hear exclusionary, derogatory, or inappropriate comments, speak up if it is safe to do so. Staying silent makes you complicit. Anti-LGBTQ+ comments and jokes are harmful, so please be vocal and let your friends, family and co-workers know that you find them offensive.

### Challenge gendered dress codes

Oregon NOW (the Oregon chapter of the National Organization for Women) devised a model policy for Portland Public Schools that was praised for being inclusive, progressive and body-positive. Lisa Frack, President of Oregon Now describes it as “Boys can dress like girls, and girls can dress like boys...You can be trans. You can be cis. Part and parcel on our mind is whoever you are, you can wear whatever you want” within reason, of course. The main dictate is: “You have to cover your parts”, but how students do so is up to them.

Go here to read more about their dress code policies:

<https://noworegon.org/issues/model-student-dress-code/>

### Don't hide your GSD relations

Be vocal if you have a connection to someone in the GSD community, such as friends or family members. Talking about your gay brother or transgender cousin the same way that you talk about any family member or friend shows that you value people equally regardless of their identities. Although we should care about all of our fellow humans, sometimes it helps others identify easier if they can put a face to an idea that is otherwise abstract to them.

## **Be inclusive**

Invite LGBTQ+ friends to hang out with your friends and family. The more mixed your friendships and activities are, the more beneficial they are for everyone involved. Also be prepared that you may face backlash for being an ally. It can be scary but put yourself in the shoes of your LGBTQ+ kin who continually have those experiences.

## Step Back

As equally important as standing-up for LGBTQ+ people, is knowing when to step back. Being a good ally is being able to read a situation and decide when it's appropriate to speak up and when it's appropriate to make room for others.

### Be a listener

Speak less in meetings to make space for your GSD colleagues to share their thoughts. If you're leading the meeting, make sure they are being heard as much as straight, cisgender team members. We are not saying that there is anything wrong with being straight or cisgender, however giving equal time to diverse voices will benefit everyone. You may get viewpoints or insights that would not otherwise have been thought of.

### Be willing to talk

Do not force someone to talk if they don't want to. If they feel comfortable, they may choose to open up to you. All you can do is make sure they know that you are a safe person by the way you interact with everyone. Do not single out someone you suspect of being LGBTQ+. They may or may not be, and if they are, they may not be ready or interested in discussing it with you.

Recognize that your bisexual co-worker may experience the double bind of never fully feeling accepted by either the GSD community or heteronormative culture.

### Mind your business

If single-gender bathrooms are the only option, don't question which one your trans or non-binary co-worker uses. If you see someone whose gender expression confuses you in a bathroom, don't stare. Everyone has an expectation of privacy in a bathroom, so how they look is none of your business. You're both there for the same reason. Do your thing and move on.

### Respect your GSD co-workers' right to privacy

Even if they disclose personal information about their gender identity/gender expression/sexual orientation/etc. to you, it doesn't mean they want everyone else to know. In fact, your GSD co-worker doesn't have to come out to anyone at work at all.

Don't expect praise for being an ally

Respect for others is a minimum pre-requisite for being human. You are an ally because it's the right thing to do, not because you get anything out of it besides the positive feeling of helping others.

## Educate Yourself

The fact that you're reading this guide shows that you are interested in educating yourself. Learning to be a good ally requires education, just as you would learn any new skill. Below we address some of the reasons for educating yourself.

### Do the work yourself

Don't expect the GSD people in your life to explain everything about GSD personhood, rights, and issues to you. Do your own research and take the initiative to look up the questions you have rather than asking for the emotional education and labour of a GSD person. This isn't to say that you can never ask questions. It's just that LGBTQ+ people are often tasked with being a representative of an entire community and it's unfair to them. Take on some of that labour first before turning to them.

### Not all LGBTQ+ people are the same

Understand that one GSD individual doesn't represent the whole group and is not a stand-in for the entire GSD community. Each person's experience is unique, and generalizations should not be made. You would never claim to represent all straight or cisgender people, so it would be silly to assume that anyone in the GSD community would either. While there may be shared experiences between members of the community, everyone is an individual with an individual story.

### Check your privilege

If you find yourself getting frustrated or upset when someone points out a gaffe or blind spot of yours, step back to listen and self-reflect. If you still don't understand where they're coming from, self-educate: read GSD literature, queer theory, or essays and articles about other GSD people's experiences.

Don't assume that this guide doesn't apply to you, a well-intentioned person. Be thoughtful. Think about what position of privilege you occupy in the world and how that might unintentionally make life more difficult for GSD folks every day.

### Accept that there will always be more to learn

If you are human, you have bias. Confront your own prejudice and bias and work to combat it, even if it is uncomfortable to do so.



### Don't make assumptions

Don't assume that all your friends and co-workers are straight. Someone close to you could be looking for support in their coming-out process. Not making assumptions will give them the space they need.

On the flip side, don't assume someone is LGBTQ+. Just because someone falls into an unfair societal stereotype, does not mean they are part of the community. If they are, they have no obligation to tell you either way. Treat them as you would any other person. If you want to show support, show up for LGBTQ+ events, volunteer, and donate to LGBTQ+ causes. Anything that shows you're an ally.

# Communication

## Pronouns

If you're not sure about someone's pronouns use "they" to be safe, or ask, when appropriate. Even better, start by offering your own when you introduce yourself to people.

Add your pronouns to your work e-mail signature to normalize disclosing pronouns. This can also spark conversations where curious recipients will ask and you can help educate them on the reason for including your pronouns.

If you're unsure of what we mean by "pronouns" or how to properly use them, check out the IATSE Pride Committee video for a quick overview: <https://youtu.be/UfqEW3TYImU>

## Gender

Accept that you can never know someone's gender just by looking at them. If you happen to misgender someone, correct yourself quickly and politely. Do not make a big issue out of it. The person may already feel embarrassed or hurt and you making it a larger issue will only make it worse.

Also, politely correct other people when they misgender your trans or non-binary friends or co-workers. Do this whether that person is present or not.

Help to remove gendered language from your communications, contracts and constitution and bylaws. It will help your LGBTQ+ kin feel as if they are part of their union, rather than afterthought.

## Terminology

Make an effort to learn up-to-date terminology, and accept that you will probably get things wrong on occasion. Instead of saying things like, "Hey guys", refer to a group of people as team, folks, everyone, y'all, etc.

Understand that while your younger coworkers are typically comfortable using the term "queer" as a catch-all for GSD, many older members of the community may still view it as a slur. When in doubt, just ask.

## Interactions

When getting to know people in social settings, be conscious of heteronormative assumptions. Instead of asking a woman, "Do you have a husband?", ask her, "Do you have a partner?". That

way they are free to answer with as little or as much info as they wish, rather than having to decide on the spot whether to correct you and “out” themselves.

Using gender neutral language can help signal that you are a safe ally. Remember, though, that they are under no obligation to reveal any personal info about themselves to you. Answering questions that you may not even consider to be personal can be a gamble for an LGBTQ+ person. They never know how someone will react. Even if the reaction is a positive one, it can still be exhausting to have to explain your personal situation to every new person you meet.

Also, be careful not to minimize someone’s identity. Though often well-intentioned, comments like, “I don’t think of you as gay — I just see you as a person” can feel more like a backhanded compliment, as if there’s something wrong with being gay.

## Conclusion

Understand that it takes a tremendous amount of energy for LGBTQ+ individuals to explain terms, definitions, and language. Any time you find it tiring or difficult, just remember that your LGBTQ+ kin has to bear this burden themselves. Any assistance you can give to help alleviate some of that pressure is a positive thing.

A lot of these points can be used to be an ally, not only for LGBTQ+ people, but for women, BIPOC, etc. It's all about coming together to ease the burden for any marginalized community.

Remember that you will make mistakes, but as long as you come from a supportive place, and are willing to continue to learn, you will make a great ally.

As always, feel free to reach out to the IATSE Pride Committee at [iatsepride@iatse.net](mailto:iatsepride@iatse.net) with any questions or comments.

Special thanks to:

GLAAD

<https://www.glaad.org/>

Pride at Work

<https://www.prideatwork.org/>

Oregon NOW

<http://noworegon.org/>

Website: [www.iatsepride.net](http://www.iatsepride.net)

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