

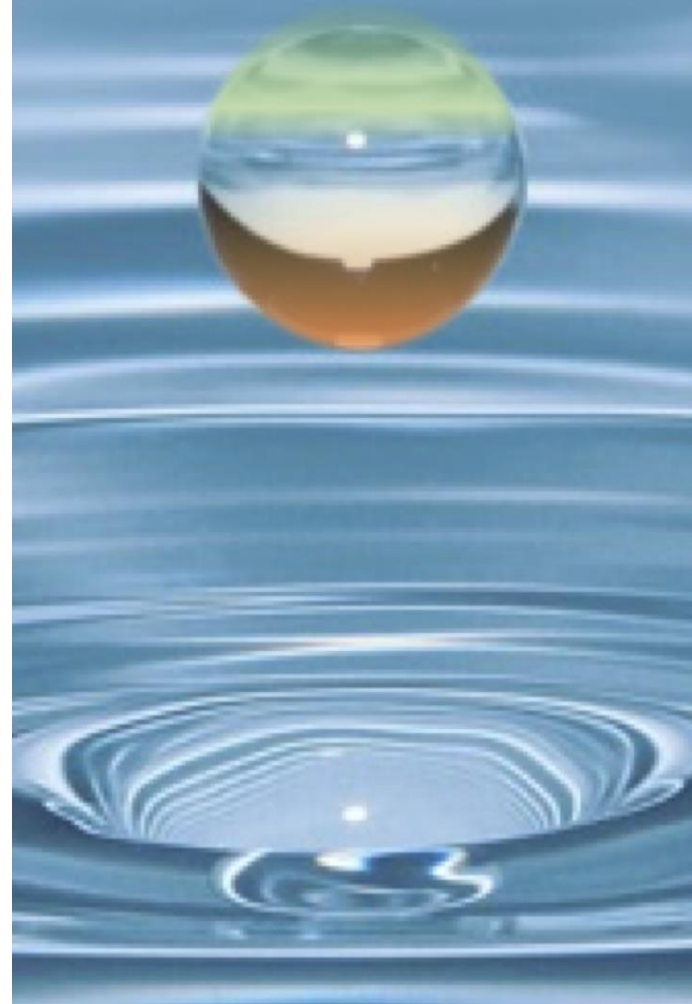


CAPLOR HORIZONS RIPPLE PAPERS

...creating ripples of change

Allyship – Journey to Justice

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Learning differently

Thinking differently

Acting differently

Allyship – Journey to Justice.

Summary

“Do the best you can until you know better; then, when you know better, do better”. Maya Angelou

This paper introduces allyship. Being an ally is a form of relationship. Allyship – like mentoring and coaching and other important forms of relationship – shares an underlying aspiration: to help others to grow and to reach their full potential. Allyship, however, is conscious and deliberate about tackling injustices; hence – in the title – the link between allyship and a journey to justice.

Essentially, being an ally involves supporting others who want your support: it involves recognising that you have some form of influence, and/or privilege, and/or position of power; and that you are committed to use this in ways that will make a meaningful difference.

The intention is to contribute to a struggle defined and named by those who are struggling. It takes courage and significant inner work to become an honest and effective ally to others. You need to really understand your privilege and potential hubris. You will need to be clear about your motivations.

An ally never *“arrives”* but is always becoming better; an ally does their best until they can do better.

It is important to balance being available as an ally and being prepared to do whatever it entails from the perspective of those you are an ally with; only stepping into an ally role when appropriate, and not imposing yourself on anyone, or naming yourself, for reward or gain.

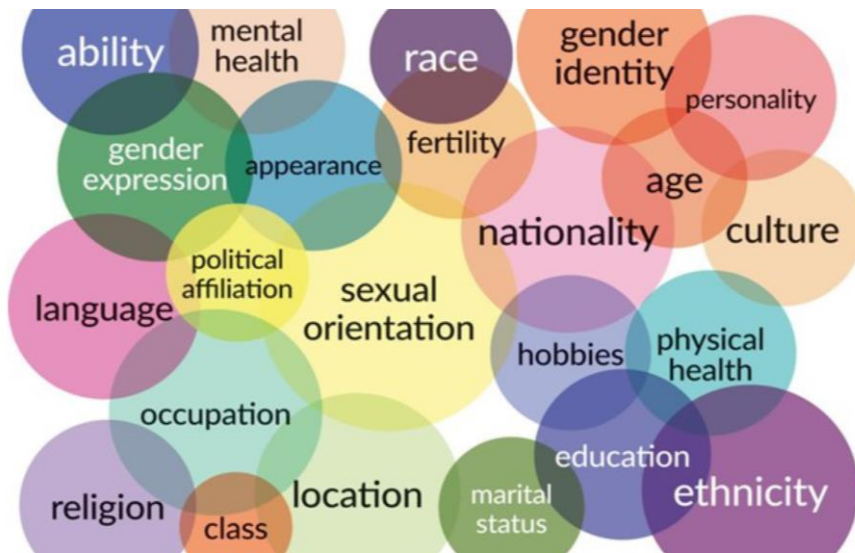
This paper is intended as a call to action and a practical guide for anyone that is already an ally or is considering becoming one. We hope you find it thought-provoking, practical and something of value.

Introduction

Countless people are in situations where the scale of the challenge is almost unbearable for them – for instance, in the circumstances they face in their home, community, organisation, country and so on.

Recent years have brought huge developments globally. This includes, for instance: rising levels of poverty; the increasing impact of climate change and biodiversity loss; conflict and political changes; high-profile killings of people of colour; police brutality; continued violence and sexism towards women and the disproportionate effect of covid on less privileged groups.

People all over the world are waking-up to different manifestations of injustice; fundamentally, this includes the oppressive nature of patriarchy.



We need to tackle injustice in all its forms.

Here is a diagram of the intersections of forms of influence, privilege and power. Whilst not an exhaustive list, it provides helpful visual insights.

Those who have a certain level of influence, privilege and power can act in different ways.

For example, they can join in protests and/or contribute resources to protest movements; in constituencies, they can challenge their politicians to bring about necessary change; in organisations, they can stand up for the rights of others, including bringing about greater diversity and inclusion.

Allyship is one of various forms of response to tackle injustices.

What does it mean to be an ally?

Allies use their influence, power and privilege to support people, doing so in various ways such as advocating.

Being an ally is a form of relationship in which listening and sustaining trust is especially important. Trust is a fundamental ingredient that always supports the development and deepening of relationships. In the case of allyship, it is something that is particularly crucial to enabling progress. This is because allyship often tackles very difficult issues.

Allyship calls for us to reflect before we act; to be conscious and deliberate about the opportunity to tackle injustices, about what it might mean to engage directly with individuals that are marginalised, oppressed, disadvantaged or struggling with other circumstances that can diminish hope and cause suffering.

Authentic allyship involves taking ownership and responsibility regarding how our actions may sometimes contribute negatively so that we can change to do something differently and better.

Allies do not need to completely understand what it feels like to be in the position of the person they are supporting; they can, however, do their utmost to keep listening, learning and changing; to keep re-aligning the relationship so that it is more effective.

The intention is to listen and to respond effectively to the particular struggle being faced by the person you are being an ally so that you can benefit *them* in ways that will make a difference.

Many of us have a mixture of influence, privilege and power along with our own experiences of suffering too. It is therefore about humility; about seeing that it is a journey for all of us, and that we can improve; it is about *doing the best you can until you know better – and then, when you know better, doing better.*

Being an ally involves doing a lot of work on yourself: it involves being active, consistently challenging, unlearning, and re-evaluating your own unique and specific position of influence, privilege and power.

It requires sensitivity and resilience and striving to be aware of the underlying injustices involved.

An ally never “arrives” but is always becoming one and this involves not being at the “centre”: that is sometimes called “performative allyship”; providing help to people in a self-serving manner to receive some reward for being a “good person” or “on the right side.”

This diagram is from Anne Bishop (from “becoming an ally - breaking the cycle of oppression in people”). It distils different characteristics of allyship.



We can ask ourselves: “how many of these characteristics do we have?”

We need to be honest with ourselves. Not all of us are ready to be an ally, although it can happen over time. We believe everyone can develop the characteristics if they want to and are willing to do the work.

We suggest working through the following steps...

Understand and own your influence and/or privilege and/or power

Having influence, privilege and power does not mean you have had an “easy” life or have never faced difficulties, such as discrimination. Owning your circumstances is important. There is no need to feel shame or guilt. The key is to see and understand the nature of what you have and to find ways of using that to support those who don’t have it.

We suggest reflecting and writing out what constitutes your influence, privilege and power; and returning to this, re-evaluating and updating it over time.

Your circumstances might relate to many factors – for instance, ability, gender, race, class, sexuality, age, religion, wealth, education, accent and so on.

You can also have influence, privilege and power in one aspect and be oppressed in another.

A certain level of discomfort is healthy. However, if guilt or shame arises, please allow it to fade away; that is not the purpose of this exercise.

If you find this exercise overwhelming, we recommend you find someone who can help you understand what is happening and support you in your journey.

Learn about different approaches to allyship and your preferences

Allyship involves using a combination of approaches.

How you draw on these relates to the situation you face and the preferences that you have. Here we are drawing upon the books of Karen Catlin and the approaches sometimes referred to as “archetypes” (they are often used in training and development sessions plus they are cited in articles on allyship).

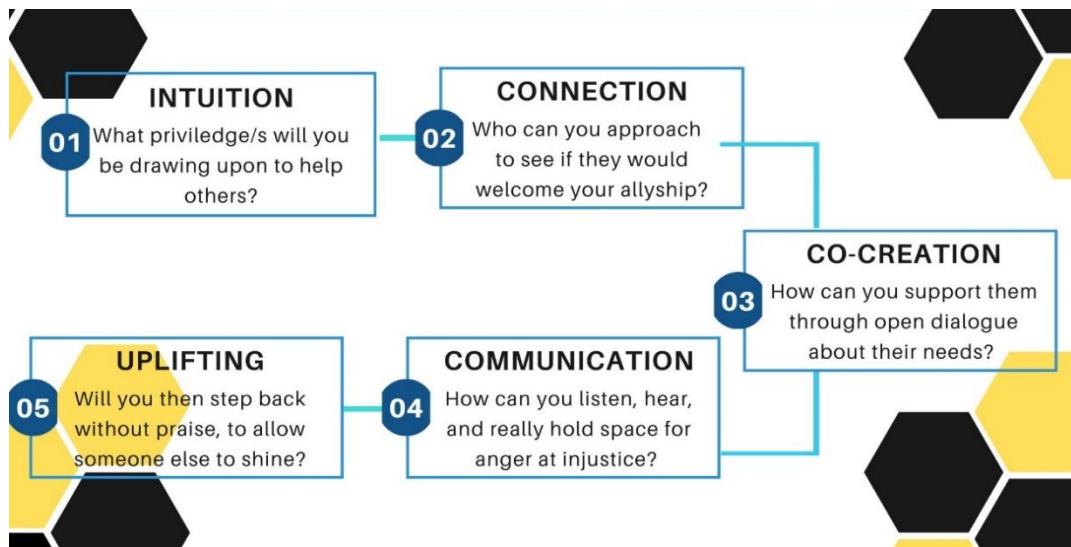
- *Being a sponsor* – by enabling others to act.
- *Being a facilitator* – by creating a safe space
- *Being a champion* – by standing up for someone.
- *Being an amplifier* – by assisting with communication in different ways.
- *Being an advocate* – by bringing people into places they would not otherwise be able to access.
- *Being a researcher* – by educating yourself and using the learning to help others.
- *Being an upstander* – by allowing space for someone to speak up.
- *Being the confidant* – by listening in total confidence.

Consider what aspect of your influence and/or privilege and/or power you are willing to use and how.

There are numerous ways. The key is to balance being available, fully prepared as to what that entails, and being clear that you will only step into an ally role if appropriate and wanted, not imposing yourself on anyone or naming yourself publicly as an ally in a way that isn’t helpful or wanted or that actively harms.

Turn your reflection and insights into a practical plan

Here are five steps that you can consider to turn your reflections and insights into a plan of action



How are the underlying ideas and convictions about allyship relevant in other ways?

We believe that the underlying ideas and convictions about allyship are relevant in many ways.

For instance, our efforts at Caplor Horizons to provide effective coaching and mentoring, are focused on providing opportunities to specific change makers around four strategic themes...

- Under-represented change makers
- Next generation change makers
- Female change makers
- Environmental change makers

We believe that the notion of allyship provides an important backdrop, given the injustices faced by change makers.

Moreover, the notion of allyship is very relevant to our other activities, including leadership and team-working and indeed all elements concerning organisational effectiveness.

We would also prompt others involved with coaching and mentoring, leadership, team-working and the range of activities related to strengthening organisational effectiveness to consider how the underlying ideas and convictions about allyship might inform their work.

Conclusion

In the face of the injustices that people face, effective allyship can provide a very helpful contribution.

We hope that you have found this useful, and it encourages you in your journey to being an effective ally.

Caplor Horizons – Background

Established in 2014, Caplor Horizons is an independent charity. We work with other charities and responsible businesses and now have over 50 Advisors. These are outstanding people that bring specialist knowledge and experience. They contribute their time on a voluntary basis, or at reduced rates, so that Caplor Horizons can provide high quality and distinctive services at an accessible cost.

Working locally, nationally and internationally, we help other organisations think differently about themselves and the new horizons that they face. We support them in strengthening their leadership, renewing their strategy and improving their influence.

We want to encourage and assist a new generation of organisations that are committed to making a positive and lasting impact. We believe that if we are to achieve real, sustainable change, we need to inspire and enable people to learn differently, think differently and act differently.

Our vision is: *A world where leaders deliver a sustainable future for all*

Our purpose is: *To be courageous, compassionate and creative in facilitating transformational change*

Our values are:

- **Courageous** – We are courageous change makers committed to challenging assumptions, taking risks and having difficult conversations
- **Compassionate** – We are open, understanding and heartfelt, encouraging the nourishment of our whole selves and others
- **Creative** – We learn, think and act differently, and are innovative and resilient in an ever-changing world

Our beliefs are:

- Through diversity we ignite dynamic innovation
- Collaboration helps achieve greater impact
- Everyone matters
- We are all leaders in our individual and collective ways – we are all change makers!
- Learning is more effective if it is fun, engaging and creative
- Building on people's strengths creates greater resilience

Our strategic goals:

- Goal 1: Transforming Leadership
- Goal 2: Strengthening Resilience
- Goal 3: Increasing Collaboration

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