

Tools for transgender allyship

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There are many ways to promote inclusion through allyship with the transgender community. Below you will find information on what it means to be an ally and how you can support transgender inclusion through pronoun use, understanding names and committing to ongoing learning.

What is allyship? How can you be an ally to the transgender community?

Being an ally means working along with disadvantaged communities towards social change and liberation.

When we don't reflect on the meaning of allyship, or what it looks like, we can fall into the trap of performative allyship, which is the positioning of oneself as a partner in a cause without being prepared to do the hard work. Genuine allyship is not about centring your feelings in the process, but rather committing to the process of learning and self-reflection.

How you can commit to being an ally

1. Ask people's pronouns

You might have seen people sharing their pronouns at Seneca during class, at the end of emails or during events. Pronouns are how we refer to people when we are not using their name. In the English language, pronouns are gendered. (E.g., "**She** forgot **her** notebook in class yesterday.")

Why is it a good practice to ask people's pronouns when you meet them? A person's appearance does not necessarily match what may be typically viewed as a man, a woman or a non-binary person. For a transgender person, being repeatedly misgendered may lead to experiences of social isolation, exclusion and gender dysphoria.

When you ask for a person's pronouns, you are less likely to make mistakes based on appearance. By disclosing your own pronouns, you are showing that the space you are in is inclusive to people of all gender identities. This simple act indicates that you are willing to listen and support the transgender community.

Show your support:

- Add your pronouns to your Zoom account, putting them right after your name
- Add your pronouns to your email signature
- Disclose your pronouns when you are in a round of presentations in a group, class or meeting
- Ask how people would like to be called when you first meet them

A positive interaction in terms of inclusivity would be introducing yourself in the following way: “My name is Bernardo. I use he/him pronouns. How do you prefer to be called?”

When you introduce yourself in this manner, you are informing other people of your pronouns and asking them how they would like to be called. Transgender people often use preferred names that are different from their legal names, and respecting this is important.

2. Understand name use

With more than 150 languages spoken on campus, Seneca represents a global community. It is commonplace for people to have more than one name or utilize a preferred name that is different from their legal name. They may choose to use their preferred name in social interactions, at school or at work. When you ask someone how they prefer to be called, you are giving the person the choice to be addressed how they feel most comfortable.

3. Continue to learn and don't be afraid to make mistakes

Being an ally means you are committed to a cycle of learning. It can also often be uncomfortable, which is why it is important to be open to listening and to recognize your own biases.

It's normal to make mistakes when you are learning something new. The best thing you can do is apologize for the mistake, acknowledge it, correct it and move on. Your relationships will benefit from your candor, honesty and willingness to learn.

Questions? Please email edi@senecacollege.ca.

Learn more about meaningful allyship [online](#).

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