

10 Ways You Can Be a Trans Ally

It's a scary time to be 2SLGBTQ+, especially for trans folks. The constant news of all the hateful legislation being passed in the US and violent rhetoric being openly shared is unsettling and terrifying. 2023 is already a [record-breaking year for anti-2SLGBTQ+ legislation in the US](#), with no sign of slowing down.

In the [UK, there's been an increase in anti-2sLGBTQ+ hate crimes](#) in recent years, with some [trans folks deciding to leave England](#) for more inclusive countries.

While 2SLGBTQ+ folks have legal protections in Canada right now, the misinformation and hate that's online flows freely over borders and it's hard not to be afraid sometimes, even in Canada.

So, cis folks, we need your allyship now more than ever! And that goes for cis queer folks too.

Here are 10 things you can do to lighten the load for the trans folks in your life, including accessible allyship options for disabled and chronically ill folks.

1. Educate yourself

The amount of misinformation online about trans topics is staggering and it's fueling hate, both online and out in the world. By taking the time to educate yourself, you're removing the burden on the trans people in your life to educate you.

If you're not sure what sources are reputable, here's a few to get you started:

- [Egale](#)
- [Pink Mantaray](#) (Schuyler Bailar does a great job of breaking down various trans topics)
- [National Center for Transgender Equality](#)

Another part of educating yourself is listening to trans stories told *by* trans folks. This is a great way to "get to know" a trans person, even if you may not be aware of any trans folks in your life. A few of my favourites are:

- [Stay on Board: The Leo Baker Story](#)
- [Seahorse](#)
- [Disclosure](#)
- [Pose](#)

2. Share information

Once you've educated yourself, share information about trans topics from reputable sources on your social media accounts. This is especially important if you have friends or family who may only be hearing about these topics from hateful sources.

Not only does this help educate people, it also signals to anyone debating coming out to you that you're likely a safe person to do so.

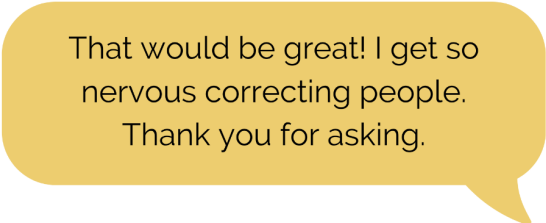
3. Be open to being corrected

We're all learning and being open to receiving feedback is a great way to keep learning and growing. It can be easy to get defensive when someone points out something we've said is hurtful or harmful but try to take a moment to pause before reacting. Correcting people takes a lot of emotional energy and can put trans folks in a vulnerable position.

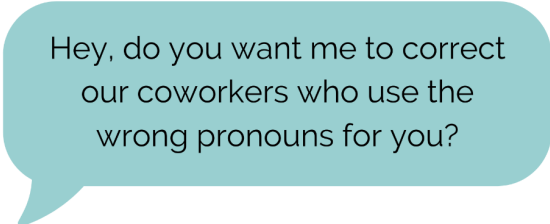
If someone says something you shared on social media or a comment you made was hurtful, apologize if necessary, thank them for taking the time to correct you, and commit to doing better next time. Profusely apologizing puts the person providing feedback to you in an awkward position of trying to assure you everything is okay, even if it's not.

4. Provide feedback or correction on behalf of trans folks

Be open to correcting or providing feedback to others on behalf of trans folks, but **only** if they've given you consent to do so. There may be spaces someone isn't open about being trans and correcting people could out them.



That would be great! I get so nervous correcting people. Thank you for asking.



Hey, do you want me to correct our coworkers who use the wrong pronouns for you?

I've had cis folks offer to provide feedback to others so I don't have to worry about dealing with the potential hostility or backlash. Sometimes I'll thank them and politely decline but other times it's a welcome relief. Either way it's always appreciated.

This could be correcting someone in the workplace who uses a trans person's old pronouns

or encouraging people to use more gender inclusive language and sharing why it's important.

5. Don't ignore hate and misinformation

Call out hate and misinformation when you encounter it, whether that's online, at a family gathering, or in the workplace. There are so many harmful narratives that are just flat out lies. For example, no one is giving toddlers gender-affirming surgeries or hormones and trans girls aren't overtaking school sports. [Utah only had one trans girl playing school sports](#) when the state passed legislation banning trans kids in sports.

For cis folks within the 2SLGBTQ+ community, this also applies to you. Queer spaces aren't necessarily safe for trans and gender-diverse folks and that needs to change.

6. Check in with the trans folks in your life

I've had friends reach out to make sure I was doing okay when there's been traumatizing and transphobic events in the news and it's always appreciated. Even if it's a simple "hope you're taking care of yourself" or a heart emoji in response to something I posted on my socials, it always means a lot.

If you're not sure you have a close enough relationship with someone to reach out, keep it simple. Instead of asking how someone is doing, opt for something like "I keep seeing stories in the news that are very transphobic, I hope you're doing okay." They may not feel comfortable honestly sharing how they're doing so this gives them the opportunity to share as much as they're comfortable and lets them know you care.

7. Respect trans people's privacy and boundaries

Even the most out and proud trans person may have topics that they're not comfortable discussing. While it's great to approach trans topics with an open mind, sometimes curiosity can cross the line and become invasive. If you're not sure if a question you're about to ask a trans person is appropriate, consider if you would ask a parent or stranger on the street the same question.



There may also be certain people or spaces where some trans folks feel safer using different pronouns than they usually do and being less openly trans. If you're not 100% sure which pronouns someone uses in different spaces or if they're openly trans, just ask. A great time to do that is when someone first comes out to you.

8. Listen to trans people

If someone tells you something is offensive or hurtful, don't make them prove it to you. If you're genuinely not sure why something is harmful, try asking something like **"I'd like to understand this better, do you have the capacity to explain this a little more or send me an article that does?"**

However, don't be offended if someone doesn't have the time or energy to educate you. Trans folks, especially trans women, are dealing with a lot right now. Not every trans person is an educator or activist and that's okay.

9. Contact your elected officials

If you live in an area where there's legislation being debated or you've noticed concerning behavior impacting the 2SLGBTQ+ community, take the time to contact your elected officials to let them know your concerns. This lets them know that 2SLGBTQ+ topics are something their constituents value and that they should too.

In Canada, federal members of parliament can be found on the [House of Commons website](#) and provincial/territorial legislative assembly members can be found with a simple Google search of "[Location] members of provincial or territorial legislature".

10. Show up for the 2sLGBTQ+ community

It's important to recognize that not everyone will feel safe showing up to in-person events, especially given the relaxing of most COVID-19 precautions.

If you do feel safe in public spaces, there's plenty of examples in the news of allies showing up when 2sLGBTQ+ spaces have been under attack. It's been heartening to see people attending vigils for murdered members of the community and providing support outside of drag events being targeted by hateful people.

If you're not sure what the best way to show support is, try reaching out to local 2SLGBTQ+ organizations. Chances are they're the most aware of what's going on in the communities they serve and how allies can best support them.

Allyship is a verb

Our community is full of passionate and skilled activists and educators but we can't do this alone. Now, more than ever, **we need our allies to join us**. Allyship takes action; to call yourself an ally means actively advocating and showing up for our community.

It's been great to see cisgender and heterosexual men like [John Oliver](#) and [Jon Stewart](#), who have repeatedly used their positions of influence to dispel hateful narratives and misinformation. They can reach people that a lot of trans folks can't because to some we are still misunderstood and what is misunderstood can sadly be scary for some folks.

I've seen the [clip of Jon Stewart](#) interviewing an Oklahoma State Senator shared by people who I never thought in a million years would be allies. It gives me hope that hate won't win and that kindness, respect, and the truth will win out in the end.

Brennen Elias (he/they) is a transmasculine and disabled DEI consultant, specializing in trans inclusion.