

CATHOLIC TEACHERS' **SAFER SPACES SERIES**

Allyship and Beyond

Allyship is a term often used to refer to people who speak up for, with, or alongside those who have been systemically denied equity.

In the article “[The Differences Between Allies, Accomplices and Co-conspirators May Surprise You,](#)” Dr. Tiffany Jana (they/them) suggests that there are differences in how we show up for, and with, people who might be different from ourselves. They suggest that we begin by being allies, and once we learn enough about a particular topic we can become accomplices, then eventually co-conspirators. Being an ally is a good goal, but ultimately, we want to move beyond allyship and grow in our ability to work with, for, and alongside a variety of Indigenous and equity-deserving groups. And remember, it is best not to call oneself an ally. Recognize that being an ally means that equity-denied people have seen and acknowledged your allyship.

Are you an ally, accomplice, or co-conspirator?

Ally[ship] The Thinking and Learning Phase	Accomplice The Reactive Phase	Co-conspirator The Proactive Phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports equal justice in theory – often with thoughts and prayers, and sometimes with words in small group settings.• Reads books to broaden understanding.• Might post on social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively works to dismantle systems of oppression.• Passed through the initial phase of allyship and has done the requisite work of learning and understanding their roles in upholding unjust structures.• Uses what they have learned, and whatever access they have, to help course correct systemic bias.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Works alongside the communities they support.• Have, seek, and create meaningful relationships with the people they actively support.• Shows up with (not just <i>for</i>) Indigenous and equity-deserving people and <i>listens</i>.• Respects the work already being done by leaders in justice spaces and offers meaningful support.

Ally, Accomplice, Co-Conspirator Examples

Example 1: Being a Straight Ally, Accomplice, Co-Conspirator

As an ally, you may have read a lot about 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in Catholic schools. You might be part of a book club, or post supportive messages on social media. If this is the case, you might be more sensitive to the micro-aggressions your students and colleagues face because of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, which may cause you to ask questions and advocate as an accomplice. You might volunteer to lead the gay-straight or gender-sexuality alliance (GSA) at your school, which creates a relationship between you and your 2SLGBTQIA+ students. Over time, you learn that sometimes it is better for you to find opportunities for others to speak while you remain silent and supportive in the background. However, this does not mean that you always stay silent. You learn to listen and respond based on the circumstances, understanding that sometimes it is safer for you, as an ally with certain privileges, to advocate and speak up. It means that you carefully consider when and how to use your power and privilege in allyship, as an accomplice, and/or as a co-conspirator.

Example 2: Being an Ally to Black Members and Colleagues

As someone who is aware of anti-Black racism, you might consider yourself an ally for feeling badly when you hear your colleague speak about being called the N-word, or when a Black student complains about white students touching their hair to feel the texture, or when you witness a new Black immigrant student being bullied for speaking with an accent. Being an ally might mean speaking privately to people you are comfortable with about the injustice you witness. Allyship in this case is passive and does nothing to change circumstances.



As you transition to an accomplice, you comfort your colleague when they talk about being called the N-word. You ask them what you can do to support them emotionally and psychologically, knowing that an experience like that could possibly trigger trauma from previous negative experiences. You intervene to stop racist behaviour when you witness it, offer your support to those who have experienced racism, and listen to how they feel. An accomplice is not afraid to be involved in finding solutions for problems.

As you transition to co-conspirator, you are well read on anti-Black racism. You understand the impact of racism, often experienced as daily microaggressions by Black people. You actively call for anti-racism policies and practices; you educate teachers, other educators, and students; and you are not afraid to act or speak out to demand change by individuals and school administration to end anti-Black racism. At the same time, you consult the people you are supporting to understand how they want this support, rather than doing so based on what you believe is best.

Reminder

Creating safer spaces is relational work. It requires that we engage with each other and hold each other accountable. We recognize that each of us may not have intended the consequences of our actions, but we need to listen and be responsive to feedback in dialogue with others. This requires reflection and self-regulation. Despite the complexities of safer spaces outlined in this resource, it is essential that you try. This applies to Association events, classroom contexts, meetings, and more. Practice is needed, perfection is not. Remaining engaged in dialogue is essential to creating safer spaces and working to address different systemic oppressions.

>> Additional Resources

See other resources in the Catholic Teachers' Safer Spaces Series, including:

- [Reflection Tool - Identity and Allyship](#)
- [Intent vs Impact](#)
- [Safer Spaces? Braver Spaces? - Our Collective Responsibility](#)
- [Understanding Trauma](#)

See other resources in the Catholic Teachers' Mental Health and Wellness Series, including:

- [Understanding Stress](#)
- [Strategies to Promote Mental Health and Wellness](#)
- [Additional Resources - Mental Health and Wellness](#)

