



Robert J Schout . President, PowerSkills Training & Development. 15 March 2025

## **Do's and Don'ts for Advocate and Ally Empowerment**

**Allies, advocates and activists must band together.** The old adage is true: united we rise, divided we fall. People, groups, movements, institutions and compassion itself, are all under assault. We cannot afford to lose one ally or advocate because of any pressure we place upon them. They are experiencing enough pressure from systems, orders, institutions, society and close friends and family. Allies and advocates are juggling choices, change and the impacts of every action they take.

### **Allies and advocates build each other up. They don't tear each other down.**

They seize the opportunity to appreciate efforts, attempts, courage, and commitment. They seize opportunities to educate and inform in different ways. They offer suggestions for what kind of advocacy and alliance words and practices help and which need to be worked on a bit more.

They don't expect perfection from their allies and advocates. They don't berate one if the right words aren't used, if some ignorance shows up in an ally's or advocate's version of history or events.

### **Additional actions to take and refrain from as an ally, advocate or activist.**

#### **Do's**

- Seek to both understand and build awareness, then reflect, change, grow.
- Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen.
- Share your stories.

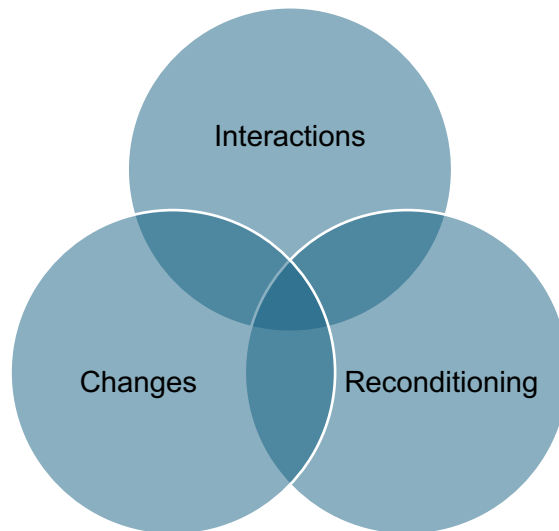
#### **Don'ts**

- Don't push an ally, advocate or activist to do more than they can juggle at one time. Remember that they are balancing their own safety, family needs and interests, and futures.

- Name, claim and own up to your own beliefs, backgrounds and behaviors that have – or still do – perpetuate privilege, bias or stereotypes.
- Assume that the “other” is in the room at all times.
- Use appropriate language and restate the language that others use, by inserting or substituting appropriate terms.
- Accept the arguments, feelings, experiences and perspectives of others regardless of whether you understand, or proof is offered.
- Ask to be taught, educated, coached so that you can be a more powerful support for ‘them/it’.
- Stop being naïve; understand that not everyone in a group for which you ally yourself, will be the best role models or examples for a cause.
- Realize that you may have been a part of the oppressive pattern or establishment, or that your group too (if you a part of an oppressed population/cause) may also oppress others internally and externally.
- Remember that your part in past oppression does not make you a ‘bad’ person. In fact, it can make you a better ally-as-an-educator to people like you.
- Count your privileges; make a list and commit to sharing them and ensuring that everyone has the same privileges.
- Be an advocate and ally with no strings attached.
- Don’t get angry with people in a movement or group that see you may as part of the problem. Rather simply remind them of what you’re trying to do and be. Ask whether they want you to do something differently or leave.
- Don’t expect everyone in a group or affiliated with a cause to agree with each other or even respect one another.
- Don’t look to the group or cause that you’re allying yourself with for your own emotional support or psychological validation unless that’s part of the mission or purpose of the group or movement.
- Don’t put your struggles on the same level as those of oppressed people or on groups who are under assault by new laws, policies, and decisions.
- If you’re part of the dominant culture or class, don’t steal the spotlight in a meeting or event.
- Don’t leap to defend yourself when called out by those for whom you are trying to be an ally or simply silently quit and never return because your feelings were bruised.
- Don’t put up with being disrespected by those for whom you are trying to be an ally or advocate. Let them know of the behaviors.
- Don’t disempower or victimize, with unthoughtful words or unwise behaviors, the very people you’re trying to advocate for and be an ally to.
- Don’t take credit for or attention from another person/group/cause’s movement.
- Don’t give up; remember that you may be the only person or voice that other people or groups may listen to.

## Make Some Commitments

What actions are you willing to take on a regular basis to demonstrate your support of other allies, advocates or activists? How might you interact to show support? What might you change? How might you recondition your own perceptions, behaviors, attitudes or biases?



Being an effective ally and advocate for a person, cause, group or principle takes work. It commits a person to constant self-reflection, self-assessment and change. It commits one's courage, bravery, hands, voice and heart to action.

Just remember that you have oceans of courage and bravery inside of you and self-reflection and change need not be humiliating as long as you remain humble.

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Robert Schout is President of PowerSkills Training & Development Inc. and Schout It Out LLC. His companies provide training, consulting and coaching to hundreds of businesses and government agencies each year. Robert is soon-to-be the author of (2) books for business professionals: [Performance Management@Work](#) and [Leading and Managing Up@Work](#). See preview chapters and get more information about coaching and executive advising services to build your confidence, steadiness, determination and courage at work and in life. Contact [www.powerskillsinternational.com](http://www.powerskillsinternational.com).

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