

Allyship

Disclaimer: The terminology used to describe ethnicity and race (BAME community) has its limitations and those who fall into this category may describe themselves differently.

Allyship is ...

- A white individual who supports those from minority groups
- A lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, accountability with marginalised individuals or groups of people
- Chance to reflect about our own views
- Giving those from minority groups a voice

Allyship is not ...

- A badge of honour or title
- A white saviour complex where BAME people can be 'saved'
- Being praised for your actions
- Only being an ally when there is a BAME audience

Importance of educators being allies:

- It is important for educators to be allies as they allow people to be seen and respected. Some characteristics of an ally include being supportive by providing someone with a listening ear, making a safe environment for everyone, challenge people who use language that may be offensive, recognise their personal mistakes and continue to grow and learn from them, are kind, and open. Holstine (2020) argues that educators need to be more than just allies They need to be advocates who fight for people's rights, speak up in public spaces, create support groups and work alongside unions to support those from the BAME community.

Strategies for practitioners to become allies to the BAME community within their role as an educator to students on placement.

1. Educate yourself.

Take it upon yourself to learn about the experiences of the BAME community and students and the challenges they can face on placement. Do not expect to be taught or shown, answer your own questions by utilising the tools around you to become an ally, for instance through the university, your organisation or BAME networks and groups. A variety of materials can be sourced including articles, books, podcasts and films.

Whilst every experience is unique to the individual, taking the first step of educating yourself will provide you with a solid foundation to be a better listener and therefore a more receptive ally.

2. Be aware of your privilege.

Privilege comes in many forms including gender, colour, race, ethnicity, health, sexual orientation and economic background. Being aware of how your privilege effects your personal and professional

life can highlight the advantages that not all people are granted. These advantages can affect your occupations, your job, your education, your health and your relationships. The process of reflection can be uncomfortable and evoke defensive feelings as people feel they have not asked for, or noticed, these advantages. It is, however, vital to be able to recognise your own privilege afforded by systematic discrimination in order to support those that do not have the same types of advantages as yourself. As an ally this awareness allows you to act more responsibly from a better-informed position.

3. Get comfortable with talking about it.

Open conversations are essential to identify challenges, opportunities and solutions. Concerns regarding appropriate language and terminology can be a barrier to people discussing race, it is important to remember that assumptions based on people's visible markers of identity can be misleading and that there is a huge amount of diversity and variance in race and culture. Being comfortable with listening, acknowledging mistakes and working to be familiar with appropriate language and terminology is what makes an effective ally.

4. Appreciate the diversity within the BAME community.

The experiences of BAME students and how they experience racism and prejudices greatly differ. Whilst there may be commonalities of what the BAME community come up against, each person will have faced discrimination in very different ways. It is important not to group all BAME individuals together as one singular group. Being aware of the variances between, and within, ethnic groups will support an ally listen to a range of diverse voices without assumption.

5. Be present in your allyship.

Step up to the responsibility by attending events which are aimed at promoting BAME inclusion, be visible in supporting the BAME community, for instance this might be talking to white counterparts about the events you have attended and what you learnt from these. Share with others your journey and the reasons why you have committed to developing your allyship.

6. Incorporate allyship within your role as an educator.

The multi-faceted role of a placement educator is not only to teach but also to act as a leader, role model, mentor and assessor. To have an understanding of the challenges students belonging to the BAME community can face and how to address these as an educator relies on allyship. It can be difficult for students to share their experiences with their educator, this is then amplified when educators do not take action to address matters or downplay and undermine the students encounter. By being an ally, educators can develop knowledge and skills in how to confront and support the challenges students can face including isolation, prejudice and racism. An educated and prepared educator is more likely to respond appropriately. As a person in a position of power educators can inform white students of their allyship and role model this to facilitate the cascade of good practice and awareness.

7. Challenge unacceptable behaviour.

When witness to unacceptable behaviour take action, do not merely be a bystander. Non-action implies implicit agreement with the perpetrator. As an educator in a privileged position there is power to address unacceptable behaviour towards the BAME community or individuals. White educators have the privilege of being able to call out inappropriate behaviour without responses or assumptions being made based on their own ethnicity.

8. Influence change.

Promote inclusive systems and processes within your organisation and liaise with BAME colleagues and students for suggestions of how practice can be improved. Policies relating to equality and diversity may be in place however there can still be structures in place which are unintentionally biased against BAME people. Being welcomed into an infrastructure which is continually reflecting on its inclusion needs provides a great basis for a student to grow and develop as an allied health professional on placement.

9. Make a pledge.

Make a pledge whether this be to yourself or a publicised forum. Commit to tackling racism and promoting a society in which diversity is celebrated and racial inequalities are eradicated. An educator might make a pledge to:

Give respect to others regardless of ethnicity or race.

Take accountability of thier part of developing a positive and inclusive placement setting for students in which diversity is celebrated.

Take positive action to combat discrimination systems and practices.

Educate themself and others on race and racism.

Stand up against racism.

Please note that the terminology used within this document to discuss ethnicity and race has limitations and each individual will have different personal associations with the language used in this area.

Resources

- An Anti Racist Approach to Education Webinar:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Dvr6vI3w2o&ab_channel=PierceCollegeDist11
- Explanation of privilege: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvIEVEW1Sp8>
- Allegories on race and racism by Camara Jones:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNhcY6fTyBM> = Uses practical examples to demonstrate her points
- Inclusion Starts with I: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2g88Ju6nkcg>

- 'Let's Talk to White Allies': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMVja7GZWYc> = practical tips from white allies about their experiences in the process
- 'White Fragility' by Dr Robin DiAngelo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dwlx3KQer54> = white people having racial identity, surface and deep level of racism
- Our allyship webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYfXlgynlYc> (Allyship: 26.09)

References

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