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## Becoming an Accepting and Supportive Person

Many members of the LGBTQIA+ community face obstacles and may be hindered due to the biases of others, in life and in the workplace. Therefore, it's important to take an opportunity to self-reflect on our own beliefs and actions, as well as how they affect those around us. As the Greek philosopher Socrates once said, "An unexamined life is not worth living." Though we should always treat others with respect and kindness, we might fall short at times or not realize how exactly to show support. If you would like to work on being an accepting and supportive ally to the LGBTQIA+ community, here are some points to consider.

**Individuality makes us human.** It takes all different types of people to make the world go round. As long as one's actions don't harm others, no one should be shamed or threatened for expressing their uniqueness. You can still respect and support someone else even if you don't agree with everything they believe or do.

**Expand your horizons.** Try being more receptive to new people. If you tend to interact with the same people in your daily routine, challenge yourself to say hello to someone new. Maybe it's someone you cross paths with on a regular basis but have never really talked with. Could you be more open to having dialogue with people who have different beliefs and points of view? Think of it as an opportunity to grow and expand your own perspective. Make sure to be respectful when engaging in dialogue with others, even if your points of view differ.

**Be mindful of your own judgments or assumptions.** We all make judgments, and sometimes it can feel like an automatic process in our brain. If you notice that you jump to immediate judgments about others, practice shifting your brain to simply making observations. Also, avoid making assumptions about others. We might do this when we are out in public observing strangers or with people we know in our daily lives. However, we can never know the inner workings of someone else unless they tell us. As Don Miguel Ruiz wrote in his book *The Four Agreements*, "It is always better to ask questions than to make an assumption."

**Take the time to listen.** Challenge yourself to truly listen when conversing with others, rather than just waiting for your turn to talk. As the Dalai Lama once said, "When you talk, you are only repeating what you know. But when you listen, you learn something new."

**Ask others how you can support them.** Don't be afraid to be direct and ask your friends, family, or others in your life how you can best support them.

**Not everyone will agree on some things.** Try not to let others' opinions and beliefs affect you negatively. Instead, focus on what you can do. Continue to spread positivity and maintain an open mindset even when others are not. If you see someone getting bullied or harassed in the workplace, offer your support, help them get to a safe space, and report the behavior through the appropriate channels. Remember to stay in control of your emotions, as this can help de-escalate the situation.