

Ally episode

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Welcome to Just breathe parenting your LGBTQ teen, the podcast transforming the conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child filled with awesome guests practical strategies and moving stories host Heather Hester always makes you feel like you're having a cozy chat. Wherever you are on this journey. Right now, in this moment in time, you are not alone. And here is Heather for this week's amazing episode.



00:33

Hi, everyone, I am so happy that you are here. I've spent a good deal of time the past few weeks reflecting on this past year. And I'm guessing I'm probably not the only one who's doing this especially after the year we've all had. Strangely, even though there have been downright sucky parts to this year COVID the loss of my darling father in law in April, and my thyroid cancer diagnosis and surgery in August and September, I have to say that my thoughts have more often wander to funny memories from the sheer funny heartwarming, interesting, weird crazy. I keep thinking about the crazy Tic Tac videos that my kids would share with us especially when we were in lockdown stay at home orders and April and May and June and and the things that we tried from Tech Talk. For instance, putting knives on our Roomba. This was before we had the baby dog but putting knives on our Roomba and popping balloons with the Roomba. We really did that. And it was truly hysterical. Just Funny, funny dinnertime conversations that we had, and long dinners and everybody just sitting together. And just the quality time that we've all had. And, you know, each of us with each other has been so amazing. And we've been forced to slow down a little bit. A lot of it actually. And I thought about all of the awesome human beings, I've

had the opportunity to interview this past year, and share with you all and I just feel grateful. I've learned so much. And each day I feel like I'm a slightly better version of myself than the day before. There are exceptions, of course. And this Steven, the kids will be happy to tell you those exceptions. But overall, there's been true beauty hidden in this horrific year, which is really made me think about what I want to share with you all today. And I want to start with a quote from Oprah's 2019 speech for the opening of the Statue of Liberty Museum in New York. And her opening she said, we live in divisive times. But I think it's only fitting that at this critical moment, we remember that the one idea that sustains the soul of America, above all, is freedom. That is even more true A year later, right and even more vital to put our differences aside and to advocate for each other's basic human rights. So today's show is about being a good ally, learning how to advocate. It's a broad term, and many of the ideas and suggestions I'm going to share can cross over. But for the purposes of this podcast, I'm going to talk specifically about being a good LGBTQ ally. So who is this for? Well, this is for anyone who knows and cares about an LGBTQ person. For some who are listening, being an ally will be as easy as breathing. For others it will take intentional effort. Either way you are showing up for the person or people you care about in a very meaningful way.



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So let's start out with just a basic definition of what an ally is. An ally is a person or group that provides assistance and support and an ongoing effort, activity or struggle. And that's according to the Merriam Webster dictionary, specific to the LGBTQ community. It is a straight or cisgender person who has A genuine strong concern for their well being. One who supports and accepts LGBTQ people and advocates for equal rights. It is one who confronts the challenges that LGBTQ people experience and believes their societal, for example heterosexism the assumption that everyone is or should be straight by prejudiced, harmful preconceived ideas about bisexual people, and trans prejudice, harmful preconceived ideas about transgender people. So the big question is, how can we be the best possible ally to our kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews, friends, students, co workers, etc. As I was researching for this episode, I came across a ton of fabulous information. And if you've been listening to me for a while, you know that I definitely get lost in my researching, and it's one of my very favorite things to do. So I had a hard time paring down. So I wouldn't be sharing for hours with you. But there is so much fascinating history. And there are well researched studies. And ultimately, I decided this episode could be the starting point. And you all can grab on to what resonates with you and research more from there. And to make it easier, I've linked all of my research in my show notes. So don't worry about taking notes, or if you're missing something, it will all be there detailed for you in the show notes. And for simplicity, I categorized what I researched into seven ways anyone can be an ally. So first, be a good listener, as in, be present, and see and hear

the person who is speaking to you. This is one of my favorites. This is something that I've had to be very intentional about learning to do. And, you know, I think the biggest thing for all of us is putting down our phones, or turning away from our computers, or making that eye contact, the genuine connection. So be intentional about creating a space of understanding. And this could potentially take some personal work that will allow you to get to a place where you believe that all people, regardless of sexual orientation, or gender identity, should be treated with dignity and respect. So I'm just going to repeat that one more time, because I think it is very, very important. Do the personal work that allows you to get to the place where you believe that all people, regardless of sexual orientation, or gender identity should be treated with dignity and respect.



08:24

The second great way to be an ally, a good ally, is to not be afraid to ask questions. But do your own research. So meaning? It's okay. And it's good to be curious and to want to learn, but be respectful and non intrusively challenge stereotypes and your own unconscious bias. And that's a huge one, a huge one. So I wanted to add in a little bit here just on the history against this. I've come across many, many times as I've done research over the past four years. And as I've educated myself, and I just find these facts so very interesting. The word homosexual did not exist in the English language until 1892. And it did not appear in the Bible until 1946. Homosexuality is criminalized nationwide in the United States nationwide until 1962 when Illinois became the first state to decriminalize it. homosexuality was considered a mental illness by the American Psychiatric Association until 1973. messaging around the 1980s, AIDS epidemic spread damaging misinformation about the LGBTQ community. The don't ask, don't tell you United States military policy prohibiting gay and lesbian Americans from openly identifying and serving in the military was reinforced in 1996, as well as the Defense of Marriage Act, barring the federal government from recognizing same sex couples in any legal matter. So these are just a few pieces of really, really important, important history to keep in mind as you research as you challenge your own stereotypes as you challenge others. stereotypes and as you work through your own unconscious bias, educate yourself on LGBTQ history, his issues, policies, adversity, have conversations with LGBTQ people and learn about their experiences, you will make mistakes, and that's okay, it's part of learning. And that leads to the third way that you can be a good ally, which is get comfortable with being uncomfortable. If you're straight, or cisgender. You're learning all new information. And it's going to potentially feel uncomfortable at first, if you are the one who who is working to shift your mindset, or confronting your own previously held prejudices or biases, this education potentially may be particularly uncomfortable. That is, okay. breathe through your discomfort and allow yourself the space and time to process what you're learning. It's okay to take that time. It's okay to take a step forward and pause. Embrace that you will make mistakes you are

human. And the goal is not to be perfect. It is for all to be free to live authentically. The fourth way to be a good ally is to Speak up. Speak up in person, speak up online. Just speak up. Social media is one way to show ally ship, volunteering and showing solidarity in person is even better. There are a couple great nonprofits out there for you to check out if you want to speak up show up in that way. These will all be listed in the show notes again, so I'm just going to list them off. But glisten is a nonprofit whose mission is to create safe and affirming schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The Trevor Project, whose mission is to provide 24 seven crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning young people under the age of 25.



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And Sage is a national organization that offers supportive services and consumer resources to LGBTQ older people and their caregivers. Here are a few ways to advocate and show solidarity in person. Calmly but firmly speak up when someone uses slurs or insensitive language. I know this can be incredibly awkward. But making others aware that their words can be hurtful as a step toward effecting change. And many times people do not even realize or they are they're not aware how hurtful these words are or can be. So this is just part of the gentle education process. Respectfully correct others if they miss gender, someone again, totally awkward at first, but when it's done with sincerity, and a spirit of education, it is another step toward effecting change. be inclusive, especially right now on the time of COVID. Be aware of opportunities to increase connection and decrease isolation. Many of you still have your child or children at home. So now is the time to instill these skills, the skills that they need to connect with others and be aware with other aware of others, as well as the tools they will need to handle isolation and finally promote diversity in your workplace. The fifth way that you can be a really good ally is to support equality. Educate yourself about policies that protect LGBTQ people from discrimination within your workplace, at your kids, schools, within your communities and so on. What may seem insignificant to you can make a huge difference, and an LGBTQ person's quality of life. In a recent interview, Lambda Legal attorney Taylor Brown said, the ability to live free from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity should not be dependent on where you live. It should be inherent for all people in this country. This one will definitely take diligent work on your part, especially depending on where you live. But this is a really, really powerful way to be an ally. The sixth way to be a great ally is to learn the language. It is respectful, and reflects your desire to be an ally when you use the right words and pronouns. Never assume someone's sexual orientation or gender identity and ask if you're unsure and if it's appropriate. The show notes again, will include a shortlist to get you started and some some good ways to open those

conversations because I know that's difficult. Last year, Connor started using the word y'all and his texts and I was so perplexed because we live in the Midwest, we don't we're not from the south. And you know, I've always appreciated the word y'all.



16:50

I love it.



16:51

I think it's warm and friendly. But I was certainly perplexed at his sudden use of the word. So I finally asked him why and he said, he switched because it is inclusive of everyone. So I thought that was so interesting, because I'd never really thought that how we use these words, depending on where you're from, you likely use you guys. I know I always have Hey, you guys get over here what you know, however you use that or Ladies and gentlemen, I've had to be very intentional and aware to slowly make the chef the shift. And I really appreciate Connor bringing that to our attention. And it's just part you know, one seemingly small part of the shift, but it means so much to people. The seventh way to be a good ally is to offer financial support if you're able any LGBTQ nonprofit would be delighted with your support. And crowdfunding is another way to financially support LGBTQ people. According to the nonprofit Think Tank movement Advancement Project, LGBTQ youth face disproportionate rates of homelessness. And in rural areas, a lack of service providers with competency serving LGBTQ youth means homelessness and other struggles. And these may be more difficult to recognize and to address. So just some things to think about. And really get those creative and shifting thoughts going for you. And one more thought before we finish up for today, I know the holidays are a common time to face family members and others you may only see once or twice a year who are not affirming and use this information I've shared with you today as a guide, and even as a protective shield of education and empowerment. It is when you are educated, you are empowered and you can empower others. I know I just shared a ton of information with you. And again, it will all be in my show notes. So don't panic if you feel like you missed something. Remember that ally is a noun and a verb. Education and shifting take time. You will make mistakes. But it is far better to make those mistakes and keep moving forward than to not try at all our kids and the LGBTQ community need us. We can touch hearts one conversation at a time. Until next time.



19:57

Thanks so much for joining Heather today. Remember to just breathe. Take a few minutes

every day to calm and center yourself. Reach out anytime with ideas, questions or feedback. Please rate and review just breathe on your favorite platform. Subscribe to Heather's website [WWW dot chrysalis mama.com](http://www.chrysalis-mama.com) to receive her monthly newsletter and stay informed. Join the private just breathe Facebook community to chat with other parents and allies and share with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone.