



Traps and Potholes for Allies to Avoid, a Beginning List

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1. PLEs ~ Perfectly Logical Explanations (EYCA)
2. Yeah, but.... (EYCA)
3. That happens to me/my group, too.... (EYCA)
4. I know someone who...and they don't agree with you.... (EYCA)
5. I don't see it that way; therefore, it doesn't really happen.... (EYCA)
6. That doesn't happen to me... (so it doesn't exist) (EYCA)
7. Don't you think that...
8. You're overreacting...you're too sensitive... (EYCA)
9. He/she's a good person...they never meant to do that....
10. That was not my intent! You misunderstood me!
11. Colluding and trying to maintain the status quo culture
12. Trying to keep your status/membership in "the club" while saying you are creating change
13. Fear of losing your access, connections, and future career opportunities
14. Attached to what people will say about you
15. Afraid of the consequences and backlash if you speak truth to power
16. Thinking you know all you need to know; feeling you have arrived
17. Believing you have the right answer, you know exactly what is needed
18. Feeling you have arrived, done all your self-work
19. Having some information and skills, but nowhere near enough competence
20. Acting alone or in isolation
21. Not having accountability structures with people in the corresponding marginalized group
22. Motivated by wanting to "help" people in marginalized identities

23. Reacting out of rescuing, patronizing, or condescending energy
24. Motivated by guilt, shame, or pity
25. Unclear why you do ally work; not clear on your motives and self-interest, i.e., reclaiming your humanity as you partner to create true equity and inclusion for all; understanding how oppression negatively impacts you in your privileged identity(s)
26. Wanting recognition and appreciation for your contributions
27. Taking over and dominating conversations
28. Assuming leadership roles in cross identity groups with thoughtful group dialogue
29. Not partnering with and following the leadership of people from the corresponding marginalized identity(s)
30. Reacting out of self-righteous energy
31. Social justice arrogance: believing you “get it” and others “don’t get it”
32. Believing there is a progression from mediocre ally to “super ally”
33. Personal attacks on people who “don’t get it”
34. Shaming others or yourself for not knowing enough, doing enough, etc.
35. Acquiescing to anything people from marginalized groups say and do
36. Disappearing from conversations and deifying people from marginalized groups
37. Defensiveness to feedback from people from both marginalized and privileged groups
38. Resistance to looking at the impact of your behavior; fragility
39. Unwilling to explore how you may be reacting out of internalized dominance
40. Holding back out of perfectionism, fear making a mistake, or being wrong
41. Fear of intense emotions (yours or others), especially anger and deep pain
42. Not seeing all people as worthy human beings, deserving of respect and dignity
43. Hiding your prejudicial thoughts and implicit bias
44. Fear of being vulnerable
45. Disengaging from other members of your privileged group(s)
46. Calling yourself an ally without engaging in active change work with people from the corresponding marginalized identity(s) ~ the people with which you say you are allied

- 47. Only working on a single identity without seeing and working with the intersections and simultaneity of multiple identities
- 48. Having a very shallow definition and vision of change work: focused on diversity and increasing demographics without systemic, sustainable organizational change to create inclusive, socially just organizations
- 49. Doing for others what they can do for themselves
- 50. Thinking there is a checklist, a to-do list of “right” ally behaviors