When someone close to us reveals that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+) we may experience a range of emotions. Similarly, when we learn that a family member has a mental illness, feelings may include concern, confusion, or a desire to provide support.

Whether an LGBTQ+ friend or family member has shared with you that they have a mental illness, or someone with a mental illness has revealed to you their sexual orientation or gender identity, there are some common strategies to being a good ally:

**Be supportive**
- Make sure to listen and provide support to your family member or friend. Ask questions to learn more while remaining open and non-judgmental.

**Learn more**
- Take the time to learn more about LGBTQ+ issues and about your loved one’s mental illness. Public libraries and the Internet may provide a good starting place. You may also want to have a conversation with your family member or friend to learn more about the issues that are important to them. Demonstrating a desire to better understand their situation is a good first step to being an ally.

**Offer compassion and respect**
- Understand that because of discrimination experienced for being both LGBTQ+ and having a mental illness, revealing such information may be difficult for your family member or friend. Even if you feel conflicted about the information they have shared, try to respect how difficult it may have been to reveal this information.

**Find support for yourself**
- To be a good ally, you may need to find support networks of your own. You may need to rely on others to talk through your emotions or to digest the information that was shared with you. A good source of support may be meeting with others who are going through similar experiences as you, such as in support groups.

Listed below are additional tips for being a good ally to your LGBTQ+ family member or friend:

**Challenge stereotypes**
- Challenge derogatory remarks or jokes made at the expense of any group, and avoid making them yourself. These remarks reinforce stereotypes and make it seem that prejudice is acceptable.

**Don’t expect LGBTQ+ people to be “experts”**
- Don’t expect members of any group that is the target of bias (e.g. LGBTQ+ people, people with mental illness) to act as the “experts” to educate others about their group. Avoid tokenizing or patronizing people different from you.

**Remember that you are human**
- Allow yourself to not know everything and to make mistakes. Give yourself time to learn, ask questions, and explore your own ideas and feelings. Extend the same to others. Don’t present yourself as an “expert” unless you truly are one.
Try your best
• Always try your best to use the correct and respectful language. If you make a mistake, apologize and continue on. Do not make a big deal about the mistake and the guilt you feel.

Prepare yourself for change and growth
• It can be exciting, painful and enlightening to explore issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or mental illness. Accept that even if it’s painful, this will be a journey of learning and growth. By becoming a good ally you’ll be improving society in the process.

General LGBTQ+ websites
Listed below are websites for some national LGBTQ+ organizations and the descriptions they provide of their work. Many of these websites have links to additional resources and information. This list is not exhaustive or comprehensive and readers are encouraged to explore the Internet for additional resources.

AGLP
Association of LGBTQ+ Psychiatrists
www.aglp.org/  

Bisexual Resource Center
www.biresource.org  

GLMA
Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
www.glma.org  

GLSEN
For Youth
www.glsen.org  

Hearts and Ears, Inc.
www.heartsandears.org  

Human Rights Campaign (HRC)
www.hrc.org  

LGBT National Help Center
888-843-4564
www.glbthotline.org  

NAMI HelpLine
National Alliance on Mental Illness
1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
www.nami.org  

National Coalition for LGBT Health
www.healthlgbt.org  

National LGBTQ Task Force
www.thetaskforce.org  

National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC)
www.nyacyouth.org  

PFLAG
For Parents, Families and Friends of LGBTQ+ People
www.pflag.org  

Rainbow Heights Club
www.rainbowheights.org  

The Trevor Project
LGBTQ+ Youth Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-866-488-7386
www.TheTrevorProject.org  

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