



Guardians of Peace in the Galaxy: Being an Ally as a Jedi

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“With the first link, the chain is forged. The first speech censured...the first thought forbidden...the first freedom denied – chains us all, irrevocably.” –Judge Aaron Satie, *The Drumhead, Star Trek:TNG*

Jedi are the **guardians of peace** in the galaxy.

Jedi use their powers to **defend and to protect**.

Jedi **respect all life, in any form**.

Jedi **serve others rather than ruling over them**, for the good of the galaxy.

Jedi seek to **improve themselves through knowledge and training**.

Jedi are “guardians of peace” who “defend and protect” others. Jedi “respect all life, in any form”, meaning that when we “defend and protect” and “serve others, rather than ruling over them”, it must be to protect all instead of just some. To do this to the best of our ability we must “improve ourselves through knowledge and training”. One might say this definition of how a Jedi acts is the same as being an ally.

Ally: “Someone who supports and stands up for the rights and dignity of individuals and identity groups other than their own.”

Institutional Prejudice: Attitudes, condition and/or behaviors promoting stereotyping of social roles and abilities that damage others (e.g. sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia etc.)

Privilege: a term for societal conditions and attitudes that benefit a certain group of people based on an external characteristic beyond what is commonly experienced by people without that characteristic under the same social, political, or economic circumstances.

Micro-aggressions: the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

Cisgendered: a person whose self-identity conforms with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex; not transgendered.

Intersectionality: “Intersectionality is a concept often used in critical theories to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another. Coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989.” The way in which allies can’t push for change along just one axis, as none of them exist in a vacuum.

Non-binary: This term describes any gender identity or sexual orientation which does not fit within the understood binary (male/female, gay/straight); that a binary understanding of identity can be harmful at worst, and insufficient at best.

I have loads of recommendations for books and sites on all of these topics; please feel free to ask me for some on any topic, or discuss any of these issues further; I can be contacted through the California Jedi website (californiajedi.org) or Facebook page. This workshop is also a safe space, please do not share any personal stories, mistakes, or information you learn about others today without their express permission.

Citations: Definitions taken and paraphrased from Wikipedia.

<http://www.xojane.com/issues/feminism-men-practical-steps>

http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Allies_workshop

Creating Safe Spaces vs. Using your privilege to interrupt problematic behavior:

One is protecting, the other is defending, both are vital.

Safe space examples:

- Give a woman more space on the train at night
- Listen instead of talking and let PoC lead conversations where their experience is more relevant
- Believe people when they talk about their experiences of oppression
- Talk about queerness or feminism or ableism with friends, with family, online; I promise it's less awkward than you think
- Educate yourself and others about movements like Feminism, trans*gender issues, racial activism. After all, "There is no Ignorance..." Knowledge is what destroys prejudice.

Using privilege to interrupt privilege examples:

- As a man, challenge other men (or women) when they make sexist or rape jokes
- As a white person take a stand against whitewashing in movies
- As a cisgendered person, be a physical presence if you witness harassment or bullying based on gender presentation, online or off
- If people organize events that would exclude people who are less able-bodied, point it out and see if changes can be made
- Hold your community to high standards: as Jedi we need to have the courage to listen to others when they point out our flaws, and to have the integrity to ask people to live and act as Jedi. Obviously we should do this kindly, but to let prejudice or unkindness flourish because someone is our friend is not the act of a true friend.

Doing any of these things can be difficult and awkward, but sacrificing your momentary comfort (or, depending on your feelings and abilities, safety) as a Jedi and person of privilege is a fair trade off to support another's rights and dignity.

Active Listening

1. Pay attention
 - Put aside distracting thoughts
 - Do not mentally prepare a response or rebuttal while the other person is talking
2. Show that you are listening
 - Nod, smile, open inviting posture, eye-contact
 - Encourage them to speak ('yes', 'I understand')

3. Provide Feedback
 - Repeat for clarification to show you heard and/or summarize lightly to engage
 - Ask clarifying or expanding questions to get more information
4. Defer Judgement
 - Don't interrupt, allow them to fully finish
 - When and if you respond, don't treat the discussion like a fight, treat it like a mutual endeavor where you both are looking to discover the truth

Possible Discussion Questions

- What are ways to be an ally, to respect, defend, and support those in need? How diverse are your choices as a consumer of knowledge, culture, and media? Is it important to use your power as a consumer to be an ally?
- What are pros of creating a welcoming environment in our community? Why is this important to our Jedi paths?
- Jedi should be open-minded and supportive: we want all who feel the call of the path to feel welcome.
- Is it important or necessary for us as Jedi to use our power and privilege for those who don't have it? Why or why not?
- What work is taken on by marginalized groups that is unfair or not equal? How can we help take on some of that work? Should we?
- Do Jedi as guardians of peace have a duty to not increase unnecessary or unproductive suffering/inject positivity when possible?
- Where do you get your information about the power dynamics in our society? What about your opinions, where did they come from? Are those sources biased, and in what way? How can we eliminate that bias (as best we can)?
- Do you say one thing and do another, e.g. have gay friends you care about, but use homophobic slurs, or love your sister/girlfriend/mother but are uncomfortable having women as superiors at work?
 - How can we find and uproot this kind of behavior in ourselves and others in a way that is productive and respectful of the fact we all make mistakes and want to improve?
- In what ways are you privileged? In what ways does societal prejudice hurt you and those around you? Should we try and share the umbrella of our privilege? If so, should we be thanked for it?
- What are the pros of identifying publicly as an ally and using the appropriate words for that (eg. Feminist etc)? What are the cons?
 - This is the first step in treating your privilege as un-earned, and working hard to cede it purposefully; otherwise you treat your privilege as normal and people's lack of privilege as their problem to overcome.
- Do the ways others try to fight for justice (both good and bad) affect your ability to do so, or the way you do so? For example, if you know feminists who you disagree with, does this mean you cannot be a feminist? Why or why not?