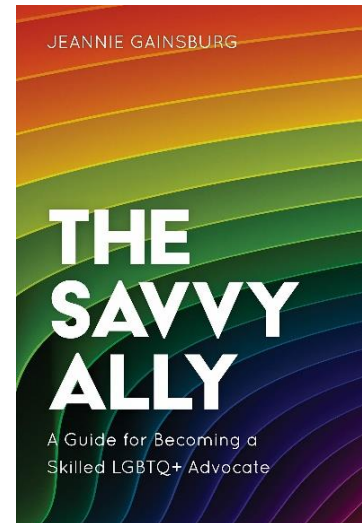


Book Club Discussion Guide for *The Savvy Ally*

(Grateful acknowledgment to Cara Pelletier, Senior Director of Culture and Belonging at Moderna, Karen Catlin, author of *Better Allies*, Jeanette Adams-Price, Monroe One BOCES Instructional Specialist, and Julie Gainsburg, Professor, California State University at Northridge for their contributions)



Section 1: Becoming Knowledgeable Allies

In Chapter 2, the author talks about the common question of “Why do there have to be so many identities?” She states that typically this question comes from people who have figured out their identity and have their word/words locked in place. Words are created when there is a need. Are there aspects of your identity for which you haven’t found quite the right word?

Are there identities of yours that you’ve hidden or avoided answering questions about? What influenced you in making those decisions? How did that make you feel about yourself and your environment?

Did Chapter 4 “Orientations, Identities, Behaviors—Oh My!” cause you to reflect on yourself in a new way?

In Chapter 4, the author talks about the hugely problematic issue of people confusing attraction and behavior and how it’s at the heart of many misunderstandings about LGBTQ+ people and a barrier to their inclusion. Have you found examples of people confusing attraction and behavior in your workplace, school, or faith community?

Section 2: Building Skills for Having Respectful Conversations

Are there LGBTQ+ etiquette language tips or ally actions, shared in Chapter 5, that you are likely to perform after reading this book? Which will be the most challenging?

Do you allow yourself to be raggedy? Do you forgive yourself when you mess up? If not, what gets in your way? Have you ever had positive outcomes after messing up?

In Chapter 5, the author shares some strategies for “getting it right the next time” after you’ve accidentally misgendered someone. What strategies for remembering people’s names and pronouns have worked for you?

Chapter 6 begins with a quote from Sam Killermann about your “You Soup” ingredient list. Which of your “ingredients” do people tend to focus on? What parts of your identity are important to you that others don’t see or tend to overlook?

The author shares that myths and stereotypes about straight/cisgender allies held her back from being more vocal and active as an ally for many years. Have any of those myths or stereotypes held you back from taking a more active role as an ally? If you were able to overcome these myths and stereotypes, what helped?

In Chapter 7, the author talks about how humans are naturally resistant learners. Where have you experienced being a resistant learner? What triggers your own resistance to change?

What are some ways you have been successful in helping people learn new things, especially when they are resistant? What tactics have worked for you?

Discuss a recent experience in which you saw discriminatory or inappropriate behavior and didn’t step in or speak up. What held you back? Do you feel more equipped to intervene now?

Did any of the bloopers in Chapter 8 surprise you? What bloopers have you made or heard others make? What bloopers do people make when referring to parts of your identity? How have you corrected people when bloopers about your identity are made?

Section 3: Taking Action to Create More LGBTQ+ Inclusive Spaces

Which of the common questions in Chapter 9 have you experienced? How did you respond? How would you change your response based on what you learned from this chapter?

Have you ever experienced receiving “equal” treatment when what you needed was “equitable” treatment? What’s a situation where one-size-fits-all doesn’t fit you?

An extremely pervasive perception is that certain groups are seeking “special rights,” rather than attempting to gain rights and protections that other groups already have. “Why is there no straight pride parade?” is similar to the “All lives matter” chant. Are there techniques that you’ve learned in this book that will help you combat this perception?

What stood out to you in Chapter 10 “Duct Tape Patch-Up Jobs and Big Fixes”? What changes can you see implementing or advocating for in your space?

Would you say your setting (i.e., workplace, school, faith community) has applied more duct tape patch-up jobs or big fixes when it comes to creating more inclusive spaces?

The author talks about how when LGBTQ+ people enter a space (i.e., an agency, a business, a faith community), they’re looking for specific indicators that they will be welcome there. What do LGBTQ+ people see when they look at your website and when they enter your space?

Section 4: Allying Responsibly

Have you experienced any of the backlash against allies discussed in Chapter 12? Have you ever been in a situation where you tried to do “the right thing” for someone, only to be called out and told you did it wrong? How did you recover from that situation and what did you learn?

In the final chapter, the author pushes back on other educator’s heavy focus on ally accountability. She writes about experiencing daunting lists of expectations for allies and unforgiving attitudes when allies mess up. Instead, she focuses on forgiveness, sustainability, and self-care. What are your thoughts on this approach? Have you found that a focus on ally accountability motivates you or does it make you feel like you’ll never be, as the author states, “ally enough”? If you agree with the author, what are ways that you can hold yourself accountable for sustained and active allyship?

In the “Take Care of Yourself” section of Chapter 13, the author talks about her recipe for happiness (i.e., sleep, exercise, and vegetables) and self-care gifts to herself. What’s your happiness recipe? What self-care gifts do you give yourself when you’re exhausted and/or vulnerable?

At the very end of the book, the author encourages you to “every so often, return to “Why?” What motivates you as an ally? What’s your why?