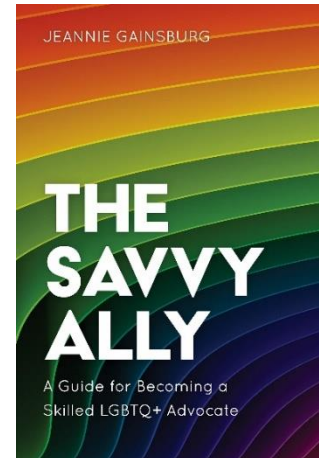


Book Club Discussion Guide for *The Savvy Ally*

(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, Gainsburg writes about the common question “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 or words locked in place. Words are created when there’s 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 deciding to hide those identities? How did that make you feel about yourself and your environment?
- Did the diagram of sex, gender, and sexuality, discussed in chapter 4, cause you to reflect on yourself in a new way? If so, what was the impact?
- Gainsburg writes about the problematic issue of people confusing attraction and behavior and how this issue lies at the heart of many misunderstandings about LGBTQ+ people and inclusion efforts. Have you experienced people confusing attraction and behavior in your workplace, school, or faith community? If so, what did this look like? What was the impact or response?

Section 2: Building Skills for Having Respectful Conversations

- In chapter 5, Gainsburg asserts that the best way to gather information about how to respectfully refer to people is to establish systems where you’re gathering the information from *everyone* who wants to share. Which of techniques mentioned in this book for gathering pronouns are ones that could be implemented in your workplace, school, or faith community?
- Are there LGBTQ+ etiquette language tips or ally actions, shared in chapter 5, that you’re likely to perform after reading this book? Which will be the most challenging and why?

- 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 experienced positive outcomes after messing up? If so, what were they?
- In chapter 5, Gainsburg 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 Sam Killermann quote 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?
- Gainsburg shares that myths and stereotypes about straight cisgender allies had held her back from being 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, Gainsburg states that humans are naturally resistant learners. Have you experienced yourself being a resistant learner? What helps you overcome your resistance to learning new ideas that conflict with old ones?
- Have you ever let someone know that their language or behavior is problematic? Have you ever informed someone that they misgendered someone else by using the wrong name, pronoun, or gendered word, like *Sir*? If so, what was the interaction like? Do you think it was effective? What was the other person’s reaction? Now that you’ve read about the effective educator tips in chapter 7, are there things you would do differently next time? If so, how would you alter your approach?
- Discuss a recent experience in which you saw discriminatory or inappropriate behavior and didn’t step in or speak up. What held you back? What have you learned from the book that better equips you to intervene now?

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

- Which of the common questions in chapter 9 have you been asked? How did you respond? Would you change your response based on what you learned in this chapter? If so, how would you change it? Are there other questions you’ve fielded about the LGBTQ+ communities that you didn’t know how to respond to? Discuss with your group some savvy ways to respond to these.
- Have you ever experienced receiving equal treatment when what you needed was equitable treatment (i.e., where one-size-fits-all didn’t fit you)? If so, how did that make you feel?

- What actions stood out to you in chapter 10, “Duct Tape Patch-Up Jobs and Big Fixes”? Would you say your workplace, school, and/or faith community has applied more duct tape patch-up jobs or big fixes when it comes to creating more inclusive spaces? What further changes can you see implementing or advocating for in these spaces?
- Gainsburg notes that, when LGBTQ+ people enter a space (i.e., a health center, a business, a faith community), they look for specific indicators that they will be welcome there. What do LGBTQ+ people see when they look at your workplace, school, or faith community’s website or enter those spaces?

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” as an ally, only to be called out and told you did it wrong? If so, how did you recover from that situation? What did you learn from that experience?
- In the final chapter, Gainsburg pushes back on putting a 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 “ally enough”?
- What are some ally actions that you can do that are a good fit your personality and skill set and are also sustainable? Are there any ally actions that aren’t a good fit for your personality and skill set that you would prefer to avoid or drop off your plate?
- Gainsburg asserts that allies should always be learning and growing. What are your favorite sources for keeping up to date with LGBTQ+ topics? What concepts or identities are you interested in learning more about?
- In the “Take Care of Yourself” section in chapter 16, Gainsburg shares her recipe for wellness (i.e., sleep, exercise, and vegetables). What’s your wellness recipe? What self-care strategies do you implement when you’re feeling exhausted or vulnerable?
- At the very end of the book, Gainsburg encourages you to think about what motivates you as an ally? What’s your “Why”?