

What are the Five Skills of an Ally?

Any person who finds him or herself in a position to support and guide another person or group is called, in old community language, an ally. Multicultural stories about ally's—who appear as trusted guides, mentors, and teachers—repeatedly show us they have five essential responsibilities. Modern helping research also confirms these five skills are essential, and demonstrates that they can be defined, practiced, and improved.

As social service systems slowly shift from an expert model of clinic or office based help to a model which involves more customer choice, direct community work, and peer/family involvement and authority, the range of professional skills is changing and expanding to more closely resemble the old cross-cultural idea of being an “ally”. Although the skills involved may appear, on the surface, similar to some standard social service practices, they are rooted in community development history and have a significantly different perspective, approach, and skill set than is generally offered in professional social service training.

1

Culture & Core Gift Identification

Helping the person stay grounded in their cultural beliefs and identify their core gifts...giving them a solid place to start from and return to.

2

Creative Problem Solving

Guiding the person through problem solving/imagination expanding processes and discovery of ways to give their gifts and get to the other side of the difficulties they are facing.

3

Stories From The Other Side

Using your own stories, and the stories of others to help the person build hope, confidence, and strategies for continuing to move forward.

4

Standing By

Using your physical presence and a variety of motivational strategies to help the person continue to move forward.

5

Creating Welcoming Places

Preparing community places to welcome the person, recognize their gifts, and provide on-going help.

Why Use *Five Skills of an Ally*?

Program participants value these attributes and skills in individuals providing help.

Multi-cultural model, rooted in history. Not a new model or territory of a particular profession.

Generalizes a foundational skill base across helping professions which have different languages.

Re-imagines roots of “authority” from Professional to Ally, and System to Community

Provides avenue for peers, professionals, family members, and community citizens to provide support that is equally valued and understood.

Root of ally model further embeds shift from deficit/medical model to capacity/community model by assuming that there is substantial capacity and inner authority in the person being helped

Affirms that ally’s bring a certain foundation of skills, in addition to their specialty area (housing, peer, employment, therapist, etc.)

Says that ally skills are primary, and specialty skills are secondary.

Emphasizes collaboration and expanded resource opportunity by focusing on community language rather than professional mental health language.