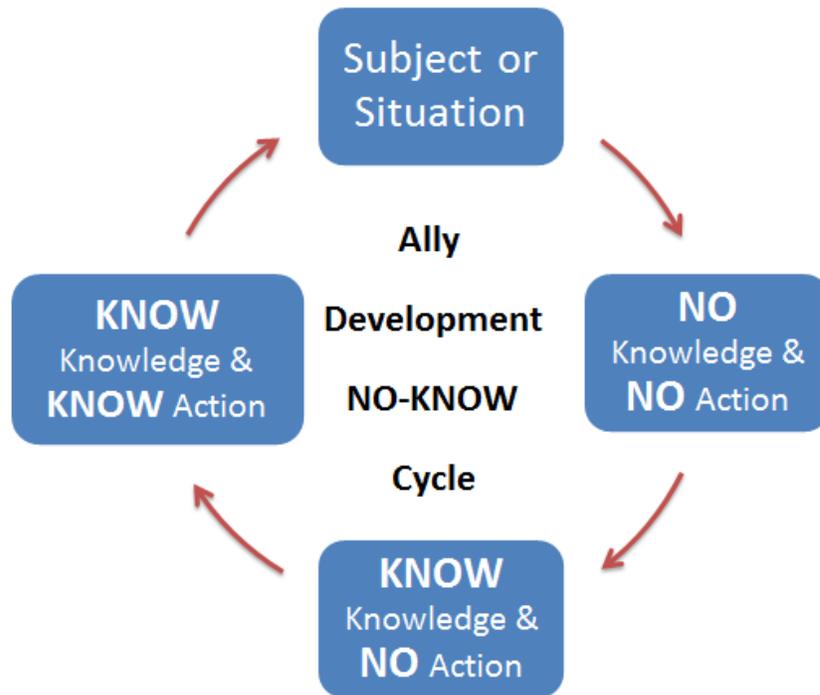


Ally Development NO-KNOW Cycle

By Dr. Maura Cullen



Created by Dr. Maura J Cullen

The Ally Development NO-KNOW Cycle describes a combination of how allies progress through levels of knowledge and corresponding action. It is a cyclical process that moves us from having little to no information about a subject to gaining enough knowledge to make informed decisions as to a course of action. Once a new subject or issue is introduced then the process begins anew.

This ongoing pursuit of knowledge is a critical factor towards improving our effectiveness as allies.

NO KNOWLEDGE-NO ACTION STEP

This is where people begin their journey into ally-hood. For allies in training, NO KNOWLEDGE-NO ACTION is a natural step in an ongoing cycle of becoming allies.

It is critical to be reminded that ALL people experience NO-KNOWLEDGE-NO ACTION. Will Rogers said, "Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects." It is impossible for any one person to know everything there is to know. As a result, allies must be open to receiving information in order to proceed to the next step.

Not having knowledge is not always a case of allies being unwilling to learn; it could be they currently do not possess enough information to see things from a different perspective. Given the individuals experience and perspective, they don't understand that an act of injustice or prejudice has occurred. If one does not possess the knowledge to identify a problem, then they are unable to enact change.

KNOW KNOWLEDGE-NO ACTION STEP

Allies at this step are aware that there is a problem yet they do not take intentional action. There are any numbers of reasons allies fail to take action. It can be a combination of not knowing what to do or knowing what to do but intentionally choosing not to take action. Whatever the reason, having knowledge of the problem is not enough to propel this person to action.

People with knowledge that do not act may enter this step as Accidental or Reluctant allies. They have come upon a situation that requires them to make a choice given the knowledge they possess. They may not have chosen the role of ally; therefore, they are reluctant to take action.

For others, they intentionally work towards gaining more knowledge to become an effective ally and are often enthusiastic, wanting to take action. They may refrain from action because they lack the confidence and skills to proceed and as a result end up being a bystander.

For many who have the knowledge to notice but do not take action, there are a litany of reasons to opt out of action. These include: being tired, not having the time or energy, being afraid of negative consequences, including loss of job, friend or physical harm. For many, it may not be realistic to confront every act of injustice and discrimination they witness each and every day.

KNOW KNOWLEDGE-KNOW ACTION STEP

An ally at this point has enough knowledge to recognize the problem and enough skills to take action. This is not to suggest that people at this stage will get every intervention right every time.

It is important to be reminded that as allies, we are continually rotating through this NO-NO, NO-KNOW, KNOW-KNOW cycle. The more we KNOW about a topic, the more likely we are to KNOW what action to take. We all fall prey to the NO-NO phase, as it is impossible to know about every group of people and their experiences. An ally can be at different stages with different areas of knowledge at any given point. Therefore, the more times we cycle through this process the more efficient the process becomes. It is much easier to duplicate something once you have done it repeatedly, opposed to doing it for the first time.

Dr. Maura Cullen is the author of the bestselling book "35 Dumb Things Well-Intended People Say: Surprising Things We Say That Widen the Diversity Gap". She is a highly-acclaimed diversity trainer who has educated and inspired people worldwide in over 400 universities and organizations on how to be more inclusive and authentic when communicating with others. She is widely considered one of the nation's foremost authorities of diversity issues today. www.TheDiversitySpeaker.com