WELCOME ALLY!! So you have discovered racism, and yeah... we know it sucks. You want to help, so you make active decisions to do better and be better. You join committees, you talk to your Black friends, you protest, of course, you write “Black Lives Matter” on all of your social media sites, and maybe even sign a few petitions. You feel like you have made a difference. But secretly you are exhausted, stressed, and frustrated because some of your attempts at what you think it means to be an ally have been dismantled. Maybe you have still been called out on subconscious racist decisions or microaggressions. I have created this list of things you can do to make you a better Ally and help with that stress. **Fighting Racism is stressful, stress is exactly what you should be feeling. It’s what Black people and other POC have been dealing with their whole lives.**

1. **BLACK PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE THE SAME OPINIONS.** Understand what you are dealing with. Black people are not a monolith in any way, shape, or form. We have a variety of cultural differences across the diaspora and we, at the end of the day, are humans and all require different things. So if you feel like you are getting mixed messages or conflicting ideas from your different Black peers do not allow this to frustrate you. Instead, remember that racism and race itself are constructs that were invented to divide and separate people and that there is no one idea on how to cure our country and world of its disease. **It will take time and an influx of changing and developing ideas.** And unfortunately, those who are oppressed are having to come up with a lot of those solutions on our own and in times of extreme stress and fear. So patience is needed first and foremost from the side of the Allies.

2. **LISTEN TO BLACK PEOPLE.** Listen to People of Color. Listen to oppressed groups. Always listen. They do not need to hear unsolicited opinions as they explain what they need from you either. Even if you disagree, listening is the first step. LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN.

3. **DO NOT BE DEFENSIVE.** Remember what you are fighting for. The first step to fighting racism is acknowledging your part in it and taking accountability. If someone calls you out on behavior you have that supports racism or white supremacy, you must be okay with that and take accountability for your part in oppression. That begins with not just accepting your privilege, but dissecting it. It sucks to lose friends and family because you call them out on their foul behaviors. Do you know what sucks more? Being considered a second class citizen and being discriminated against because you were born a few shades darker than another human. **Even in moments of frustration check your privilege and remember that you have the choice (a privilege in itself) to care.** Caring means conflict because racism is something people do not want to let go of. If you really care, you will understand that you may start to see some of your peers and family differently. This is okay, you should be trying your best to educate them. Don't take it personally.
4. To elaborate on the last point... when you hear something you disagree with stop and LISTEN don't take it personally or be defensive. Normalize hearing you are wrong and changing your thinking.

5. DO NOT LOSE MOMENTUM. This is exhausting work and always has been and always will be. Sit in your privilege and understand you are lucky you can choose to make this your problem and remember that we are not free until WE ARE ALL FREE.

6. PERFORMANCE VS. ACTIVISM. There is a difference. Do not fight racism for praise and admiration, do it because its the right thing to do. Do not do this because it seems to be “in” or trendy right now, you must believe in the movement. Thank yous are nice, but not owed to anyone for being a decent human being. Lastly, know that you are doing good work and good work takes time, progress, and sacrifice. Having racist actions is a result of the society we live in. You don't choose what color you are born into, just as Black people did not choose to be born oppressed by society. But if you CHOOSE not to do better when you have the ability to, then you are at fault.

7. DO NOT GIVE UP ON EQUITY and EQUALITY.

Denissa Roddy