

What men can do to stop violence against women

1. **Understand violence against women as a men's issue.** Violence against women scars the lives of all women. It takes many forms; physical assault, rape, sexual exploitation, emotional abuse, sexist jokes, degrading images of women in the media. It is men who do most of this violence and men must step up to stop it, as empowered bystanders who can confront abusive peers.
2. **Don't remain silent.** If a brother, friend, colleague, classmate, or teammate is abusing his female partner or is disrespectful or abusive to girls and women in general, don't look the other way. If you feel comfortable doing so, try to talk to him about it. Urge him to seek help. Or if you don't know what to do, consult a friend, a parent, a professor, or a counselor.
3. **Listen to what she says she wants.** If you suspect that a woman close to you is being abused or has been sexually assaulted, gently ask if you can help. Don't assume that women want or need your "protection." But support them if they ask, with actions such as walking a woman to her car. If a woman is walking in front of you along a dark street, give her a lot of room or cross to the other side of the road.
4. **Have the courage to look inward.** Question your own attitudes. Don't be defensive when you are told that something you do or say hurts someone else. Try hard to understand how your own attitudes and actions can help to maintain sexism and violence, and work toward changing them. Get support from people in your life whom you trust to help you look at aspects of your behavior that you want and need to change.
5. **Seek help.** If you are emotionally, psychologically, physically, or sexually abusive to women, or have been in the past, seek professional help NOW.
6. **Get educated.** Learn about the social and cultural supports for violence against women. Think about all the messages and images you have gotten in your life about the strength and superiority of masculinity and the weakness and inferiority of femininity, and how these support violence against women. Think about the ways in which these ideas about masculinity and femininity damage the lives of men as well, especially men who do not fit with society's views of what a masculine man should be. Watch films, read articles and books, attend programs and take courses to learn more about the root causes of violence against women.
7. **Spread the word.** Talk to other men about violence against women. Start by mentioning something you read, a conversation you had or something you've been thinking about. Mentor and teach young boys about how to be men in ways that don't involve degrading or abusing girls and women. Volunteer to work with violence prevention programs, including anti-sexist men's programs. Lead by example.

8. **Be an ally.** Work with women who are working to end all forms of gender violence. Attend "Take Back the Night" rallies and other public events. Raise money for community-based rape crisis centers and battered women's shelters. Support the work of campus-based women's centers. If you belong to a team or fraternity, or another student group, organize a fundraiser.
9. **Recognize and speak out against homophobia and gay-bashing.** Discrimination and violence against lesbians and gay men are wrong in and of themselves. This abuse also has direct links to sexism. The sexual orientation of men who speak out against sexism is often questioned, a conscious or unconscious strategy intended to silence them. This is a key reason few men do speak out.
10. **Don't fund sexism.** Refuse to purchase any magazine, rent any video, subscribe to any Web site, or buy any music that portrays girls or women in a sexually degrading or abusive manner. Protest sexism in the media.

Adapted from a poster produced by MVP Strategies, a gender violence prevention, education and training organization. Email: MVPStrategies@aol.com

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