

# What Every Man Can Do

## *Be an Ally in Ending Violence Against Women*

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Our effort to work with men and boys stems from and honors the pioneering work and continuing leadership of the women's movement. We stand in solidarity with the ongoing struggles for women's empowerment and rights in our commitment to contribute to efforts around the world to achieve gender equality.

By working closely with women's organizations, we aim to change individual men's attitudes and practices, and transform the imbalance of power between men and women in relationships, families, communities, and institutions.

We encourage you to be an inspiring ally to the women in your life and the women's organizations in your community. Support and join efforts like the YWCA's Rose Campaign ([www.rosecampaign.ca](http://www.rosecampaign.ca)) in promoting gender equality and ending violence against women in Canada and around the world.

### **What is an Ally?**

An ally is an individual who speaks out and stands up for a person or group that is targeted and discriminated against. An ally works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for people who are stigmatized, discriminated against or treated unfairly.

Men can play a significant role as allies in helping to end violence against women and in promoting gender equality.

### **What Can You Do?**

#### **Learn about the issue ... listen to women... learn from women**

The path starts with listening. Who knows better about violence against women than women who experience it? Around the world, as many as one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way. Huge numbers experience sexual harassment in the workplace, at home or at school.

Turn to your local women's organizations. They have a wealth of accumulated experience and knowledge. Talk to them. Read their publications. Contribute financially. Learn from them.

#### **Challenge sexist language and jokes that degrade women**

Sexist jokes and language help create a climate where forms of violence and abuse have too long been accepted. Words that degrade women reflect a society that has historically placed women in a second class position. By reflecting this reality they once again put women "in their place" even if that isn't the intention.



One of the most difficult things for men is to learn to engage with other men on this issue. To question sexist language. To speak up when men talk lightly of violence against women.

To intervene with men who engage in violence. You are likely to find that when you speak up, other men will acknowledge that they too feel uncomfortable with sexist and degrading language.

Even when "good guys" are silent, it sends the message that this kind of behaviour is OK, that it causes no harm. What we know in fact, is that our silence both tolerates and perpetuates violence against women and girls.

### **Support local women's programs**

Around the world, dedicated women have created support services for women who are survivors of men's violence: safe houses for battered women, rape crisis centers, counselling services, and legal aid clinics.

Women escaping violent situations depend on these services. They deserve men's support and our financial backing. That's why we encourage community-based White Ribbon Campaigns to raise money for local women's programs.

### **It Starts With You. It Stays With Him.**

Whether you are a father, a family member, an educator, or a community leader, you can be a good role model to the boys and young men around you by teaching them respect for women and girls and how to develop healthy, equal relationships with the women in their lives.

One of the most important ways a man can take action is to leave a positive legacy around healthy and equal relationships, gender equality, and prevention of violence for all of the young men in their lives.

Visit [www.itstartswithyou.ca](http://www.itstartswithyou.ca) for tips, tools and information to motivate the boys around you.

### **Examine how your own behaviour might contribute to the problem**

If you've ever forced or pushed a woman to do something sexual she didn't want to do; if you've hit, pushed, threatened, kicked your spouse or girlfriend, then you've been part of the problem.

If this happened in the past, admit what you did was wrong and make amends if possible. But if such behaviour has any chance of continuing, then you urgently need to get help getting to the root of your problem. Don't wait until it happens again. Please act today.

Most men will never be physically or sexually violent. But we all need to examine ways we might try to control women. Do we dominate conversations? Do we put them down? Do we limit their activities? Do we make the decisions? We all must think about the choices we make. Real change starts from within.

### **Get involved with the White Ribbon Campaign's educational efforts**

The White Ribbon Campaign is the largest effort in the world of men working to end men's violence against women. The Campaign is a grassroots effort, relying mainly on volunteers. It has spread from Canada to more than sixty countries.

Aside from organizing the annual White Ribbon Days, allies can do many things throughout the year. They can hold activities in schools, communities, and workplaces; raise money for women's groups; organize special events to support positive roles for men, including fathers; talk to young people about building healthy relationships; start a local White Ribbon Campaign; and financially support the work of the WRC.

### **Be an advocate for change**

Global research shows that working with men and boys can reduce violence against women, improve relationships, strengthen the work of the women's movement, improve health outcomes of women and men, and girls and boys.

Encourage your local, provincial and national government representatives to address gender inequalities; to recognize gender equality as a human right for women, girls, men, and boys; and support legislation aimed at improving the lives of women and girls and engaging men and boys in ending violence against women.

### **THE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN**

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