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Men! Quit Being Freaked by Feminism and Join its Male Allies

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On 24 and 25 October I will be at the [Feminism in London](#) conference, the Chair of which has received rape threats, death threats and threats to her family. An end to male violence against women is one of the key priorities that has energised the fourth wave of feminism, why this conference exists and has grown to host internationally acclaimed speakers from Shami Chakrabarti to Nawal El Saadawi. Feminists have struggled to end male violence pretty much on their own. When I say feminists I mean the women and girls who are awake to this global pandemic that the media treat as 'unrelated' incidents. I mean women who never want to see another teenage girl raped by her boyfriend, wives battered by their husbands, women fleeing stalking ex-partners who want them dead. I mean Rape Crisis, women's charities and refuges, women campaigning for Sex and Relationships education while hardcore porn fills the gap, women who are academics, artists and activists. We work our asses off through the pain as many of us have been broken by male violence.

Yet isn't this all rather strange? Male violence is a problem with men so why is it side-lined as a women's issue? Where are the men standing by us? Where are the community voices speaking out against the violent men who kill two women a week and leave their children motherless? At this year's Feminism in London, there is a line-up of workshops run by men has under the umbrella title Male Allies.

The [White Ribbon campaign](#) get men involved in ending sexual violence, often getting sports teams to pledge. White Ribbon UK, headed up by Chris Green, a man who for whom no question is too small, have always been a strong presence at the conference. This year they're running a workshop on *Gender and the Arts*, debating how limiting, stereotypical film roles for women and a minority of women directors influence gender-based violence. *Men, Sexism and Patriarchy*, run by the [Men's Development Network](#), will address the unaware sexism men carry, identify how Patriarchy benefits and deficits men, and show men how to stop being sexist. *Engaging Men in Feminism* looks at the stereotypes and misconceptions underlying modern masculinity. Participants will leave knowing how to talk to the boys and men in their lives about the pressures to act in certain ways and how to express their whole selves. This is run by the [Great Men](#) project, set up by [The Great Initiative](#). The Great Men team have delivered school workshops on gender equality, masculinity and violence prevention to over 3000 teenage boys since the project began two years ago. Another workshop, Men as Carers, asks if men as fathers can contribute to their well-being and women's empowerment, if boys need male role models to grow into caring, non-violent adults.

Since the first Feminism in London conference in 2008, I've noticed the smattering of men in the audience grow. Could some of the twenty-somethings simply be clued up to where all the coolest, smartest girls go? Last year I decided to ask. I met Clive Eley, who runs the [Good Lad Workshop](#) in universities, teaching young men about positive masculinity and consent in reaction to Lad Culture and the rape crisis on campus. Good Lad Workshop joins international male-led campaigns such as [HeForShe](#), [A Call To Men](#) and the long-standing US organisation [Men Can Stop Rape](#). And while Twitter has brought a tidal wave of male violence and silencing tactics on women, it has allowed feminist men like [@mydaughtersarmy](#) to speak out for us.

25 November is [International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#). Why do we need it? The website has all the sorry statistics. The fact that one in three girls and women will experience some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime is a cause and consequence of inequality. This is a problem with ordinary men, powerful men, famous men, with the school boys accountable for 5500 sexual assaults including 600 rapes in the last three years, as revealed by a [BBC Freedom of Information investigation](#) last month. So what every man should be asking is this: 'What can I do to help end violence against women?' If men are bystanders to sexism and other men's

You can start simple and you can start today. Hear the gobby one in your beer crowd throw about some sexist banter? Call him up on it. If he's a dad, ask him if he wants his son to grow up believing he's better than his mother, if he wants his daughter to grow up in a world where no matter what she achieves, she doesn't matter unless she's hot. Challenging everyday sexism puts you in good company: Ryan Gosling, Simon Pegg, John Goodman, Byron Hurt. Question why Punishtube exists. Question why addiction to the porn and sex industries is the third biggest cause of debt among men. Listen to women. Ask a woman close to you what she does to guard against male violence every day. Talk to boys and young men about what it means to be a man. Start challenging the hyper-masculine culture of hip hop, of the World Wrestling Federation, of war, the sexism and homophobia of football, the tough guy stereotypes in video games. Show boys that they are allowed to be kind, caring, gentle, sensitive, to like My Little Pony. Allow them their full humanity. Don't let anyone get away with saying 'Like a girl' in a derogatory way.

Look up the organisations above to get ideas to help. Order *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help* by Jackson Katz and read his [10 Things Men Can Do To Prevent Gender Violence](#) right now. Going to Feminism in London will awaken and motivate the proactive, good man in you. It will disprove beliefs about 'angry feminists'. We are passionate. We want a fair world. We want a safe world. This is a conference to fuel your intellect, fire your humanity. I'm serious. You'll find guys just like you there.

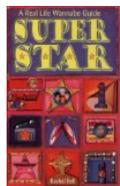
For further insights on how to stop being freaked out by feminism, the conference and be a [male ally](#) or [feminist dad](#), go to Rachel Bell's blog www.bettybandit.co.uk

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