

100 Easy Ways to Make Women's Lives More Bearable

broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/bj5ex8/how-to-help-gender-equality-international-womens-day

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Every year, I wake up on March 8 to a flurry of tweets from men wishing me a “Happy International Women’s Day!”

And every year, I find myself thinking: Well, thanks, but is that it? Is that all the support for gender equality that you can muster? For the entire year? It’s a nice sentiment, but at a time when the gender pay gap means that women in the UK work for free for 67 days each year, Black women in the US are three to four times more likely to die in childbirth than white women, and trans women in the US are four times more likely to be murdered than cis women, it doesn’t quite do it for me.

So, to ensure that men aren’t missing direction, a few years ago I started compiling a list of easy actions that men can take to meaningfully support gender equality. Every year, I would post it on social media. Slowly, other women started contributing suggestions. So the list grew. And grew. It will likely never stop growing.

The suggestions cover many realms of life—from home, to work, to the ways we interact with strangers, to the language we use—but it is in no way comprehensive. Below, I’ve included a mere 100 entries out of the several hundred I’ve crowdsourced and personally compiled.

To the men reading: You may already do some of these things, and others you may not be in the position to do. But a good place to start is by, at the very least, reading the list through—in its entirety. And remember: These apply all year, not just during the annual 24 hours dedicated to half of the planet's population.

1. Before explaining something to a woman, ask yourself if she might already understand. She may know more about it than you do.
2. Related: Never, ever try to explain feminism to a woman.
3. Trans women are women. Repeat that until you perish.
4. RESPECT PEOPLE'S PRONOUNS. It's not hard.
5. Remember that fat women exist and aren't all trying to get thin. Treat them with respect.
6. In fact, just never comment on a woman's body.
7. Be kind to women in customer service positions. Tip them extra. (But not in a creepy way.)

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8. Trust women. When they teach you something, don't feel the need to go and check for yourself. And especially do not Google it in front of them.
9. Don't maintain a double standard for... anything, ever.
10. CLOSE YOUR LEGS ON PUBLIC TRANSIT, OH MY GOD.
11. Trying to describe a woman positively? Say she's "talented," "clever," or "funny." Not "gorgeous," "sweet," or "cute."
12. Examine your language when talking about women. Get rid of "irrational," "dramatic," "bossy," and "badgering" immediately.
13. Don't think to yourself, *I describe men like that too*. A) You probably don't. B) If you do, it's to criticize them for acting like a woman.
14. Do you love "fiery" Latina women? "Strong" Black women? "Mysterious" Asian women? Stop. Pick up a book on decolonial feminism. Read.
15. Stop calling women "feisty." We don't need a special lady word for "has an opinion."
16. Recognize women's credibility when you introduce them. "Donna is lovely" is much less useful than "Donna knows shitloads about architecture."
17. Think about how you describe the young women in your family. Celebrate them for being funny and smart, not for being pretty and compliant.
18. Examine the way you talk about women you're attracted to. Fat women, old women, queer, trans, and powerful women are not your "guilty crush."

19. Learn to praise a woman without demonizing other women. “You're not like other girls” is not a compliment. I *want* to be like other girls. Other girls are *awesome*.

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20. Share writing by women. Don't paraphrase their work in your own Facebook post to show us all how smart or woke you are. I guarantee the woman said it better in the first place.

21. Buy sanitary pads and tampons and donate them to a homeless shelter. Just do it.

22. How much of what you are watching/reading/listening to was made by women? Gender balance your bookcase.

23. Feeling proud of your balanced bookcase? Are there women of color there? Trans, queer, and disabled women? Poor women? Always make sure you're being intersectional.

24. Don't buy media that demeans women's experiences, valorizes violence against women, or excludes them entirely from a cast. It's not enough to oppose those things. You have to actively make them unmarketable.

25. Pay attention to stories with nuanced female characters. It will be interesting, I promise.

26. If you read stories to a child, swap the genders.

27. Watch women's sport. And just call it “sports.”

28. Withdraw your support from sports clubs, institutions, and companies that protect and employ rapists and abusers.

29. Stop raving about Woody Allen. I don't care if he shits gold. Find a non-accused-abuser to fanboy over.

30. It's General Leia, not princess. The Doctor has a companion, not an assistant. It's Doctor Bartlett, not Mrs Madame First Lady.

31. Cast women in parts written for men. We know how to rule kingdoms, go to war, be, not be, and wait for Godot.

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32. Pay for porn.

33. Recognize that sex work is work. Be an advocate for and ally to sex workers without speaking for them.

34. Share political hot takes from women as well as men. They might not be as widely accessible, so look for them.

35. Understand that it was never “about ethics in journalism.”

- 36.** Speak less in meetings today to make space for your women colleagues to share their thoughts. If you're leading the meeting, make sure women are being heard as much as men.
 - 37.** If a woman makes a good point, say, "That was a good point." Don't repeat her point and take credit for it.
 - 38.** Promote women. Their leadership styles may be different than yours. That's probably a good thing.
 - 39.** Recruit women on the same salary as men. Even if they don't ask for it.
 - 40.** Open doors for women with caring responsibilities by offering flexible employment contracts.
 - 41.** If you meet a man and a woman at work, do not assume the man is the superior for literally no reason.
 - 42.** If you're wrongly assumed to be more experienced than a woman colleague, correct that person and pass the platform to the woman who knows more.
 - 43.** Make a round of tea for the office.
 - 44.** Wash it up.
 - 45.** If you find you're only interviewing men for a role, rewrite the job listing so that it's more welcoming to women.
 - 46.** Make sure you have women on your interview panel.
 - 47.** Tell female colleagues what your salary is.
 - 48.** Make sure there's childcare at your events.
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- 49.** Don't schedule breakfast meetings during the school run.
 - 50.** If you manage a team, make sure that your employees know that you recognize period pain and cystitis as legitimate reasons for a sick day.
 - 51.** If you have a strict boss (or mom or teacher) who is a woman, she is not a "bitch." Grow up.
 - 52.** Expect a woman to do the stuff that's in her job description. Not the other miscellaneous shit you don't know how to do yourself.
 - 53.** Refuse to speak on an all-male panel.
 - 54.** In a Q&A session, only put your hand up if you have A QUESTION. Others didn't attend to listen to you.

55. If you have friends or family members who use slurs or discriminate against trans or non-binary people, sit them down and explain why they must stop. (This goes for cis women, too.)

56. If you have friends or family members who use slurs or discriminate against women of other races, sit them down and explain why they must stop. (This goes for white women, too.)

57. If you see women with their hands up, put yours down. This can be taken as a metaphor for a lot of things. Think about it.

58. Raising a feminist daughter means she's going to disagree with you. And probably be right. Feel proud, not threatened.

59. Teach your sons to listen to girls, give them space, believe them, and elevate them.

60. Dads, buy your daughter tampons, make her hot water bottles, wash her bras. Show her that her body isn't something to be ashamed of.

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61. But dads, do not try to iron her bras. This is a mistake you will only make once.

62. Examine how domestic labor is divided in your home. Who does the cleaning, the childcare, the organizing, the meal budgeting? Sons, this goes for you, too.

63. Learn how to do domestic tasks to a high standard. "I'd only do it wrong" is a bullshit excuse.

64. Never again comment on how long it takes a woman to get ready. WE ARE TRYING TO MEET THE RIDICULOUS STANDARDS OF A SYSTEM YOU BENEFIT FROM.

65. Challenge the patriarchs in your religious group when they enable the oppression of women.

66. Challenge the patriarchs in your secular movement when they enable the oppression of women.

67. Trust women's religious choices. Don't pretend to liberate them just so you can criticise their beliefs.

68. Examine who books your trips, arranges outings, organizes Christmas, buys birthday cards. Is it a woman? IS IT?

69. And if it is actually you, a man, don't even dare get in touch with me looking for your medal.

70. Take stock of the emotional labor you expect from women. Do you turn to the women around you for emotional support and give nothing in return?

71. Remember that loving your mom/sister/girlfriend is not the same as giving up your own privilege to progress equality for women. And that gender inequality extends beyond the women in your direct social group.

72. Don't assume that all women are attracted to men.

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73. Don't assume that a woman in public wants to talk to you just because she's in public.

74. If a woman tells you she was raped, assaulted, or abused, don't ask her for proof. Ask how you can support her.

75. If you see a friend or colleague being inappropriate to a woman, call him out. You will survive the awkwardness, I promise.

76. Repeat after me: Always. Hold. Men. Accountable. For. Their. Actions.

77. Do not walk too close to a woman late at night. That shit can be scary.

78. If you see a woman being followed or otherwise bothered by a stranger, stick around to make sure she's safe.

79. This should go without saying: Do not yell unsolicited "compliments" at women on the street. Or anywhere.

80. If you are a queer man, recognize that your sexuality doesn't exclude you from potential misogyny.

81. If you are a queer man, recognize that your queer women or non-binary friends may not feel comfortable in a male-dominated space, even if it's dominated by queer men.

82. Be happy to have women friends without needing them to want to sleep with you. The "friend zone" is not a thing. We do not owe you sex.

83. Remember that you can lack consent in situations not involving sex—such as when pursuing uninterested women or forcing a hug on a colleague.

84. Champion sex positive women but don't expect them to have sex with you.

85. Trust a woman to know her own body. If she says she won't enjoy part of your sexual repertoire, do not try to convince her otherwise.

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86. Be sensitive to nonverbal cues from women, especially around sex. We're not just being awkward for no reason. (You read "Cat Person," didn't you?)

87. It is not cute to try to persuade a woman to have sex with you. EVER. AT ALL. Go home.

88. Same goes for pressuring women to have sex without a condom. Go. Home. And masturbate.

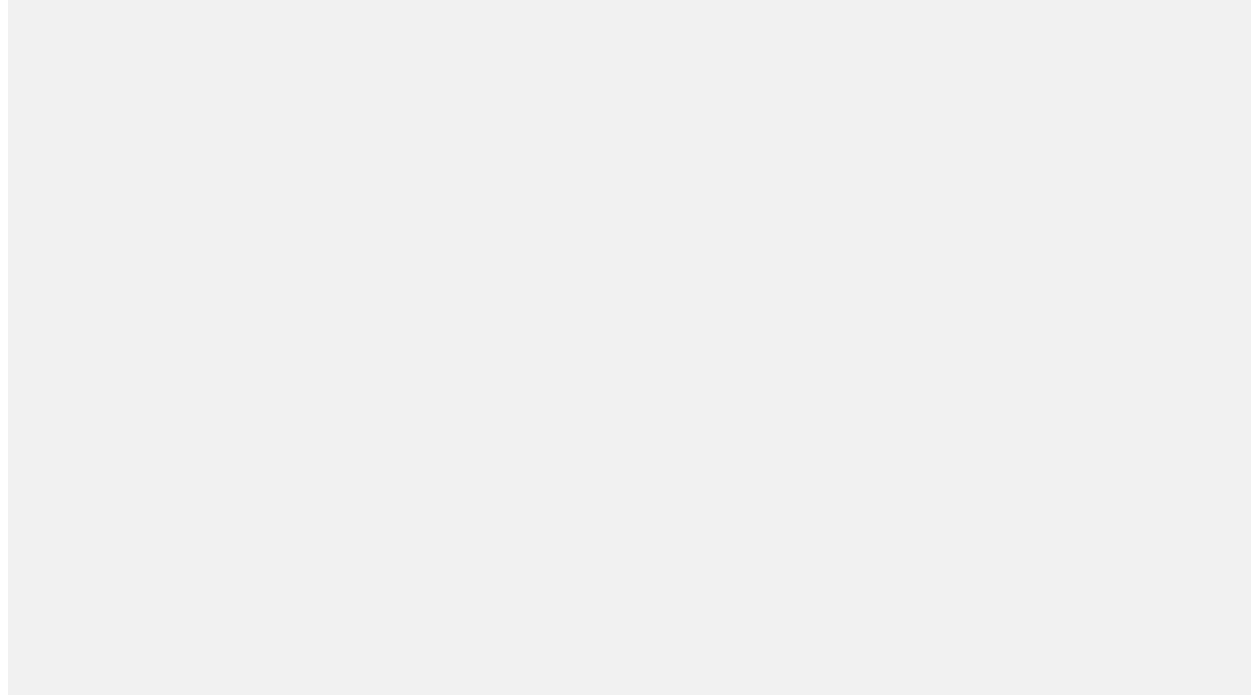
89. Accidentally impregnated a woman who doesn't want a kid? Abortions cost money. Pay for half of it.
90. Accidentally came inside a woman without protection? Plan B is expensive. Pay for all of it.
91. Get STD tested. Regularly. Without having to be asked.
92. Examine your opinion on abortion. Then put it in a box. Because, honestly, it's completely irrelevant.
93. Understand that disabled women are whole, sexual human beings. Listen to and respect them.
94. Understand that not all women have periods or vaginas.
95. Believe women's pain. Periods hurt. Endometriosis is real. Polycystic ovaries, vaginal pain, cystitis. These things are real. Hysteria isn't.
96. If a woman accidentally bleeds on you, try your absolute best to just keep your shit together.
97. Lobby your elected officials to implement high quality sex education in schools.
98. Uplift young Black and Indigenous girls at every possible opportunity. No excuses.
99. Do not ever assume you know what it's like.
100. Mainly, just listen to women. Listen to us and believe us. It's the only place to start if you actually want all women to have a "Happy International Women's Day."

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