

# 11 ways men can respond productively to #MeToo

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Earlier this week, Meghan Murphy [offered](#) a few suggestions as to what we might ask of men, in light of the viral hashtag, #MeToo, which aimed to remind the blissfully (or stubbornly) ignorant about the ubiquity of sexual assault and harassment perpetrated by men against women everywhere.

Some men have responded by acknowledging that they participate in misogyny. Some men have admitted to being guilty of harassment or sexual assault. Some men have apologized for letting other men get away with this behaviour. But, while these men may mean well, these kinds of social media responses don't necessarily constitute productive action. As such, the *Feminist Current* team has compiled an (incomplete) list of suggestions for men who would like to respond to the problem of male violence against women in a productive way, beyond virtue signalling online.

1) Sit with how many women in your life have publicly disclosed that they have been sexually assaulted and/or harassed this week, and let it make you uncomfortable. Avoid a defensive "not all men" response. Even if you

haven't personally sexually assaulted a woman, this is part of our culture, therefore you are responsible for working to challenge and change the fact that, worldwide, [one in three women](#) have been victims of physical and sexual violence and almost all of this violence is perpetrated by men.

**2)** Stop treating women and girls as “pretty” first. This means avoiding complimenting girls and women on their appearances first and foremost. Many of us do this without even thinking (we start early, too, telling little girls they look “pretty” or commenting on their outfits), but doing this reinforces the notion that being viewed as attractive or desirable is the most important thing a woman or girl can be.

**3)** Similarly, start paying attention to the way you look at/view women. If the first thing you do when you see a woman on the street is scan her up and down to evaluate her fuckability, stop that.

**4)** Stop treating all women as potential sex partners, rather than simply as people who are interesting or fun. If a woman wants to be your friend, this is a good thing, not a fail. Take “friendzone” out of your vocabulary and just replace it with the word “friend.” Women do not become worthless just because they won't have sex with you.

**5)** Refuse to consume pornography or pay for sex. The sex industry says that women are things to be bought and sold, used and abused by men. Both pornography and prostitution reinforce the idea that women are *for men*. These industries sexualize rape, violence, and oppression. Regardless of whether or not a woman “chooses” to participate in this industry for survival, the overall effect of the sex trade is to dehumanize women. Figure out ways to challenge/talk to other men about this.

**6)** Have you treated women badly during sexual encounters? Acknowledge this and apologize to the woman/women you hurt. Do not expect a response. Do not expect to be forgiven. Do not expect anything at all. Don't ask for anything from the woman/women you have victimized or hurt. Don't make excuses. Just own your behaviour and apologize. And never do it again.

**7)** Quietly fund feminist events, media, and organizations. You could, for example, donate your pay gap money for the week (13 per cent of your wages) to an organization that directly supports female victims of male violence. You don't need to brag about this on social media — the point is not for you to be rewarded.

**8)** Volunteer to be part of the clean up crew for a feminist event. Volunteer to cook. Volunteer to help with childcare. Do whatever else feminists ask you to do so that their event can be a success.

**9)** Learn to listen. Avoid dominating conversations. When you meet a woman at a bar, are talking to female friends or colleagues, or when you are talking to your partner, for example, practice active listening and pay attention to how much you are interrupting/speaking/inserting yourself into conversations. Are you asking questions? Listening to the answers? Hearing what women are saying? Men spend a lot of time talking over/at women and need to spend more time listening, as males are socialized not to be aware of the space they take up in the world. This is just one example of how male entitlement manifests itself. This behaviour discourages men from empathizing with women and working to better understand women's experiences.

**10)** Do not neutralize issues that are not gender neutral. It is not helpful to insist that male violence against women is a “human issue.” It is not helpful to say that “rape culture is genderless.” It is not helpful to say you're against “all violence.” Yes, men experience violence and abuse at the hands of other men, but that doesn't negate the fact that male violence against women is systemic. Responding in this way is essentially “All Lives Matter-ing” women. #MeToo is about holding men accountable for the violence they perpetrate against women, and in order to effectively address this, we need to name the problem and address its root.

**11)** Understand that, as a man, you will never fully be able to relate to what women experience on a day-to-day basis, under patriarchy. There has not been [a single day](#) in the history of the world that a woman has not been raped or beaten by a man. Women live in fear, every day, of male violence. Women's lives are shaped by rape culture and the male gaze in all sort of ways, big and small, from body hatred, to PTSD, to choices we make about work, travel, relationships, clothing, socializing, and more. Believe us when we tell you about those experiences. Believe us when we tell you it is a big deal. Believe that we aren't simply being dramatic or seeking attention. Believe us, even if you don't fully understand. We aren't pouring out our trauma online for fun.

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