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Sex + Relationships



11 Ways Men Can Be Better Feminist Allies

By Ozy Frantz
July 24, 2012



Ozy Frantz offers 11 ways men can be better allies to women, including learning a few things about gender, challenging their female friends, and supporting a woman's bodily autonomy.

- 1) Educate yourself.** One summer, in high school, I literally read every book the library had about feminism. You don't have to go that far, but a familiarity with concepts like male privilege, slut-shaming, and rape culture can give you a lot more understanding of how gender works.
- 2) Don't be that asshole.** Don't assume that the women in the room have no idea what they're talking about regarding gender. (If they clearly don't, well, see #4.) Don't expect to be thrown a parade because you've decided to vote pro-choice. Don't forget that most men are not feminists and that many feminists are survivors of rape or abuse, and that you're not sending out Beacons of Awesomeness that show that everyone has to trust you. Check your privilege.
- 3) Talk to your male friends.** It's sad but true: For a lot of people, men have more credence when talking about gender issues than women do. If your friend tells a rape joke or says that women just aren't as good at science as men are, challenge them on it. A lot of times, people can't think of anything to say in the moment; if that's you, prepare comebacks in advance so you know exactly what to say when it comes up. Even if you forget in the moment, a simple "that's not cool, dude" can go a long way.
- 4) Challenge your female friends.** A lot of people say that men shouldn't tell women when they're being misogynistic. That's crap. There are plenty of sexist women in the world and they should not get a free pass. If your friend starts snarking about a fat woman or saying that she's so much better than all those silly other women that are only concerned about their hair and boys, tell her she's full of it. Other women will thank you.
- 5) Consume media made by women.** A lot of people listen to music made by men, read books written by men, watch movies directed by and starring men—without even realizing it. That's stupid! It neglects women's voices and experiences; besides, think of all the amazing talent you're missing because of their gender. If you like comics, try Alison Bechdel or Gail Simone; if you like movies, look for Kathryn Bigelow or the late Nora Ephron; if you appreciate music, add some Bikini Kill or Nicki Minaj to your playlists.
- 6) Practice good consent.** The general rule is that all sex should be sex that everyone involved wants. I know you, personally, would never have sex with someone who said no, but good consent goes far beyond that.



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Bad With Men: Red, White And Fail [\(/sex-and-relationships/details/2012-07-bad-with-men-red-white-and-fail\)](#)

By Dana Norris



Talk openly and honestly with your partner(s) about your and their sexual desires. Check in when your partner seems to not be enjoying themselves. Eschew pressure and coercion. And the same applies to you—if you're being pressured or coerced or not having your consent respected, you are not in a healthy relationship.

7) Believe the survivor. It's true that occasionally people falsely accuse other people of rape or abuse. This is very rare, however, and time spent figuring out the truth is time not spent supporting the survivor. Also, if there is a rapist or abuser in your social group, don't take "I don't do drama" as a reason to keep hanging out with them. Not being invited to parties is not a cruel and unusual punishment, and most rapists are repeat rapists. You can keep them from doing it again.

8) Support women's bodily autonomy. On a political level, of course, one should fight pro-life initiatives, attempts to de-fund Planned Parenthood, forced sterilization efforts, etc. On a personal level, of course, it's almost more important. If your partner gets pregnant, it's up to her whether to have an abortion, give the child up for adoption, or raise the kid. Her body, her rules. If a woman is having sex with hundreds of people, don't call her a dirty slut; if she's a virgin until marriage, don't call her a prude. Her body, her rules. If she weighs more than you think she should, don't call her fat or tell her to go on a diet; if she weighs less, don't tell her to eat a sandwich. It's her body and, ultimately, what makes her comfortable in it is what matters.

9) Be a feminist because you support equal rights. Don't become a feminist because you want to get a girlfriend or because you heard that feminist chicks are easy. Don't become a feminist because your girlfriend is a feminist and you want to get in good with her. Don't, for God's sake, take women's studies classes because it's an easy A. Become a feminist because you believe women are people and you will not be satisfied until they are fully treated as such.

10) Be intentional. Maybe it's best for your family that your wife sacrifice her career to raise kids. But is it really, or are you just assuming that because it's the narrative you're used to? Maybe you're only attracted to 22-year-old blonde skinny women. But are you really, or have you simply not explored your attraction to other people? It's OK to do things that look anti-feminist to outsiders...as long as it is honestly what you want, and not just falling into the patriarchal rut because you haven't thought about the other options.

11) Don't satisfy yourself with just being a feminist. If you are just a feminist, you're only advocating for the rights of women—which means that you're advocating for the rights of straight, white, abled, middle-to-upper-class, privileged women. Everyone else? They suffer from racism, queerphobia, ableism, or classism in addition to sexism. Fighting for those rights means fighting for everyone's rights.

Ozy Frantz is a student at a well-respected Hippie College in the United States. Zie bases most of zir life decisions on [Good Omens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Omens) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Omens) by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman; identifies more closely with Pinkie Pie than is probably necessary; and blogs at [No, Seriously, What About Teh Menz](http://nosseriouslywhatabouttehemenz.wordpress.com/) (<http://nosseriouslywhatabouttehemenz.wordpress.com/>)?

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(/turn-the-page)**FeministMan**[\(http://disqus.com/guest/cb282ec34c3ef360f44cda7018ead845/\)](http://disqus.com/guest/cb282ec34c3ef360f44cda7018ead845/)

To begin with, I have a major problem with the title. What makes you think that men can only be feminist allies and not feminist? all through the discussion you've maintained a clear divide between men and women, AND then you talk about GENDER? WOW! like seriously, how do you define a woman? anatomically? bravo to your knowledge of gender, maybe when you were reading all the books on feminism in your school library, you discreetly skipped Judith Butler, eh? As a Coloured, Queer, FEMINIST (not an ally, i assure you) MAN (?), I can read you out to my students in the class 'morrow as one of the ten reasons why FEMINISM fails as a movement for all practical purposes. Sigh!

**Timothy**[\(http://disqus.com/guest/3dd004706b8477003b3f8c61673b0068/\)](http://disqus.com/guest/3dd004706b8477003b3f8c61673b0068/)

"Don't become a feminist because you want to get a girlfriend"

I dont think self-identifying as a feminist increases a guys sexual attractiveness to women. Men who are very successful with women are often quite anti-feminist and chauvinist deep down.

**Timothy**[\(http://disqus.com/guest/3dd004706b8477003b3f8c61673b0068/\)](http://disqus.com/guest/3dd004706b8477003b3f8c61673b0068/)

Feminists struggle for womens interests. There is a difference between an interest group and a rights group struggling for equality. Feminists look after womens interests. It is only logical for every woman to be a feminist. Why wouldnt you like a group that wants the best outcome for you ?

A man can only support feminism as long as it intends to undo effects of sexism and patriarchy.

**James**[\(http://disqus.com/deadhead9150/\)](http://disqus.com/deadhead9150/)

I support equal rights for all. Men, women, trans, humanoid android, whatever. This is contrary to a great deal of what modern feminism stands for. Another problem comes from the fact that mainstream feminist groups base their arguments on data that has been twisted so brutally it doesn't even resemble its original form.

Feminism -- female supremacy -- is great, and it is your right to be part of a group that advocates for the advancement of women regardless of whether or not you're pushing well past equality. But let's stop pretending that mainstream feminism is really about equal rights; it isn't. If it were we'd have feminist groups supporting efforts to improve educational opportunities for young men; we'd have feminist groups supporting equal access to preventative care and cancer screenings for men; we'd have feminist groups supporting the funding of institutions that help male and transgender victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. These are things that the vast majority of mainstream feminist groups are explicitly against.

jtc[\(http://disqus.com/guest/61a9d55db26dd76de2250b2a1532557a/\)](http://disqus.com/guest/61a9d55db26dd76de2250b2a1532557a/)

I have to tweak the female supremacy thing. Feminism is equality for women in areas where they have less power than men. So, no they do not fight for anyone else, nor should they. Its not in their goal/name/foundation. They do run into the problem sometimes of clarity of vision/perspective, believing that men have it 'x' way when in truth its very similar/bad for both sexes. Take some versions of Take Back the Night that primarily focused on the idea that women should be able to walk anywhere alone at night without fear of robbery, assault, or rape. Sans rape in most cases and as a man in the inner city, i couldn't take these people seriously because they believed as a man i could go out at night and be safe when in reality it wasn't safe for anyone.

Many humanist, mra, and fra organizations are in their angry infancy like feminism was back in the day. Technology has allowed beliefs and movements to catch much faster than they have in the past. So, i wouldn't doubt that within the next decade we see more and more people move toward true equality as opposed to this pseudo/one sided equality offered by feminism.

Unless the economy tanks majorly and we're all knocked back 30 years.



Emily Marchment Smith (<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=779425584>)

(<http://disqus.com/facebook-779425584/>)

I agree with Jtc. Firstly, that is not mainstream feminism. That is actually a very small minority which is blown way out of proportion by the media. Unfortunately our main representatives in the wider world don't actually represent what most feminists want. Feminism is about women fighting for the areas in which they have less rights/less privilege than men. There's enough there for us to be getting on with to be honest, without us also fighting for the areas where men have less rights. Also, many of the areas where men have less rights are matters of law (such as child custody), an area where women have little influence as it is. I am for equality for everyone, I do not want "female supremacy" nor do about 98% of feminists, and I am more than aware of many of the negative effects the patriarchy has on the male population also. I'm more than happy for MRAs to fight for the things they are less privileged in. But they have no right to do this while undermining the feminist movement, which is why there's a lot of backlash from women. While the gap between mens' and womens' rights is closing, there are still serious areas where women do not have the same rights (pay gaps, being less likely to get a job if you're unattractive, being accused of making false rape accusations or being blamed, having our reproductive rights controlled, losing a job if you have a child, I could go on...) These are many things men don't think of and are lucky enough to go through their lives without worrying about. The reason women, need feminism is because in the government, in the courts, even in the street, men are in control. We have far less power. You're more than welcome to debate that if you want but I think it would be a bit futile. So yes, most feminists do want literal equality between men and women (where possible) but the only way we can get people to listen to us is if we have male allies. That's why we need men in the feminist movement when you guys seem quite capable of taking care of yourselves.



James

(<http://disqus.com/deadhead9150/>)

Ahhh, yes, the silent majority. It's just like the Republicans. You cannot claim to not be against a specific, toxic position when your chosen representatives espouse that position and you remain silent. Republicans cannot talk about not being a racist party when you have folks like Michele Bachmann saying truly sickening things with absolutely no rebuke. The same goes for feminism.

The very existence of MRA is viewed by the feminist leaders as undermining of the movement. Not only is anyone who even dares to suggest that men have issues completely torn down by feminists and the media, but feminists ARE actively campaigning AGAINST men's issues. Do you know why that men's health issues did not get funding under the ACA? Because feminist groups fought tooth and nail against them. Free mammograms and hormonal birth control are the right of any modern woman but free testicular and prostate cancer screenings are a bridge too far.

Another problem is that feminist groups twist data. Even the researchers who conducted the study on the pay gap have stated many times that the "women make 77 cents on the dollar for equal work" was not in any way shape or form a result of their study. It simply is not true. I own a business. If women earned 77 cents on the dollar to what men earn, the unemployment rate for women would be zero.

There are certainly things that men are lucky enough to not worry about as they go through life, but they same can be said for women. The problem is that most reasonable men want nothing to do with the feminist movement because the leaders of the movement and the stated positions of the dominant feminist groups are inherently anti men.

P.S. False rape accusations happen. Often. Want to know what happens to men falsely accused of rape? Take a look at the Duke Lacrosse boys and then take a look at feminist leader Amanda Marcotte and her position with that. She should have been fully discredited and run out of the feminist movement, but she wasn't. It'd be like if the Republican party had made Strom Thurmond Senate Majority Leader while claiming to be 100% against racism.



Melenas

(<http://disqus.com/Melenas/>)

This happens in almost every social/political movement, unfortunately. Someone says something incredibly racist/sexist/whatever and everyone else in the movement either supports it or is silent. But the moment someone else criticizes the movement for whatever that person said, those formerly-silent people leap to the defense claiming "we're not all like that" or "that person was just an extremist."



cvharquail

(<http://disqus.com/cvharquail/>)

Ozy, (and to some extent James and jtc)- Suggestions number 1- 10 are great. #11, however, is flat out wrong.

To say that being a feminist, or fighting against sexism, is "only advocating for the rights of women—which means that you're advocating for the rights of straight, white, abled, middle-to-upper-class, privileged women" is incorrect. Feminists and feminism has evolved over time, and now most feminists would describe feminism as advocating for the rights of all people, by addressing sexism, racism, ableism, classism, consumerism, capitalism, and a whole lot more -isms.

Like any movement, philosophy, ideology or framework, feminism is an evolving understanding of the world as it is, the world as we'd like it to be, and the various ways to get there. The definition of feminism that you use here, Ozy, is appropriate for 1972, and for the first 4 weeks in an "intro to gender studies class". Having broken past the binary, and incorporated intersectionality, the forefront of feminist theory and activism focuses on changing the systems of kyriarchy, not just patriarchy.

Check out these resources:

<http://brennamcaffrey.com/201...> (<http://brennamcaffrey.com/2012/07/19/wtf-is-a-kyriarchy/>)

<http://feministphilosophers.wo...> (<http://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/2008/05/01/word-of-the-day-kyriarchy/>)



jtc

(<http://disqus.com/guest/61a9d55db26dd76de2250b2a1532557a/>)

If this term/belief was widely accepted. (I've heard it only once before) The majority seems to want to hold on to the useful tools "patriarchy" and "male privilege" while blatantly ignoring this belief that would turn some of the ire inward to areas where there might be "female privilege."

The other barrier i see is the name/brand. Its there for a reason and has been built over a century of work by feminists. If i was in a car wreck, i personally and the systems that are in place would never take me to a pediatric hospital even if it was closer, able, and willing to care for me. A lot is held in a name.

Even if this idea took hold, feminism itself would still be/feel like a place for women even if the doors were open to all.



woop

(<http://disqus.com/guest/414bc390b32bc96d0a5a3869adee846d/>)

I think this is an example of unnecessary gendering. All of these things are good things for any person, not just men, to be doing, and in no way are specific to being a man. They are all fully generalizable good ideas. So why structure them in terms of men being feminist allies, when a) men can be feminists, and b) the ideas are so general? A better structure would have perhaps been "11 things anyone can do to be a better feminist, as counted by Ozy,"



mikahella

(<http://disqus.com/guest/b02145965fd10c302ba431c828168bf0/>)

Thanks for this. I agree 100% with all this.



peterfmac

(<http://disqus.com/peterfmac/>)

Misogynistic is not a word.

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