

Suggestions for Men Regarding Conduct in Feminist Spaces

 empirecontact.com/libera/2007/11/suggestions-for-men-regarding-conduct.html

1. Realize it's not all about you. No, really! Shocked? This is because:

Corollary to Rule 1: Feminism is about women. Girls, ladies, females, grrrrlz, womyn, wimmin, whatever you call them, it's about us. It's for us, by us. Not how you feel harmed or threatened by feminism or women, or about how you are oppressed as a man. We know that patriarchy affects all people negatively - but this isn't the space to draw attention to how men suffer. I strongly encourage you to form your own men's group to discuss those issues.

2. Check your privilege. Yes, you have it. We all have different kinds of privilege, but you, as a man, have male privilege. Just because you don't feel privileged doesn't mean you don't have it. Recognizing that you have privilege does not mean that you have never suffered. Being told to check your privilege is not a personal insult or attack. It also doesn't indicate that someone is trying to cop out of an argument or silence anybody - we just get tired of having to explain it constantly. See Rule 6 for more info.

Corollary to Rule 2: There is no such thing as "reverse sexism." Don't even think of trying that one on us. The fact that an individual man can be harmed by an individual woman does not override an entire misogynistic social system.

3. Listen. This would be really nice. Please respect our feelings and our experiences.

Corollary to Rule 3: When in doubt, shut the hell up. If you're not sure you're "getting it" take a step back, resist the urge to hit that "respond" button, and try to think about what women are saying - before you act.

4. Resist the unconscious urge to dominate. It's what you've been programmed to do, but this is not the place for it. See Rule 1 and Corollary. If you find that you're posting more than the rest of the community combined, think about why. If you feel the need to constantly draw attention to your maleness, examine that dynamic - it's often a subconscious method of exercising control.

5. Try not to get defensive. Remember that women expressing frustration with the patriarchy is not a personal attack on you, and there's no need to respond as such. If you do so, you're likely to violate rules 1-5. Remember: If you're feeling attacked by feminism, it's probably a counter-attack.

6. Remember that it's not our job to educate you. Feminist communities shouldn't have to be constantly rehashing "feminism 101" due to the influx of new male members. You can read this, so you can read a book, or if that's too much to ask, you can do internet research. There are lots of ways to learn about basic feminist theory without sidetracking an entire community in the process. If you do the research and still have specific questions, then it's more appropriate to ask people for their opinions - but they still don't "owe" you anything.

7. If people are calling you a troll, there's probably a good reason for it. You don't have to purposefully be trolling to act like one. You can play devil's advocate to your heart's content and then log off the computer and not have to deal with these issues ever again. The rest of us can't do that. This is our reality, and we generally don't appreciate men treating issues that really affect us as some sort of witty intellectual exercise.

8. Don't try to be a knight in shining white armor. So you think you can singlehandedly save feminism with your unique insights? Get over yourself. It's extremely unlikely that you've had some brilliant revelation that has eluded us women for ages thanks to the superior intellect of your penis.

9. Women are not a hive mind. Feminism is not The Borg. There is a wide range of diverse experiences and views within feminism. Just because one person on a feminist community agrees with you doesn't mean that we all will. Just because your feminist friend thinks one way doesn't mean we should all be expected to. Wide, sweeping

generalizations and assumptions about feminism and women are not likely to win you any points.

Corollary to Rule 9: Do not use your presence or opinions to pit women against each other. Try to refrain from becoming the subject of discussion - that violates Rules 1, 3, and 4. Don't "divide and conquer."

10. Call out other men on sexist behavior. This is the best way to put theory into practice, and is a way to use your male privilege for good! If you're claiming to be a feminist on one board and then laughing when your friends make sexist jokes, we're obviously going to question your sincerity.

11. Understand that just because you call yourself a feminist doesn't mean that you're exempt from these suggestions. So you have an understanding of feminist theory - wonderful. So you want to fight the good fight - great. That doesn't give you the right to then go and ignore all the other suggestions because you "get it" and you're "one of the good ones."

Corollary to Rule 11: Don't identify as feminist so you can get attention from women. It's creepy and pathetic, and usually we can smell it a mile away. It does not become any more appropriate to hit on or make suggestive comments to women in a feminist community simply because you call yourself a feminist, either. This is not the place to look for a date.

12. Don't expect a pat on the back for following these suggestions. And don't whine if you don't feel you're receiving enough credit for acting like a decent human being. You shouldn't be behaving appropriately because you crave our stamp of approval - you should be behaving appropriately because it's the respectful thing to do.

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