

# How To Be An Accountable Man

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## A Handbook for Preventing Violence



By: Isaac Louie



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## Welcome to the Accountable Men's Handbook!

### (Content Warning: Rape, Sexual Violence, Abuse)

If you are reading this, likely you have an interest in how men are perceived in society and how we behave. Presumably, you are looking for some pointers in figuring out how you can be a “better” man and how we can do “better” in our communities. Awesome! That’s what this manual is for. Thanks for taking the chance to consider other ways of expressing masculinity.

I have written this handbook with the singular goal of preventing violence in our campus and communities. Since men are statistically the perpetrators of violence, I am hoping to provide healthier, non-violent alternatives that we can use to stop harm in our communities, before it happens and when it happens. Although #notallmen are violent, #yesallmen benefit from male/patriarchal violence. Though most violence is created by only a handful of men, we all have the capacity for violence and that fact is what causes women, femmes, and non-binary folks to live in fear of male violence every day.

In this manual you will find step-by-step checklists for what to do in ambiguous/awkward situations as well as facts and figures that may give you insight into the conditioning that we men experience in a patriarchal society.

A majority of sexual violence happens in private spaces, so my hope is that men will use this handbook to equip themselves with the skills they need to be guardians of safety in these spaces; to raise the veil of silence and secrecy in our social environments so healthy communities can sprout and flourish; to make the spaces we move in safer for femmes, non-binary folks, and women (and ultimately, ourselves?).

If we want to change this society of male superiority and dominance I think the first place we ought to look is in the mirror. Who is the person we see? What do they stand for?

## About the Author

Isaac Louie is currently a student-teacher in SFU's Professional Development Program and an educator with SafeTeen's Boys Program, where he facilitates workshops teaching youth assertiveness skills and healthy sexual consent. Previously, he was the discussion group facilitator of SFPIRG's *Critical Masculinities Series* and a youth facilitator in Battered Women's Support Services *YOUth Ending Violence Program*.

Content warning: Rape, Sexual Assault

Statistics on Rape and Sexual Assault

*One In Four USA*

<http://www.oneinfourusa.org/statistics.php>

*SexAssault.ca*

<http://www.sexassault.ca/statistics.htm>

Content warning: Rape, Sexual Assault

*Nearly One-Third of College Men in Study Say They Would Commit Rape*

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/09/college-men-commit-rape-study\\_n\\_6445510.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/09/college-men-commit-rape-study_n_6445510.html)

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the people who have been invaluable to me for their inspiration, guidance, feedback, and support in writing this handbook. If we stand on the shoulders of giants, I wrote this on my tippy toes with a team of humans pulling me up with a harness. The wedgie was well worth it.

In no particular order, I thank Amber Louie, Nadine Chambers, Angela Marie MacDougall, Rona Amiri, Zain Meghji, Tijash Ramirez, Nati Garcia, Diego Cardona, Jorge Salazar, Andrea Canales, Anita Roberts, Jeff Gourley, Bill Pozzobon, Lindsay Reid, Craig Pavelich, Suze Chiv, and Kalamity Hildebrandt, Battered Women's Support Services, SFPIRG, the SFU Women's Centre and SafeTeen. Without all of your guidance and support I would not have been able to have come this far in my journey of learning, nor would I be headed in the direction I am going.

What actions will they take towards gender justice? If we say we stand against violence against girls, women, femmes, and non-binary folks, then we need to own the harm that we cause them and minimize/end it. We don't choose our male privilege, but we do choose what we do with it and how we can work to change an inequitable system of patriarchy that gives us it in the first place.

I hope that this handbook can be useful to us men as a reference, a stepping stone, or a light in our path towards healing ourselves and our communities.

## **This is called the “Accountable Men’s Handbook,” but to whom are we accountable to?**

When I use the word “accountability” I am describing the onus on men to take responsibility for our actions and the consequences of those actions, including the benefits we get in a hierarchical society that gives us power over women, femmes, and non-binary folks. As patriarchy's main beneficiaries, we men are in the primary role to end gender violence both as individuals in our social circles, and as members of a dominant social group. If we are in a romantic relationship with a woman or femme, we are accountable to them for our physical size and strength and are obligated to be aware of how that might intimidate our partner (like when we get angry). When we are out with our group of guy friends, we are accountable to other folks in public for how our friends behave and whether they intimidate/harass them. Throughout the day, we are accountable to ourselves and the standards we hold for our behaviour, and if we live up to or compromise them.

## **So, who are “men” anyway?**

When I refer to men in this handbook, I am talking about any person who self-identifies as a man. This means anybody who internally feels that their gender identity is “man” is a man regardless of the way that their body has been sexed or gendered by others, including medical professionals or society at

large. Generally men go by the third person pronouns of “he,” “his,” and “him” and may or may not associate qualities our society deems masculine with their gender identity. Although men overall benefit in our society and culture, my hope with this handbook is to highlight ways we as individual men need to be accountable to women, femmes and non-binary folks: in our romantic relationships, on public transit, at parties, in our workplaces, in conversations, in our consciousness.

While this handbook is directed at men, my hope is that this handbook can also apply to folks who may identify or be read as masculine, boi, or butch. For all of us who are read as masculine in public spaces in a patriarchal world, we are accountable to people read as feminine for the privileges we carry (i.e. not getting sexually harassed, cat called, etc.).

On pages 8 and 11 are a couple of tools for understanding different qualities related to gender, sex, and sexuality and some language to talk about it.

### **So, what is “male violence” anyway?**

When I am talking about male violence, I am talking about the fact when it comes to intimate partner violence (also known as “domestic abuse”) and sexual violence, men are disproportionately the majority of perpetrators and women are disproportionately the majority of the victims. By naming this violence “male violence,” I hope to do what Angela Marie Mac-Dougall (Executive Director of Battered Women’s Support Services) frequently describes as “making that which is rendered invisible visible,” or naming that which we constantly let go unnamed. With consistent media coverage of mass shootings in the United States and Canada, who are often the ones responsible for these rampages? Men. When it comes to sexual violence, who are most often the perpetrators? Men. Thus, I hope to speak truth to the damage in our communities that comes from our hands in the hopes that we can recognize the potential to use them to repair and build.

**Rape:** coerced, non-consensual sexual intercourse.

**Sexual assault:** legally a category of criminal behaviour that ranges from unwanted sexual touching (ex: kissing) to rape.

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## **Suggested Readings**

Content warning: Rape, Sexual Assault

*I looked at a rapist in the mirror and saw him smiling back* by  
Hari Ziyad

<http://racebaitr.com/2015/07/09/i-looked-at-a-rapist-in-the-mirror-and-saw-him-smiling-back/>

Content warning: Verbal Abuse

*Why I Am a Male Feminist* by Byron Hurt

[http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2011/03/why\\_i\\_am\\_a\\_black\\_male\\_feminist.1.html](http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2011/03/why_i_am_a_black_male_feminist.1.html)

Content warning: Rape, Sexual Assault

*The Revolution Starts At Home* by Ching-In Chen, Jai  
Dulani, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

(Available at the SFU Women’s Centre & Out on Campus  
Libraries)

Content warning: Rape, Sexual Assault

*The Facts on Dating Violence in Youth Relationships*  
(BWSS)

<http://www.bwss.org/services/programs/youth-ending-violence/youth-dating-violence-awareness-month/the-facts-on-dating-violence-in-youth-relationships/>

## Glossary

**Feminism:** I define feminism as the ideology that works towards justice for all genders, which understands that there are more than two genders (i.e. more than just men and women) and that recognizes society empowers men over women, femmes, and non-binary folks. Thus, the work of a feminist is not simply creating gender equality, but a reconfiguration of society that guarantees equitable redistribution of resources and social rights/ protections for all.

**Male sexual entitlement:** “the belief that men are owed sex on account of their maleness.”

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2013/01/male-sexual-entitlement-hurts-everyone/>

**Entitlement:** The (sometimes subconscious/unconscious) belief that men have the right to control or access women’s bodies.

**Mansplain:** Slang term coined by a blog commenter, “phosfate” meaning the occurrence when a man condescendingly explains a concept to a knowledgeable party (ex: a woman) about her experience as if she were completely ignorant.

**Manspreading:** When a man takes up more space than is reasonable in a public setting. Ex: Spreading one’s legs beyond the width of their hips on a crowded bus. This is different than when a woman places their bag on their seat so they are at the aisle to prevent another from sitting beside them on the night bus to be safe (i.e. because women are harassed in public way more than men).

**Patriarchy:** The social hierarchy that gives men power over women, femmes, and non-binary folks. Patriarchy defines men and masculinity as absolutely tough, strong, and women as gentle and kind.

## Why me (Isaac Louie)?

Well, why not me? I benefit from my social position as a (cisgender) man and have the privilege to engage with this work or not. Many femmes, women, and non-binary folks often have to bear the brunt of explaining the conditions of their oppression out of pure survival so this is my attempt at changing the terms of engagement.

I didn’t have a handbook like this growing up so I wanted to make one with the hopes that others will not have to make the same mistakes I made in order to learn from them. There are too few of us men doing the work of preventing violence in our communities and I think there is a growing need for us men to talk with each another about the ways toxic masculinity is a part of our lives. I hope this handbook can help begin and continue that conversation.

I write this book not as an expert, but as someone who is committed to the lifelong learning of how to be an accountable man. Let this book be a light on our path towards healing, growth, and preventing violence.

**\*\*I will use Content Warnings at the beginning of each section to identify content that may be triggering for people recovering from trauma.**

According to One In Four USA, “[Rape] survivors are significantly more likely than women in the general population to suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (McFarlane, Malecha, Watson, Gist, Batten, Hall, & Smith, 2005); in fact, rape survivors are the largest population in the nation with PTSD (Campbell & Wasco, 2005).” In writing this manual, I hope this can serve as a simple way we can help make our spaces safer for women, femmes, and non-binary folks.

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*long days of occasional parent fights  
going to sleep  
with a twisted stomach*

*4 generations ago,  
one carried abuse  
passed down  
from father to son to son to son*

*a  
pattern  
that bleeds  
into my present  
the history that speaks  
and repeats  
and repeats  
and repeats  
and repeats*

*until it is heard*

*once  
and for all*

*you didn't know  
that  
your scolding, frustrated strikes*

*would become  
the things on the dresser  
my dad pushed to  
the ground,  
burning holes in the carpet  
like a coal left on wax:*

*grandfather-shaped  
depressions  
i  
fell into..*

*you didn't know that*

*the bruise  
on my  
soul*

*would become  
the pain in my girlfriend's smile  
the shaken ground upon which i walk*

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## GENDER TOOLKIT

As I mentioned previously, this handbook will use language about gender and sexuality that you may not have encountered before. In this section, you'll find a couple tools that are useful for talking about the different ways that gender identity, gender expression, assigned sex, and romantic or sexual attraction can exist in one person. For the purpose of clarity, when I say "gender," I am referring to someone's gender identity unless otherwise specified. Also, whenever I say "men" I am referring to anyone who identifies as a man.

### Gender Unicorn

Landyn Pan of Trans Student Educational Resources (TSER) has put together this tool called the Gender Unicorn to talk about many different aspects of gender and sexuality that exist within one body. You might note how the colours in the drawing refer to the colours in the spectra rays. Feel free to fill this out for yourself, if you like, by putting an 'x' on which part of the continuum you are. I've included Landyn's descriptions of each category on page 10.

*would be the  
angry echoed yell  
  
banging on walls  
adorned with family photos,  
printed monet paintings,  
&  
good luck fortune scrolls*

*(from nails  
your legacy dangles  
like vertical paper diaries  
folded into  
knuckles  
and  
teeth..*

*your work,  
a porcelain bowl's glaze  
dripping and crackling,  
reaching perfection  
long after  
the artist has died..*

*..)*

once and for all

by Isaac Louie

&  
patterns  
die  
slow...

(because)  
you didn't know

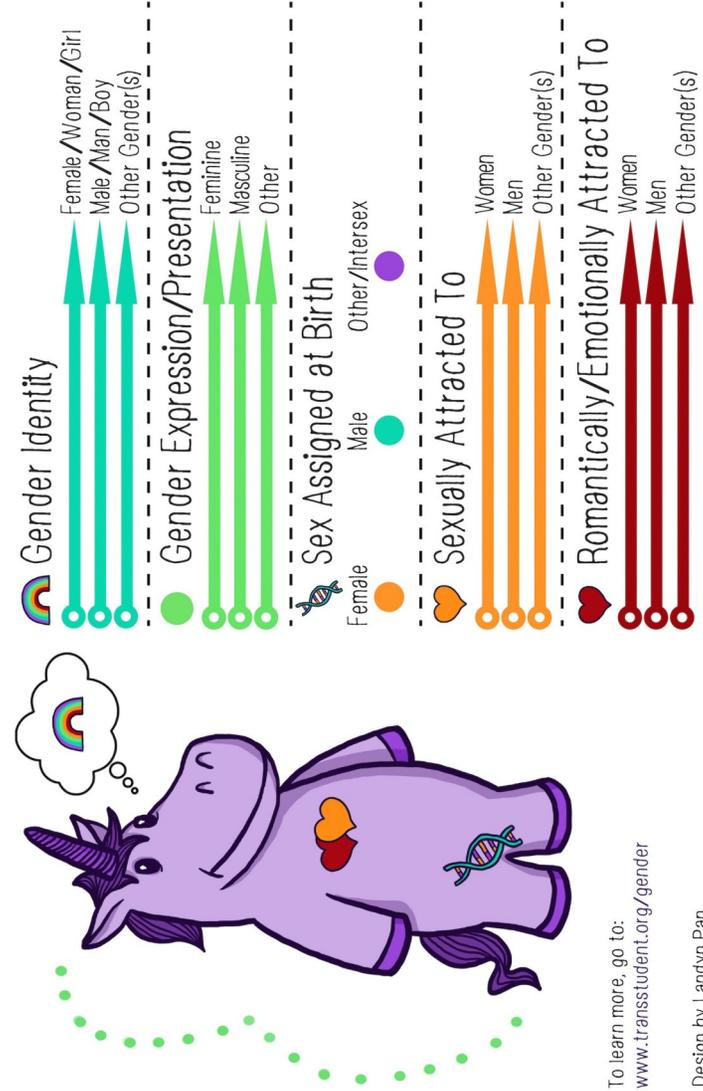
that when you grabbed him  
by the scruff of HIS neck  
1, 2, 9, 25 years old  
you reached into the present day  
and left your red hands  
on mine

you didn't know

that your one-time abuse  
your temper thrown tone  
(scraping in my ears  
like heavy metal screams)

# The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:  
**TSER**  
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:  
[www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)

Design by Landyn Pan

**Gender Identity:** One's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or another gender(s). Everyone has a gender identity, including you. For transgender people, their sex assigned at birth and their own internal sense of gender identity are not the same. Female, woman, and girl and male, man, and boy are also NOT necessarily linked to each other but are just six common gender identities.

**Gender Expression/Presentation:** The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. Most transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth.

**Sex Assigned at Birth:** The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex based on a combination of anatomy, hormones, chromosomes. It is important we don't simply use "sex" because of the vagueness of the definition of sex and its place in transphobia. Chromosomes are frequently used to determine sex from prenatal karyotyping (although not as often as genitalia). Chromosomes do not determine genitalia.

**Sexually Attracted To:** (Sexual Orientation.) It is important to note that sexual and romantic/emotional attraction can be from a variety of factors including but not limited to gender identity, gender expression/presentation, and sex assigned at birth.

**Romantically/Emotionally Attracted To:** Romantic/emotional orientation. It is important to note that sexual and romantic/emotional attraction can be from a variety of factors including but not limited to gender identity, gender expression/presentation, and sex assigned at birth.

## How to handle a mistake

1. Accept responsibility for your role in the mistake.
2. Isolate the attitude(s) and behaviour(s) that created the mistake.
3. Know that everyone makes mistakes and admitting to having done something wrong is not a weakness, but a strength, of character.
4. Allow learning from the mistake to help you to grow. Welcome it as insight into how you can improve as a person.
5. Know that you are probably not the first (or the last) to make this mistake.
6. Commit to and follow-through with what actions it takes to repair the harm caused by the mistake. Invest in learning ways to correct the mistake and prevent it in the future.



Are we at the memorial march to support the families and survivors of violence or are we there to commiserate with friends and community? Are we trying to create gender justice or are we tickled by the positive attention? I don't think there should be shame in feeling good about hearing words of praise for good work but that must not be the ceiling of our involvement or work, it should be the floor. Our commitment should not end at being recognized for our work, it should achieve lift off.

As men who consider ourselves feminists, it's important that we realize we possess more potential to be perpetrators and abusers in our communities than "allies." The deeper we are welcomed into feminist spaces, the more trust we receive: and thus the more harm we can commit when we break that trust (intentionally or not). Finding a home in feminism can be liberating for men but we must remember that it is vital survival for women, femmes, and non-binary folks. Patriarchy hurts us, yes, but let's not forget the many, many more ways we benefit from it while femmes, women, and non-binary folks are oppressed. Let's try to be extra clear about why we feel like we live up to the label of "feminist" and recognize the responsibility we must take on because of it.

A large part of our commitment to feminism should be in finding our own healing, going to therapy and trying to unlearn sexist attitudes and behaviours. As feminist men, we often appreciate the emotional support and care that women and femmes provide us so we should be working on how we can create this within our own male groups.

If we are to shape better men, let us start with shaping the one we have the most control over: ourselves.

# Gender 101

**Gender Binary:**  
The categorization of gender into two distinct, opposite sexes.



**Trans/Transgender:**  
An umbrella term applied to those whose gender identity is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.



**Cisgender:**  
Someone who identifies exclusively as their sex assigned at birth.



**Genderqueer:**  
A term applied to individuals who do not identify within the gender binary.



**Transition:**  
The process of changing one's gender expression to match their gender identity.



t transstudent  
f /transstudent  
@transstudent

For more information,  
go to [transstudent.org/graphics](http://transstudent.org/graphics)

**TSER**  
Trans Student Educational Resources

Design by Landyn Pan

## “Man Up” Culture and “Real Men”

“My message to all men is that you have to kill pride. You’ve been taught that pride is a manly thing, that pride is a good thing. But the problem with pride is that it stops you from growth. When you’re so proud that you won’t change, you’ve got problems. Male pride causes wars; millions of people have died because of male pride, because one man would not back down. Male pride will say, “I’d rather blow up my whole family than have everyone look at me as though I’ve lost.” That is so dangerous. I go back to the biblical story of Solomon, with the two women both claiming a baby is theirs. And Solomon said, we’re going to cut the baby in half and give a half to each of you. And one lady accepted that, and the other said, “Don’t do that—give the baby to her.” I look at male pride in that respect: a man who is proud would rather cut the baby in half and destroy it all, rather than save his own life and his own future. When you kill that pride, instantly, you become a better person, because now you’re listening. Now you don’t know it all. Now you’re humble. Now you can grow and get smarter.”

-Terry Crews, from an interview with Dame Magazine

Once, when I was on the community bus ride home after school, the bus driver stopped along the sidewalk of a main road because she noticed an elderly man who had fallen and scraped his nose. Asking if he was okay, she put the bus in park and attended to him. Immediately, I got out of my seat with some tissues and hand sanitizer and asked him if he needed any assistance. With a badly scraped nose and lacerations on his face and bent glasses, he was very adamant about refusing any help. He was obviously startled by the fall yet every time we asked to do something to help him he began to scowl and his lips grew tighter and tighter. He *insisted* he didn’t need anything from us, shaking as he bent down to pick up his cane.

I was appalled, not just at this man’s refusal to accept help, but in his visibly growing anger at an accident that clearly left him

As a man of colour, I know dating (or just existing in public) can be complicated for us: we are frequently seen by white society as deviant (whether hypersexual or completely non-sexual) or ultra-sexist/misogynist so any interaction is affected by that. These things still being true, women of colour time and again show up for us men of colour and it’s time we show up for them. We are not the only targets of racism and we could strengthen our bonds by recognizing the connections between our experiences: like how the incarceration of Black and Indigenous men fuels the stereotype of the absent father, and puts the onus of domestic labour on single mothers of colour. We men of colour should think critically about the anti-racist world we imagine and if it contributes to the freedom of all of us or if it just reconfigures the structure to let us live with the privileges of white men.

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### Dear Feminist Men...

Dear men who call or consider themselves feminists,

Please learn from my mistakes. Checking ourselves and the privileges that we carry is an essential part of being accountable men. There are many stories in the social justice community of so-called male feminists who take up space from women on feminist issues and others who use feminist spaces to access women for sexual and romantic gain. Do some feminist women who are attracted to men desire a (male) partner who understands patriarchy and makes a commitment to help overturn it? Probably yes. (I don’t know – I can’t speak for women!) Does that mean we deserve special access to women because we’ve read the books, speak the language, marched at the memorial march, etc.? No. I don’t think that we need to stop being present when we are called upon to show up, but we do need to be conscious and deliberate about our reasons for why we show up.

- Put grocery bags or backpack on the floor between legs or on lap
- Tuck in broad shoulders as best I can
- Keep my hands folded in mylap
- Move in as much as possible from the aisle

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## Men of Colour & Accountability

“White women and black men have it both ways. They can act as oppressor or be oppressed. Black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors of women. White women may be victimized by sexism, but racism enabled them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black people. Both groups have led liberation movements that favor their interests and support the continued oppression of other groups. Black male sexism has undermined struggles to eradicate racism just as white female racism undermines feminist struggle. As long as these two groups or any group defines liberation as gaining social equality with ruling class white men, they have a vested interest in the continued exploitation and oppression of others.”

– bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From margin to center*

Though she is speaking specifically of Black men, I think that bell hooks’s above quotation can apply to the many ways in which we men of colour have been opponents to the liberation of women of colour, especially in anti-racist work. Historically we have been elevated to speaking roles on race and centered in the discussions; the focus on racist physical violence enacted on men in high numbers obfuscates the emotional, financial and physical violence enacted on women; male leaders of anti-racist movements ignore their sexism as if racism took precedence over the domestic, physical, and sexual violence women of colour face.

in some pain. I absolutely believe that this was a result of his socialization as a man: we are offered so few emotions to show in public that when we feel real human sensations like pain, sadness, vulnerability, or fear, we are only allowed to answer with anger. The man who needed medical attention for his wounds could only be hypersensitive to the eyes on him: eyes that communicated care and worry yet he felt judged as a man in a position of vulnerability. This is a prime example of the poisonous pride that actor Terry Crews talks about in the quotation above. This is toxic masculinity, that which is willing to destroy oneself and take everyone with them rather than admit being wrong, weak, vulnerable or afraid.

As men, what do we gain from remaining “stoic” and “tough” or “emotionless” in times of extreme pain? What do others gain from this? Do younger boys learn to feel and acknowledge their hurt or do they learn to suppress it and hide it? How does that experience help us to grow as people?

In my job as a workshop facilitator, I often ask young men and boys, “Who created these rules for how to be a man?” Are they expectations that they created themselves or are they judgments of other men? Are these expectations reasonable? Do they encompass the complexity of human experience or fulfill the basics of a healthy, happy life? Are these rules they want to live by?

Similarly, I invite you to think about the attitudes or behaviours you change out of the fear of what other guys might think. Does that hinder or help you from living your truth?

### On “proving” masculinity

“Women tend to internalize pain, men instead act it out, against themselves and others.” – Kali Holloway, from “Masculinity Is Killing Men: The Roots of Men and Trauma”

A majority of casually violent and intimidating behaviour that we see/cause in daily life is a result of “proving” our masculinity: being too forceful trying to fix something because we mustn’t appear weak; “insisting” on helping someone even if they have already refused; insulting women we found attractive because they turned us down; hitting a wall or throwing a video game controller out of frustration. All of these behaviours are attempts at gaining control of a situation or, at least, trying to appear in control. However, the root source of the reaction is a feeling of insecurity, of realizing you’re **not** in control. Since anger is a secondary emotion and one of the few emotions we get to express, it is no wonder that we often resort to aggressive behaviours automatically when we are not feeling good about ourselves or our lives. When we feel like we are exposed or seen to be weak/vulnerable in a situation (and therefore socially inferior), we try to regain a sense of superiority by controlling or dominating what we can: objects, video game controllers, or other people.

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“Masculinity is both difficult to achieve and impossible to maintain, a fact that [Psychologist Terry Real] notes is evident in the phrase “fragile male ego.” Because men’s self-esteem often rests on so shaky a construct, the effort to preserve it can be all-consuming. Avoiding the shame that’s left when it is peeled away can drive some men to dangerous ends. This is not to absolve people of responsibility for their actions, but it does drive home the forces that underlie and inform behaviors we often attribute solely to individual issues, ignoring their root causes.”

– Kali Holloway, from *Masculinity Is Killing Men: The Roots of Men and Trauma*”

## Sitting like a decent person



Have you heard of “manspreading?” It’s a term to describe men who take up an unreasonable amount of space on public transit. You know the behaviour: spreading arms and legs that takes the space of either two or three seats; three buddies taking up a section of seats in the back of the bus; that dude on the bus that invades your legroom with a wide spread.

This behaviour is an expression of dominance, of men claiming space for themselves and seeing the space that women, femmes, non-binary folks (and others) occupy as theirs. There is a difference between using the space you need and making the back of the bus your personal sofa during rush hour. I think it’s fine to stretch your legs a little in a relatively empty skytrain car, but if you are hoarding space as more people hop on board it’s time to change. Are you and the fellas sharing space or taking a whole section for yourselves?

A couple of guidelines I try to abide by to avoid the dreaded “manspread:”

- Spread your legs only as wide as my hips go

## Riding public transit while male/masculine presenting

### Where to put your eyes

Because women, femmes, and non-binary folks are socialized into paying attention to us (since we have more social power than them) our gaze can take up a lot of space and command attention for even the smallest things. To avoid making people uncomfortable in public, here are some suggestions (especially if you already feel awkward in these situations):

- Avert your eyes, or focus on an area away from the direct line of sight of others. On the skytrain I tend to look to the corner of a window or stare blankly and calmly at an advertisement.
- Look down or at another neutral space
- Look at your phone or read a book

While I wish that we could be more comfortable and casual in a public space such as transit, the reality is that enough violence and harassment happens that we men need to proactively take steps to prevent it. If we feel strongly that safety is a right for all, then we ought to take the responsibility of creating it where it is missing.

“I’ve often heard that ‘rugged individualism’ is an American value [but] try being a true individual and see what Americans really think. Self-contained sufficiency is a more accurate value in America, not individualism. In this sexist society, this value is applied to men. An independent individualistic woman is somewhat frowned upon still today. Manliness is measured by a man’s ability to conform to ideals of masculinity. Some of these ideals are strength, competence, control, and self-sufficiency. Independent thinking and behaviour is “appropriate” for men as long as it upholds the rigid ideals of masculinity: heterosexuality, hard work, and dominance over anything that is not male or that which threatens maleness.”

– Matthew Campbell, from *On the Road to Healing* (zine)

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## MYTHS vs. FACTS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

*Content warning: This section talks about rape, sexual assault, intimate partner violence (domestic violence), and abuse.*

### Rape is about sex: Myth or Fact?

Myth. Rape is about power and control more so than it is about sex. For example, when playing video games and a 12-year-old says that they “totally raped” the other team, what does the word rape refer to? The 12-year-old is saying that they totally “owned” the other team or dominated them. The gamer could easily have said “dominate” or “own” in this context but specifically chose the word “rape” because they understand it describes the total control one person exercises over another’s body. This is how rape is a function of power: it is a situation where one person victimizes/violates another by having their way with the other person’s body.

### Committed romantic partners cannot rape one another: Myth or Fact?

Myth. Rape or sexual assault happens whenever people have sex without consent. This means that even if two people have had engaged in sexual activity before (i.e. they “hooked up”), they still need to attain consent each subsequent time they have sex. Even if two people are married to each other, they still need to attain sexual consent before having sexual activity. (\*\*Please refer to page 20 for more information on consent.)

### **Men can be victims of rape or sexual assault: Myth or Fact?**

Fact. Anybody regardless of their gender can be a victim of rape or sexual assault. Even if a man has a visible erection, that is not an invitation to have sex with him.

Rape and sexual assault are crimes of victimization and power and control. It is always the choice of a perpetrator to rape or sexually assault someone else, to use force or their size to violate another’s body.

The fear that men have of prison rape is what femmes, women, and non-binary folks have to live with every day.

### **It’s a victim’s fault that they were raped: Myth or Fact?**

Myth. Rape or sexual assault is never the fault of the victim. It is always a person’s choice to rape or sexually assault another and being too drunk or high is not a legal justification for violent behaviour. A common tactic rapists use for avoiding responsibility for harmful behaviour is to project the fault on the victim by saying the victim’s behaviour, presentation, or promiscuous reputation led to or invited the rape/assault.

But men are able to control their behaviours and falling back on the stereotype that men “just can’t control” their sexual urges is not an acceptable excuse. We are very capable of controlling our bodies throughout the day: when we are at the urinal we control where our gaze lands; when an overwhelming emotion comes over us, we stifle our tears; when we detect a fart in the room, we hold our breath. (Okay, the last one was a joke...kind of.) Vio-

ways we can be helpful men is by making sure that we ourselves and the other men in our lives actively practice being safer and accountable in public. If it’s fair to say that women, femmes, and non-binary folks learn to be careful of men (most perpetrators of sexual violence are known to the victim; most perpetrators are men), then it’s fair for us men to be proactive in demonstrating our trustworthiness through our actions, not taking it as a given fact of our character. If we are worried that women might think of us as potential rapists, logically we should be angry at other men not at women for thinking so.

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Imagine that you are on your way home alone after a heavy night of drinking with your friends and you notice there is a woman walking ahead of you on the same side of the sidewalk, going in the same direction. You aren’t sure if she knows you are there and it’s kind of awkward because you’re tired and just want to make it home to your soft, comfy bed. What can you do to avoid making things awkward? Here are a few suggestions:

- Walk with louder steps to make it more obvious that you’re there, so as not to startle them.
- In a calm, clear voice announce on which side you are going to walk past them, ex. “Passing on your left.”
- Cross the street if you can (yes, it probably adds to a longer trip on an already long night but think about this, what if some dude creeped up behind you on a poorly lit street? Would you feel safe?)
- Slow down your stride to create a larger gap between the both of you.
- If she speeds up, slow down. You may have the best intentions and mean no harm but she likely does not know that and now is not the time or place to have that discussion.

What thoughts or feelings came up for you in this exercise? Were there any challenges in thinking of how you would prepare yourself?

Did you change your behavioural choices depending on the situation?

The purpose of this exercise is to put yourself in the shoes of a gender or sexual minority: oftentimes women, femmes, and non-binary folks have to plan out ways to stay safe throughout the course of a day. Though we might agree that 3:00 AM on a poorly lit side street is not the safest place to be, the thought process of how to be safe for a woman, femme, or non-binary person may have begun a lot earlier. To name a few ways:

- Finding an outfit that it is attractive but not “too” sexy, otherwise creeps will hit on them
- Having a plan for how to get home and with whom
- Being very careful not to drink too much alcohol.
- Knowing which routes they can take to get home
- Memorizing a fake number to give to men (because they are socialized into not saying “no” to men). Women have literally been assaulted or killed because they said no to a man.

These are just a few ways that women, femmes, and non-binary folks have to think about their safety – but from *whom* are they trying to be safe from? Violent men. Rapists. Random men. Any man.

Why should a woman have to change her route home to be safe? What guarantees the alternative route is safer?

Instead of constantly telling women, femmes, and non-binary folks to be vigilant about their safety, one of the most effective

lence is always a choice; one that we often default to when/if we cannot articulate our inner experiences with words. We as men need to learn and use better ways of communicating non-violently.

It is our role as men to define masculinity/manhood in ways that do not cause harm to others – if we leave it to patriarchy, we are hurt by the social norms that say men are not allowed to express/feel vulnerability, fear, sadness lest they seem inferior.

### **A man must be/is sexually ready or active all the time (or they’re not a man): Myth or Fact?**

Myth. A person’s sexual activity is no qualification for their gender. This myth not only ignores the experiences of asexual/ aromantic men, but it also sets up the stage for victim blaming when men are raped. Patriarchy tells us that we have to “prove” our masculinity by using women’s bodies as trophies to conquer and dismissing other men as p\*ssies or a f\*gs if they refuse to comply.

### **Women/femmes shouldn’t wear revealing clothes to avoid getting raped: Myth or Fact?**

Myth. As stated previously, rape and assault are never a victim’s fault, they are a perpetrator’s behavioural choice. Sexual assault and rape tend to be the only crimes where we think the victim’s behaviour or appearance is relevant where in fact there has been no evidence to support this claim. While some victims of rape/sexual assault may have had opportunities to resist, this belief largely masks the power dynamics and force or threat of force that a rapist wields over them. According to [sexualassault.ca](http://sexualassault.ca), “as many as 3/4ths of all sexual assaults involved some pre-planning by the assailant (sic).” A belief that the victim could – or *should* – have done something to protect themselves from the rape/sexual assault takes the burden of responsibility off of the perpetrator and places it on the one who was harmed. Would we blame a person stopped at a red light for a hit and run?

**Perpetrators are extremely adept at identifying “likely” victims and testing prospective victims’ boundaries.**

(Lisak & Miller, 2002 via One in Four USA)

**Perpetrators plan and premeditate their attacks, using sophisticated strategies to groom their victims for attack, and to isolate them**

**physically.** (Lisak & Miller, 2002 via One in Four USA)

**Perpetrators use alcohol deliberately to render victims more vulnerable to attack, or completely unconscious.**

(Lisak & Miller, 2002 via One in Four USA)

**Perpetrators view women as sexual objects to be conquered, coerced and used for self-gratification.** (Lisak & Miller, 2002 via One in Four USA)

### **How to act safely at night**

On your walk home from the bus stop after a late night of partying, you notice that there is a person walking down the sidewalk towards you. This person has their hands in their pockets and wears a hoodie. It’s kind of dark so you’re not quite sure what to do but they are bolting towards you at a fairly brisk pace.

**Situation 1:** You realize the person is a man approximately your height and build, what precautions go through your mind?

- Hold your keys in a fist in case you need to fight your way to safety
- Cross the street or take an alternate route
- Get your phone out and pretend to talk to a friend
- Walk your shoulders squared and chest up
- Relax, it’s probably not stranger danger.

**Situation 2:** You realize the person is a woman approximately your height and build, what precautions go through your mind now?

- Hold your keys in a fist in case you need to fight your way to safety
- Cross the street and take an alternate route
- Get your phone out and pretend to talk to a friend
- Walk your shoulders squared and chest up
- Relax, it’s probably not stranger danger.

one a f\*g, our silence is indirectly supportive of that behaviour. When an acquaintance makes a rape joke and we laugh, we are telling that person that we are OK with his belief and that rape is acceptable. It is in these instances where another man extends an offer to agree with sexist or misogynistic thinking that we approve of harm to women, femmes, and non-binary folks and it is with our choice to accept or decline it. I do not think that it is our “stupidity” that causes sexual violence, I think it is our complicit actions that encourage and enable harmful, sexist attitudes and behaviours.

### References/Resources

Urging Men To Intervene In FHRITP Incidents

<http://www.whiteribbon.ca/news/urging-men-to-intervene-in-fhritp-incidents/>

Jocks vs. Nerds by David J. Prokopetz

<http://prokopetz.tumblr.com/post/107164298477/i-think-my-biggest-huh-moment-with-respect-to>

### **Most accusations of rape are false: Myth or Fact?**

Myth. The research shows that this claim simply is not true. “False accusations of rape happen no more often than false reports of other types of crime: about 2 to 4%, which means that 96 to 98% of reports are true.” (Baker, Sexual Assault on Campus)

“Rape is the least reported of all violent crimes.” (Rand, 2009 via One in Four USA)

Part of the socialization that tells us that men are superior and women are inferior also treats our voices as more important than women’s, even if we say the exact same thing.

### **There is no singular profile of a rape victim: Myth or Fact?**

Fact. While certain social factors such as disability status, gender, race, class, and age affect risk of sexual violence, there seems to be no universal profile of rape victims. Similarly, there is no universal profile of rapists aside from the fact that they are almost always men.

“For female rape survivors, 98.1% of the time a man was the perpetrator. For male rape survivors, 93% of the time, a man was the perpetrator.” (Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, & Merrick, 2011 via One in Four USA). When a male is raped by a female, it is usually when he is a child and she is an adult.

### **Men of colour in general and black men in particular are potential rapists to be afraid of: Myth or Fact?**

Myth. There is no evidence to support a racial profile of rapists. Most rapes/sexual assaults happen within one’s race and the most common abusive partner to women is a male partner of the same race (except for Aboriginal men/women).

**60% of rapes on college campuses occur with a perpetrator who is an acquaintance of the survivor. 32% are romantic partners, 8% are unknown/strangers.**

(Zinzow & Thompson, 2011 via One in Four USA)

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Resources/References:

Sexual Violence On Campus

<http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Assets/Public+Folder+%28General+Use%29/Digital+Assets+-+Public+Use/Violence+Against+Women+on+Campus.pdf>

SexAssault.ca – Myths & Facts

<http://www.sexassault.ca/mythsfacts.htm>

One In Four USA

<http://www.oneinfourusa.org/statistics.php>

Masculinity Is Killing Men: The Roots of Men and Trauma

<http://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/masculinity-is-killing-men-the-roots-of-men-and-trauma/>

On the Road to Healing (\*Content Warning: Violence, Rape)

[https://remuernoteverde.poivron.org/uploads/2014/09/on\\_the\\_road\\_to\\_healing\\_1.pdf](https://remuernoteverde.poivron.org/uploads/2014/09/on_the_road_to_healing_1.pdf)

**How to take “no” for an answer**

No is not an easy thing to hear, especially when we are trying to come out of our shell and talk to people in spite of anxiety. Here are some ways that people say no:

“No.”	(No response)	“No, thanks.”
“Please stop”	“Sorry, I’m unavailable right now.”	
“I’d really love to but I can’t.”	“Not right now.”	
“Maybe tomorrow.”		

As men wanting to be accountable to women, non-binary folks, and femmes, we could do better to hear and listen to the various forms of “no.” It’s not always easy, but the context of the situations is very different for us:

“Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them.” – Margaret Atwood

Being able to hear “no,” can be difficult but it also makes hearing “yes” that much more satisfying. We should recognize that while we are entitled to ask for clarification when unsure about things, we are responsible for becoming aware of people’s verbal and physical cues for “no” and respecting that.

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“Women certainly don’t need men to protect them, but men need to intervene in other men’s stupidity.”

- Todd Minerson of the White Ribbon Campaign as told to Stephen Quin of CBC’s *On The Coast*

While I disagree with Todd Minerson’s use of the phrase “men’s stupidity,” (I think it’s willful ignorance or bigotry) I think that this quotation does shed light onto our responsibility as men to intervene in other men’s violence, harassment, and antagonism of other people. If we are silent on the bus when a man calls some-

David J. Prokopetz – Jocks vs. Nerds

“I think my biggest “huh” moment with respect to gender roles is when it was pointed out to me that your typical “geek” is just as hypermasculine as your typical “jock” when you look at it from the right angle.

“As male geeks, a great deal of our identity is built on the notion that male geeks are, in some sense, gender-nonconformant, insofar as we’re unwilling or unable to live up to certain physical ideals about what a man “should” be. Indeed, many of us take pride in how putatively unmanly we are.

“Viewed from an historical perspective, however, the virtues of the ideal geek are essentially those of the ideal aristocrat: a cultured polymath with expertise in a vast array of subjects; rarefied or eccentric taste in food, clothing, music, etc.; identity politics that revolve around one’s hobbies or pastimes; open disdain for physical labour and those who perform it; a sense of natural entitlement to positions of authority (“you should be flipping my burgers!”); and so forth.

“And the thing about that aristocratic ideal? It’s **intensely** masculine. It may seem more welcoming to women on the surface, but - as recent events will readily illustrate - this is a facade: we pretend to be egalitarian because it suits our refined self-image, but that affectation falls away in a heartbeat when challenged.

**“Basically, the whole “geeks versus jocks” thing that gets drilled into us by media and the educational system isn’t about degrees of masculinity at all. It’s just two different flavours of the same toxic bullshit: the ideal geek is the alpha-male-as-philosopher-king, as opposed to the ideal jock’s alpha-male-as-warrior-king. It’s still a big dick-measuring contest - we’re just using different rulers.”**

## DEFINITION OF SEXUAL CONSENT

*\*\*Disclaimer: I am not a legal professional – while I share my knowledge and interpretations of the law for informative purposes as an educator of healthy sexual consent, I am in no position to give legal advice. Please feel free to see more information on consent in the resources page.*

In this handbook, I use the legal definition of sexual consent as outlined in the Criminal Code of Canada: “the voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity.” The Criminal Code defines voluntary agreement as requiring one to attain “affirmative consent” for sexual activity from a partner, which means that a negative response – or lack of a response – is negative consent. “Voluntary agreement” means that any person engaging in sexual activity must be in a legal position to do so.

In other words, sexual partners have to be at least 16 years old and in a conscious capacity to understand and consent to sexual activity. That means that any partner wishing to engage in sexual activity cannot give consent when too intoxicated (i.e. too drunk, high, or both) to understand and agree to what is being proposed.

The age of consent is 18 years old “where the sexual activity ‘exploits’ the young person -- when it involves prostitution, pornography or occurs in a relationship of authority, trust or dependency (e.g., with a teacher, coach or babysitter)” (Age of Consent to Sexual Activity FAQ). Generally speaking, affirmative consent must be both **verbal** and **physical**.

**“Cooperation does not mean consent.”** (One In Four USA)

Sexual activity is any physical contact for a sexual purpose “ranging from sexual touching (ex: kissing) to sexual intercourse” (Age of Consent to Sexual Activity FAQ <http://>

[www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/clp/faq.html](http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/clp/faq.html)). While two people who have been dating for a couple years may not ask to kiss one another every time, the need to attain consent remains. Over time “communication may change within a relationship but that doesn’t mean consent is off the table.” (Susan Chiv).



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Comic by Alli Kirkham

Website: <http://ms-demeanor.tumblr.com/>

Twitter: @allivanlahr

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### Resources/References:

#### A Definition of Consent to Sexual Activity

<http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/victims-victimes/def.html>

#### Age of Consent to Sexual Activity – Frequently Asked Questions

<http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/clp/faq.html>

that does not entitle oneself to getting what they want just because they want it.

I support men who are ready to be honest with themselves and willing to do what it takes to become a better person, but I think that desire needs to come from within, not from the external expectations of bro’s. The sexualisation of conversation common to pick-up that seeks to playfully blame a woman for double-entendres is a form of gaslighting and manipulation.

While I cannot stop anyone from going to pick-up to try and improve their life, I would caution against any dating advice that does not incorporate a celebration of one’s unique personality traits nor advice that does not seek to build relationships from a foundation of genuine trust and authenticity.

As men we should resist the notion that the objective<sup>2</sup> physical attractiveness of our partner should matter more than **our** attraction to them. The belief that straight men have that a woman can get laid anytime she wants ignores the fact that men, too, in a way can get laid anytime they want – they would just have to change their expectations. Rather than fixating on only dating “8s,” “9s,” or “10s,” wouldn’t it be more effective to find out what it takes to be someone’s number 1? Corny, I know, but I believe in it.

Any healthy dating advice – pick-up or not – would suggest using good sense and would encourage being perceptive of body language, not advancing at all costs. Recognizing what genuine interest looks like; learning how to ask when you’re not sure; and being able to take “no” as a final and sufficient answer, not as an invitation to continue manipulating the other person’s words are all ways that we can approach dating and relationships (platonic, a/romantic, intimate, or otherwise) as accountable men.

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<sup>2</sup> Objectivity is a subjective construct!

can be out in public and not be disturbed, but a woman in public always seems to be seen as “fair game” or approachable. The belief that men have that they (should) have access to a woman’s attention when it best suits their needs is called “male entitlement.” Just because a man is ready to start dating does not mean that they can approach any woman that they find interest in.

Pick-up artistry also tends to talk about women as if they were categories ranked out of 10. Men who study pick-up often rate women they want to date as 8s, 9s, and 10s. Again, this does not necessarily incorporate a woman’s perspective and consider what she might rate him on a scale of 1-10. Neither does this ranking system challenge the ways that society fetishizes or denigrates women’s appearance according to conformity to gender stereotypes, skin tone, physical size/shape.

### **So what should you do if your buddy has a hard time talking to girls but you don’t feel so good about pick-up artistry?**

As someone who used to read pick-up (\*barf\*), I’d say that trying to give him another point of view to consider would probably be the most effective strategy. Men who read pick-up are often just looking for ways they can be more effective in dating and relationships, they just chose a crappy source of advice. Pick-up artistry predominately relies on using “cold” techniques that people can say/perform without actually believing in it.

Rather than hiding behind a mask, I’d encourage and help a buddy learn to accept himself as he is and to try and grow as a better version of himself for himself by himself. Instead of looking for the perfect partner, I’d try to get him to see how he can work towards being the perfect partner and feeling the satisfaction that comes from that. Pick-up often tells prospective men to try to improve their attractiveness – i.e. groom oneself regularly, practice talking to people if they have social anxiety – and I don’t think that should end, but it should proceed with an awareness that

## **Is there consent...?**

\*\* If a person has a good time on a date and goes home with the other person, are they obligated to have sex with them? What if they start making out and take their clothes off – if either person has second thoughts, are they allowed to stop?

\*\* Is it rape or sexual assault if you have sex with someone who gives consent when they are drunk and unable to walk straight?

\*\* What if someone has sex with a person who is really drunk but earlier in the night whispered what they would like their partner do to them in bed later that night?

\*\* What would you do if you’re at the club and there’s a man sitting at the bar staring at a woman who has drunk too much, and he goes to take her into a cab?

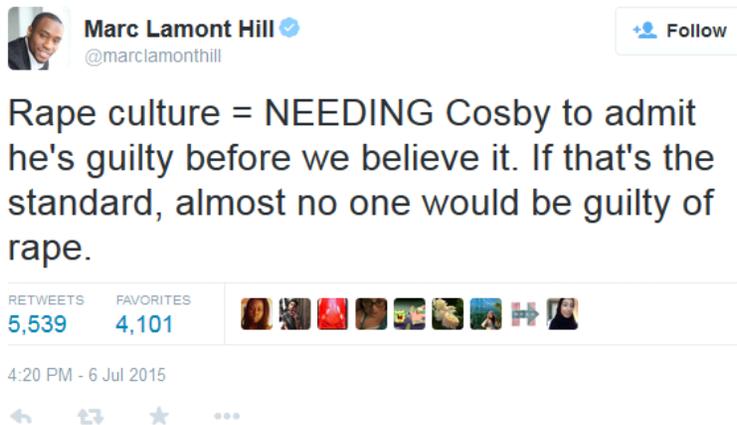
What if that man was your buddy or acquaintance?

What if you ask your partner, “Can we have sex?” and they nod but, as you start kissing them, you notice their body freezes up like a stiff board. Are they consenting to continue with the activity?

- **How do you know when you have a green light for sexual activity?**
- **How do you know when you have a yellow light?**
- **What does a red light look like?**

Hopefully, these questions have helped you explore how ambiguous and uncertain situations can get regarding sexual consent – and thus, how important it is to make sure you practice it as an ongoing, continuous thread of relationships.

## RAPE CULTURE



Rape culture is a term feminists coined to describe the social/cultural phenomenon that while we condemn rape and rapists on the surface, we actually support it institutionally (rapists are incriminated at incredibly low numbers) and in practice (such as on the previous page, “Is there consent...?”). So many times we need to hear from a perpetrator before we actually do something for the survivors, who are so often women.

## PICK-UP ARTISTRY

Sexual activity is a key path to masculine status, and other men are the audience, always imagined and sometimes real, for one’s sexual activities.

- Michael Flood, “Men, Sex, and Homosociality: How Bonds between Men Shape Their Sexual Relations with Women”

Perpetrators are extremely adept at identifying “likely” victims and testing prospective victims’ boundaries.

(Lisak & Miller, 2002 via One in Four USA)

“Pick-up artistry” is a term used to describe the use of persuasive phrases and put-downs that people (almost exclusively men) use to get a date by adopting a persona and sexualizing conversation. The most popular version of pick-up artistry is a “cocky and funny” routine that tries to blend confidence (frequently portrayed as arrogance) with negging<sup>1</sup> to elicit laughter. Pick-up is usually marketed towards bookish, geeky (straight) men who are looking for dating advice. The problem is that pick-up tends to focus on approaching women strictly from the point-of-view of a man and does not question the fact that a woman in a public place may not actually be looking for a date or wanting men to approach them. From her point-of-view, she may actually just be trying to accomplish ordinary things that people do like buying a book or drinking a coffee at the café.

Similarly, pick-up artistry does not often acknowledge, question or challenge the ways that women are socialized into giving men their attention, either. As many feminists have pointed out, a man

<sup>1</sup>Negging is a method of finding a negative quality about a woman and exaggerating it in the hopes of appearing charming. Negging is often just petty put-downs that necessitates a confrontational dynamic and preys on a woman’s insecurity.

violence (they, of course, still face transphobic violence) compared to trans women.

“Most men who are attracted to and date transgender women are probably stigmatized more than trans women are... “I think a man who is dating trans women, who is a celebrity, or famous or is an athlete or something, needs to come forward — or a musician — and needs to say, ‘I love transgender women and [they] deserve to be loved and I’m going to declare that publicly.’ I think those men need some sort of inspiration and hope, so they can live more authentically.”

- Laverne Cox, actress from *Orange Is The New Black*

If men are to be protectors of safety in our communities, then we need to recognize that the prejudices we have against transgender women – and men who are attracted to transgender women – and how they perpetuate stigma, hate, and ultimately violence against them. We should not underestimate the power of our words and silences in stopping or permitting transphobia and transmisogyny.

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### Resources/References

National Report on Hate Violence Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Communities, May 29, 2014

[http://www.avp.org/storage/documents/2013\\_mr\\_ncavp\\_hvreport.pdf](http://www.avp.org/storage/documents/2013_mr_ncavp_hvreport.pdf)

Transgender Equality: A Handbook for Activists and Policymakers by Paisley Currah and Shannon Minter

[http://www.thetaskforce.org/static\\_html/downloads/reports/reports/TransgenderEquality.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/TransgenderEquality.pdf)

**“9% of college men admit to acts meeting the legal definition of either rape or attempted rape.”** (Abbey &

McAuslan, 2004 via One In Four USA)

**Put in plain language, that is almost 1 in 10 college men.**

—> Who have we high-fived? Who have we shaken hands with?

As men, we should not underestimate the power of our words and actions. Given the above statistics, it should be clear that what we say and do and what we allow to be said and done in front of us has a significant impact on people in our lives. When we laugh at a rape joke our friend makes, we support an attitude that minimizes the damage rape causes in victims’ lives and tell any survivors (known or not) that we are not safe people they can confide in. Since most rapes go unreported, one of the most effective ways we can be accountable men is by challenging attitudes that blame victims for their rape/sexual assault to show survivors and authorities (ex: police) that sexual violence is unacceptable in our communities.

Not only are survivors of sexual violence among us on campus, so are (potential) perpetrators, so by supporting a rape culture we actually greenlight the behaviours and attitudes of rapists. Approaching the topic of rape and sexual violence with this in mind can help us to choose words and behaviours that will prevent further violence or attitudes which support rape. Through our conversations, we are able to influence one another about what is and isn’t acceptable. What are some responses we could use to interrupt rape jokes?

- Dude, I don't think that's funny.
- You know that makes you sound like a rapist, right?
- I disagree. Rape is a choice, not an uncontrollable urge.
- You know that's what rapists think/say, right?
- (Silent, neutral-faced displeasure)

While the use of humour around awkward topics can help ease the nerves of talking about them, we need to be vigilant and aware of when a joke crosses the line from funny to offensive. If the so-called joke really was funny, the person who is at the expense of the joke would find it funny, too.

While it might be sucky to hear that many women see men as potential rapists, it might be more unnerving to learn that rapists assume every other man is just like them. When a rapist makes a joke about rape and we laugh, he confirms what he has assumed all along, that we are just like him and would act the same way he does in the same situation. Unless we choose differently.

### **Male Privilege & Sexual Entitlement**

Excerpt from "Legal Consent, Morning-After Regret, and 'Accidental Rape'" by Amanda Hess

A few weeks ago, my boyfriend was hit by a car when he was in a crosswalk (he's fine, thanks for asking). In D.C., of course, pedestrians legally hold the right of way in a crosswalk. But my boyfriend did not share the privilege of

patriarchal society and I think this is the source of the stigma we have of male-male attraction.

If we are to be accountable men, I think we need to consider the ways that we adopt homophobia and misogyny in our daily worldviews and reject those beliefs that rest on superiority over women, femmes, non-binary folks, and femininity. We need to challenge one another to choose healthier, respectful ways of treating feminine folks and femininity – especially the femininity that exists in ourselves.

### **Accountability to Trans Women**

There is no way to talk about male violence without mentioning who is on the receiving end of it. Without question, one of the most affected groups of people by lethality (the extremeness of violence) and per capita are trans women.

"Almost three-quarters (72%) of homicide victims [of violent hate crimes] were transgender women, and more than two-thirds (67%) of homicide victims were transgender women of color."

- National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs

"Ninety-eight percent of the reported [hate violence] incidents involved [transgender women]."

- From Transgender Equality, a Handbook for Activists and Policymakers

I don't want to erase the violence and fear trans men experience, but when it comes to gender-based violence, trans women are the most at risk. I think this is a result of misconceptions of gender and sexuality – like the myth that trans women are men in drag. The truth is that trans women are women. In a culture that treats masculinity as superior to femininity, seeking maleness and adopting masculine roles/behaviours is prized and so it makes sense why trans men statistically face less gender-based

Being socialized as (straight) cisgender men means that we do not often have insight into the experiences of women when it comes to objectification and street harassment. We aren't used to being ogled or harassed by superiors or people who can physically threaten us. Yet this is what we do to women, femmes, and non-binary folks when we objectify them and sexualize their body parts. On one hand, we say that women should take it as a compliment that we are paying attention to them, yet if we were in a similar position we get angry and feel violated.

“Homophobia: The fear that another man will treat you the way you treat women.”

– Source unknown

While this quotation ignores the homophobia women experience for female-female attraction, it does serve to highlight the specific ways in which male-male attraction is stigmatized in our society and culture, and how it is connected to misogyny. I like how this quotation holds up a mirror to alpha male culture and forces us to confront our own attitudes and behaviours, like the harassment of women, femmes, and non-binary folk as well as feminine-presenting men. Even if we don't actively harass others, we still benefit from that intimidation by knowing or insuring we won't be targets of it – and we're accountable to that violence when we are silent in the presence of it.

Heterosexist patriarchy (alpha male culture) deems men as pursuers of romantic/sexual relationships and women as the ones to be pursued. Hetero-patriarchy insists that valid sex is only penile-vaginal sexual intercourse and men can (and should) only feel pleasure from penetrating others and women can (and should) only feel pleasure from being penetrated. Not only does this essentialist definition of gender erase/ignore genders and sexualities beyond the binaries of man/woman, male/female, cisgender/trans, and homosexual/heterosexual, it also rests on a devaluation of receiving penetration for pleasure. Because receiving penetration is gendered as feminine, it is treated as inferior in our

the driver—he was a pedestrian, and so he was forced to wait patiently at the very wide, very well-marked, very busy crosswalk until one of the big privileged cars deigned to stop for him. If a pedestrian decides to step out into the street as oncoming traffic approaches, he has to hope that his legal right to cross—not to mention his human life—outweighs the driver's sense of privilege to keep on trucking. Asserting your rights, of course, comes with a certain amount of danger. But pedestrians have no choice but to cross busy streets. And sometimes, they get hit.

Now, the driver who hit him did not set out with the *intention* of running into a human with her car. She didn't mean to hurt anybody. But she also knew full well that cars are required to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. She was simply so accustomed to her driving privilege that she never dreamed that this could actually happen—and that she would ever be held responsible for her habitual disregard for the law. After all, a lot of motorists act this way, and most pedestrians just stay out of their way. When a pedestrian is hit in a crosswalk, it's not an accident. It's the result of the motorist who has normalized her dangerous actions.

When rapists engage in sex acts without bothering to gain their sex partner's consent, they are not "accidentally" raping someone. Rapes don't come from miscommunication. They are not isolated, unpreventable incidents. They are a product of institutionalized, reinforced, life-long privilege. They are the symptoms of a flaw in the rapist's entire worldview. They are the product of the way the rapist has habitually devalued women, laid claim to the bodies of others, pursued what he wants no matter what—and *never thought anything of it* because he has never been called on it. That's not an accident. That's a system.

In this excerpt, the author describes the broader forces that comprise rape culture. It's not just people's individual beliefs, but the

collective actions of people that enforce daily the logic of victim blaming; not just any individual driver, but enough to change the rules. Even though the law – a creation of society – governs fault in this situation, we still socially judge a pedestrian for their actions crossing the street with more scrutiny than the driver. In similar fashion, our media and culture largely focuses on the steps a woman takes to keep herself safe from rapists yet neglects to ask what steps men take to prevent rape.

### Alcohol & Sexual Assault

“I have never raped, but I have looked at a rapist in the mirror and have seen him smiling back.”

– Hari Ziyad, from “I looked a rapist in the mirror and saw him smiling back”

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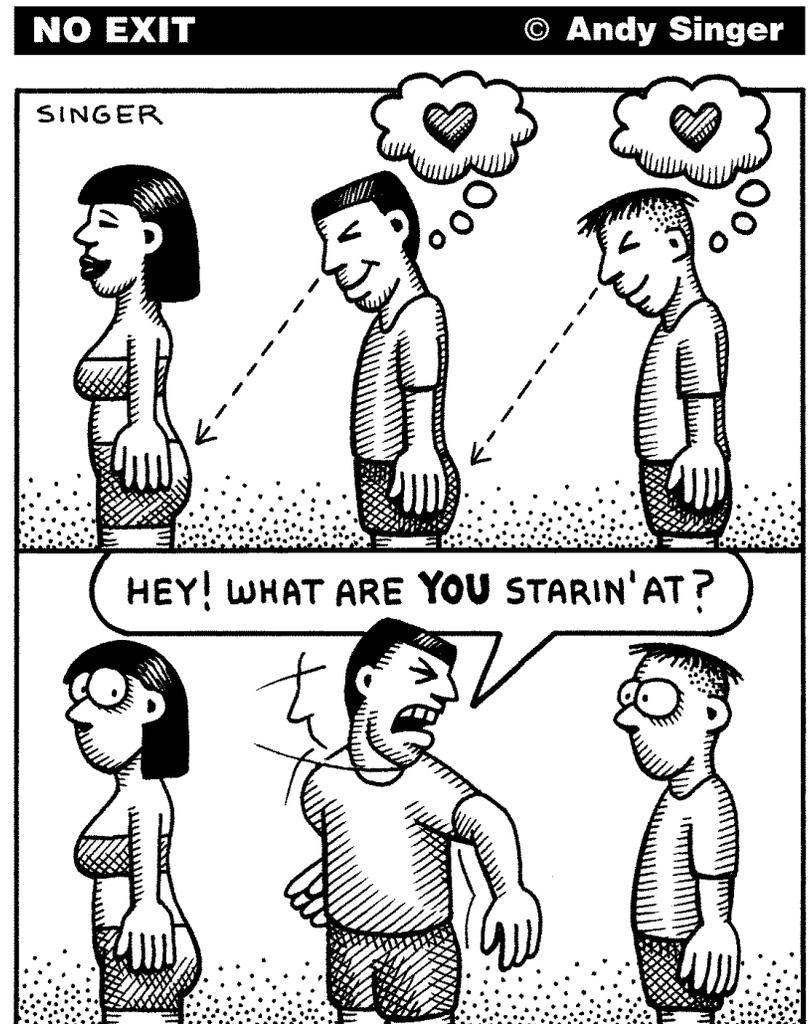
As college/university students, we often participate in a drinking culture where we feel social pressure to binge drink alcohol and hook up with people. If we pass out from drinking too much, we may worry that someone might draw a penis on our face. If femmes, women, or femme-presenting folks pass out, they worry they may be sexually assaulted. Here are some facts to think about next time before you go out to a party:

**72-81% of cases in which a male rapes a female college student, the female is intoxicated.** (Lisak & Miller, 2002; Mohler-Kuo, et al., 2004 via One in Four USA)

Perpetrators plan and premeditate their attacks, using sophisticated strategies to groom their victims for attack, and to isolate them physically (Lisak & Miller, 2002 via One in Four USA)

**Among male offenders who rape women, 64% were using alcohol and/or drugs prior to the attack.** (Brecklin & Ullman, 2002 via One in Four USA)

## HOMOPHOBIA OF MALE-MALE ATTRACTION



“What Are You Staring At” by Andy Singer

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Does this comic make you uncomfortable? Why or why not?

Would the reaction likely have changed if the person on the right was a woman?



(Caption: Teen Actor Jaden Smith got flack for wearing a skirt and dress to school.)

#### Resources/References

The Media Is Lying to You About Men's Emotions, And It's Really F\*cked Up – Here's a Healthier View

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/06/the-media-mens-emotions/>

College men who consume alcohol two or more times a week and had **friends who support physical and emotional abuse of women** are **nine times** more likely to commit sexual assault than men with none of these characteristics. (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2014 via One In Four USA)

Perpetrators **use alcohol deliberately** to render victims more vulnerable to attack, or completely unconscious. (Lisak & Miller, 2002 via One in Four USA)

**“The presence of a bystander makes a completed rape 44% less likely.”** (Clay-Warner, 2002 via One In Four USA)

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## Supporting Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Abuse

It is likely that at some point in our lives, someone we know will tell us that they have been in an abusive relationship so it's best that we are prepared to support. In this section you will find a checklist of ways you can support someone through the process of leaving an abusive relationship.

### Ways to Help

- Listen to as little or as much as they want to share, believe what they have to say.
  - o A person who has gone through trauma or abuse needs to be trusted and believed. When someone is abused, they have learned to not trust their own thoughts and perceptions and instead believe their abusive partner's manipulation and deceits more than their own intuitions.
  - o They may not be ready to confront their abuser yet and may just want an ear to think things through.

- Abusers maintain control by isolating their partner. You are likely one of the few people they have and can confide in.
- Unless otherwise specified by the victim, or if you are legally obligated to disclose (ex: you're a teacher and this is your student) keep their disclosure confidential.
- Recognize that they are coping the best way they can or know how to. There is no singular "right" way to survive trauma.
  - Many survivors try multiple times to leave the relationship before being successful, so showing them that you don't judge them for their decisions opens a window of opportunity for them to come back to you for support.
- Understand that relapse may be a part of healing. There are many reasons why an abuse victim may not leave their partner right away: hope that the violence will stop; they love their partner and don't want the relationship to end – just the abuse; they may not trust they can be successful leaving the relationship; they may depend on their partner's financial resources.
  - Most victims of abuse make multiple attempts at leaving their partner before being successful.
  - Abusive partners can be very charming and convincing. A victim of abuse may go back to their partner because they believe their partner's lies.
- If you are up for it, help your friend make an escape plan including safe locations, such as transition houses or women's shelters.

against the rules, seeing how often it happened at recess or lunch time encouraged many to become more daring in the game and in meting out revenge "sacks."

While boys sexually assaulting one another (because that's what sacking is) was commonplace, boys sexually assaulting girls was also a normalized part of middle school, too. As I began to hang out in a mixed-gender circle of friends, boys would smack or touch the bums of our friends (male and female alike). While I knew that this, too, was against the rules I didn't do anything to stop it and I also participated in it. I'm sure that the girls were uncomfortable and feeling unsafe when that happened. On one hand they probably did not like what was happening because boys were demonstrating how they had the power/control to access their bodies and on the other hand they probably felt restricted/limited/constrained in telling us to stop because they were conditioned to not act "bossy" or like a "b-i-t-c-h." This is further supported by a culture that lets this kind of behaviour slide by saying that "boys will be boys" or that smacks on the bum "must mean they like you" rather than saying "boys can control their bodies" and "boys need to learn to respect other people's boundaries." We knew what we were doing and it was a choice to sexually assault. We felt entitled to touch other people without consent because we were confident we would not be challenged.

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### **On "Emasculation"**

Should a man feel shameful for being emasculated? While I consider ignoring and denying a person's gender identity a form of violence, I think that it's worth noting that our culture is femme-phobic and misogynistic: women and femininity are treated as inferior and men and masculinity are treated as superior. In 2015, it appears that society is more accepting of women performing traditionally masculine gender roles (such as jobs with manual labour) versus men performing traditionally feminine gender roles like homemaking or sewing/knitting.

## Normalization of sexual assault and harassment

As a middle school student, I remember when I first learned to “act like a man.” In Grade 8, I learned guys were supposed to sit with their legs wide open. When I asked why, my friends – not quite entirely uniform in their answers – offered up the best theories thirteen-year-olds can think of, like needing more air flow for private parts or, simply, “because only women sit with their legs crossed.” Not knowing much better, I followed suit and noticed that spreading legs widely on a bench wasn’t the most comfortable sitting position (though, I guess it was OK) and that it opened me up to getting “sacked” (kicked or hit in the private parts). I wasn’t instantly seen as manly as I had first imagined, but at least my friends didn’t bug me about how I sat anymore.

From this experience I think there are two things useful to talk about: 1. How taking up space is seen as a thing men are supposed to do; and 2. How normalized and commonplace sexual assault is.

In my middle and high school years, guys were supposed to sit with their legs wide open and spread out. Taking up space was seen as showing confidence. The thought that this might also communicate dominance and encourage an alpha male culture was never spoken about. Thus, this just seemed normal to me. My guy friends weren’t the first to make up “the rules” for being a guy but they weren’t supporting a different way to exist as a guy either.

“Sacking” is one way that we boys were taught to normalize sexual assault and accept it as an everyday occurrence. By “normalized,” I mean that sexual assault is so commonplace and casual so as a result it is rarely, if ever, challenged. Sacking others was intended to cause them harm or send the message that you were not to be messed with. Even though it might not seem like a sexual act on the surface, sacking is sexual assault because it involves touching other people’s genitals without their consent. Though I and others knew sacking each other was

## Ways to not help

- Blame them for the abuse or violence
  - o Abusers often deflect responsibility by saying their partner had it coming. Judging them will discourage them from seeking help.
- Question their motives/behaviours
  - o Survivors of abuse have learned to stop trusting their intuitions and sense of reality due to their partner’s manipulation and gaslighting<sup>1</sup>
- Give unsolicited advice or tell them what to do.
  - o It’s OK to tell them what support you can provide (ex: accompany them to a transition house or counsellor’s office), but an effective safety strategy must come from the victim/survivor
- Pick a fight with the person who caused the harm/violence/abuse
  - o This continues the cycle of violence which often ends up with the abuser taking that out on their partner.

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<sup>1</sup>Gaslighting is a tactic abusers use to distort reality so that their partner second-guesses their own judgement. Ex: Saying that the survivor’s mental illness is clouding their judgement or gut feelings about wanting to break-up.

### Quick facts:

- Contrary to popular belief, emotional abuse is the most common form of violence in abusive relationships, not physical abuse. (BWSS)
  - Young women (15-24) are most at risk for abuse and sexual assault. (BWSS)
  - An abuse victim is most at risk of being assaulted or killed when they leave their partner. (BWSS)
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### Supporting Survivors of Rape

On the next page you'll find a  handout for how to support survivors of rape. 

### References/Resources

Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS), YOUth Ending Violence Handout

When Someone Tells You, "I Was Raped"... by Men Can Stop Rape

[http://www.mencanstoprape.org/images/stories/PDF/Handout\\_pdfs/supporting-survivors-wdys.pdf](http://www.mencanstoprape.org/images/stories/PDF/Handout_pdfs/supporting-survivors-wdys.pdf)

*I looked at a rapist in the mirror and saw him smiling back* by Hari Ziyad

<http://racebaitr.com/2015/07/09/i-looked-at-a-rapist-in-the-mirror-and-saw-him-smiling-back/>

## When Someone Tells You, "I Was Raped"...

**Believe them.** It is **not your role to question** whether a rape has occurred.

**Help them explore.** Don't take charge of the situation and pressure the survivor to do what you think they should. Give them the freedom to choose a path of recovery comfortable for them, even if you would do things differently. **There is no "right way" for a survivor to respond after being assaulted.**

**Listen to them.** It is crucial to let the survivor know that they can talk **when they are ready**. When they finally decide to come to you for support, don't interrupt or inject your feelings. Just listen. Your caring but silent attention will be invaluable.

**Never blame them for being assaulted** No one ever deserves to be raped. Not even if they were drunk or high, wore revealing clothes, considered "promiscuous," initiated the sexual activity, or even married to the rapist. **Let them know, "It wasn't your fault."**

**Ask before you touch.** Don't assume that physical contact, even in the form of a gentle touch or hug, will be comforting. **Give them the space they need.** Try your best not to take it personally. Signal your openness by uncrossing your arms, leaning forward, and keeping hands apart and unclenched, palms face up.

**Recognize that you've been hurt too.** When someone you love is hurting, it's hard not to feel hurt as well. Don't blame yourself for the many feelings you will have, which can include helplessness, guilt, shock, anxiety, and depression. Being aware of these emotions will help you better understand the survivor's experience and be more supportive.

**Get help for yourself.** Make sure you don't go through this alone. Reach out to a friend, family member, or counselor. Most rape crisis centers, realizing that the impact of rape extends far beyond the survivor, offer counseling for family and friends. Suppressing your own feelings will only make you less available to support the survivor. **Remember: Asking for help when you need it is a sign of strength, not weakness.**