

what men can do

STOPPING RAPE: WHAT MEN CAN DO

All men can play a vital role in rape prevention. Here are a few of the ways:

Be aware of language. Words are very powerful, especially when spoken by people with power over others. We live in a society in which words are often used to put women down, where calling a girl or woman a “bitch,” “freak,” “whore,” “baby,” or “dog” is common. Such language sends a message that females are less than fully human. When we see women as inferior, it becomes easier to treat them with less respect, disregard their rights, and ignore their well-being.

Communicate. Sexual violence often goes hand in hand with poor communication. Our discomfort with talking honestly and openly about sex dramatically raises the risk of rape. By learning effective sexual communication -- stating your desires clearly, listening to your partner, and asking when the situation is unclear -- men make sex safer for themselves and others.

Speak up. You will probably never see a rape in progress, but you will see and hear attitudes and behaviors that degrade women and promote rape. When your best friend tells a joke about rape, say you don't find it funny. When you read an article that blames a rape survivor for being assaulted, write a letter to the editor. When laws are proposed that limit women's rights, let politicians know that you won't support them. Do anything but remain silent.

Support survivors of rape. Rape will not be taken seriously until everyone knows how common it is. In the U.S. alone, more than one million women and girls are raped each year (Rape in America, 1992). By learning to sensitively support survivors in their lives, men can help both women and other men feel safer to speak out about being raped and let the world know how serious a problem rape is.

Contribute your time and money. Join or donate to an organization working to prevent violence against women. Rape crisis centers, domestic violence agencies, and men's anti-rape groups count on donations for their survival and always need volunteers to share the workload.

Talk with women... about how the risk of being raped affects their daily lives; about how they want to be supported if it has happened to them; about what they think men can do to prevent sexual violence. If you're willing to listen, you can learn a lot from women about the impact of rape and how to stop it.

Talk with men... about how it feels to be seen as a potential rapist; about the fact that 10-20% of all males will be sexually abused in their lifetimes; about whether they know someone who's been raped. Learn about how sexual violence touches the lives of men and what we can do to stop it.

Organize. Form your own organization of men focused on stopping sexual violence. Men's anti-rape groups are becoming more and more common around the country, especially on college campuses. If you have the time and the drive, it is a wonderful way to make a difference in your community.

Work to end other oppressions. Rape feeds off many other forms of prejudice -- including racism, homophobia, and religious discrimination. By speaking out against any beliefs and behaviors, including rape, that promote one group of people as superior to another and deny other groups their full humanity, you support everyone's equality.



P.O. BOX 57144 • WASHINGTON, DC • 20037

(202) 265-6530

info@mencanstoprape.org

www.mencanstoprape.org

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