

13 Steps Men Can Take

1. Check out the sex you have with your girlfriend, boyfriend, partner or in one-night stands. Make sure that the sex you have is always consenting. Don't pressure a woman to have sex. Realise that your strength, size, social role and age are all factors that can contribute to a woman's feeling of powerlessness against your pressure for sex. Don't guilt-trip, expect sex in return for buying dinner or blackmail her or him with leaving the relationship.

2. Take "no" for an answer. The assumption that women say "no" when they really mean "maybe" or "yes" is just that, an assumption. Do not ignore a woman if she says "no" or seems resistant in any way. If she really means "yes" then it's up to her to communicate her consent. The right to say "no" is a constant, regardless of previous sexual relations. If you are not willing to accept "no" from a partner, then a "yes" really has no meaning either. And silence doesn't mean consent.

3. Talk about sex. If you are unsure of what a woman wants, ask her. Say what you want to do and check out what she or he wants to do. Discussing mutual expectations and clarifying any mixed messages are effective ways of eliminating confusion and greatly reducing the risk of sexual assault. For instance, if you are unsure about how she is feeling, you might want to ask, "Is this comfortable?" or, "Are you feeling okay about this?"

4. It's never okay to use force or coercion. Don't assume that just because a woman dresses or flirts in a manner that you consider sexy that she wants to engage in sexual activity. Realise that women don't provoke rape by their appearance or by agreeing to go to a man's room or house. The person responsible for the rape is the person who uses force or pressure.

5. Take responsibility for your sexuality. Don't assume that if you are being sexual with a person on one level, then you can automatically start being sexual on other levels. Kissing or masturbating doesn't mean that intercourse comes next. What you do with your penis is your responsibility. Having an erection doesn't mean you have to put it somewhere.

6. Avoid excessive use of alcohol or other drugs. When you've been drinking or taking other drugs, your decision-making abilities are impaired, you may become

aggressive, and you may not think clearly or communicate effectively. Remember that being under the influence of alcohol or drugs is not a defence against criminal behaviour and rape is a criminal act.

7. Understand how sexual stereotypes influence attitudes and behaviours. Social roles and expectations may affect a man's decisions about sex. Some men feel pressured into having sexual intercourse by their peers. Men are also taught that expressing feelings is not masculine. Examining your social role and learning ways to express feelings directly and non-violently can help to create deeper and more meaningful interpersonal relationships. You don't have to prove yourself.

8. Don't engage in any forms of sexual harassment, such as wolf-whistling, unwanted touching or peeping. Women aren't public property, available for our intrusions. Neither are men.

9. Inform yourself. Develop an awareness of the cultural supports for violence against women. Develop a 'crap detector' to recognise the myths. Don't condone rape jokes. Say they're offensive. When you see sex without consent on tv, in a film or book, remind yourself that it is rape.

10. Talk to other men about sexual assault. Start by mentioning something you read, a conversation you had or something you've been thinking about. Become practised at refuting the myths.

11. Believe people when they tell you they've been raped or harassed or they know someone who's been raped or harassed. Support what they say about it. Don't ask, "What were you wearing?".

12. Don't assume that women want or need your 'protection'. But support women if they ask you to, such as by walking with a woman to her car in a carpark. If a woman is walking in front of you along a dark street or through the campus at night, give her lots of room, or cross to the other side of the road.

13. And finally, take public and collective action. Intervene or do something if you see violence happening. Get involved in the Campaign Against Sexual Assault on Campus. In whatever places and spaces you live-whether your workplace, your classroom, the street or your house-do what you can to end sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Resource Information

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Reading