**10 Everyday Things You Can Do To Eliminate Gender-Based Violence**

1. **Consider the importance of language**.
	* Challenge language that silences or denies women access to their sexuality.
	* Stop using homophobic and feminizing slurs to reinforce problematic notions of masculinity. These degradations work to police gender expression and perpetuate sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.
2. **Interrupt sexist jokes, attitudes, and norms.** Norms are standards/unspoken rules that are socially enforced and provide a model for behavior. Gender-based violence will not end unless the prevailing norms and acceptance of gender-based violence are challenged and changed.
3. **Interrupt racist, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, etc., jokes, attitudes, and norms.** All oppression is connected. The norms that allow gender-based violence to continue also allow hate speech and crimes.
4. **Challenge victim blaming beliefs and statements.** Shift the conversation away from “How’d they let that happen?” and “Why don’t they just leave?” and instead ask questions like “Why did the perpetrator think it was okay to commit this act of violence?
5. **Believe victims/survivors when they share their stories.** Victims/survivors face countless obstacles to reporting, which is why the vast majority of incidents go unreported. Fear of not being believed should never be one of them.
6. **Practice obtaining affirmative consent when choosing to be sexually active and beyond.** Communicate with your partner(s). We all know to obtain consent when making everyday requests like “Want to meet up for lunch?” or “Can I have your Netflix password?” Why should our expectations be any different when it comes to sex?
7. **Recognize how internalized oppression impacts you.**No one is born sexist, racist, ableist, etc. Through observing, learning, and understanding society, we come to hold common attitudes and beliefs, including oppressive ones. Oppressive messages become a part of how we think about and perceive others and how we think about and perceive ourselves.
8. **Don’t pressure people**, regardless of the matter or your intent. Many of us are desensitized to applying and receiving pressure. We often pressure people into doing everyday things they don’t want to do, like sharing notes with someone who never shows up to class. When we apply this type of pressure, we’re normalizing the act altogether. Normalizing pressure is a part of the system that allows gender-based violence to continue.
9. **Be a critical consumer.** Sexism and cissexism sell because it’s what we’re being sold. Choose not to fund it. Refuse to support or purchase any magazine, television show, film, or music that portrays girls, women, or gender non-conforming people in a degrading or abusive manner.
10. **Continue to educate yourself about the dynamics of a culture that allows this level of violence to occur.**We all become desensitized to implicit sexism either because we’ve come to accept it as commonplace or because it hasn’t directly impacted us. The same is true for all other forms of oppression. **Unlearning attitudes and norms that condone or excuse oppression takes time. Holding ourselves accountable requires commitment. We all have to start somewhere.**

  

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**How to Support a Friend or Family Member Who Has Experienced Gender-Based Violence**

**Listen.** Let your friend or family member control what and how much information they want to share with you. Digging for every detail can overwhelm or alienate them. Many of us are quick to go into “fix it” mode, assuming our friend or family member is looking to us for solutions. Before making this assumption, you might try asking, *“How can I best support you right now?”* This question centers their needs and allows them to control their healing process. Some people will not know what they need in the moment, it is important to let them know you’re there to listen.

**Use language that communicates your support** instead of your judgment, frustration or accusations. You might try saying, *“I’m worried about you and I would like to help”* instead of *“Why don’t you just leave?”* or *“I can’t believe you put up with that.”* Be careful that what you are saying doesn’t infer victim blaming, for example “You have to be more careful.”

**Honor their agency.** Despite your best intentions, it is never appropriate to tell your friend or family member that they “need” to make a report, seek therapy, tell their parents or anything else you think is in their best interest. When we tell survivors that they “need” to do something, we are taking away their power, just as their assailant/abuser did. This doesn’t mean you can’t offer resources, but it does mean they should be presented as options not recommendations.

**Honor the trust they are putting in you.** Disclosing a traumatic experience takes a lot of trust. It can be helpful to thank them for confiding in you. You may also want to commend your friend or family member for their resiliency and thank them for confiding in you. If they begin to blame themselves, remind them that the only person who could have prevented the violence from happening is the person who committed the violence. Make sure they know you believe, support, and love them.

**Practice self-care.** Identify your emotional boundaries and acknowledge your limits. You’ll be better able to respond to your friend or family member’s needs, if you’re also taking care of yourself. If you’re feeling frustrated or angry that your friend or family member has stayed with (or returned to) their abuser, seek support from other friends or counselors – while respecting the survivor’s confidentiality - to help you through this.

**Want to get involved?**

* **Interested in becoming a VAWPP Peer Facilitator next fall? You’ll first need to enroll in the one credit pre-requisite course being offered this spring – WGSS 3271 Rape Education & Awareness**
* **Interested in engaging in conversations around masculinity, power and privilege with men on campus? Consider joining Men’s Project. All inquiries should be directed to mensproject@uconn.edu**
* **Are you a member of a fraternity or sorority on campus interested in challenging cultural norms that promote gender-based violence? Consider joining Greeks Against Sexual Assault. All inquiries should be directed to gasa@uconn.edu**
* **Access our website – http://womenscenter.uconn.edu/ – to join our mailing list. By subscribing, you will receive a weekly email that includes information about upcoming Women’s Center events, announcements, and national/international news about women**

 

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