

# How to be a Better Man

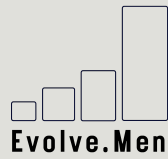
## Note

This list borrows heavily from:

- Nicole Stamp's [Facebook Post](#) on ways men can show up for women
- Nicole Silverberg's [Twitter Post](#) on the same
- [A Gentleman's Guide to the #Metoo era](#), by Zaron Burnett
- [Against Patriarchy: Tools for Men to Further Feminist Revolution](#), by Chris Crass
- [A Message for Men who Want to Avoid Women Regretting Having Been Sexual with Them](#), by Daniel Schmachtenberger
- [How to Show up for the #Metoo Movement](#), by Philippe Lewis

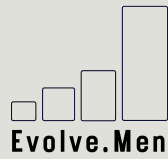
## The List

1. **Do the Work.** Don't pretend you're all good.
2. **Love yourself.** The work begins with loving yourself: Take care of your body and your mind. Seek out what makes you happy. When you are out of alignment with your values you will hate yourself, and the impacts of male self-hatred tend to fall on others.
3. **Take the time to understand how the Patriarchy has impacted you.** Some common examples include: The expectation that you'll take care of everything; the expectation that you should want anonymous sex all the time; the expectation that you should be hard every time you're in a sexy situation; your habit of hurting the women and femmes you sleep with; your internalized mistrust of your own presence around children; your disgust with homosexual attention, your hesitancy to be emotional around other men; your association of emotions with weakness.
4. **Conduct a thorough moral inventory.** Reflect on how you've impacted people, especially women and femmes, sexually and emotionally. Examine your internalized misogyny and misandry. The point of this exercise is not shame or guilt, but to be radically honest with

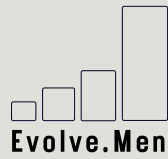


yourself about when your actions have been out of step with your values. Remember that most of the people you have hurt will never tell you about it. Be brave and put yourself in their shoes.

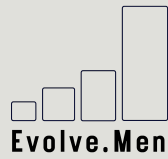
5. **Develop your empathy and emotional intelligence.** The Patriarchy has assured us that it's OK for us not to know how to manage our emotions. First you need to be able to sense emotions in yourself and other people. Start by challenging your ingrained habit of quelling and suppressing your feelings. Then you need to be able to discern what these emotions are (Beyond "I'm upset" or "it doesn't feel good") Then you need to be able to understand why these emotions are present, and formulate an intelligent, compassionate, useful, timely, healthy, loving response. Then you need to be able to express this response well. Then you have to be able to receive feedback and self-reflect on the whole process.
6. **Take ownership of the healthy development and expression of your sexuality.** Explore more ethical porn, (Check out [Erika Lust](#) and thank me later) or give it up altogether. Understand that sexuality, like gender, is fluid and can evolve over time. Ensure that the way you engage in sex, from masturbation to flirtation, to sex, is in integrity with your values. Make sure you are getting the touch you naturally desire as a human. Long, friendly hugs, cuddle parties, massages, social dancing, and acroyoga are all good alternatives to hookups. Taking responsibility for the development of your own sexuality is neither perverted, nor shallow, nor optional.
7. **Don't do this alone.** Toxic masculinity tells men that they should handle everything independently, but evolved men know how to lean on the people around them for support. Create a support structure for yourself with friends, therapists and allies, and make sure that your network includes men, women, femmes, and queer people. Finally, remember that we men can't smash patriarchy without women, femmes, queer, and non-binary people. We're all in this together.



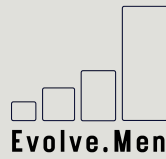
8. **Listen to women, femmes and queer people and default to believing what they tell you.** Especially when they are talking about any of this. Say less than you instinctually want to in conversations with women, femmes and queer people. Recognize your own power and privilege, learn from them and support them.
9. **Don't expect applause for being a decent human being.** Just because the world is filled with assholes doesn't mean you deserve kudos for not being one. You don't get cookies for trying to be an ally, and you don't even get them when you're an effective ally. True allyship doesn't require acknowledgment.
10. **Avoid gendered terms and misogynist insults.** Learn to use the pronouns people prefer and avoid gendered terms like "hey guys," or "hey, man" (hey y'all is a good alternative) with people whose gender identity you don't know for sure. Also avoid insults like "cunt, pussy, dick, or asshole" that make our genitalia bad, as well as "whore, girly, or sissy," that shame the feminine, or "cuck, beta, and loser," which play into patriarchal tropes. I prefer "douchebag," which is, after all, a useless, sexist tool.
11. **Use your privilege to create spaces for women, femmes and queer people.** As more types of people gain acceptance, they are becoming more visible. Be aware of your privilege as a male-presenting person around them. Ask people politely about their pronouns. Be extra-sensitive to not talk over them, and notice if your first instinct is to defend "men" or minimize or dismiss their complaints as being oversensitive.
12. **Read female and queer writers.** Sometimes what they write may seem really angry. Recognize if your male privilege is allowing you to disengage from conversations that women, femmes and queer people don't get to disengage from. Some authors to start with: bell hooks. Audre Lorde. Rebecca Solnit. It doesn't all have to be serious. Check out the hilarious Reductress, too.



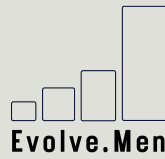
13. **Don't get defensive when you get called out.** If your first instinct is to deflect, minimize, or attack, check yourself. Even the harshest moments of personal feedback are a deep and sincere gift; an investment in making us better men by people who care (Even if they come in a salty package).
14. **Make amends, but do no harm.** Be mindful of the way in which your feelings of guilt, remorse, or curiosity around harm you've caused in the past manifest with the women and femmes in your life. Often, seeking understanding can come across as deeply selfish. Notice if you're conspicuously saddling women and femmes with undue emotional labor in general, and if you're asking the women and femmes you've hurt to trot out their pain so as to educate you or make you feel better.
15. **Don't take advantage of your power or authority to get women and femmes into bed.** Avoid the temptation to put notches on your belt or to assuage temporary loneliness through sex—the women and femmes almost invariably end up hurt. Learn to question your escalation agenda and instead cultivate authentic connections. It's possible to do this Even in a one-night stand. If you're not sure how, you can learn. Seek out authentic relating, or values-aligned dating coaches. Knowledge is out there.
16. **Seek enthusiastic consent in sex.** Your goal should be to have no one regret hooking up with you. Even a one night stand should be a collaboration—not a "win." So be on the lookout for verbal and non-verbal redirects from people you're trying to sleep with. They're often made in an effort to avoid hurting your feelings. Phrases like: "Maybe some other time," "find me later," or even, "I'm not feeling well" often mean "no." In general, don't put someone in a position where they have to reject you explicitly, or force someone to say "no" when you're just going for it. You have the ability to control yourself. So, own your own desires, control yourself and recognize, respect, and welcome every "NO" you get.



17. **Take responsibility for your own personal growth.** While openness to feedback is good, an over-reliance on others for improving yourself can look like abdicating responsibility for your own impact. Get better at noticing when you're impacting others badly, or when you could be, and catch yourself before they say anything. They often won't.
18. **Be a safe-sex expert.** Be the one to initiate conversations around birth control and STI/STD screening, especially BEFORE sex happens. Make sure you're tested responsibly all the time, and don't make your partner tell you to wear a condom. Let your partners know if you're sleeping with others - it's not consent if they don't have all the information that might keep them safe.
19. **Watch out for intoxication and consent.** Cut down on alcohol or substances if that's what's needed for you to follow this list. If someone is really drunk, they can't consent. Double check verbally if the person you want to be sexy with seems to give an auto-response to an advance, especially if drugs or alcohol are involved. If they stop reciprocating, get quiet, seem tense or stiff, avoid making eye contact, pause, or otherwise slow the tempo of the encounter, then just stop and check in. "Is this working for you?" is a good phrase. If you can sense even a little discomfort, take it upon yourself to NOT escalate, even when the "opportunity" is there.
20. **Boost queer and female voices.** Be really, really careful about talking over women, femmes and queer people. This can be a trigger as it happens ALL the time. Listen for men dismissing women, femmes and queer people's contributions and instead proactively say things like "Hey, she has a point."
21. **Go out of your way to encourage, demand, and facilitate inclusion.** If you get asked to be on a panel or a team and you see that it's all men, say something, maybe even refuse to participate until there's at least one woman participant, and go ahead and make the extra effort to suggest names.



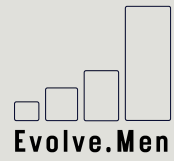
22. **Be mindful of how you talk to women, femmes and queer people at work.** No matter how they look, they would rather be introduced by their job title than as “the lovely” or “the beautiful,” which signals that you value their looks more than their work. Don’t call female or queer colleagues diminutive names like “honey, darling, sweetheart, or dear.” This puts the emphasis of your interaction on your power over them. Even with friends, be aware of how these phrases may sound to others. Finally, be really careful about using certain words to describe women, femmes and queer people like “crazy,” “spunky,” or “shrill.” They carry a unique and more negative meaning when a man is using them to describe a non-man.
23. **Observe other men in public.** If you see someone on the street you find attractive, notice if you’re creepily staring at them, and then note how other men observe or interact with them. Observe how men are treating the women and femmes around them in general, (especially if they’re “traditionally attractive”) and how they are reacting.
24. **Don’t make, indulge, or laugh at, sexist or misogynistic jokes or statements.** Be aware of when you’re “punching down” (insulting or mocking a group of people with less social power or privilege than you). This is the cheapest kind of humor. Develop your ability to rise above it as a sign of maturity.
25. **Call out men who say or do sexist things.** Practice these phrases: “Hey bro,” “Dude, that’s really not cool,” or the excellent “We don’t do that here,” which helps to shut someone down without putting them on the defensive. If you witness street harassment, check in with the victim, rather than antagonize the perpetrator. If you have to confront someone, try: “We’re good here.” Remember, if it’s mildly uncomfortable for you to intervene, you can assume it’s far more uncomfortable or painful for non-men to do so.
26. **Don’t vouch for men you’re not sure of,** especially if you haven’t talked with them about these issues. If you observe your friends or acquaintances behaving towards women and femmes in a way you don’t approve of, check in with them and let them know it makes you



uncomfortable. Your friends are your responsibility, and you offer “social proof” to them that women and femmes see and trust.

27. **Role-model radically embracing the feminine** to the young people in your life. Challenge them on what counts as “boy stuff” and “girl stuff.” Do something with a young boy that’s traditionally coded as “feminine” like cooking or caring for others. Buy them books and watch TV and movies that prominently feature anyone other than cis-gendered hetero men and boys. Teach your sons that it’s OK to cry, and to love wholly. Raise daughters to be empowered to speak up when they are harassed.
28. **Embrace the masculine too!** None of this is about men sacrificing our manhood or compromising our integrity, though it does require us to relinquish our dominance. Be the leader you want to be - go for the things in life most important to you. If being a better man would prevent you from living your best life, examine that further.
29. **Love your male friends.** Talk about undoing your own power with other men. Share your own stories and your own traumas. Be comfortable sharing your pain and hearing others’. Open yourself and get deep. Learn to touch your friends platonically and discover the bond that arises by simply flouting this arbitrary convention.
30. **Own your own harm.** Accountability is a deeply important element to all of this. If you’re someone that people don’t trust to take news of your own harm well, then people will hide the impact of your actions from you. Seek out accountability proactively. Use phrases like: “I wanted to check on how what I said landed with you,” or “I didn’t like the way I showed up the other day,” which demonstrate both your interest in your own impact, and your openness to hearing about it.

**Remember:**



There is no perfect way to be a man. Be prepared to make mistakes. A good man is one who is committed to a continuous process of becoming a better man. You got this. You're ready.