



Alliance Corner: Involving Men at the Women's Center

An interesting thing happens over at Price House. Virginia Tech women walk right through the front door. Virginia Tech men, on the other hand, often times feel as though they need permission to enter. This highlights a commonly held misunderstanding that must be clarified right now. So let's set the record straight ...

Fiction: The Virginia Tech Women's Center is a women-only space where men are not welcome.

Fact: The Virginia Tech Women's Center welcomes all men and women of the campus community who want to:

- learn about gender issues,
- advocate for gender equality,
- work to create a safer environment for women, and
- celebrate our campus community in all of its diversity.

We invite everyone interested in how men can support gender equality to spend some time looking through these pages. There is so much men can do to help the Women's Center achieve its mission and goals. Please read on ...

[Why Men Should Care About "Women's Issues"](#)

[What Men Can Do to Affect Change](#)

[Resources for Men Who Want to Make a Difference!](#)

[Click here for Video on Mens Alliance](#)

Thanks for your time and interest! Together we can form a strong alliance and work towards a better, safer, stronger Virginia Tech for everyone!!

Why Men Should Care About "Women's Issues"

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Well, perhaps the first step is to define issues such as gender violence, sexual harassment, assault, stalking, and abuse NOT as women's issues, but rather as global issues that affect men and women of all races, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, religions, and physical abilities. Gender violence is a men's issue, too! Men's lives are impacted on many levels ...



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- Women who are rape survivors are also the daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, grandmothers, nieces, aunts, partners, granddaughters, and friends of men. Clearly men have a vested interest in helping to create and sustain a safe world in which the women in their lives can exist and thrive.
- Though it's generally considered a taboo subject and no one talks about it much, men too are victims of rape. As many as 10-20 of all males are sexually violated during their lifetime. Most of the perpetrators are heterosexual men. Like men who rape women, these men use sexual violence as a weapon for power and control. If you are a male survivor of sexual assault, there are available resources to help you. Contact the Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley, Cook Counseling Center, or the Counseling and Advocacy Coordinator at the Women's Center, Christine Dennis.
- According to Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault, 98% of sexual violence is committed by men. But only 7% of men are rapists. These statistics are very confining to the 93% of men who do not commit violence against women. The fear and threat of sexual violence leads to an atmosphere of mistrust, intimate relationships become constrained by the fear of violence, and all men are viewed as potential perpetrators of sexual violence. The VAASA Men of Vision campaign, among many other men's organizations, stresses the responsibility of men in ending all forms of sexual violence.
- Finally, most sexual violence is committed by men. In order to eliminate it, men must resolve to make it stop!

This means that gender violence is a men's issue, too!

Men's Involvement Change

- Speak out!

Don't just sit quietly when you witness a sexist incident. To paraphrase the late Paulo Freire, one who ignores abuse is not taking a neutral stance; rather s/he is taking the side of the abuser. Don't be complicit!

- Challenge sexist language/sexist jokes. Language is a very powerful thing. Using derogatory language in reference to women (e.g., bitch, whore, slut, etc.) is demeaning and dehumanizing. And using jokes to make light of serious issues is also unacceptable.
- Letter writing campaigns can be very effective. Write a letter to the editor if you have something to say. Write letters to TV network executives and advertising agencies that promote shows and ads that objectify women. Let politicians know that you won't support proposed laws that limit women's rights. Don't fund sexism, either. Boycott all forms of media that degrade and dehumanize women.
- Do not remain quiet if you know of an abusive situation. While it may not always be a good idea to challenge the abuser directly (especially if you do not know the person), you CAN seek advice on how to intervene. There are available resources to help you figure out the best course of action. Contact the Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley, Cook Counseling Center, or the Counseling and Advocacy Coordinator at the Women's Center, Christine Dennis.



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- If you think that a woman in your life has been abused in any way, approach her gently and offer your support.
- Join a campus and/or community organization that addresses gender issues. If you don't see one that suits your interests, start one! Men's anti-rape groups are becoming more common on college campuses around the country, and they provide wonderful opportunities for men to speak out against gender violence.
- Challenge other forms of inequality and discrimination, such as racism and homophobia. It is important to remember that discrimination and violence in all forms feed on one another. Gender-based oppression cannot be eliminated unless oppression in all its guises is dismantled!

- Reflect on your own behaviors and ideas.

Think about ways in which you can be part of the solution, but also reflect on ways in which your behaviors and ideas might reinforce gender inequality. How do you treat women? Do you believe in gender equity? Do you dominate conversations with women, or interrupt women a lot? Do you use degrading language in reference to women? Do you support programming that portrays women in a negative light? Do you believe that gender violence is only a women's issue, or that women's behaviors cause gender violence? Be honest with yourself. This is an essential first step towards change.

- Lead by example.

Be a mentor, and teach others about gender-related issues. Let your treatment of women and girls serve as a model for other men and young boys! Empower men and boys to embrace a masculine identity not predicated on control, power, and dominance.

- Listen.

Discuss gender inequality and gender violence issues with your peers, colleagues and classmates. Listen to what women have to say on the issue. Talk with men about their feelings, too. Take the initiative to start a dialogue.

Don't ever have sex with another man or woman against his or her will. If someone says "No," that means they do not want to have sex. Listen to them.