



what can men do to develop healthy relationships with women?



**ACTION SHEET:
10 STEPS**

Men can love passionately, respectfully and sensitively. Think about the following 10 statements - are these issues which you take into account when you're in a relationship with a woman? All the statements include steps which you can take to develop healthy, gender-equitable relationships with your partner. Think too about how you can support other men to do the same.



Learn about the problem

Violence against women includes physical and sexual assault, sexual harassment, psychological abuse, or emotional abuse. Not all violence leaves visible scars. Learn about violence by asking a woman who trusts you how violence has affected her life. Then, if she feels comfortable to talk, sit back and listen. Your role isn't to challenge her on the details, nor to debate whether something really should have bothered her or not. It is to listen. Turn to local women's organizations. They have a wealth of experience and knowledge. Talk to them. Learn from them. Contribute to them financially.



Have the courage to look inward

What kind of relationship do you want? What's going to make you and your partner happy in the long term? How will you both make that possible? Think about what you need to do to change your own attitudes and actions to have a healthy relationship, and consider which friends and family members can support you to achieve these goals.



Talk to his partner openly and honestly

Talk to your partner about your relationship. Do you know how your partner is feeling and what she wants? Talk about what you each enjoy and desire, and what you don't. Open communication will help you know what you each want sexually and emotionally.



Understand that 'no means no'

Both your partner and you have the right to choose whether you want to have sex or not. If she says 'no', then that's what she means. Respect her wishes - no



matter how much either of you have had to drink or whether you've been sexual before. Remember silence does not mean 'yes' - no matter what the circumstances are. Show her that you accept and support her decision. She'll trust you and respect you for it.



Protect himself and his partner from HIV

In any new relationship, discuss HIV/AIDS with your partner, get tested together and reach an agreement about condom use. If you have decided to be faithful, keep your word. Protect yourselves from HIV.



Demand justice and rights

The South African Constitution and existing laws related to domestic and sexual violence make it very clear that the government has an obligation to ensure safety for all - and to arrest, prosecute and convict perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence. To date, the police and the criminal justice system are repeatedly failing victims of violence. Take action to demand that the government meet its constitutional obligations to safety and security. Accompany survivors to court and help them to access their human rights. Support, and when necessary, put pressure on the police and the courts. Demand swift passage of the Sexual Offences Bill; it's been stuck in parliament for nearly a decade.



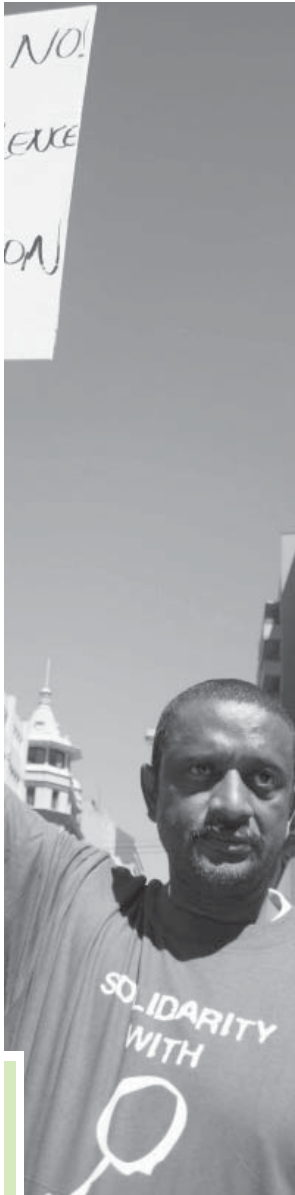
Be active in his community

Get directly involved with local organisations that work to end violence against women. Find out what is going on in your community. There are lots of organisations working with men across the country. Find one, join it and lend your skills. Help to write newspaper articles or press releases, join marches for gender equality and participate in protests saying 'no to violence against women'. Help to raise money for women's shelters and activist organisations demanding women's rights.



Stand up for his principles

Don't let your friends pressure you to act in ways that disrespect women and that you know are wrong. Find the courage to stand up for your principles. If your friends act in ways that degrade women or contribute to domestic and sexual violence, challenge them to think about what they're saying or doing. Don't let them use cultural justifications to excuse violent or abusive behaviour. Remind them that culture is fluid and changes all the time. Promote the idea that a society with greater gender equality and less rigid roles for men will benefit men too, and support each other to change the way you think and act.





Break the cycle of violence

If you've witnessed violence within your family, you know how terrifying and destructive it is. Take action to end it. If you suspect a brother, friend, colleague, classmate or teammate is being abusive to women, don't look away and don't remain silent. Tell him you're concerned. Remind him of the damage his violence is doing to his partner, his children and to his relationship. Tell him that domestic violence is against the law. Encourage him to seek professional help and follow up with him frequently to make sure the violence stops.

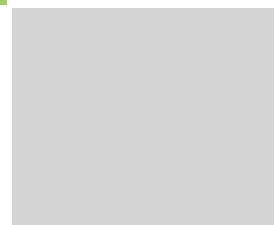


Be a role model to young boys and other men

Positive men can be powerful role models for boys and other men in their community. Boys are watching how you and other men relate to women to figure out how they should relate to girls and women. So teach boys early, and teach them often, that there is no place for violence in a relationship.

For information on where to get support, see the Directory of Service Providers in the One Man Can Action Kit, or see our website www.genderjustice.org.za/onemancan

Portions of this were adapted from Jackson Katz (www.jacksonkatz.com/topten.html) and The White Ribbon Campaign (www.whiteribbon.com/get_involved/default.asp?load=can-do).



This document is part of the One Man Can Action Toolkit, an initiative of Sonke Gender Justice and the Provincial Government of the Western Cape. For more, see www.genderjustice.org.za/onemancan