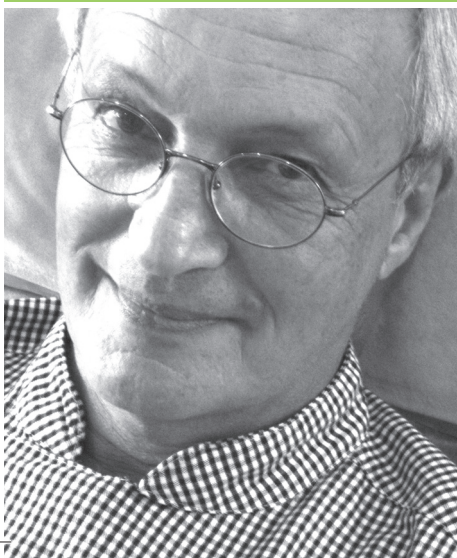
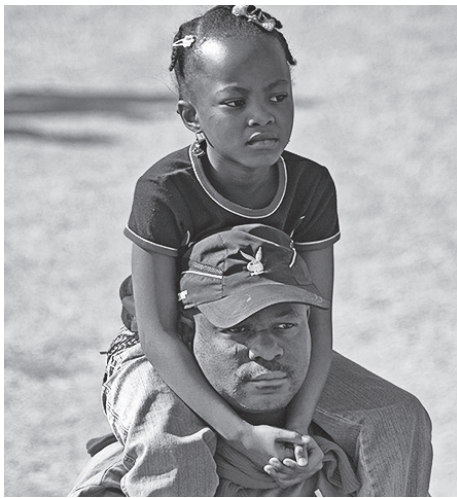




# be a father figure

One Man Can teach boys early and often to respect women and girls



**ACTION SHEET:  
FATHERS / MENTORS**

**T**he boys in your life need your time and energy. Your son, grandson, nephew, younger brother as well as the boys you teach, coach and mentor. All of them need you to help them grow into healthy young men who respect the women and girls in their lives.

Boys in South Africa grow up exposed to some of the highest levels of domestic violence and rape anywhere in the world. They also experience high levels of violent crime. Along with this, they hear many damaging messages about what it means to “be a man” – including that they have to be tough, “in control”, have many sexual partners and never ask for help.

The reality is boys need your advice and assistance to help them make sense of their world. They need you to help them understand all the messages they get about who they are supposed to be and how they are supposed to behave. This is especially true when it comes to their views on relationships and how they should behave towards women and girls.

Boys are watching how you and other men relate to women to figure out their own stance towards girls. So teach boys early, and teach them often, that there is no place for violence in a relationship.

## One man can be a positive role model



**Teach early.** It’s never too soon to talk to a child about violence. Let him know how you think he should express his anger and frustration – and what is off limits. Talk with him about what it means to be fair and to treat others with respect.



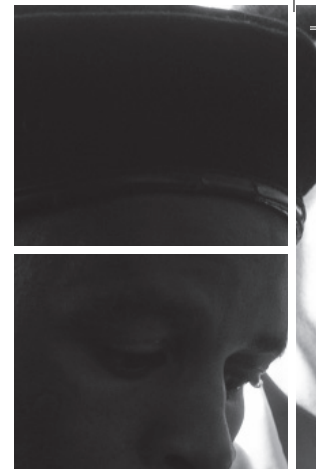
**Be there.** If it comes down to one thing you can do, this is it. Just being with boys is crucial. The time doesn’t have to be spent in activities. Boys will probably not say this directly - but they want a male presence around them, even if few words are exchanged.



**Listen.** Hear what he has to say. Listen to how he and his friends talk about girls. Ask him if he’s ever seen abusive behaviour amongst his friends. Is he worried about any of his friends who are being hurt in their relationships? Are any of his friends hurting anyone else?



*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](http://www.genderjustice.org.za/onemancan)*





**Explain how.** Teach him ways to express his anger without using violence. When he gets angry, tell him he can walk it off, talk it out, or take a time out. Let him know he can always come to you if he needs to talk. Give him examples of healthy things he might say or do to prevent violence.



**Keep it real.** A child is unlikely to approach you and ask for advice on how to treat women. But that doesn't mean he doesn't need it. Try watching TV with him or listening to his music. If you see or hear things that encourage violence against women, tell him what you think about it. Never hesitate to let him know you disapprove of celebrities who disrespect women, and that you don't like jokes, video games and song lyrics that degrade women. And when it comes time for dating, make sure he knows that treating girls with respect is important.



**Take responsibility.** If you've been violent in your own relationship and particularly if your child has been exposed to your violence, it's extremely important that you take responsibility for your actions. Children are often confused by domestic violence so it's really important that you explain that you were responsible for your violence. Make it clear that you acknowledge that the violence was wrong and that it wasn't the child's fault or your partner's fault. Explain that you will not be violent again. Then stick to your word.



**Teach often.** Your job isn't done once you get the first talk out of the way. Help him work through problems in relationships as they arise. Let him know he can come back and talk to you again any time. Use every opportunity to reinforce the message that violence has no place in a relationship.



**Be a role model.** Fathers, coaches and any man who spends time with boys or teens will have the greatest impact when they "walk the walk." They will learn what respect means by observing how you treat other people. So make respect a permanent way of dealing with people – when you're driving in traffic, talking with customer service reps, in restaurants with waiters, and with your family around the dinner table. He's watching what you say and do and takes his cues from you, both good and bad. Be aware of how you express your anger. Let him know how you define a healthy relationship and always treat women and girls in a way that your son can admire.



## How to use this Action Kit:

The One Man Can Action Kit includes a number of materials that will help you motivate other men to take a stand against domestic and sexual violence. You'll find stickers, buttons and posters that you can put up in your office or at home. You'll also find fact sheets that will give you ideas about how to take action, and how to support a survivor.

**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](http://www.genderjustice.org.za/onemancan)**

