

Ways decent men can support the #MeToo movement

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As we approach March 8, International Women's Day (IWD), we take pride as teachers in our victories and recommit ourselves to the challenge of engaging women in our teacher organizations in the fight for true equality especially in our profession.

The 2018 IWD theme selected by Status of Women Canada, [#MyFeminism](#) was inspired by the role feminism continues to play in shaping Canada and countries around the world.

This year's United Nations' theme "Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives", echoes the priority theme of the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, drawing attention to the rights and activism of rural women, who make up over a quarter of the world population and the majority of the 43 per cent of women in the global agricultural labour force.

Another international theme, [#PressforProgress](#) states on its website: "International Women's Day is not country, group or organisation specific. The day belongs to all groups collectively everywhere. So together, let's all be tenacious in accelerating gender parity. Collectively, let's all **Press for Progress.**"

No matter the theme, this year's International Women's Day comes on the heels of unprecedented global movement for women's rights, equality and justice. Sexual harassment, violence and discrimination against women has captured headlines and public discourse, propelled by a rising determination for change. People around the world are mobilizing for a future that is more equal. This has taken the form of global marches and campaigns, including #MeToo.

So how do men like me support the movement? I was inspired by [an article that was posted on CNN](#) that outlines ways decent men can support the #MeToo movement. The following are excerpts of this article that I wish to share with my counterparts:

- 1- **Practice this phrase: "That's not cool."** Say it to other men who are saying disrespectful things to or about women.

- 2- **Don't call her sweetie.** With colleagues and strangers, avoid diminutive nicknames like hon, baby, darling, girl, young lady or kiddo. It's condescending to use pet-names at work. Using preferred names shows respect.
- 3- **Amplify women's voices at work or during meetings.** If a woman's contributions are being dismissed, interrupted or claimed by others, speak up. "That's what Monique said." "Hey, Zahra has a point."
- 4- **Don't mention appearance when introducing female colleagues:** "This is the lovely Janet." Instead, make a point of introducing women (and others from marginalized groups -- racialized, young-looking, and disabled, etc.) by using their full job titles and accolades: "This is Maya Campbell, our department head."
- 5- **Don't be dismissive or argumentative** during conversations around types of oppression that you don't personally experience. Keep an eye open for our culture's gross habit of putting the onus on oppressed persons to dredge up their pain for our inspection -- only for us to then minimize their experience as "over-sensitivity" or "just a misinterpretation." Asking respectful questions is acceptable -- but nobody owes us answers. So ask humbly, and when people engage, discuss their responses sincerely, and treat their time and energy as valuable, because it is.
- 6- **Accept discomfort.** Changing broken systems takes work, and it won't always feel good. Conversations about sexism, racism, transphobia, privilege, cultural appropriation and other social issues are all related (look up "intersectionality" to learn more), and these are complex issues that stir up our emotions. But discomfort is an important sign that we may have something new to learn.

We all have a role to play towards achieving gender equality. The responsibility is ours to eliminate violence against women and girls by educating ourselves and by taking positive steps.

Happy International Women's Day!