

# Seven Tips for Feminist Men

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Tuesday, March 08, 2016

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I know already. You're a feminist. And a man. But I'm not going to pat you on the back for that because we need to do better.

We may think we've already earned all the male-feminist scout badges. We may subscribe to the male-feminist version of the doctors' maxim 'first, do no harm.' But that's not enough. We need to actively change our world.

So here are seven ways to improve.

## 1. Switch from Passive to Active

Men need to move past a place of neutrality to actively supporting feminist actions that make a real difference in people's lives.

This may feel risky, and it should, because some men will interpret our actions as betraying our gender. We need to call that out.

If you aren't comfortable pondering all this, keep reading anyway.

## 2. Seed Your Life with Feminist Inspiration

In February, Emma Watson (Hermione Granger in the *Harry Potter* films) announced she was going to take a year off of acting to pursue activism and personal development. She is already the global face of the UN's [HeForShe](#) gender equality campaign. Be inspired by following her and that campaign on whatever social media platforms you are on.

As of a few weeks ago, fewer than 18,000 Canadian men had committed to gender equality actions at [HeForShe.org](#). Add your name there and explore the website to learn about innovative ways to pursue more equality. One in 18 Icelandic men have made that pledge. To match that rate, a million Canadian men need to sign up. Get busy and tell your friends!

Watson has also started "[Our Shared Shelf](#)," a global online feminist book club. Join it. Why not? There are already over 119,000 members.

Also, read and subscribe to [Gender-Focus.com](#), an exceptional Canadian (and labour-friendly) website exploring equality. We need to be challenged out of our complacency with new ideas; see #1 above.

Also, go back into your favourite social media platforms and follow Buffy Sainte-Marie, Margaret Atwood, Pam Palmater, Nora Loreto, bell hooks, Tantoo Cardinal, Geena Davis, Ta'Kaiya Blaney, and

the Idle No More movement. That's a good start!

### **3. Be Quiet**

Men talk too much. We hog airtime in meetings, mindlessly exercise our illegitimate entitlement to talk first in mixed groups, and we interrupt women reflexively. A lot. We need to get over ourselves and recognize that for women to have more influence we need to create that space by being quiet more. It's amazing what we can learn when our mouths are closed!

Here's a fun exercise: while being quiet, count how many times women say, "I just wanted to say . . ." before sharing their idea. Where does that come from?

Being quiet also means not agreeing to be on or attend all-white or all-male panels or committees.

### **4. Raise Feminist Sons**

Our boys are growing up with an opportunity to interact with girls in more progressive ways than when we were growing up. From a healthier understanding of consent to new norms of collaboration, our job is to model feminist actions, and to talk about why we're doing that.

We also need to tell our sons stories about our own experiences — when we saw inequality and either did or didn't do something about it. Our stories carry the wisdom we need to share.

And when progressive groups at our sons' schools have a feminist bake sale and charge boys \$1 and girls only \$0.72, we need to applaud that.

### **5. Sacrifice, and Promote Pay Equity**

Here's a badge no one will give us: the badge of suffering. Men must give up some of our entitlements, including financial, for women to get more.

We already know that solidarity means supporting each other, but it really means doing so until it hurts. Last month, Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association in BC settled a collective agreement that explicitly earmarked extra funds for their precarious contract professors. That's sacrifice, but it's still far too rare, in post-secondary or any sector.

We also need to promote pay-equity language and funding in collective bargaining so that people in female-dominated jobs can earn comparable pay. And that means people in male-dominated jobs will have to seek smaller raises.

### **6. Abandon the Meritocracy Myth**

People often object to quota positions on committees and boards because of this myth of meritocracy. Let it go.

In 2016, we can no longer accept the idea that all people have had equal access to education,

opportunities and political influence, and therefore no one has any unearned advantages over anyone else. It's just not true.

Meritocracy is a myth often used as an excuse to keep marginalized groups away from men's entitlement zones. And merit is itself arbitrary and defined by people already representing demographics in power.

## **7. Promote Talented Women**

Since we're being more quiet (see #3 above), we should spend some of our newly found reflective time to carefully watch the women around us to see who we can encourage and promote.

We need to talk to them and ask what they want to accomplish in work and life. Then we should help them do that. And we need to remember that being a good ally means doing what people need us to do. Resist the urge to practise paternalism; let people guide us in helping them.

There. That wasn't so bad, was it?