

10 STEPS MEN CAN TAKE TOWARDS ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is a crucial element in male allyship and healthy masculinities. Use the following ten steps to support your journey in practicing accountability and promoting healing for the people who experienced harm, those who witnessed it, community members, and those who caused harm too.

1. ACKNOWLEDGE THE HARM CAUSED: Reflect on past behaviours and actions that may have caused harm, pain or discomfort to others. Acknowledge the impact of what you did or said by genuinely recognizing the emotions and experiences of those impacted. Avoid making excuses or minimizing the harm caused.

2. SEEK SUPPORT: Being alone can lead to guilt, shame, blame, and more harm. Building a strong support system is essential in moving towards accountability. Find friends, counselling services, resources, community and support groups that can help you take responsibility and promote healing from the harm caused.

3. RECOGNIZE THE SYSTEMS THAT ENABLE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION: Recognize the power dynamics, social norms and systemic gaps that support and enable the harm you caused. Understand the broader social, cultural, and institutional factors contributing to harmful behaviours and attitudes. Violence and harm most often impact women, 2SLGBTQ+, Indigenous, Black, racialized, disabled, young people, and other equity-seeking groups. Acknowledging these underlying structures is crucial for understanding the root causes of harm and working towards systemic change.

4. APOLOGIZE AND MAKE AMENDS: Reach out to those you have harmed and share your intentions to apologize and be accountable. Be ready for scenarios in which they state not wanting an apology, not being ready to talk or in which they might no longer be reachable. If the person agrees to connect with you, genuinely open up about your remorse, apologize and demonstrate the steps you are taking to change. Your apology might trigger various emotions. Listen, acknowledge the other person's feelings and experiences, and incorporate what you learn into your accountability journey.

If connecting with those you have harmed is not possible, or if they do not wish to talk with you, respect these boundaries and reflect on how the harm you caused impacted them and your relationship. Do not let this stop you from continuing a journey of reflection, transformation and taking responsibility for your actions.

5. COMMIT TO NEVER CAUSING HARM AGAIN: Commit to changing inequitable attitudes and beliefs within yourself that led you to cause harm. Cultivate empathy, self-awareness, and a willingness to learn from mistakes. Be mindful and intentional about your language and actions. By prioritizing growth and accountability, you can strive to never cause harm again and contribute to creating a safer and more respectful environment for everyone.

6. ENGAGE OTHERS TO PREVENT HARM BEFORE IT HAPPENS: Take an active role in promoting awareness and preventing harm within your community and social circles. Engage in open and honest conversations with others about the importance of respecting women and diverse communities, promoting consent, and challenging harmful norms and behaviours. Encourage bystander intervention and support systems that empower individuals to speak up and take action when they witness sexism, homophobia, transphobia, racism and other forms of harm and discrimination. By collaborating with others and fostering a culture of accountability, positive growth and support, you can work together to prevent harm before it occurs.

7. PROMOTE CONSENT, ALLYSHIP, AND RESPECT: Advocate for consent education, allyship with women and diverse communities, and respectful behaviour in all interactions, whether in intimate relationships, friendships, professional settings, or public spaces. Encourage mutual respect and empathy in all relationships and interactions.

8. BELIEVE AND SUPPORT SURVIVORS: Listen to survivors with compassion and without judgment. Believe their experiences and validate their feelings. Offer your support in whatever way they need, whether it's providing a listening ear, connecting them with resources, or advocating for their rights. Stand in solidarity and actively work to challenge victim-blaming attitudes and behaviours in all of the spaces and communities you navigate. By believing and supporting survivors, you help create a safer and more supportive environment for healing and empowerment.

9. COMMIT TO CONTINUOUS GROWTH: Commit to ongoing personal growth and accountability. Recognize that accountability is a lifelong journey and be open to learning from mistakes, listening to feedback, and evolving towards healthier ways of being and healing.

10. BE OUTSPOKEN IN YOUR ADVOCACY: Gender-based violence continues to be chronically underreported, and even when reported, it tends to be overlooked. Advocate for survivor-centric approaches at community and institutional levels and within our justice systems. Victims and survivors deserve justice.

We all play a role in ending all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination.

Join the largest movement of men and boys working together to promote healthy masculinities and gender equity by visiting whiteribbon.ca

