

8 Tips for Men Engaging Other Men about Gender Equity

1. **Act courageously. (As often as you can, so you make it a habit.)** When a comment is made or something happens that dismisses another, step in and speak up. Intervene to stop the behavior. Don't let the moment pass. Don't let your own discomfort or not knowing what to do/say silence you. Embrace and engage. You can intervene without having a fix or an answer. Stop the behavior, interrupt the joke/comment/behavior and suggest other ways for men to interact – all of it involves you leading by example. Remember courage involves the outward display of your vulnerability and humility.
2. **Use self as instrument of change.** All of us at times say and do things that unconsciously and often unknowingly offend another. Oftentimes, this goes unnoticed and/or unacknowledged. Give permission in advance to your team mates and colleagues to intervene with you when you say or do something that is invalidating or dismissive. How you respond to your missteps will help others to graciously respond to theirs. Don't set a destination for perfection (i.e. I'll never say or do a stupid thing again.). Learn to normalize the ways in which you are blind to how your actions and words impact others. Use yourself to engage and assist other men in their struggle/challenge to be full gender partners.
3. **Assume good intent.** Assume the other is not intending to be dismissive or hurtful. Don't appoint yourself as the gender equity police. Learn to distinguish between not truly knowing and premeditated malicious offense. Most missteps made by others are done from a place of blissful ignorance. It has often been helped along because no one has previously spoken up. Acknowledge and support the person. Help them work to more fully understand how what they did or said (no matter how well intentioned) has impacted another. Help them learn from these moments of disconnection.
4. **Learn to discover your self-interest in gender equity.** Then help other men to discover their own as well. Figure out how it is also an issue for you and other men. Look for ways that your male conditioning has caused you to distance yourself from other men, hide your feelings, and be numb. If you always equate gender equity as only a women's issue, you will not be able to stay in it over the long haul.
5. **Expect to make mistakes — often.** Expect some of the mistakes to have negative impacts on others. Learn how to better see your mistakes in service to your further learning. Expecting perfection (from yourself or others) can set you or others up to do nothing out of fear of doing the wrong thing.
6. **Point out the positive, not just the negative (especially when engaging other men).** Support and acknowledge when another is being a good gender equity partner. Do this especially when just in the company of other men. If women are around, don't look to them to back you up when you challenge and support other men.
7. **Notice how your conditioning as a man affects your own closeness/relationships with other men and your image of yourself as a man.** Work to undo the effects of this conditioning which has taught many men to go it alone (don't ask for help), don't show vulnerability (don't show weakness), have an answer for everything, etc.
8. **Work to notice your assumptions.** Notice how you often use your assumptions to misinterpret other's behavior. Notice how your assumptions are often more about your life experiences, personal values, and beliefs rather than about the other person. Work to notice first what you are surprised by with others. Your surprise usually indicates your mindset or position rather than the person whose behavior you are surprised by.

8 Tips for Women Engaging Men on Gender Equity

1. **Continue to do your own work** about how you have been conditioned to see yourself and other women (sometimes called internalized sexism). Strive to better notice how your own assumptions help and/or hinder the depth of your work partnerships with men. Notice how you use might be using old assumptions to interpret other's behavior. Avoid and interrupt any of the ways you directly or indirectly give your power away to others, especially men.
2. **Don't confuse men's unconscious incompetence (what they don't know that they don't know) with conscious and intentional missteps.** Their cluelessness may be genuine no matter what their level of seniority is in the organization. Conversely, don't accept their unconscious incompetence as an ongoing excuse for lack of growth or change on their part. Ask and expect men to become more conscious of yours' and other women's realities. Assist them to effectively practice the partnership skills needed to show up more fully in partnership with you and other women.
3. **Think and practice *and/both***, instead of *either/or* thinking. Notice when you ask a question from a simple *yes/no* frame. Learn to see the complexity inherent in most interactions across difference.
4. **Expect everyone to make mistakes along the learning journey and have a support system to rely upon when they happen.** Full partnership takes ongoing effort. Have and use a good support system that contains other women as well as men. This support system can help you stay in it when you might otherwise what to remove or extract yourself from fatigue, annoyance, distraction, or some other reaction. Work always to practice inquiry. Ask a lot questions of others rather than assume you understand. Allow yourself to be confused. Learn to use any confusion to further feed your curiosity.
5. **Assume positive intent even when your male colleague's presenting behavior may at first indicate otherwise.** Similarly seek to discover and understand how what you intended impacted others. Don't assume your intention is clear to anyone else other than yourself.
6. **Practice seeing men as individuals rather than just as the current representative of the entire male group.** Men are as different from one another as women are from other women. Work to hear their unique perspective rather than stopping to generalize, especially when a man's behavior may at first appear to match that of other men you have worked with. Men, like women, are both individuals and members of their respective gender group. Each man is both unique from and yet similar to other men. Learn to better see the similarities and differences simultaneously.
7. **Recognize your words may not be heard by men.** Because they have largely been a part of the dominant (normative) group, they may have difficulty seeing, understanding and/or acknowledging your reality as a woman. Give them feedback when what they do is working or when it is not. Assume men are capable of handling and hearing your feedback, particularly when it is critical.
8. **Challenge men to rise to the occasion of full partnership.** Assume they can partner with you and other women effectively. Don't collude with men and don't do the work for them. Hold them accountable for what you expect from them as a full diversity partner.