

ENGAGING MEN IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION: STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES

PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING WITH MEN TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DEVELOPED BY DR. ALAN BERKOWITZ

1. Violence against women is a direct consequence of unequal treatment of women. Sexual assault/violence prevention should therefore be viewed as a social justice issue, i.e. it is not only about education but also about personal and social change. As a result, violence-prevention work should be informed by a feminist or pro-feminist perspective.
2. Violence against women is gendered and is almost always perpetrated by men. Understanding and ending gender violence therefore requires an understanding of gender and gender socialization.
3. Men seeking to end violence against women should be accountable to women in their efforts. The form and nature of this accountability may vary by circumstances and community. Men should seek guidance from women, partner with them, and define ourselves within an accountability relationship to women if our work to end violence against women is to have integrity.
4. Violence against women cannot be addressed without also considering and addressing other oppressions, including racism, sexism and homophobia, and their intersectionality.
5. A positive approach is always more effective than a negative, blaming, or guilt-inducing approach. Men should not be treated as potential perpetrators who are problematic but may be approached as allies who have a positive contribution to make to ending violence against women -- focusing on strengths, positive development, the creation of healthy relationships between men, and the correction of misperceptions that inhibit men from taking action to end violence against women.
6. Men who want to do this work must commit themselves to a process of personal change and healing as men, i.e. we "can't be part of the solution unless we understand how we are part of the problem." This requires acknowledging that "we are the work", that we have privilege, and how we may consciously or unconsciously contribute to sexism. Men must understand the larger culture and environment that allows violence against women to occur, as well as their participation in it.
7. In addition to helping men understand how violence hurts women, it is important to also help men understand how violence against women hurts men directly, rather than only indirectly by hurting women who we care about. Men can realize that we have a personal stake in ending violence against women that goes beyond paternalism and concern for women's well-being.
8. Interventions for men are more effective to the extent that they based on an understanding of the gendered nature of violence. This can mean offering all-male, peer facilitated, interactive, smaller in size, workshops for men that provide the opportunity for men to share their unexpressed discomfort with male socialization, stereotypical male sexuality, and other men's behavior, or by creating mixed gender programs for that address relevant gender issues.