

ENGAGING YOUNG MEN AS ALLIES TOOLKIT

Curriculum Unit #4: How to Become an Ally to Girls and Women

(Developed by Members of the Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team and their Male Allies)

OBJECTIVE

To help young men to become more empathetic about sexism and to spur them to becoming allies to young women.

TIME

1.5 hours

ACTIVITY #1 – STEP UP, STEP BACK – 20 MINUTES

Explain that you will read out a statement and if the statement is true for the participant, then they should take a step forward. If the statement is not true for them, then wait for the next statement. Explain that after each statement you will read a statement that explains how this relates to women's experience in general.

Read the statements:

- Take a step forward if you were raised by a single mother.

56% of households headed by single mothers in the U.S. are poor.

- Take a step forward if you know a woman who is struggling to pay the bills.

Studies show that women earn less than men earn for comparable work. For every dollar that a man earns, a woman earns 76 cents. Resulting in a lifetime loss of over \$650,133.

In Illinois, African American women earn 64 cents for every dollar earned by a white man, Native American women earn 56 cents and Latina women earn just 47 cents for every dollar a white male earns.

- Take a step forward if a woman in your family has ever been on a diet.

In a recent survey, 40% of nine-year old girls say that they have dieted at least once. Every year, more than 20,000 girls in the U.S. are hospitalized for eating disorders. 1,000 of these girls die.

- Take a step forward if you know a woman who is locked up.

The number of women in Illinois state prisons at the end of 2002 was 2,520 – a 173% increase in ten years. As of year end 2002, the number of incarcerated women nationwide was 97,491.

More than 61% of women prisoners in Illinois serve sentences for property (32%) and drug (29%) offenses.

About 15,000 women are detained in Cook County Jail annually and about 1,200 women are in the jail on any given day.

- Take a step forward if you know a girl who has dropped out of school.

49.7 percent of Latina women in Illinois have not earned a high school diploma, compared with 24.3 percent of African American women, 22 percent of Native American women, 16 percent of Asian American women and 13.4 percent of Caucasian women.

- Take a step forward if you know somebody who grew up with domestic violence in their household.

Every 9 seconds a woman is beaten in the United States by her boyfriend, husband, or lover.

The Chicago Police receive 566 domestic violence reports every day.

In 2004, the Mayor's Office on Domestic Violence Help Line received over 8,000 calls from victims of domestic violence.

- Take a step forward if you know a girl or woman who has experienced rape or sexual assault.

1 in every 3 young women is sexually assaulted by the time she turns 18 years old. Every year, almost 1.5 million women are raped or sexually assaulted. The majority of these women (75%) know their attacker.

- a. Ask participants to look around the room to see where people are standing. Explain that the steps that they took illustrate the many ways in which just the people in the room have encountered injustice against women.
- b. Talk about the fact that there are a number of social forces that have an impact on the lives of women and girls.
- c. Bring the group back together. Ask the questions: What did you learn from the activity? Were you surprised by any of the numbers? How do these statistics related to your life – whether to yourself or women you know?
- d. Conclude the exercise by pointing out that these are the very real conditions that women living in our society must deal with because we live under the system of sexism, classism, racism, and heterosexism.

DEFINITION OF SEXISM – 10 MINUTES

Tell the workshop participants that all of the statistics that you read are manifestations of sexism. Ask the Workshop Participants—What is sexism? [Let them give you their definitions]

Then you can give them this definition of sexism:

Prejudice + power over = ism. An ism happens: where one group of people has stereotypes or misinformation about another group and has power to use prejudice against that group, to control them – hurt them, make them feel bad, or get something from them – or receive better treatment or more resources than them.

Sexism is prejudice towards women or girls plus power to use that prejudice against women/girls. The key to the definition is not just the fact that prejudice exists but that a group has to have power over the target group.

MANIFESTATION OF SEXISM – TWO DIFFERENT REALITIES OF SAFETY – 15 MINUTES

Ask the men in the room to brainstorm all the things that they do on a daily basis to feel safe or protect themselves from physical harm from others. Write their answers on the board. When the men have finished, ask the same question of the women and record their answers. After both lists are completed, ask participants for their observations on the two lists.

Have them discuss:

1. What differences do you notice in the two lists?
2. How do you account for the differences?
3. How do these concerns affect the lives of men and women?

Processing:

Generally, the men's list is quite short, with terms such as locking one's door, while the women's list is quite long, with a wide variety of measures, such as not walking alone, carrying mace, not walking in certain places and at certain times of the day and checking their car before getting in. Since the men's list is shorter than the women's, asking the men to go first has greater impact in demonstrating the differences between men's and women's experiences.

In summary, note how women are much more concerned about their safety on a daily basis. While men may give some thought to physical safety, they generally have little worry about sexual assault, which is of paramount concern for most women. As a result of sexism, women and men experience different feelings of safety and ability to move about freely in the world.

MEN AS ALLIES – 20 MINUTES

Question for the audience:

DO YOU THINK THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR MEN TO BE INVOLVED IN ENDING SEXISM AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?

If people say yes, ask them why they think this?

Talk about how the statistics that they heard when you started the workshop make it important for men to be involved in ending sexism and violence.

Definition of an Ally:

Someone who steps in the way of mistreatment happening to someone.

Ask for a male volunteer, tell them the following scenario.

Role Play – You are standing in front of your locker at school. Your friend, John, is standing across from you. He is yelling at his girlfriend, Suzanne. Then he grabs her and pushes her roughly against his locker. If you were to be an ally, what would you do?

Thank the volunteer and ask the workshop participants: what did he do well? Is there anything else that he could have done?

Ask for some volunteers to complete the following sentences:

1. What I never want to see, hear, or have happen again to women and girls is....
2. What I expect a male ally is...

After a few volunteers have gone, share the “how to be an ally” handout.

After a few volunteers have gone, talk about how men can be supportive of women in working against sexism and violence. Talk about the fact that there are many ways that we can work against sexism and violence in our lives.

Some possible strategies on an individual/interpersonal level include:

- Interrupt sexist jokes or comments (or do not tell them)
- Change use of sexist or biased language
- Take down sexist posters
- Don't be a bystander – step up to help a woman or girl who is being abused

Some possible strategies for the institutional/cultural level include:

- Join an activist organization
- Organize a boycott of a product/movie you find sexist and offensive
- Write letters to the editor
- Organize educational events
- Organize a march or demonstration

- Organize a petition drive
- Create or change a policy in your school or organization (for example, sexual harassment)

VOICES OF YOUNG WOMEN – 15 MINUTES

Read the YWAT poem “*Looking for a Good Brother*” out loud. You can ask for volunteer to each read one line. Discuss the poem.

- What do you think of this poem? How does it make you feel? Do you like it? Why or why not?
- Are there any lines or stanzas that you can particularly identify with? What are they and why do you feel a connection to them?
- Why do you think YWAT wrote this poem? What’s the message/point of it, if there is one? Who do you think they are speaking to in this poem?
- Are you able to relate to girls who have been victims of violence if you have not been a victim yourself?

STEP UP/STEP BACK STATEMENTS

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BECOMING AN ALLY

WHAT IS AN ALLY?

An ally is a member of the agent social group who takes a stand against social injustice directed at target groups (Whites who speak out against racism, men who are anti-sexist). An ally works to be an agent of social change rather than an agent of oppression. When a form of oppression has multiple target groups, as do racism, ableism, and heterosexism, target group members can be allies to other targeted social groups they are not part of (African American people can be allies to Native Americans, blind people can be allies to people who use wheelchairs).

WHAT DOES AN ALLY DO?

- Take action. Before everything else, the mark of an ally is taking action against inequality or mistreatment.
- Listen/learn. A gift of alliance is finding out, from the target group experience, how the world is perceived and experienced by someone whose life is different from yours, providing information that has been withheld from you by the conditioning you received. A first act of alliance is to make space for target groups, with unconditioned support from you, to define issues with which they grapple, the structure of the “ism” from their own experience.
- Use your privilege. As an ally you identify the resources you have and use your resources on behalf of the target group, gaining them access and opportunity.
- Support the target person’s leadership. True alliance means getting out of the way of the target group members, supporting them in taking charge of their lives and making their own decisions about what must be done. To rescue, or attempt to rescue, or take over removes the power once again. Conversely, to step out of the way without offer of support or tactful guidance is to abandon.
- Go after nontarget members. Target group members, engaged in their own work, need you to intervene with and educate other members of your group. Moreover, your intervention must be from the standpoint of support, not differentiating yourself as better than the others of your group. To the extent you reject or push them away, you are pushing away part of yourself.
- Take a chance; make mistakes. Expect to make mistakes, and to agree to fix them when you do. Alliance work is built upon trying things, making mistakes, and going on.
- Take care of yourself. Alliance is a lifelong activity. It can’t be sustained unless you are rested, replenished, and hopeful. So, in light of that:
- Get support, accept support.

By Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team – www.rogersparkywat.org

LOOKING FOR A GOOD BROTHER INSPIRED BY PEARL CLEAGE (BY YWAT)

It's time!

Brothers, it's time to step up

We are waiting

Let's be clear

We are looking for some good brothers

We are looking for the real deal

A brother who can listen

A brother who can change

A brother who is not afraid of women

We are looking for a real brother

One who loves his people

A brother who doesn't hit, slap, yell, punch, rape, kill women and children

A brother who doesn't call us bitch or ho

We are looking for a brother who says I'll be with you till we get there

Till we get to the place where violence ends

We are looking for a brother who says

"That's not cool" when his friends down women

We are looking for a REAL brother

A brother who uses his hands to build, not to break

A brother who understands the word "solidarity"

We are looking for a brother

One who gets it

A brother who doesn't pass the buck

A brother who takes responsibility for male violence

A brother who speaks truth to power

Will you stand with us?

Brother, will you stand strong with us?

Will you be a soldier in an army of peace with us?

It's time

It's time to step up

Brothers, we need you

We are waiting.