

TOOLBOX FOR MEN

RESPECTFUL SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS



YOU WANNA BE A GOOD GUY, RIGHT?

Whether you're in a long-term relationship or hooking up for the first time – you wanna treat your partner with respect.

Showing respect is sexy

Here are some simple tips for having good sexual relationships with women.

Start with respect and keep on respecting

Respect means treating others how you want to be treated. So, think about how it feels when someone respects you – this is how you want your partner to feel.

And remember, every woman is someone's daughter, sister or friend, so treat her how you want other men to treat the women you care about.

And most men are respectful to women – it's the right way to be.



HOW DO YOU RESPECT YOUR PARTNER?

R – Take **R**esponsibility for your actions – they're your choice. Ask yourself, "If I was the kind of man I'd really like to be, what would I do?" Ask her how you can communicate better, and really take it on board. Do what you can to improve things for everyone.

E – Treat your partner as an **E**qual. She's her own person, as important as you are. You don't need to have all the power – make decisions with her, not for her.

S – **S**ay how you feel. Share stuff, even the scary stuff. Talk about your worries and how you'd like things to turn out. Start sentences with "I feel...".

P – Listen to her **P**oint of view. Value her views as much as you value your own. Think about what she says and take it on board. Ask questions; you'll learn new stuff.

E – **E**mpathise with your partner. Imagine how it feels to be in her shoes, and if you can do something to make it better, then do it.

C – **C**hallenge set beliefs. Question assumptions about how men and women have to act, and what media or advertising keep reinforcing. Find your own way and let each person choose how they'll behave.

T – **T**ell her you appreciate what she does for you. Notice how she improves your life and makes you a better person. Tell her.

Respect across everything gives a good sexual relationship.



See White Ribbon's Respectful Relationships Toolbox for more on this - [HTTPS://WHITERIBBON.ORG.NZ/TOOLBOX](https://whiteribbon.org.nz/toolbox)

And if you want to understand your behaviour or relationship better, take the FETH test (fairness, equality, trust and honesty)¹ at [HTTP://WWW.THELINE.ORG.AU/RECOGNISING-RESPECTFUL-RELATIONSHIPS](http://www.theline.org.au/recognising-respectful-relationships)

The FETH Test is provided by The Line, an Australian national campaign that helps young people reject violence and develop healthy, respectful and equal relationships. <http://www.theline.org.au/>





You'll see that respectful sex is not about the man having power over the woman. It's about the two of you having a powerful experience – together.

WHAT IS A RESPECTFUL SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP?

A respectful sexual relationship is when everyone:

- Knows they can say 'no' at any time, and are also able to say 'yes'.
- Finds the experience positive and is enthusiastic for more.
- Has sex to connect and express affection.
- Can be themselves.
- Lives by their values and who they are, and avoids any scripts.

That's it. Pretty good, eh? You can do this.

WHERE ARE YOU AT?

Sexuality is different for everyone, but what's important is that YOU:

- Know who you are, and are comfortable with your body. That includes your sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Express your sexuality in ways that match your values, while also respecting the rights of others.
- Can show love and affection, and accept it too.
- Respect the sexuality of others, especially when they're different from you.
- Enjoy your sexual feelings without necessarily acting on them.
- Are aware of all the family, cultural, media, and social messages about your sexuality, and still manage to be yourself.
- Find out things you don't know from a trusted source.
- Only have sex that is honest, pleasurable, consensual and safe. More on this later.

You might want to talk to someone about this stuff, just so you're clear. Talking always helps.



ENTHUSIASTIC CONSENT IS ALWAYS SEXY

The best sex is when both your partner and you are enthusiastic about it. Whatever you're doing, and whoever you're doing it with, enthusiastic consent is always your starting point.

Consent is much more than a 'yes' or a 'no'. It's an ongoing talk about desires, needs, and comfort with different sexual interactions.

Remember – you don't ever 'earn' the right to have sex with someone. If anything's going ahead, you have to both be into it, all the way. You and your partner both get a say on what happens, and you can each change your mind whenever you want to.

So, understand...

Gotta ask, don't assume

Don't just assume your partner is OK with whatever you're doing. You need to ask, listen and pay attention to how she's acting. You can only keep going if she's enthusiastic about it too, and actively and equally participating. And even more important, you need to accept what she wants – even if it feels unfair.

Do it together

Being sexual is something you do together. You both need to be actively and equally participating. Is she touching and kissing you back? No? Then check in with her.

Check in

Keep checking in. After all, relationships and sex can involve lots of different activities – saying yes to one doesn't mean you say yes to everything. Before you take it a step further or change things up, ask if she's OK with it.

It doesn't have to be super awkward – checking in could be as simple and as sexy as asking “Would you like to take your shirt off?”

And no pressure if she says no. You also get to say what you're OK doing.

ENTHUSIASTIC CONSENT IS

- N** – **N**o strings attached
- you aren't assuming anything. They're free to say 'yes' and they're just as free to say 'no'
- U** – **U**nderstood - they know what will be involved
- D** – **D**eliberate – they aren't affected by alcohol or drugs, or under pressure
- E** – **E**mphatic – it's a definite 'yes', not a 'maybe', 'not sure' or 'um' or silence



Everyone has to be able to say yes

If a woman is out of it from alcohol or drugs, she can't give you the big thumbs up. Obvious, right?

Here's how it works. Not saying 'no', or allowing something to happen, or not resisting, being silent, doesn't mean she's giving you consent. You need a clear, enthusiastic YES to go ahead, otherwise leave it – that is respect.

Legally, girls under 16 can't give their consent either. If your partner can't agree, for whatever reason, having sex is illegal.

No pressure

Consent only counts if it's given freely – that means no threats or tricks, including things like guilt trips or the silent treatment. Having sex like that isn't just a crappy thing to do, it's also illegal.

If you're hooking up regularly, then develop your own ways of showing you're both keen and into it.



HERE'S YOUR ENTHUSIASTIC CONSENT CHECKLIST:

- What do I really want, here, with this person? Be honest with yourself and her. Check what your values tell you is right.
- What does she want here? Get more info by asking her.
- Keep checking in by asking:

N – Are there **N**o strings attached? Is my partner as free to say 'yes' as she is to say 'no'?

U – Does she **U**nderstand what I'm proposing? And do I understand what she wants?

D – Can she be **D**eliberate? Is she affected by alcohol or drugs so she can't give consent, or am I putting her under pressure?

E – How **E**mphatic is she? Is it a definite 'yes' and not a 'maybe', 'not sure', 'um' or silence? Is everyone actively and equally participating?

If you've got NUDE enthusiastic consent, then you can go ahead – until it's time to check consent for the next activity.



BE TRUSTWORTHY

A good relationship, and an enthusiastic sexual relationship, comes from you and your partner feeling safe with each other. So, work on being trustworthy in all the things you do together.

Being trustworthy is sexy.

It sounds super cheesy, but sharing your real thoughts and feelings helps your partner (and people in general) understand and connect with you.

This means being direct and not playing power games. If you like someone and want a relationship, or even if you've been together for a while, make your affection obvious by listening, asking questions, talking, being helpful, showing warmth and with non-sexual touching.

Don't forget sharing your feelings, offering genuine compliments, being interested in her activities, respecting her moods and feelings, and saying what you appreciate about her. All of that, all the time, is part of a good relationship – and a big part of a respectful sexual relationship.



Men, women – don't believe everything you've heard

Question all the messages you've got over your life about being a man. And all the messages about sex. They'll have come from your family, peers and culture, and all the TV shows, movies and ads you've seen, not to mention the porn that's around now.

Choose the messages that are helpful to you, and the way you want to live by your own values.

Let go of old scripts for how men and women should be together, and make your own choice about what being a man means to you. Break out of the 'man box' and be the person you really are.

For example, you might've heard that as a man you have a right to sex, or you have to take the lead. Your partner will most probably disagree and women have their own feelings too. So, sort out together what you and your partner are most comfortable with, regardless of messages.

Everyone's an individual, so be open to how each person behaves and feels. Chucking out old scripts about how men or women should act makes it much easier for everyone to choose for themselves. You and your partner get to make it up together.

Life doesn't have a script – you direct your own movie.

When it comes to sex, **be open to making it up together.**



YOU'RE BOTH EQUAL

Lots of the messages men get are about being in charge and having more power than women.

These messages make it easy for men to think this is how things are, rather than choosing what's right, and what's best for respectful relationships with women.

When it comes to sex, feeling you must be in charge makes the sex about your power, rather than the two of you sharing your equal power to have a positive experience together.

Sex is something you do together, as two equal adults.

And remember, always being in charge is a lot of pressure you don't need. Let it go, take the pressure off, and enjoy a more relaxed time together.



PORN – WHAT'S THAT ABOUT?

Take a good hard look at porn

Porn is a turn-on, but what else is happening?

Ask questions – Who has the power? Does everyone give their consent? How much of porn shows rape?

As well as showing sex, porn often uses violence against women. This can be verbal or physical, and is mostly about men dominating women. Check out how much violence or abuse there is, and who uses it – mainly against women.

Porn actors are paid a lot of money, sometimes to do things they find uncomfortable or hurt them. They're paid to look like they're enjoying something that is not pleasurable. The money blurs their consent.

So, ask yourself, how is porn affecting your attitude about violence against women, and even your behaviour towards women?

Remember, porn can easily become a habit. The more you see, the more it will control what turns you on. So, consider how porn affects you, and make sure you're in charge of your sexuality.

You still want to be turned on by real bodies, real situations and real relationships. And real respect.

So keep it real

Porn is made to be sexually arousing. It's like an action movie, with exaggerated make-believe drama. It's too unrealistic so you won't be able to imitate it.

Porn is also unrealistic about how women and men look. So, keep your expectations real and focus on being real yourself – your confidence and relationships will be way better. By developing your own skills to have good, real sex, your life will be more satisfying in every way possible.

Real relationships are between equal, consenting adults. Check that you're treating women with respect and that there's always enthusiastic consent. And always keep it real.

Aspire to have the best experiences you can.



SHARING IS THE THING

Sex is about sharing, and so is a good relationship –

S – **S**ee her as a person. Enjoy what makes her special.

H – **H**old respectful values of equality and fairness, and live by them.

A – **A**sk for her help. Take on board her feedback – it'll make things better.

R – **R**espect her wishes and judgement. Listen and respond.

E – **E**mpathise – see things from her point of view, and if there's stuff you can do to improve her situation, then do it.

Sharing gives you a better connection across your whole relationship.

TAKE CARE DOWN THERE

Sex is fun, and serious too.

You need to share the responsibility for contraception and protection – don't just assume she's on the pill and hope it'll all be good.

When you're just getting together, use a condom. It's the easiest, most effective way to protect against STDs and pregnancy. And it shows you're a trustworthy guy.

If you're getting more committed, talk about what's best for you both. This can be a bit awkward at first, but bringing it up early on helps you get closer.

Find out more at

[HTTP://WWW.FAMILYPLANNING.ORG.NZ/ADVICE](http://www.familyplanning.org.nz/advice)

For more helpful advice see other white ribbon toolboxes

[HTTPS://WHITERIBBON.ORG.NZ/TOOLBOX/](https://whiteribbon.org.nz/toolbox/)

The toolbox content was developed with help from male educators at Wellington's Sexual Abuse Prevention Network (<http://sexualabuseprevention.org.nz/>) and inspiration from Australia's The Line (<http://www.theline.org.au/>). Thanks to Words for Breakfast (<http://wordsforbreakfast.co.nz>) and Ocean Design (<http://oceandesign.co.nz>) for working their magic.



BREAK OUT OF THE MAN BOX!



The Man Box is how lots of guys think they have to act in front of other men. You know, always acting like they're in control and in charge. And not showing any feelings – except anger. It's about looking tough.

We call it the **Man Box** because it restricts you into a narrow way of being. It hurts others, and it hurts you.

Living in the Man Box is stressful – breaking out will be a relief, and will help you feel better in yourself. It will also mean you have happier relationships with your partner and kids, who'll feel safe around you.

You're still a real man, but a far better, happier, more peaceful one.

The Man Box

In front of other men, I will:

Always appear onto it and in charge, especially over women

Not show emotions, except for anger, and being aggro towards others

Not admit to mistakes or backing down

Appear staunch, not needing others

Keep proving I'm 'manly' by mocking behaviour outside the Man Box

Break out!

I'll choose my own identity and behaviour, because I want to:

Listen to others, share decisions, and value women as my equals

Be real, show all my feelings, not just anger, and always treat others with respect

Admit my mistakes and learn from them, and from others

Ask for help when I need it and value other people and their strengths

Avoid the idea that males are superior, and not put down others because they're not male



There's more helpful information about breaking out of the Man Box in White Ribbon's Break out of the Man Box! toolbox, available from

WWW.WHITERIBBON.ORG.NZ

whiteribbon.org.nz

