

# Redefining what it means to be a man

Have you ever heard the phrase 'act like a man'?

Who said this and why?

How did it make you feel?

If this comment was directed at someone else, how do you think they felt about this?

To get you started, try the 'Man Box' activity below.

## The 'Man Box'

Imagine yourself as a 15 year old boy.

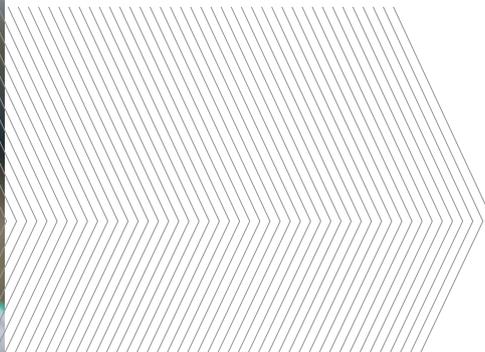
Complete the sentence. '*Real men...*' and put your answers in the box.

What are the types of things you would expect to have heard or been told as a 'typical' 15 year old boy? Add as many as you can think of and be honest.

**Real men...**



White Ribbon have done this exercise with hundreds of men and boys in workshops across Australia. Look over the page to see the different ways men have finished the sentence '*Real men...*'



## Real men...

Don't cry

Are tough

Are great in bed

Are strong

Are leaders

Are good with the ladies

Provide for their family

Are financially successful

Don't show any emotion

Do you think it is achievable for men to have all the qualities 'inside the Man Box' all the time? Are these expectations realistic?

Where do you think these 'manly' qualities are learnt? At school, in the workplace or in sporting clubs? Where else?

This exercise is designed to help you start to challenge and redefine masculinity. This is an essential step in ending men's violence against women.

Narrow ideas of what it means to be a man harm both men and women. Sometimes men feel pressure to be dominant and in control. Some people believe men must be strong and powerful. These characteristics are called 'gender norms'. Of course, not all men accept or follow these gender norms.

Examining social definitions of manhood will help remove the pressure on men to meet expectations that are impossible to satisfy or attain. These expectations of men create the conditions for violence, abuse and control of women to occur.

**It benefits everyone to address gender stereotypes and gender inequality.<sup>i</sup>**

## Next Steps

- Take the White Ribbon Oath.
- Commit to building respectful relationships.
- Learn how to be an active bystander.
- Get involved in violence prevention work.

Visit [www.whiteribbon.org.au](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au) for more information and inspiration.

<sup>i</sup>Kaufman, M. (1999) *The Seven P's of Men's Violence*  
<http://www.michaelkaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/kaufman-7-ps-of-mens-violence.pdf>

