

# A Young Woman's Guide to Being a Man in 2k18

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So, you're a man who wants to do better. OK. Well I guess that's a start. The journey might not be much fun, but it will be worth it. Becoming a paragon of maleness or a Good Man probably seems abstract and difficult and to be honest and upfront with you, it's not not either of those things. Defining what we mean by Good is tenuous at best. At what point do you graduate from simply being Man (awful) to Better Man (acceptable) to Good Man (impossible)? Are there levels, like 'Mario Kart', or is it more a kind of icy Skyrim hinterland you're forced to wander through aimlessly, searching for fleeting interactions upon which to demonstrate your Not Bad-ness? It's confusing and uninviting, but also important. So important in fact, that I'm willing to help you navigate this expanse of embittered masculinity. But, lest my potions be too strong for you, we need to start with a few basics. Some Good Man-tras, if you like. If you don't agree with them already, simply repeat out loud until you do. Why not chant them? Come on, we'll do it together.

## Good Man-tras

1. Despite my life being reasonably awful and feeling lonely and vulnerable a lot of the time, by default of being a man I inhabit a position of privilege in society.

One down, yay! (Yes I'm going to use words like privilege but dw<sup>1</sup> there's a glossary coming up.) All together now:

2. It is highly likely that there have been times when a woman in my company has been intimidated or imposed upon by me but felt unable to express her discomfort.

So good! I hope you're doing this in public. Last one:

3. It is my responsibility as a man to educate myself on how I can act in a thoughtful and reasonable way, interrogating behaviours I might previously have accepted as the norm.

No wait, last one:

4. I suck!!

Haha joking! Hope you didn't fall for that. If you did, repeat them out loud all over again. Think of those as HIIT<sup>2</sup> workouts for your conscience: something you'll watch hours of YouTube videos about but only ever actually do once. Right, there's an impending swamp of male ineptitude to wade through, so let's get started.

<sup>1</sup> Don't worry! <sup>2</sup> High Intensity Interval Training



Bertie Brandes  
photographed by  
Bella Howard in London,  
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## Glossary

Uh! New words U don't know! How annoyingggg lol they're so dumb! Suck it up, this is so painfully basic you should feel right at home

### Cisgender

Meaning: a form of privilege. Being cisgender means you identify with the gender you were assigned at birth. Basically, if you've never had to think about it before now, you're cisgender.

### Consent

Meaning: imagine consent as a Dally Mix you're listening to with someone for the first time. You might both enjoy the first song, or six songs in a row, or (hopefully) the whole thing. But if all of a sudden a new Eminem comes on and even though you love the guy your partner isn't feeling it any more – switch it off and get on with your life! You can always finish it alone later, like always.

### Gaslighting

Meaning: originating from a play called *Gas Light* (1938) in which a man convinces his wife she's going insane, to gaslight somebody means using techniques of subtle manipulation to consistently undermine them. Like consistently calling someone an idiot until they believe they are one, or telling someone they're ill or hungry or tired until they agree. It's a form of psychological abuse and oh boy is it common.

### Non-Binary

Meaning: a non-binary or genderqueer person does not identify with their assigned gender or necessarily one specific gender. Referring to them as 'he' or 'she' is inappropriate, so either use 'they' or – brainwave – their actual – preferred – name.

### Pansexual

Meaning: someone who is chill about whether the people they crush on identify as male, female, non-binary, gay, straight, bisexual, asexual or absolutely anything else. They just see sexy.

### Polyamorous

Meaning: the practice of having an intimate relationship with multiple people, hinging on – key component here yo – the knowledge of all partners by all partners.

### Privilege

Meaning: the recognition of advantages including access to resources and financial independence historically bestowed upon members of society with specific skin colours (white) and gender identities (cis male). Yes, in the past, but also now.

### Robert

Meaning: the idiot antagonist of savage *New Yorker* short story *Cat Person*. To call someone a Robert is to implicate him as the perpetrator of circumstances mired in the grey area of technically consenting but ultimately traumatic or regrettable sex. TLDR<sup>3</sup>: creepy loser. ▶

<sup>3</sup> Too long, didn't read