

Not perfect

BETTER

 **White Ribbon**
Australia



Better with your Mates

Tips and advice for better men

Why ‘Not Perfect, Better’?

In November of 2024, we began our #welisten campaign where we spoke to men and boys in a series of focus groups and interviews. The focus groups were made up of men from all different cultures, ages, classes and experiences, yet they had a common thread: many **men couldn't tell us what a “good man” or a “good relationship” looked like.**



A lot of them felt disconnected from the issue of violence against women – not because they didn't want to be part of the solution, but because they felt like they couldn't be. They questioned whether they could speak up if they knew they still had room to be better.

The answer to that is **yes** and it's why we started **Not Perfect, Better.**

Better with your Mates

With loneliness among men reaching epidemic levels, having a close group of mates is more important than ever. Rain, hail or shine, you can always rely on the boys for a cheeky beer, banter or simply an excuse to watch some sport.

But, despite how close your friendship group can be, the support within it can still be surface-level. **The ‘man up and move on’ attitude still rules, so we often go to our mates to escape our feelings, not share them.**



Being better can help you drive change among the men you surround yourself with, and it starts by challenging what it means to be a man. **It's not about calling your mates out, it's calling them in.**

When you have the courage to break free from stereotypes and practise equality and respect in everything you do, your mates will follow.

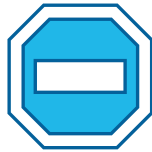
Being better lads.

Men listen to their mates, so that's where you start. Use the LADS acronym for some simple ways you can have a positive influence on your mates.



Live your respectful values

Let your actions show that you respect women, especially when you're with your mates. When you show the way, it's easy for others to follow.



Act to stop violence

When you see violence against a woman, step in rather than stepping back. If you see a mate abusing a woman - whether that's forcing her to do something, or threatening her, you can help stop it.



Disrupt disrespect

Show you don't support a mate's disrespectful comments. Stay silent, or better still, say you don't agree. It doesn't have to be a blow-up, just an opportunity to start a conversation. is the point of a relationship, don't trying to 'win' against each other all the time.



Speak Up

Good mates respect you more when you speak and stand for something. Your views count, and your actions will make a difference. We tend to forget how much power we actually have to influence the behaviour with a simple, "Nah mate, I don't agree." We're happy to do it with bad takes on TV, sports and fashion choices - so let's do it with bad takes on women.

Show the way.

Being better isn't a destination, it's a journey, and we're all at different stages. Some of your mates might be starting out, and that's fine. 'Better' always starts with the right intentions. That means not making excuses, but giving leeway to learn and grow. It's like working out - baby steps eventually lead to big gains.

Every step counts, which is why it's important to call men in rather than calling them out. When you lead the way, others follow, and it begins by changing how we see and speak about what it means to be a man.



Be a mirror for your mates.

The best way to influence the men around you is to show them what it means to be better. When you set the standard, your mates follow.



1. **Call it out** when you witness disrespectful behaviour towards women in real life or online. You're mates – so you should be able to honest with each other without breaking the friendship.
2. **Encourage healthy and respectful relationships** among your mates.
3. **Recognise the signs** of technology-facilitated abuse and helping your friends understand them, too.
4. **Take responsibility** for your actions and hold others accountable.
5. **Be a role model** for your mates by practising equality and respect in all aspects of life.

Challenge yourself to think differently.

Don't let your beliefs limit your potential. Try stepping out of the stereotypes, dropping the tough act and being your genuine self. That way, you'll be a better friend to your mates – and they can drop the act too. It's all about challenging the social norms and helping you and your mates to be more openly respectful.

Break out of the 'Man Box'.

As Aussie men, we're constantly pressured to think and act a certain way. We're told things like 'boys don't cry' and that we simply need to 'man up' or 'toughen up' when we need support.

Not only do these ideas limit our potential, but they also set an impossibly high ideal that no one can ever achieve.

We need to change the expectation of what a modern man is. Stereotypes put us into a box, and for many men, that box does not let them be the full version of who they really are.

Help your mates think outside the Man Box.

You can be better by helping the men around you break free from these pressures. Show them it's okay to be different. Encourage them to think for themselves, treat women with respect, and build healthy relationships. Ask how they're doing and share experiences in a way that doesn't immediately involve taking the piss or trying to compete with other. It's okay to say what's inside of you – even if it's super uncomfortable at first!

How do I call out bad behaviour from a mate?

We all need to learn how to have respectful, non-judgemental, and non-threatening chats with our mates. But choosing your moment to speak up and have an honest talk is also important. So how can you get started?



Decide where and when

Find a time and location to talk to your mate without interruptions. This lets you have a focused discussion where you can listen and talk freely.



Listen to them

Actively listen to your mate's answer while delivering feedback. This will help you grasp their viewpoint and let them express themselves, without excusing their behaviour or expecting better in the future.



Use "I" sentences

Use "I" to provide feedback on what you're noticing with their behaviour, and even how it affects you. "I honestly feel uncomfortable/sad/respect you less when you talk about women that way."



Support him

You might be telling them that their behaviour is not okay, but letting them know you care about them is still important.



Be specific

Show your worries with examples. Your mate will comprehend the behaviour and its effects better when you're super specific. He'll likely give excuses or dismiss your feelings, which is another opening to explain again what you're seeing.



Be patient

Changing behaviour takes time, so support and encourage your mate to make different choices.

None of this is easy, but it's important for your mate and the women around them to live better lives. Ultimately – you're trying to help, so it shouldn't come across as an aggressive attack.

Keep scrolling, not controlling.

Technology has made us more connected than ever, but it's also opened up new avenues for abuse, so it's important to know how to recognise and prevent it.

If you wouldn't say or do something offline, you shouldn't do it online. And the same goes for your mates.

Being better means pulling your mates up when they use technology to stalk, harass or degrade women online, control their girlfriends **or threaten women. When you call them in, you're empowering them to change and helping to stop online abuse, harassment, and stalking.**

Better you

Being better is not about aiming for perfection, just progress. It's about being the man you want to be, feeling all your feels, and taking responsibility when you mess up. Learn how to level up with some easy, effective things you can put in practice at home, work and out in public.



Want more Better Guides? Head back to **Not Perfect, Better** or stay up to date with upcoming resources by following us on **Facebook**, **Instagram** or **LinkedIn**.