



No More Excuses: Dismantling Rape Culture Discussion Guide

When you first considered the definition of rape culture (beliefs and practices that normalize and excuse male sexual violence and aggression), what feelings did you have?

Some say that the elements of rape culture discussed in this book are “just the way things are” and that women should learn to deal with it. What do you think about that?

What’s your earliest memory of being sexually harassed or treated as a sexual object?

Discuss the things you do (or don’t do) on a regular basis to protect yourself against sexual assault.

How has sexual harassment and/or assault affected your education and your work life?

Even though people of any gender can be victims (or perpetrators), rape culture, by definition, is a gendered concept—the normalization of male sexual aggression. Discuss why this is.

Discuss the stereotypes of the “virgin victim” and the “deviant rapist.” How do these stereotypes perpetuate rape culture? How do they impact the justice system’s ability to prosecute rape?

Psychologists explain victim-blaming through the “Just World” hypothesis, a belief that says people get what they deserve and deserve what they get. How does believing that a rape victim “deserved it” create the illusion of safety?

How did you learn about sex? What proportion of your education in this area came from parents, friends, school sex education, faith-based organizations, books, movies, and porn? Did you ever talk about consent, including what that means and how to communicate about consent during intimacy?

Discuss the idea that girls and women must be the gatekeepers to sex. How is this concept related to rape culture? How is it related to consent?

Consider your most recent media choices (movies, TV, video games, books, music). Did they include sexual assault or rape? Did characters commit illegal acts (like spying on naked women, indecent exposure, etc.)? How were these behaviors depicted? Played for laughs? Used to further the plot line of male character? Shown as normal or typical?

Discuss the factors that could go into a survivor’s decision to report an assault. How do these factors impact the ability of our system to pursue justice?

Some have called the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault in our culture a form of terrorism that prevents women from reaching their full potential. Discuss.

What would a world without rape culture look like to you?