

Take A Risk & Be An Accomplice

Contributed by [JUF Chicago / DePaul - Research Training Internship](#)

Source: Revenge of Dinah: A Feminist Seder on Rape Culture in the Jewish Community

As feminists and as Jews, language is one of the most important tools we have to address the social injustices around us. Though it can seem nit-picky, **it is crucial for us to be mindful and intentional about the words we use to describe ourselves, our work, and the people we collaborate with.** We cannot do good work or protect ourselves and our communities if we can't or won't.

Currently, there is much debate in the wider social justice community about the term 'ally' which has historically been used to describe someone who identifies with particular injustices and feels committed to the people affected by them. Many people, especially folks of color and other people oppressed by systematic injustice, feel frustrated by privileged, young, white people who claim to be "allies" to causes that have nothing to do with them by either not doing enough (i.e. posting on social media in faux "solidarity" but never actually showing up at organized efforts in-person) or doing too much (i.e. refusing to recognize how their privileges take up way too much space and undermine the work already being done by the same folks who are oppressed by the issues in the first place). **Although allies always mean well, their efforts to show solidarity may actually end up doing nothing to help the cause, and in some cases, may unknowingly result in harm and/or the perpetuation of oppression.**

As a result, some social justice workers make the distinction between "ally" and "accomplice" in their efforts. Specifically, the goal is for people to understand the benevolently-caused damages done by well-meaning allies, and help people to be more intentional about becoming "accomplices". The list on the next page (The RTI 10 Commandments of Being an Accomplice, Fighting Patriarchy, and Shutting down Rape Culture) is designed to help you, our readers, think through the ways in which you can use your power to **become accomplices, rather than allies, in the disruption of rape culture.** We want to acknowledge that being an accomplice is inherently risky because it sometimes necessitates using your own privileges and power in ways that might complicate your social status. We understand that everyone has various thresholds for this kind of emotional labor, and that some folks aren't able to risk their physical or psychological safety some or all of the time. **We would also like to give a special shout out, in particular, to the male-identified and cis-gender folks** who are reading this because of the tremendous potential they have to use their gender privileges to hold other male-identified and cis-gender people accountable for their words and actions.

The RTI 10 commandments of being an accomplice, fighting patriarchy, and shutting down rape culture.

I. **Hold others in your life accountable.** Don't make excuses for anyone- if they are making rape jokes, or bragging about non-consensual sex, do not enable them by laughing along because you are nervous about not fitting in. Hold abusers accountable for their actions: do not let them make excuses like blaming the victim, alcohol, or drugs for their behavior.

II. **Think more critically** about the messages that are perpetuated in media and popular culture. It is okay to question what you see and hear if it doesn't feel safe or respectful.

III. **Do your research, listen, and read.** The internet is a great tool for staying informed about actions you can take to demonstrate your solidarity, as well as communities to support who are already doing great work. You can also listen to the testimonies and experiences of survivors and victims of sexual violence, street harassment, and other gender-based oppressions. In addition, choose to believe people when they report being raped or experiencing sexual violence of any kind.

IV. **Use the knowledge you have gained to educate others with similar privileges as you.** Survivors and

victims experience huge emotional labor when asked to educate others about how to shut down rape culture. Help to relieve some of it by going out of your way to start conversations about it with your friends and family.

V. **Know when to step back and not take up too much space.** Your job is not to speak on behalf of others or decide what the agenda should be. Show up, but don't take over.

VI. **Don't let privilege shame get you down!** It's not always easy or comfortable to recognize our privileges, especially when we start to understand how they perpetuate systems of oppression. Process your feelings about this with people who share similar privileges, and allow it to motivate you to be a good accomplice. Privilege shame isn't helpful to anyone!

VII. **Avoid using language that objectifies or degrades women, trans people, and gender non-binary people.** Similarly, don't perpetuate toxic masculinity by telling boys to "man up" or encouraging "locker room talk".

VIII. **Think critically** about the media's message about women, men, relationships, and violence.

IX. **Always communicate** with sexual partners and do not assume consent, even if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

X. **Define your own manhood, womanhood, or other gender expression** in ways that feel healthy and authentic, and encourage others to do the same. Do not let stereotypes shape your actions or whether "respect" is on the table. It's always on the table.

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Download the full haggadah here: <https://jufwebfiles.org/pdf/teens/RTI-Haggadah-Final.pdf>