

Teach Your Sons To Be Feminists

Make sure that they know what a feminist is; when they are young tell them that a feminist is anyone—boy, girl, man, woman, and/or they—who believes in the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes; Let them know that this is common sense, not a radical idea; Let them know that feminism is for the benefit of all beings and for mother earth and universes known and unknown; add that a feminist believes that oppression is wrong, pure wrong.

Put the definition of feminism on a wall in the house that everyone must pass as they enter or exit; get crafty and paint it in loopy script; inform your sons that feminism does not go against any legitimate belief system—Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Sikh, agnostic, atheist; inform them that there is no good reason to believe that God is male or that Adam and Eve ever existed or that Eve was made from borrowed bone—tell them that no science supports this.

Make sure that they know what science is: the systematic study of anything to test its veracity by means of observation and experimentation; tell them that conceptions of God are (often) an un-examined projection of white-male privilege; tell your sons that if they are going to live peacefully in your house, that you better not hear them throwing insults that refer to female anatomy; it is not necessary to use pussy or cunt or bitch to ridicule anyone; other words work just fine and are more creative, to boot.

Be sure your sons know that feminism is not a fad, even if it's trendy; let them know when you first knew that you were a feminist—I was a feminist back in the late seventies when it was cool and later when it wasn't cool and now when there are those who balk at the label and those who embrace it without meaning.

Make sure that your sons know that feminists are not angry harridans determined on revenge; explain to your sons that a woman who is fiercely pissed faces a different threshold than a man who is angry;ask them to consider why assertive women are called pushy and assertive men are called strong; play Samantha Bee at breakfast; at lunch read the “Feminist

Manifesto on How to Raise a Child” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; and, at dinner remind your sons that after our current President got elected, over five-million people, many in pink hats, marched in Women’s Marches around the world.

Be sure to use the word *feminist* in mixed company with your boys around, so they get used to the word and don’t think that *feminist* is a word for women only; have a comeback for anyone who snickers upon hearing the word; do not let the phrase *boys-will-be-boys* slip from anyone’s lips in your presence; ask your sons to imagine what it would feel like to be grabbed without consent; have them consider laws passed to limit their rights to manage their own bodies; advise them that birth control is not just a woman’s thing. Make sure your sons know how to write an excellent thank you note; make sure that they know how to clean a soiled toilet; make sure your sons never feel bad about crying or saying, *I love you* or *I’m so sorry*; make sure your sons are aware that making money is not the same as being successful; make sure your sons understand the difference between professional success and personal development.

Pray that your sons are the kind of men whom, when they see trouble, want to help and not run; help them to admit failure, defeat, and mistakes by not shaming them when they are wrong; make sure your sons know when to listen and when to speak and that the former is as important as the latter sometimes, but the latter is crucial when they see injustice.

I tell my sons that if their dad were not a feminist and had played by the old book, he would not have cuddled them on his chest through anxious nights in the days and weeks after they were born; he would not have pureed his homemade chicken soup for them when they first started eating; he would not have taken them to board meetings with a bottle of milk in one pocket and a teething ring in the other; if he were not a feminist, he might have pushed them away when they came to him sobbing, because comforting kids is a mother’s job and boys need to be toughed up not made soft inside and out.

I tell them that their father doesn’t fear for his masculinity as he washes the dishes, changes diapers, folds the laundry, makes lunches, shops for groceries, trims dirty toenails, and attends PTA meetings; he never suffered

from being a father who is a feminist married to this woman, a Jewish feminist from birth.

I tell them that the world has some very bad ideas about what it means to be a man; I tell them not to follow the herd off a cliff, because their father and I love them too much and can't bear to see them live shut-down lives.

The oppression of girls, women, and other marginalized groups is based in fear. And I want my sons to live lives full of possibility.