

# A BETTER MAN

**community screening guide**



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PRODUCTIONS



*A Better Man* offers a fresh, nuanced look at the healing and revelation that can happen for everyone involved when people take responsibility for abusing their partners. The film depicts co-director Attiya Khan pursuing her personal vision of justice and closure with the man who abused her 20 years ago.

This kit is designed to support individuals and organizations hosting community screenings of *A Better Man*. Read on for tips and ideas for creating a supportive environment for the rich, transformative conversations about gender-based violence (GBV), intervention, justice and healing that *A Better Man* can inspire.

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# AUDIENCE SUPPORT

## THE ROLE OF COUNSELORS

**“I think having a support person at a movie theatre is really new. But I also think with that starting point, I'm able to give them the resources to seek out further support—maybe more long-term support— within the city.”**

—Destiny Laldeo,  
Support Worker

The subject matter of *A Better Man* and any discussions about the film can be painful or triggering for some. We strongly recommend all community screenings have at least one counselor available for private discussion with guests who need support.

For screenings with more than 100 attendees, we recommend having more than one counselor. If the venue has multiple levels, at least one counselor on each level is best. If using only one counselor at a venue with multiple levels, station the counselor on a wheelchair-accessible level if possible.

## FINDING COUNSELORS

We recommend that at least one counselor is a woman or non-binary person. Men can be excellent counselors, but some people who have experienced violence from men may feel uncomfortable seeking support from one. We also advise having at least one racialized or Indigenous counselor. *A Better Man* includes discussion of racist abuse, and attendees may prefer not to unpack the film with a white counselor.

Counselors at *A Better Man* screenings should have experience in a trauma-informed context, ideally with clients who have experienced or used violence. Host organizations may be able to find counselors by contacting their local women's, shelter, reproductive or sexual health centre, hospital, campus sexual assault centre, or other organization that deals with GBV.

While some counselors may be willing to volunteer, we encourage finding room in the budget to pay them whenever possible (e.g \$50 per counselor). They play an important role in creating a brave space to reflect upon and discuss *A Better Man*.

## PREPARING COUNSELORS

Counselors will be in a better position to support attendees if they have watched the film before the screening. Contact the film distributor to request a confidential link to share with counselors. Offer them an option to debrief with you on the thoughts and feelings that came up for them as they watched.

**To avoid assumptions, counselors can ask guests about their pronouns.**

*e.g. "Which pronouns do you use? I use she/her."*

Counselors must do their best to avoid making gendered assumptions about guests who approach them. We cannot always tell a person's gender based on how they look, and it would be painful for a guest to have their gender inaccurately assumed when seeking support from a counselor.

We also cannot use a guest's gender to predict with certainty whether they have experienced violence, used violence, both, or neither. Counselors should be aware that while many who seek their support may have experienced violence, some may also have used violence. Counselors who are not comfortable supporting guests of all genders and experiences on the continuum of violence may not be the best choice for screenings of *A Better Man*.

**Start with our template!**

See page 10 of this guide

Invite counselors to suggest GBV support services to include in a resource list for audience members. Host organizations can research hotlines, shelters, counseling services and other options in their communities.

While it's uncommon, audience members who speak with a counselor might request further support via email, phone or in person. Counselors should be aware of this possibility and assured that they are not expected to make themselves available for this. The resource list can direct audience members to sources of ongoing support.

## VENUE CONSIDERATIONS

Inform the venue that counselors will be at the screening due to the film's painful and triggering subject matter. Explaining the importance of this service can help venue staff adopt a compassionate frame of mind with attendees.

Work with the venue to identify suitable spaces for a counselor to speak with audience members. It is ideal for counselors to have a quiet, private and accessible room where they can take guests who need support. When this is not possible, there may be quieter corners of the lobby or foyer area that are suitable.

During the screening, counselors can sit in the theatre close to the exit. After the film, counselors can quickly go to the lobby and situate themselves alone in a visible location for audience members to approach. Ask other staff to keep a respectful distance as much as possible while counselors are supporting audience members.

Confirm with the venue how long you will have access to the counseling space after the event concludes (at least 30 minutes is ideal). Some audience members in distress may seek peace and quiet in the restroom. It can be helpful to inform venue staff of this possibility, particularly if the venue will be closing after the screening.

## EFFECTIVE OUTREACH

### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Consider inviting the participation of local individuals and organizations involved in GBV work (e.g. shelters, advocacy groups, counseling services, activists, therapists or artists). Partners such as these can enrich screenings of *A Better Man* and amplify their potential for driving social change in communities.

Opportunities for audience members to engage with local work can catalyze the potential for them to get involved. Boosting awareness of local GBV resources also makes it more likely that people needing access will hear about these resources from someone in their network. Some partners may be able to provide counseling services to audience members. Finally, collaboration nourishes the broader movement to end GBV by sparking new relationships and learning exchanges.





## CONTACTING POTENTIAL PARTNERS

If you're not sure whom to contact, the following resources may be helpful in finding potential partners in your community:

### **Shelter Safe – [sheltersafe.ca](https://sheltersafe.ca)**

Directory of shelters across Canada for women fleeing violence

### **National Network to End Domestic Violence – [nnedv.org](https://nnedv.org)**

Information about GBV groups and coalitions across the United States

### **Canadian Restorative Justice Consortium – [crjc.ca](https://crjc.ca)**

Information about restorative justice programs across Canada

In the interest of creating a welcoming environment for audience members, host organizations may want to find out the partner organization's stance on transgender inclusion. For example, some women's shelters do not allow trans women to use their services, and/or may use language that does not affirm transgender identity (e.g. referring to trans women as "male-bodied" or "women born men").

Many GBV organizations are unfortunately under-resourced. To make it as easy as possible for community partners to spread the word, host organizations might consider providing partner groups with email templates, social media graphics, sample social media posts, and other promotional materials.

Partners may also appreciate an offer of reserved tickets for their team members, and/or a chance to showcase their work on the host organization's website, social media, and any promotional materials for the event.

## SETTING THE TONE

Set the tone for a supportive discussion by using caring language in promotional materials (e.g. "Join a compassionate discussion about the many forms that violence, justice and healing can take"). Note the film's rating (14A) and the painful and triggering subject matter in materials. If counselors will be available, this is also important to mention.

### **Get started with our tip sheet for promoting community screenings**

- Graphics
- Flyer template
- Media release
- Q&A videos
- Social posts
- Links and more

[bit.ly/abmpromotips](https://bit.ly/abmpromotips)

Host organizations and discussion leaders will be in a better position to respond to difficult questions if they are well versed in the facts and terminology on intimate partner violence (IPV). The *A Better Man* website provides a primer on the language we use to talk about abuse ([abettermanfilm.com/resources](http://abettermanfilm.com/resources)), and the Canadian Women's Foundation offers a wealth of data on violence against women ([canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence](http://canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence)).

*A Better Man* can bring up strong and sometimes painful feelings – feelings of anger, shame, fear or frustration are common. Anyone speaking as an emcee, panelist, facilitator or keynote will find it helpful to watch the film before the screening and note the thoughts and feelings that emerged for them.

## AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

### Engagement Ideas

Many audience members want to unpack *A Better Man* with others after watching. While no audience members should be pressured to participate, consider offering an optional opportunity to dive deeper, such as a panel discussion, Q&A, meet-up, workshop or performance.

Draw inspiration from the following list or brainstorm your own with community partners.

- Panel discussion or keynote presentation from those with expertise and/or lived experience with GBV (ideally including a Q&A)
- Facilitated breakout discussions for participants to explore themes related to the film (e.g. bystander intervention, transformative justice)
- Volunteer fair with tables hosted by local groups working to end GBV
- Workshop for participants to process the thoughts and emotions raised by the film (e.g. art therapy, mindfulness)
- Performance or exhibition featuring art or music with a focus on GBV

### GROUND RULE IDEAS

- Nobody will be pressured to share things they don't want to
- Victim-blaming or shaming is not permitted
- Responses from women and transgender people will be prioritized

Hosts may want to create ground rules for discussion or programming that follows the film. These should be shared with discussion leaders prior to the event, as well as audience members at the event.



## TOPIC IDEAS

*A Better Man* can provoke reflection on a variety of rich themes. Host organizations may consider which themes have the clearest intersections with their own work. Community partners and counselors can also contribute ideas. Examples include:

- Pathways to healing from violence
- What it means to take responsibility for harm
- Bystander intervention and community responses to violence
- Racism and GBV against women of colour
- How trauma and shame can impact memory
- Different approaches to justice
- Working with people who use violence, and its role in ending IPV

After watching the film, audience members often need time to collect their thoughts and feelings. It can be helpful to begin any post-film discussion with open-ended icebreaker questions or prompts, such as:

- “How do you feel right now?”
- “What surprised you about this film?”
- “If you could say one thing to Attiya, what would it be? What about Steve?”

Download the free *A Better Man* discussion guide for these and other discussion questions and activities ([abettermanfilm.com/resources](http://abettermanfilm.com/resources)).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*A Better Man* community screening packages include two optional videos to accompany a screening, both featuring co-director Attiya Khan. The three-minute video can provide context for the film before *or* after audience members have seen it. In the eleven-minute video, better suited for after the film, Attiya answers frequently asked questions about *A Better Man*. Consider screening the Q&A video to address common questions on audience members’ minds after they watch the film.

Highlights of questions addressed in this video include:

- **Why make a film about this issue?**
- **How did Steve get involved?**
- **How can bystanders help?**

### Find the Q&A videos in our tip sheet.

- Links to share on social media
- Downloadable files to screen at the event

[bit.ly/abmpromotips](http://bit.ly/abmpromotips)



# SCREENING DAY

## ITEMS TO BRING

### Essential

- Counselor name tags
- Copies of the resource list

### Optional

- Distraction items  
*Stress balls, fidget spinner, stuffed animals*
- Care basket for restroom  
*Tissues, facial wipes, menstrual products*

## COUNSELOR CONSIDERATIONS

Ask counselors to arrive at the venue 30 minutes before start time. They should also be prepared to stay an additional 30 minutes after the event concludes, or whatever length of time the venue will allow access to the space.

Upon arrival, provide counselors with name tags, copies of the resource list, and any distraction items. Brief them on how the emcee will introduce them. Show them their seat, the area of the venue where they can speak with guests during the screening, and where they'll be stationed after the screening.

## INTRODUCING THE FILM

When introducing the screening, inform audience members that the film may be painful or triggering, and indicate where they can pick up a resource list. Encourage audience members to treat themselves and one another with care and compassion.

If counselors will be available, the emcee should be prepared to share the following talking points in their introduction:

- “Counselors are available to support guests of any gender.”
- “Counselors, please wave so guests can easily see you.”
- “Approach them in these spots at any point during the screening.”
- “They will also be in the lobby afterward.”

Our feelings and opinions about IPV may be rooted in our personal experiences. It is important for emcees, facilitators or other speakers to be prepared to validate strong emotions expressed by participants.

## CLOSING THE EVENT



Many audience members who seek support at *A Better Man* screenings do so after the event concludes. When wrapping up the event, remind audience members of the resource list and (if available) the counselors.

*A Better Man* focuses on a deeply rooted social problem that won't be resolved overnight. Close the event by encouraging audience members to continue thinking and talking about possibilities for intervention, healing and justice with their loved ones, colleagues and community members.

The following quote from co-director Attiya Khan might serve as a thoughtful note on which to conclude the event.

**“I desperately want domestic violence to stop. Art, storytelling, and deep, painful conversations are an integral part of the solution. By getting closer to the truth of what survivors experience, and of why men choose to use violence, we can help stop the violence. My hope is that this story will motivate others to keep finding creative solutions to a problem that continues to be a global epidemic.”**



If you have any questions, please email us at [impact@abettermanfilm.com](mailto:impact@abettermanfilm.com) for more information.

# RESOURCE LIST TEMPLATE

A *Better Man* broaches topics that can be painful and triggering. If you need immediate support, the following resources may be helpful. For learning tools and other resources, visit [abettermanfilm.com](http://abettermanfilm.com).

## SUPPORT SERVICES

### Local shelter/service #1 (add more if possible)

*Description of services offered and populations served.*

**Address:**

**Phone:**

**Online:**

## SERVICE DIRECTORIES

### ShelterSafe

([sheltersafe.ca](http://sheltersafe.ca))

Directory of women's shelters across Canada

### Bridges Institute

([bridgesinstitute.org/links](http://bridgesinstitute.org/links))

Counseling options across Canada for people who abuse their partners

### Women's Shelters

([womensshelters.org](http://womensshelters.org))

Directory of women's shelters across the United States

### Batterer Intervention Services

**Coalition of Michigan** ([biscmi.org](http://biscmi.org))

State-approved intervention programs across the United States for people who abuse their partners

## HOTLINES

### Local/Regional Crisis Hotline

Toll-free number:

TTY number:

### Kid's Help Phone (24 hours)

Toll-free number: 1-800-668-

6868 | Online: [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)

### Assaulted Women's Helpline (24 hours)

Toll-free number: 1-866-863-

0511 | TTY number: 1-866-863-7868

### National Domestic Violence Hotline (24 hours)

Toll-free number: 1-800-799-7233 | TTY number: 1-800-787-3224

Online: [thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org) (7:00 am-2:00 am Central Time)

### Fem'aide Helpline (24 hours)

Gratuit: 1-877-336-2433

ATS: 1-866-860-7082

# EVENT PREPARATION CHECKLIST

## Three Months Before

- Confirm venue
- Brush up on GBV facts, data and terminology as needed
- Outreach to potential community partners

## Two Months Before

- Confirm key community partners
- Decide on format for enrichment programming (e.g. panel, workshop)
- Outreach to potential speakers/facilitators/performers
- Begin creating promotional materials

## One Month Before

- Confirm speakers/facilitators/performers
- Outreach to potential counselors
- Finalize promotional materials
- Share promotional materials with partners and speakers
- Solicit partners' and speakers' input on discussion ground rules and topics

## Two Weeks Before

- Test screening media at venue
- Send confidential screener link to partners, counselors and speakers
- Finalize discussion ground rules and topics, circulate to all parties
- Add local services to resource list template
- Confirm counseling details with venue (e.g. ideal spaces, times of access)

## One Week Before

- Gather or purchase counseling items (e.g. name tags, stress balls)
- Brief emcee on protocol for introducing film and counselors
- Print copies of resource list
- Confirm that all partners, counselors and speakers have watched the film; debrief if desired