

A BETTER MAN

men's viewing group guide



HOST A MEN'S VIEWING GROUP

**“With *A Better Man*,
I gained reluctant
empathy with
someone who
causes violence.
That’s powerful.”**

—Ben Wert,
Audience Member

A Better Man can empower audience members to play new roles in challenging violence, whether it’s in their own relationships or as part of a broader movement for social change.

This film often sparks dialogue about how gender-based violence (GBV) has touched viewers’ lives. These discussions can be transformative if people feel safe speaking honestly and vulnerably. Supportive spaces can include people of any gender. Some men may wish to create men-only spaces to unpack their experiences and their role in ending GBV without asking for the energy of women and non-binary people. These spaces can help men drive positive change in their communities.

Learn more on the
Canadian Women
Foundation’s website:

[canadianwomen.org/
facts-about-violence](https://canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence)

One in six men have experienced family violence, and those who do often struggle to find support. A majority of people who experience violence from partners are transgender people and cisgender women (women whose sex organs match the gender with which they identify). A majority of people who use violence against their partners are cisgender men. We can and must create space for the experiences of male survivors while also acknowledging that partner violence is a gendered problem.

SETTING THE TONE

**We want to hear about
your viewing group!**

Please post photos and
insights your group is
comfortable sharing on
social media and tag
[@abettermanfilm](https://twitter.com/abettermanfilm)

*Consent is important! Make sure
your group is okay with it before
posting, and avoid posting
personal details.*

When deciding who to invite to your viewing, consider which men in your life have shown an interest in talking about GBV – even (perhaps especially) if you feel they still have a lot of learning to do. Invite people who will be respectful of others, and bring a sense of good faith and a desire to create positive change.

Set the tone for a constructive conversation by using caring language in your invitation (e.g. “Join a thoughtful discussion about how men can support each other in addressing gender-based violence”).

A Better Man and discussions about the film can be painful or triggering. We encourage those engaging in a discussion about the film to treat one another with care and compassion, recognizing that our opinions about intimate partner violence may be rooted in our own experiences.

See *A Better Man* in your community or at home!

All upcoming screenings and broadcasts are on the Screenings page of our website:

abettermanfilm.com

Abuse isn't always as physical or extreme as in *A Better Man*. It can take forms including:

- **Emotional** (e.g. insults, isolation from friends, manipulation)
- **Physical** (e.g. pushing, grabbing, preventing exit from a room)
- **Financial** (e.g. restricting accounts or ability to work)
- **Sexual** (e.g. rape, sexual harassment, groping)
- **Racial** (e.g. slurs, racial micro-aggressions)
- **Spiritual** (e.g. using religion to control others)

It may be helpful to define the term “emotional labour”:

Managing feelings and expressions (our own and those of others) to serve the needs of a relationship.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Mix and match from these discussion questions and activities to debrief with your group after the film. This is where the potential lies to activate change in your community! If any participants need support, they can find resources on our website at abettermanfilm.com.

Icebreakers

- What surprised you about this film?
- If you could say anything to Steve, what would it be?
- Is there a man in your family, friend group, workplace or community who needs to see this film? Why?

Unpacking the Film

- Did you see aspects of yourself in Steve? Why or why not? If so, were there any moments in the film that triggered it?
- Steve struggled to remember the details of his violence against Attiya at first, while Attiya's memories of violent incidents were vivid. Why do you think this might be?
- What stood out to you about ex-boyfriend Seth's efforts to help Attiya and Steve? Have you ever struggled with how to help a friend who was hurting others (or being hurt)? What did you do? Is there anything you'd do differently now?
- Steve's childhood experiences shaped his treatment of Attiya. What connections exist between your childhood and how you approach relationships today? How can we do a better job of stopping intergenerational cycles of violence?

Taking Responsibility

- To what extent do you feel Steve has taken responsibility for his abuse? What other steps could he take to continue this journey?
- What role did Attiya play in Steve's efforts to take responsibility? How do you think this role affected her?
- What are some possible motives for taking responsibility? How can we ensure our efforts to take responsibility don't cause more harm?

Gender & Race

- What stereotypes exist about how men “should” approach sex and relationships? How might these have influenced Steve's abuse of Attiya? How do you see them reflected in your community?

- What attitudes about race might have influenced Steve's abuse of Attiya? How do you see them reflected in your community?
- What stereotypes exist about how men "should" express their feelings? How might these have influenced Steve's self-expression, in his relationship with Attiya or during filmmaking?

ACTIVITY: REMEMBERING HARM

Think of a time that you hurt someone (emotionally, physically, financially, sexually, psychologically). It could be a partner, woman you worked with, friend, family member, or any other person in your life. While it doesn't need to be an abusive type of harm, if you feel supported in this space, try to challenge yourself to think of a moment that makes you feel ashamed.

Shame can contain important information about our values. Ask yourself: "What does my shame over my harmful choices say about what is important to me? What would it say about my values if I did *not* feel ashamed?" Facing feelings of shame can be productive and freeing.

- What do you remember about this incident?
- How did you justify your actions at the time?
- Name any responses you feel in your body as you remember the incident (e.g. flushed cheeks, tense shoulders, racing heart). What feelings can you connect these physical responses to?
- How has the incident shaped you and your choices since?
- What do you wish you could say to the person you hurt?

EMOTIONAL VOCAB

- Frustration
- Sadness
- Hope
- Pride
- Shame
- Fear
- Anger
- Trust
- Embarrassment
- Grief
- Surprise
- Disgust
- Awe
- Remorse
- Anticipation

START THE CONVERSATION

Visit our Resources page:

abettermanfilm.com

Tips for people who have:

- Used violence
- Experienced violence
- A friend or family member in a violent relationship

If you care about a person using violence...

Some people who have used violence feel shame about their choices and may cope with it in a variety of ways, some by addressing it and some by turning away from it. Support from friends and family, or from a therapist, elder, or support group, can help channel shame into long-term change.

People who use violence are human beings. It's okay for friends and family to provide compassionate support for their journeys toward non-violence and accountability. If this is the role that feels right for you, it is also crucial to check in with yourself regularly about your loved one's commitment to that journey. You can be supportive, while remaining cautious of attempts at manipulation and being honest about your biases.