



## Part 4 - To the woman unconvinced

TRIGGER WARNING: RAPE/SEXUAL ABUSE

To [“A woman who agrees with the man”](#):

OK sure, believe that some women need to take responsibility for preventing their own rapes if you want to but keep four things in mind.

*One.*

You know the majority of rape isn't actually your classic 'stranger rape' deal, right, so I'd ask you – the four-year old boy raped by his grandfather, should he take more responsibility for preventing that? How about the fifteen year old girl raped by her mother's boyfriend? What about the 21-year-old man raped in prison? How about the 45-year-old woman with physical disabilities raped by her carer? And the 70-year-old woman beaten and raped by her husband?

Or are you saying that there are only *certain kinds* of rape that victims should take responsibility for preventing? (And if you think that there are some more and some less 'innocent' victims of rape, then do you know for sure that your message of responsibility is reaching the *right* kinds of victims and not hurting the wrong ones?)

*Two.*

When I was in first-year university I went away for the weekend as the only girl with four boys to a beach-house on a little island. We were all friends, though in truth it was pretty clear to me that these four were each a little interested in me. And it was probably obvious to them, too, that I was attracted to some of them. We spent the weekend drinking, laughing, swimming and listening to music together.. oh, and flirting. I remember even flashing my breasts a couple of times when they were taking photos of the sea and one of them trying to catch it on his camera. But I didn't want to have sex with any of them that weekend. I really hadn't worked out what I wanted and whether I wanted to pursue anything. And then, you know what happened? Nothing. I didn't get raped. None of them raped me. And those boys weren't heroic for not raping me; they weren't 'good' for not raping me; not raping someone is the default position, actually. It should be what we expect from boys and men.

But I bet you think I made bad decisions? You think I took terrible risks? You think I was asking for trouble? That I didn't take sufficient "precautions"? And you know, I just thought I was having fun and that I could, of course, trust my friends. I thought I was safe. And in truth, there isn't anything actually wrong with a girl thinking she can trust a male friend. There isn't even anything wrong with an 18-year-old girl joyfully exposing her breasts. Neither of these things *cause* rape.

*Three.*



Everyone takes risks, even you. Almost everything has some risk attached to it and taking risks doesn't make you a terrible person. Sometimes people take risks, or make decisions you think you wouldn't take/make. Sadly, as a result of the rape culture we live in we often tend to think this when we read about a rape allegation in a newspaper article. It all seems so obvious to us by then. Why did she get so drunk she passed out? Why did she go home with him? Why didn't she struggle more? You need to ask yourself where these thoughts – which are very much directed at her and not him, the rapist – are actually coming from.

For instance, the four-year old boy I mentioned in the example above. After experiencing childhood sexual abuse perpetrated by someone who is supposed to love him, well, that boy might not be so great at determining which people are to be trusted and which aren't as he grows up. So when at 14 he hangs around with a couple of paedophiles who he likes because they seem to like him, is he more responsible for it this time when they rape him or not? Should he have been able to see, as clearly as you think you can see, that these men are bad news? What if the next time it happens he is smashed on drugs, is he more responsible for it this time? Did he not take enough precautions?

And the fifteen year old mentioned above, when she is an adult woman and another man tries to rape her and she just freezes up, cries and waits for it all to be over. She might not assert herself as much as you think she should in that situation, she might not struggle enough for you or shout enough, is she more responsible for the rape this time?

And the sense of independence and adventure that led me to go on a weekend away with four male friends, should that have been squashed out of me? Even though these same traits have since helped me in my career, made me a good mother, and are probably some of the things that my partner has been most attracted to in me?

Was I more or less stupid than the girl who passes out drunk? More or less cavalier than her? More or less naive? More or less self-harming? More or less slutty? Could I tweak the circumstances a fraction in her favour, or a fraction in mine for you; what would tip you over the balance so that you side with her or me or both of us in our defence? Would the next person agree with you or would they side (blame) differently? Can you see how arbitrary this all is when we decide *some* victims are responsible for their rape?

*Four.*

Now ask yourself, what precautions do you take to prevent rape when you go out? List them all – from what you decide to wear to which bar you choose to go to for drinks with your friends. And actually, choose another woman friend or relative and ask her what precautions she takes – what decisions does she make about public transport, about what time of day she goes outside to exercise, about where she parks her car at the shopping centre, about making eye contact with strangers? You'll find there is, literally, a list a mile long and I guarantee you that you'll find all women, not just you, already take a *lot* of precautions to prevent rape. Taking more responsibility isn't the magic answer to rape. Putting responsibility back where it belongs – on the person who rapes – is the only way to truly tackle rape culture.



So no, being a self-declared feminist won't cut you any slack on these comment threads, as long as you are still arguing that victims of rape aren't taking sufficient precautions you are coming from a place filled with victim-blaming and rape apologists, and excuse the rest of us feminists, but we won't be backing down from telling you exactly that.

This post was first published [here](#) - thanks to author for permission to cross post

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