

8 Ways To Respond...

when men's behavior crosses the line in a group setting.

Many women wrote to say they recognized themselves in that moment, the polite laugh, the instinct to keep the room comfortable, even when something feels off.

So here is the next step.

Below is a list of ways to respond when someone's behavior crosses the line in a group setting. The goal isn't to start a fight, embarrass anyone, or come across as preachy or overly sensitive. It's simply to shift the dynamic in the room.

These responses can quietly signal to other women that they're not alone, build trust within the group, and gently remind the person telling the joke that not everyone finds that behavior funny. Note that there will often be men who are uncomfortable but don't feel they can say anything. As unfortunate as that is, it's up to us ladies.

Sometimes all it takes is one calm, intelligent voice to change the tone of the room. Here are a few tips.

1. The “Light Truth” Approach

A calm statement that simply names the reality of the situation.

Examples:

- “I don’t think the women in the room are finding that as funny as you might think.”
- “That one landed a little differently over here.”
- “You might want to workshop that joke.”

Why it works:

It corrects the assumption without attacking the person.

2. The Curiosity Question

Instead of accusing, ask a question that prompts reflection.

Examples:

- “Do you think that joke lands the same with women as it does with guys?”
- “Would you tell that joke if your daughter were standing here?”
- “What part of that is supposed to be funny?”

Why it works:

Questions make people self-correct rather than feel attacked.

3. The Calm Boundary

A direct statement about your reaction without judging the person.

Examples:

- "That one's not really my kind of humor."
- "I'm going to sit that joke out."
- "Yeah... that one didn't work for me."

Why it works:

You speak for yourself rather than labeling the person as wrong.

4. The Social Redirect

Shift the conversation away from the behavior.

Examples:

- "Alright... moving on."
- "Okay, that's enough of the comedy hour."
- "Let's change the topic."

Why it works:

You reset the room without making it confrontational.

5. The Gentle Mirror

Reflect the behavior back to them.

Examples:

- “You’re very comfortable telling that one, aren’t you?”
- “You’ve got a whole routine there.”
- “You seem proud of that one.”

Why it works:

It lets the behavior speak for itself.

6. The Room Ally Approach

Speak collectively instead of individually.

Examples:

- “I think the women here might have a different take on that.”
- “You might want to read the room.”
- “We’re not quite the audience for that.”

Why it works:

It removes the dynamic of **one woman vs. one man**.

7. Humor That Flips the Dynamic (I happen to love these)

Sometimes humor works better than confrontation.

Examples:

- "That joke retired in 1985."
- "That's a very vintage perspective."
- "You're brave telling that in 2026."

Why it works:

It lightly signals that the behavior is outdated.

8. The Straight Truth (when needed) Sometimes clarity is the best approach.

Examples:

- "Yeah... the women here aren't actually laughing at that."
- "You might want to read the room."
- "That's not really respectful."

Why it works:

Directness can reset the tone quickly.

A helpful rule of thumb

A good guideline is:

Address the behavior, not the person.

Instead of:

- “You’re being sexist.”

Try:

- “That joke doesn’t land well with women.”

It reduces defensiveness.

One more important thing...

What I did yesterday was actually a great example of how to handle it. I surprised myself quite honestly.

A replay of my response:

“Of course, what else are we supposed to do? But trust me, none of us actually thought it was funny. Read the room next time.”

That was:

- calm
- honest
- socially aware
- not aggressive

That’s exactly the tone that often works best.

I hope this helps.