

Misogyny: Naming It, Seeing It, Addressing It

Posted May 1, 2026

There are moments in history when something long tolerated becomes impossible to ignore. We begin to hear it more clearly. We begin to see it more plainly. And perhaps most importantly, we begin to name it.

Misogyny is one of those things.

At its core, misogyny is the dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women. But in practice, it is rarely this simple or this overt. Misogyny is not only expressed through obvious hostility or aggression; it often operates quietly, embedded in everyday interactions, normalized beliefs, and institutional structures.

It is found not only in what is said, but in what is dismissed. Not only in what is done, but in what is tolerated.

To understand misogyny, we must move beyond the assumption that it is limited to extreme behaviours or fringe individuals. Instead, we must recognize it as a pattern: a system of thinking that reinforces inequality, limits voices, and shapes how women are perceived, treated, and valued.

What Misogyny Can Look Like

Misogyny does not always announce itself. More often, it reveals itself through patterns that, over time, create a climate of imbalance and harm.

It can sound like dismissing a woman's expertise while amplifying a man's opinion on the same topic. It can look like interrupting, speaking over, or explaining something to a woman in a way that assumes a lack of knowledge. It can appear in the scrutiny of women's appearance, tone, or emotional expression in ways that men are rarely subjected to.

It can also exist in more insidious ways: through double standards in leadership, expectations of caregiving without recognition, or the normalization of language that devalues women's experiences.

At its most harmful, misogyny manifests as harassment, control, and violence. But long before it reaches those extremes, it often begins in subtle, normalized behaviours that go unchallenged.

Why It Persists

Misogyny persists not because it is always intentional, but because it is often unexamined.

Cultural norms, media representations, and long-standing power structures have shaped beliefs about gender roles for generations. These beliefs can become internalized; held not only by men, but by women as well ... making misogyny a societal issue rather than an individual one.

When behaviours are minimized as "just a joke", when concerns are labeled as "overreactions", or when accountability is avoided to maintain comfort, misogyny is allowed to continue unchecked.

Silence, in this context, becomes reinforcement.

Recognizing the Signs

Awareness is the first step toward change.

Some key signs of misogyny include consistent patterns of dismissing or undermining women, unequal expectations based on gender, and language that reduces women to stereotypes or roles rather than recognizing their full humanity.

It can also show up in decision-making spaces where women's voices are absent, ignored, or undervalued. In more personal contexts, it may appear as control, belittling, or the expectation of obedience.

Recognizing these signs is not about labeling individuals; it is about identifying patterns and dynamics that require attention.

A Safe and Solution-Focused Response

Addressing misogyny requires both courage and care.

Not every situation calls for confrontation, and safety (emotional, psychological, and physical) must always come first. A solution-focused approach allows for response without escalation, and awareness without harm.

In some cases, addressing misogyny may look like asking a simple, clarifying question: *"Can you explain what you mean by that?"* This creates space for reflection without immediate defensiveness.

In other situations, it may involve setting boundaries: *"I'm not comfortable with that comment."* Clear, calm language can be powerful.

For those in positions of leadership or influence, it means actively creating environments where women's voices are heard, respected, and included. This includes examining policies, practices, and everyday interactions through a lens of equity.

It also means supporting one another. When misogyny is witnessed, allyship matters. Acknowledging, validating, and amplifying women's experiences can disrupt patterns of silence.

Moving Forward

Addressing misogyny is not about assigning blame; it is about creating awareness and fostering change.

It asks us to reflect on our own beliefs, to challenge what has been normalized, and to engage in conversations that may feel uncomfortable but are necessary.

Progress does not come from perfection. It comes from willingness.

A willingness to notice.

A willingness to listen.

A willingness to respond differently.

When we begin to name what we see, we create the possibility for something better ... not only for women, but for communities as a whole.