

# It's a *Venus vs. Mars* thing

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'Man up!' must be one of the most common and (mis)used phrases within our society. Why should men always have to 'man things up'?

Freelance Copywriter and Blogger, Sander Van Rijn is growing concerns about feminism and the unforeseen impact on men and their image within society. It's what causes a disconnection between the both sexes and one of the reasons why men feel pressured by society. Speaking for myself, and plenty of men that I know who struggle with this, statements like 'man up' make us feel helpless and intoxicated. Being raised this way as a male could lead to lifelong issues within our relationships with females. It could even encourage dangerous interactions in relation to women at a later age.

Because we must 'man up' we keep to ourselves and feel less encouraged to speak about our emotions. Feminism, which has become a prominent topic within our world, has only contributed to the image of men being abusive and sexist. Now just to clarify, I'm not against equal rights or feminism. I believe men should contribute to housekeeping just as much as women do and women should be able to make as much money. But to me, feminism seems to have become more of a 'Venus vs. Mars' thing.

Essentially, feminism should bridge the gap between men and women and their values. It was meant to bring both sexes closer together. However, the opposite seems to be the case and things like the #MeToo affairs have only pushed us further apart. The movement seems to have strengthened the image of men abusing and suppressing women. And it's been making it extremely hard to 'man up'

when we're expected not to show weakness and not to do harm to our female counterparts by being manly somehow. We're expected to be strong, tough and in control over our weaknesses as men. We are expected to provide safety and a sense of security.

The problem with feminism is that there's a fine line between addressing the issue regarding inequality between men and women, and inadvertently discriminating against men and labeling them as 'abusive' or 'suppressing'. It's causing us to be on guard all the time, because we often feel like we should avoid putting ourselves into positions that could scare, stress or worry women. Such is the coincidental effect of feminism, which is somewhat withholding men to remain a sense of strength and self-control. Nonetheless, the issue of inequality must be addressed as much as the psychological effects on men should be. Only then can both sexes find common ground and seek for a tangible solution. On the contrary, it's hard to be a man if we constantly need to keep the woman's rights into account. History has shown that it's seemingly impossible for a dominant class of people to establish equal rights with underprivileged people. Because the former is needed to make serious concessions to the rights of the latter. However, this concept will only drive an insignificant amount of men away. Many of us are actually willing to accept the equality of men and women. I mentioned feminism to become more of a 'Venus vs. Mars' thing. But thinking about it, maybe it's always been that way.

Like there's femininity, there's masculinity. Without one, the other can't possibly be. But despite the fact that both can't exist without one another, their existence comes with friction, conflicts and challenges. Ancient mythology associated the Roman goddess Venus to femininity, whereas the Roman god of war Mars was associated with masculinity and lust. Whereas feminism inadvertently encourages the polarization between men and women, I believe the solution lies hidden within us. We should be looking at the Venus vs. Mars function within ourselves, which is what I meant by saying 'it's becoming a Venus vs. Mars thing'.

If men were to allow themselves to be more in touch with their feminine sides, we wouldn't have to fight our own demons so much and let ego get the best of us. Which is ultimately paving the way for women. Tempering masculinity as men creates space for women to gain their independence and, thus, connect with their masculine sides. They then too will have to face the struggles that come with masculinity which creates a deeper understanding for their male counterparts. Protecting women also means creating space for them to develop into equal beings with equal rights and challenges.

**“Feminism has, in my opinion, only magnified the imbalance in rights between men and women without offering a constructive solution to the problem.”**

In the meanwhile the differences between the two sexes is only increasing as men fail to live up to these toxic standards set by society and the urge to compel to the needs of feminists. I'm explicitly stating 'feminists' because most women do in fact seek resolutions with their male counterparts.



Change is also visible in industries such as in fashion, whereas women have started to dress more baggy and manly as opposed to men who are dressing more skinny or gender-neutral. Fashion has played (and continues to play) an important role in bringing men and women closer. Many brands have started manufacturing unisex collections and are taking a lead when it comes to preventing ethnic profiling. Fashion quite literally and symbolically is a representation of form, body and content. Identities are something we can construct and shape consciously and by doing so, we allow us men to bring back chivalry into something more suited for 2021 and beyond. Feminism should at last need more male-feminist role models.