



Through this social media campaign Maitri is starting a dialogue with men in our community to identify and eliminate the root cause of gender based violence and partner violence.

#EngagingMenAndBoys

Thank you **Neranga Jayaweera** for joining us in this meaningful discussion.

Q: Tell us your name and a little bit about you, anything you want to share with our readers.

A: My name is Neranga Jayaweera. I am a 28-year-old male living and working in New Zealand in the accounting and finance industry. I am from Sri Lanka.

Q: In what ways can men be allies to women, in their day to day life?

A: Men have societal and cultural biases that lead to making faster judgments and conclusions when it comes to dealing with women. Being an ally means being educated about women's issues, empathetic to their experiences, and supporting their right to equity in all aspects of life.

Q: How can men inspire other men to develop a sense of equity and respect towards women in their day-to-day dealings?

A: I've always wondered why, when it comes to addressing doctors in most Sri Lankan hospitals, all female doctors are referred to or labeled as "Dr (Miss/Mrs)" followed by their name, while male counterparts are simply addressed as "Dr." I find this practice very discriminatory and sexist.

The hospital management should eliminate the "(Miss/Mrs)" labeling and address all doctors as "Dr," regardless of their gender. This way, we can normalize and reduce biases against women, especially in male-dominated professions such as medicine.

Similarly, using neutral or gender-neutral titles in everyday conversations among men can inspire progressive societal change and attitudes.

Q: What is the role of a man to be a good role model for future generations?

A: The worst thing a man can do is view or perceive gender equity as a threat. Men must learn to embrace the progressive shifts in society as we strive for greater equity. Embracing this shift means challenging traditional gender roles that confine individuals to predetermined societal expectations. Men must be confident in their own identity while encouraging women to break the glass ceiling and achieve success. It also means having an open mind with regard to wives, girlfriends, mothers, and daughters, and supporting them in their chosen careers and decisions.

Q: What are your thoughts about division of labor or household chores in a couple or family situation?

A: I believe it's important to share household duties, but the division of chores should not be based on gender. If both spouses are working, they should come to an arrangement that they believe works best and makes them happy. This could involve sharing cooking responsibilities or one person cooking while the other cleans up. Similarly, all chores and household duties can be planned and managed in a way that the couple or family believes is optimal.

If only one spouse is working, there may be a stronger case for the stay-at-home spouse to handle the household duties. However, every situation and approach can be different, and as long as the family believes it is an optimal use of their skills and time (promoting happiness, equity, and efficiency), I think it is a pragmatic solution.