If a man whistles at you, don't respond. You're a lady, not a dog. @UserOne / boldomatic.com
Years ago I provided occupational therapy services for the Indiana Department of Corrections in a high security all male prison. Interesting job. Most of my time there was spent in the infirmary, though on occasion I would need to make an escorted walk across the prison yard to the solitary confinement area to see a patient. This trip usually involved hearing some whistles sprinkled with "hey baby" and occasionally more explicit and creative heckling. A little uncomfortable, but nothing too serious being they were literally behind bars. I definitely kept my head forward and walked as straight as possible giving zero indication that I might be working it.

At one point in my tenure at the DOC I made this walk pregnant, which transformed the whistling into a stadium applause, and the uproar wasn't for the younger cute blonde trainee replacing me on my maternity leave...it was for the belly! As I waddled and tried to ignore the dudes as usual, the shouting and cheering was getting louder and wilder with gate rattling and all--you would have thought that I just scored the winning score of a game. Ready to have a baby in a few short weeks, I couldn't walk in my straight stiff posture--somehow by default I was working it. The prisoners, and I, found this hilariously ridiculous--at least I could laugh at it (again they were behind bars). Fortunately security picked me up in a vehicle to escort me for the return walk saying they didn't want to risk any chaos. I was glad to not have to "work it" past them again with my waddle.

Developing my yoga practice helps me move with poise and grace and confidence... poise, grace and confidence still gets whistles. Having helped hundreds of women learn to feel more comfortable in their bodies through yoga, I know there is a fear of unsolicited attention from men that they are trying to avoid. When the attention is from a group of men it becomes especially painful. I also know that the women who keep a sense of humor while "working it" (whether the work is intentional or not) thrive.

A vexing story to me is that of Queen Vashti from the Old Testament Book of Esther. This Queen was married to a powerful warrior that liked...
to celebrate his victories. On the 7th day of an all boys party with open bar, he was drunk and summoned his wife to leave her guests at the all women's royal party so she could "work it" for him and all of his drunk male guests. Nada. As a result, for what I consider keeping her dignity as Queen, the royal advisors banished Vashti from her husband for life and stripped her of her royal position. A decree went out for women to "respect their husbands from least to greatest". Interestingly, despite having an estimated 350 wives, Xerxes appointed Vashti's son as heir to the throne*. Obviously Vashti didn't need a royal decree to be respected.

Fortunately for all of us Christians and Jews, Esther the Jewish girl was able to be a part of the king's sex slave collection (harem) and had the opportunity to spend one night in bed with him. Somehow as a virgin she wowed him to become queen. Esther knew how to "work it". Later in the story when she needed that favor to save her people, she "worked it" again. Esther's prowess saved the Jewish race which birthed Jesus. I'm glad Xerxes didn't ask her to "work it" in front of his drunk friends though I'm guessing he learned that lesson the hard way and yes we are still discussing this over 2,500 years later! Some stories just don't get old.

I've often heard Esther celebrated for her submission, today's mantra manna celebrates Esther for being able to "work it". "Modest is Hottest" is a virtue, but not at the expense of being unable to have the prowess to "work it" within the system as a woman. Being a hermit and hiding doesn't change the world for Christ and this is why Christian woman should be able to "work it"...just like Queen Esther.

*Esther and Ahasuerus: An Identification of the Persons So Named; Followed ...

By Richard Edmund Tyrwhitt