

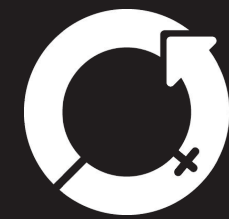
International Women's Day 2023

#EmbraceEquity

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

Embrace equity today, and always
in partnership with [LeanIn.Org](https://leanin.org)

LEAN IN



International Women's Day

LeanIn.Org and InternationalWomensDay.com are
working in collaboration to #EmbraceEquity this
International Women's Day.

This content has been developed by LeanIn.Org and is
distributed by InternationalWomensDay.com.

Moderator Guide

Preparing to host your International
Women's Day event with Lean In

WHY WE'RE HERE

73% of women experience bias at work—yet less than a third of employees are able to recognize bias when they see it. Whether deliberate or unconscious, bias makes it harder for women to get hired and promoted and negatively impacts their day-to-day work experiences. This hurts women and makes it difficult for companies to level the playing field.

Knowing that bias exists isn't enough.

**This International Women's Day
and beyond, let's all fully
#EmbraceEquity.**

Source: LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, Women in the Workplace 2021



50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

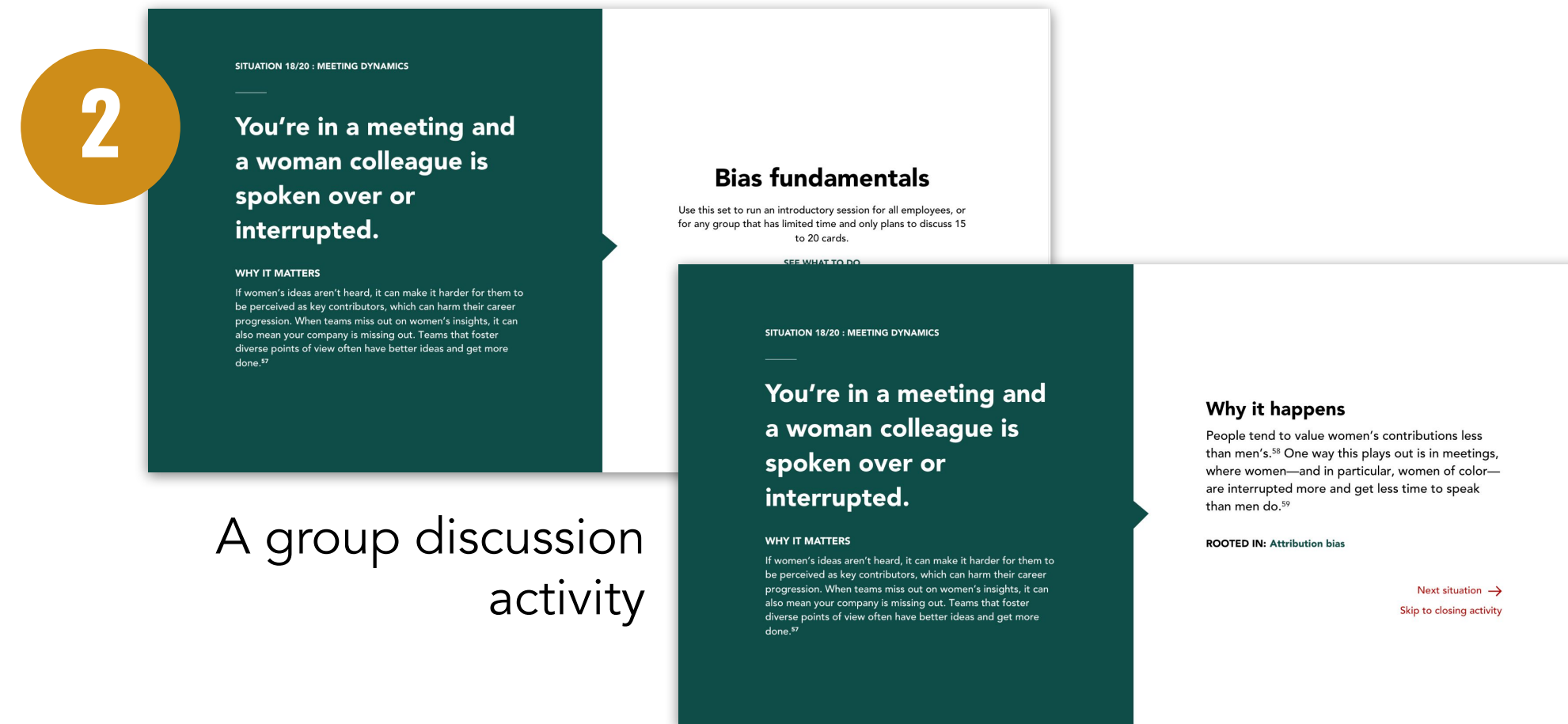
MODERATOR NOTES

50 Ways to Fight Bias is a free digital program to empower people to identify and challenge bias head on

The program is optimized for virtual workshops and consists of two parts:



A short video series



A group discussion activity

The program highlights almost **100 instances of workplace bias**, including the compounding biases women experience because of their race, sexual orientation, disability, or other aspects of their identity.

WHAT MAKES 50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS EFFECTIVE?

MODERATOR NOTES

- ✓ Specific and solutions oriented
- ✓ Rooted in research
- ✓ Strong emphasis on intersectionality
- ✓ Designed to engage all employees

50 Ways has been used by thousands of organizations, including **Amazon, Fossil Group, PayPal, Momentive**, and **The Wharton MBA Program**

PayPal

Walmart

amazon

Wharton
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

95% of participants are **more committed to challenging bias**

96% of managers feel **better equipped to talk about bias with their teams**

90% of participants say **they know what to do when they see women face bias at work**

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Educate people on how to identify and challenge bias in the workplace using specific examples.
- ▶ Encourage solutions-oriented discussions and learn research-backed recommendations for what to do and why it matters to challenge bias when you see it.
- ▶ Commit to one action that participants will take to **#EmbraceEquity** and create a more fair and equal workplace this year.

Note: This presentation works well for large mixed-gender groups; however, during the activity we recommend you split into small discussion groups of 6-8 people using virtual breakout rooms.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY EVENT AGENDA

Agenda for 60-90 minute workshop:

Guiding principles

Bias is complex, and countering it takes work. As you engage with the situations in this activity, remember that:

Bias isn't limited to gender

People also face biases due to their race, sexual orientation, disability, or other aspects of identity—and the compounding discrimination can be much greater than the sum of its parts. This is called intersectionality, and it can impact any situation.

Knowing that bias exists isn't enough

We all need to look for it and take steps to counteract it. That's why this activity outlines specific examples of bias towards women with clear recommendations for what you can do.

We all fall into bias traps

People of all genders can consciously or unconsciously make biased comments or behave in other ways that disadvantage women.

Give people the benefit of the doubt

Remember that everyone is here to learn and do better—and an open and honest exchange is part of that process.

Stories should be anonymous

When sharing stories of finding or experiencing bias, be mindful of your audience.

Some situations may be difficult to hear

Be mindful that some of the cards describe situations that may be sensitive or painful for participants.

1

Set the tone

Level set with participants on how to encourage an open and respectful discussion.

Overview of bias types

This activity covers the most common types of bias against women at work. Select a bias type to learn more about what it is, why it happens, and why it's harmful. Or watch the overview video, below, for an explanation of all five types of bias.

Play the video

An introduction to the common biases women experience (12 minutes)

Unconscious bias

Performance bias

Attribution bias

Likeability bias

Affinity bias

2

Introduction to bias

Participants watch a short video that explains the most common types of biases that women face.

SITUATION VS. MEETING DYNAMICS

A woman suggests an idea in a meeting and it falls flat. A few minutes later, a man suggests the same idea and gets an enthusiastic reaction.

WHY IT MATTERS

Getting credit for ideas is important—it's often how employees get noticed. When people don't feel heard, they may also stop speaking up and sharing their views. Over time, if their contributions go unseen, it can slow their advancement. In both cases, companies end up missing out.

Start the conversation

As a group, discuss your reaction to the situation. Have you heard or seen something like this before? What can you do in these types of situations?

After the discussion, read what to do and why it happens.

SEE WHAT TO DO

3

Group activity

Participants discuss specific examples of bias, brainstorm solutions together, and learn research-backed recommendations for what to do.

Closing activity

Today you've heard about a lot of different actions you can take to fight bias in your workplace. Now it's time to put what you've learned into practice.

1 Think of one thing you're going to do when you see bias at work—or one thing that you've learned that you're going to share with others.

2 Write it down. This is your "one action."

3 Taking turns, go around the group and share your one action.

4

Commit to action

Participants commit to take One Action to #EmbraceEquity based on what they've learned.

PREPARING TO HOST YOUR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY EVENT

Step 1: Download and review these Speaker Notes for a step-by-step guide on how to moderate a 50 Ways workshop for International Women’s Day

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS Speaker Notes

LEAN IN

Overview

50 Ways to Fight Bias is a free digital program to empower all employees to identify and challenge bias head-on. The program is optimized for virtual workshops and consists of two parts: a short video that explains the most common types of biases that women face, and a digital card activity where participants discuss specific examples of bias in small groups, brainstorm solutions together, and learn research-backed recommendations for what to do.

This digital program includes 12 sets of digital cards curated for different audiences and workplace interactions—for example, we offer a set for managers and a set focused on bias in hiring and promotions.

Your role as moderator

To facilitate real conversations about biases women face at work, you will:

- Guide the group through the different parts of the activity
- Ask follow-up questions to encourage discussion and mutual learning
- Make sure everyone feels supported

Running the program virtually

50 Ways to Fight Bias can be run virtually using any platform you choose. Below are some best practices for engaging participants virtually:

- **Use breakout rooms:** For the group activity, you will divide participants into mixed-gender groups of 6-8 people. Some platforms will allow you to assign participants to breakout rooms before the meeting, while others will only allow this while the meeting is in progress.
- **Share the link to the digital program with participants:** Before sending participants to breakout rooms, share the link to the digital program and the name of the set you have selected. This will allow all breakout rooms to engage with the situations you selected.
- **Use announcement feature:** If your platform allows for it, keep participants on track and moving through the situations by using the announcement feature.
- **Leverage chat feature for closing activity:** When facilitating the “One Action” activity, ask participants to share their One Action in the chat of the platform.

1

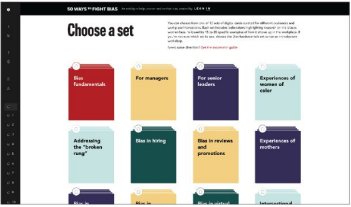
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50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS Speaker Notes

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5. Choose a set

WHAT THEY’LL SEE

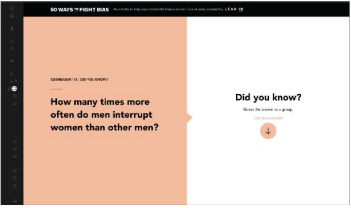


WHAT YOU’LL DO

Select the set of digital cards that participants will discuss in your workshop. You should have chosen which set you will use during your preparation. There are 12 sets of digital cards curated for different audiences and workplace interactions—for example, we offer a set for managers and a set focused on bias in hiring and promotions.

6. Warm up the room (~5–10 min)

WHAT THEY’LL SEE



WHAT YOU’LL DO

Challenge the group to guess the findings of some of the most surprising research on biases women face at work.

- 1 Read the prompt to the group.
- 2 Instruct the audience to guess the answer aloud or in the chat feature of your platform.
- 3 Click on the arrow button to reveal the answer.

6

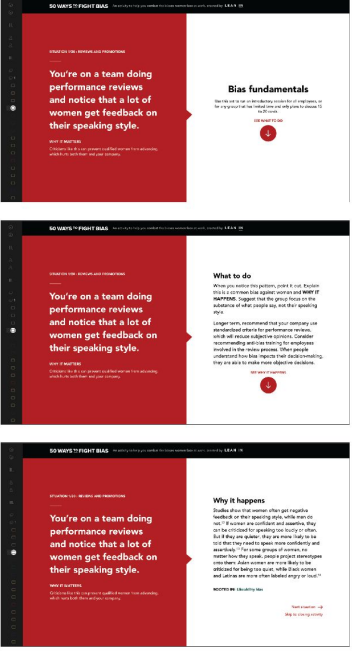
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50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS Speaker Notes

LEAN IN

7. Group activity (~30–60 min)

WHAT THEY’LL SEE



WHAT YOU’LL DO

- 1 Break participants into small groups and share the link to the digital program.
- 2 Ask each group to select one person to read the situation and **WHY IT MATTERS** aloud to the group.
- 3 Prompt participants to share with the group what they would do in this situation. You can use any the following prompts (or your own):
 - Has anyone experienced something like this before?
 - How would you respond in this situation?
 - How do you think bias is involved here?
- 4 After the discussion, have participants read **WHAT TO DO** and **WHY IT HAPPENS** aloud to the group.
- 5 Groups will continue through as many of these situations as they can until there are only 10 minutes remaining in the session.

7

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PREPARING TO HOST YOUR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

Step 2: Attend an optional, virtual moderator training session hosted by LeanIn.Org

Our 60-minute virtual training will walk you through the program materials, give you an understanding of the program concepts, and provide tips for answering frequently asked questions so that you can feel confident about running Lean In's 50 Ways to Fight Bias program this International Women's Day.

[REGISTER HERE](#)



PREPARING TO HOST YOUR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

Step 3: Use the bias situations included in this presentation or choose your own

Designed to be flexible and tailored to suit your organization's needs, 50 Ways to Fight Bias features almost 100 digital cards that highlight specific instances of workplace bias.

This PDF presentation includes all of the Bias Fundamentals we think everyone should know and is ready to be used for your International Women's Day event (feel free to prioritize the situations that resonate most with your organization).

However, we also make it easy to run your workshop your way:

- Explore 12 digital sets curated for different audiences [here](#)
- If you don't see a set that works for you, you can always create your own [here](#)
- Access the program translated into six languages [here](#)



HOW TO USE 50 WAYS TO BREAK THE BIAS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION ALL YEAR ROUND


1	ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES	<p>Format: For large gatherings—either in-person or virtual—select a set of cards and use our virtual moderator guide to walk everyone through the activity. Break participants into smaller groups or virtual breakout rooms to discuss the situations and brainstorm solutions together.</p> <p>Set recommendations: Bias Fundamentals; Experiences of women of color; Bias in networking and mentoring</p>
2	TRAIN YOUR MANAGERS AND SENIOR LEADERS	<p>Format: Managers play a critical role in creating inclusive team cultures, yet only a third of managers challenge bias when it happens. Lead managers through the program to help them understand how they can challenge bias—and then ask them to bring the program to their teams. .</p> <p>Set recommendations: For Managers</p>
3	INTEGRATE INTO YOUR HIRING AND REVIEWS/PROMOTIONS PROCESS	<p>Set recommendations: Addressing the broken rung; Bias in hiring; Bias in reviews and promotions</p>
4	FACILITATE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS	<p>Set recommendation: Use one of our 12 sets that is relevant to your small group—or customize your own set.</p>

DISCOVER MORE FROM LEAN IN

Lean In's free diversity, equity, and inclusion training programs equip every employee with the knowledge and tools they need to create a more inclusive workplace culture.

CHALLENGE GENDER BIAS

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS




This digital workshop highlights almost 100 specific examples of workplace bias against women, and gives employees expert recommendations to push back.

[EXPLORE 50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS](#)

CREATE A CULTURE OF ALLYSHIP

ALLYSHIP AT WORK




This diversity training program guides employees to recognize their privilege and power to create change, and equips them with more than 50 specific actions they can take to show up as allies.

[EXPLORE ALLYSHIP AT WORK](#)

CREATE A NETWORK

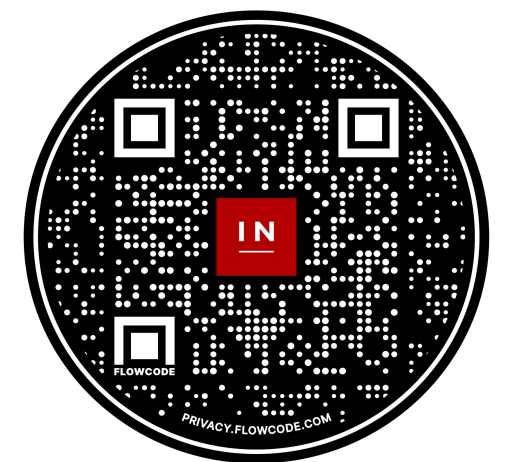
CIRCLES FOR COMPANIES



Circles bring women together in small groups to talk about their experiences, build skills, share advice, and celebrate each other's wins.

[EXPLORE CIRCLES FOR COMPANIES](#)

Scan the QR code to sign up to receive the latest information on Lean In's programs and free resources for companies to help you continue to #EmbraceEquity all year round.



International Women's Day 2023

#EmbraceEquity

PRESENTATION STARTS ON NEXT SLIDE



LEAN IN

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

An activity that helps you combat the biases women face at work

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Welcome

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

LEAN IN

LeanIn.Org helps women achieve their ambitions
and works to create an equal world.

LeanIn.Org thanks our partners for their valuable contributions to this program:



- ▶ Bias—whether deliberate or unconscious—is holding women back in the workplace.
- ▶ It makes it harder for women to get hired and promoted and negatively impacts their day-to-day work experiences.
- ▶ This hurts women and makes it hard for companies to level the playing field.
- ▶ Today, we'll learn concrete steps to address bias against women head-on.

TODAY'S AGENDA

- 1 Set the tone
- 2 Learn about biases women face at work
- 3 Dive into specific situations and solutions
- 4 Finish with a closing activity

Setting the tone

- 1 Women face biases due to their race, sexuality, and other aspects of their identity.
- 2 Intersectionality can be at play in any situation.
- 3 We all fall into bias traps.
- 4 Knowing that bias exists isn't enough—commit to take action.

GROUND RULES FOR TODAY

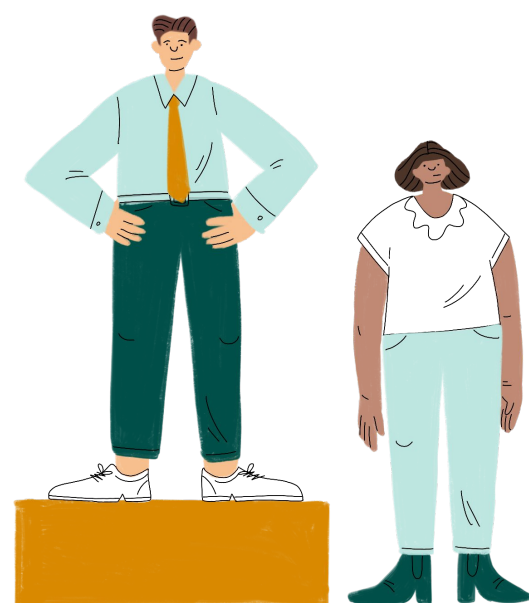
- 1 Some situations may be difficult to hear.
- 2 Stories should be anonymous.
- 3 Give people the benefit of the doubt.

Overview: common types of biases women face at work

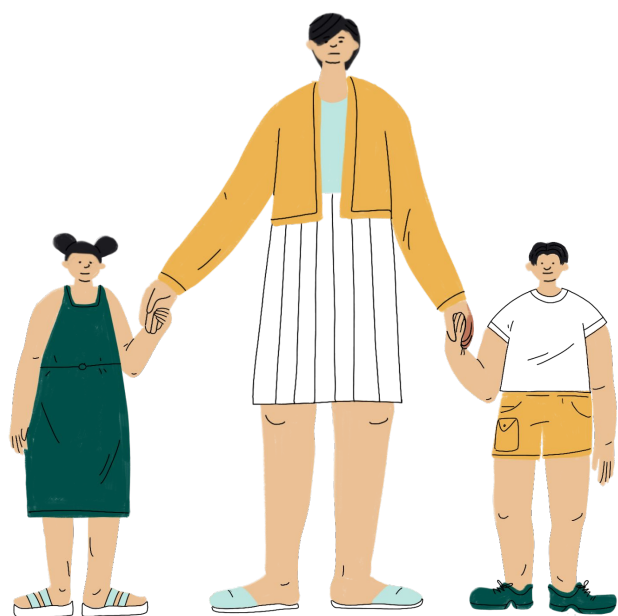
COMMON TYPES OF BIAS AGAINST WOMEN AT WORK



Likeability bias



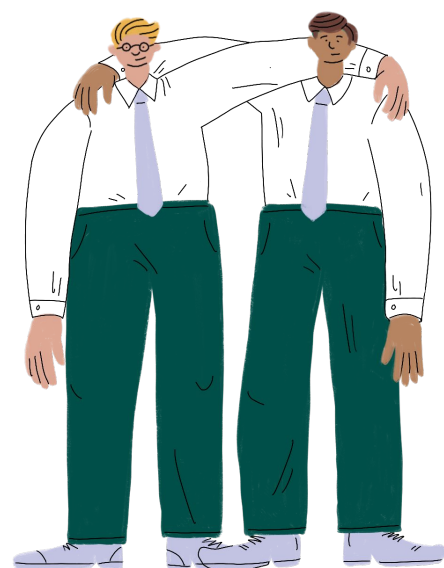
Performance bias



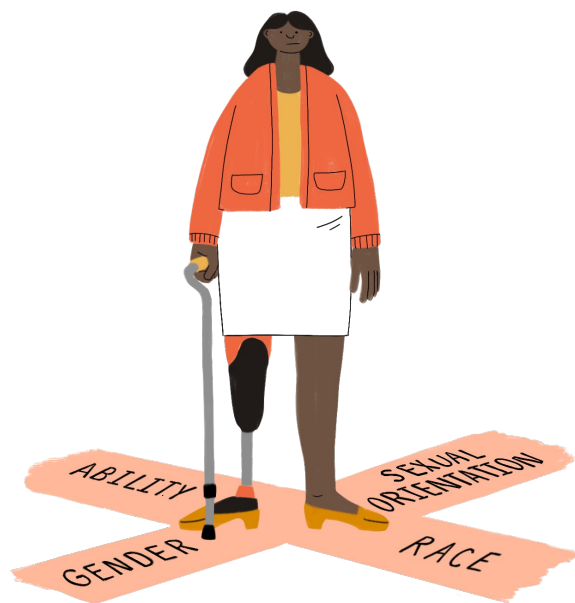
Maternal bias



Attribution bias



Affinity bias



Intersectionality



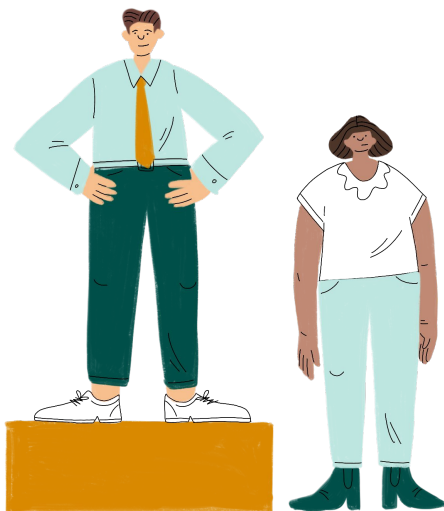
Watch the video:
"Introduction to the Common Biases Women Experience"

COMMON TYPES OF BIAS AGAINST WOMEN AT WORK



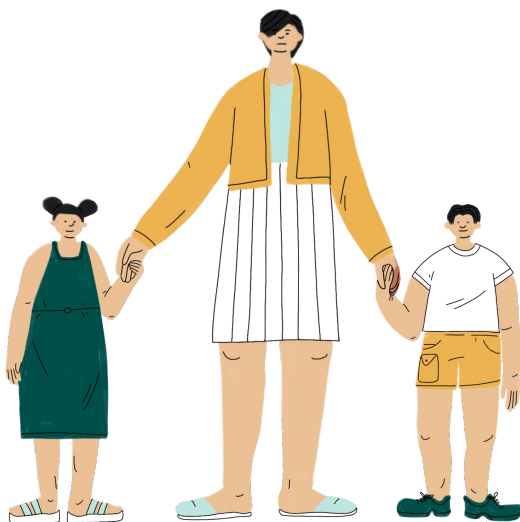
Likeability bias

Likeability bias is rooted in age-old expectations. We expect men to be assertive, so when they lead, it feels natural. We expect women to be kind and communal, so when they assert themselves, we like them less.¹¹



Performance bias

Performance bias is based on deep-rooted—and incorrect—assumptions about women’s and men’s abilities. We tend to underestimate women’s performance and overestimate men’s.⁹



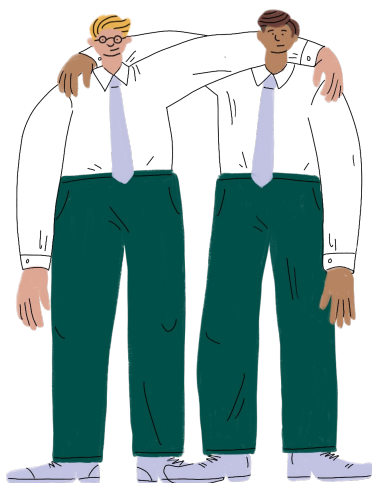
Maternal bias

Motherhood triggers false assumptions that women are less committed to their careers—and even less competent.¹²



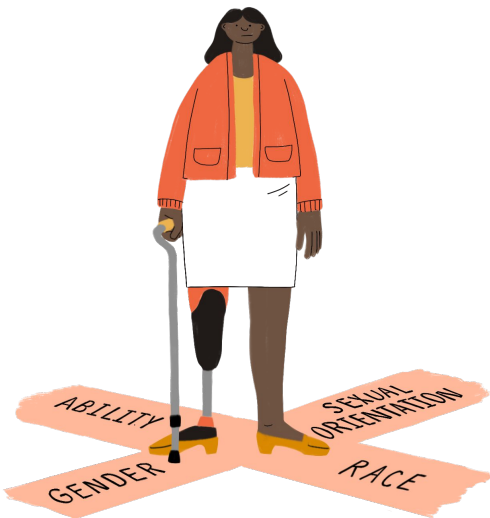
Attribution bias

Attribution bias is closely linked to performance bias. Because we see women as less competent than men, we tend to give them less credit for accomplishments and blame them more for mistakes.¹⁰



Affinity bias

Affinity bias is what it sounds like: we gravitate toward people like ourselves in appearance, beliefs, and background. And we may avoid or even dislike people who are different from us.¹³



Intersectionality

Bias isn’t limited to gender. Women can also experience biases due to their race, sexual orientation, a disability, or other aspects of their identity.

Microaggressions are comments and actions that demean or dismiss someone based on their gender, race, or other aspects of their identity.

Some groups of women experience them even more often:

- ▶ Black women are nearly 2.5x more likely than white women to hear someone at work express surprise about their language skills or other abilities
- ▶ Lesbian and bisexual women and women with disabilities are far more likely than other women to hear demeaning remarks about themselves or others like them



Icebreakers

How many times more often do men interrupt women than other men?

ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

How many times more often do men interrupt women than other men?

ANSWER

Almost 3 times more often.⁴⁹

In a study of performance reviews, what % of women received negative feedback on their personal style such as “You can sometimes be abrasive”?

And what % of men received that same type of feedback?

ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

In a study of performance reviews, what % of women received negative feedback on their personal style such as "You can sometimes be abrasive"?

And what % of men received that same type of feedback?

ANSWER

66% of women
and 1% of men.⁵⁰

What % of Black women have *never* had an informal interaction with a senior leader at their company?

ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

What % of Black women have *never* had an informal interaction with a senior leader at their company?

ANSWER

59%.⁵¹

Workplace situations

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Move into your small group or breakout room. Everyone should have a copy of the presentation you will use for discussion.
- 2 Select one person to read the situation and **WHY IT MATTERS**.
- 3 As a group, discuss what you would do in this situation.
- 4 After 3-5 minutes of discussion, read **WHAT TO DO** and **WHY IT HAPPENS**.
- 5 Continue through as many situations as you can in the time allotted.



REVIEWS & PROMOTIONS

You're on a team doing performance reviews and notice that a lot of women get feedback on their speaking style.

WHY IT MATTERS

Criticisms like this can prevent qualified women from advancing, which hurts both them and your company.

LEAN IN



You're on a team doing performance reviews and notice that a lot of women get feedback on their speaking style.

WHAT TO DO

When you notice this pattern, point it out. Explain this is a common bias against women and **WHY IT HAPPENS**. Suggest that the group focus on the substance of what people say, not their speaking style.

Longer term, recommend that your company use standardized criteria for performance reviews, which will reduce subjective opinions. Consider recommending anti-bias training for employees involved in the review process. When people understand how bias impacts their decision-making, they are able to make more objective decisions.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Studies show that women often get negative feedback on their speaking style, while men do not.²² If women are confident and assertive, they can be criticized for speaking too loudly or often. But if they are quieter, they are more likely to be told that they need to speak more confidently and assertively.²³ For some groups of women, no matter how they speak, people project stereotypes onto them: Asian women are more likely to be criticized for being too quiet, while Black women and Latinas are more often labeled angry or loud.²⁴

Rooted in likeability bias

LEAN IN

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NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

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Rooted in likeability bias

You're on a hiring committee and a colleague rules out a woman of color because she's "not a good cultural fit."

WHY IT MATTERS

Evaluations of "culture fit" tend to be subjective. They can lead us to screen out people who aren't like us, which means we can miss qualified candidates and end up with less diverse teams. Plus, it can mean that talented job seekers lose out on opportunities.

HIRING

You're on a hiring committee and a colleague rules out a woman of color because she's "not a good cultural fit."

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

When someone rules out a candidate because of fit, ask them to be more specific. If their thinking boils down to "she's different," point out that different can be good. Propose that you look for someone who adds to the team dynamic—a "culture add"—instead of someone who simply fits into it.

As a longer-term solution, ask that a set of standardized criteria be used for all hires. This reduces bias by minimizing subjective evaluations.⁵⁵

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

You're on a hiring committee and a colleague rules out a woman of color because she's "not a good cultural fit."

WHY IT HAPPENS

We tend to gravitate toward—and hire—people who remind us of ourselves, which can impact our ability to objectively evaluate who would bring the most to the job.⁵⁶

Rooted in affinity bias

You're in a meeting and a woman colleague is spoken over or interrupted.

WHY IT MATTERS

If women's ideas aren't heard, it can make it harder for them to be perceived as key contributors, which can harm their career progression. When teams miss out on women's insights, it can also mean your company is missing out. Teams that foster diverse points of view often have better ideas and get more done.⁵⁷

MEETING DYNAMICS

You're in a meeting and a woman colleague is spoken over or interrupted.

WHAT TO DO

When a woman gets interrupted, speak up. You might say, "I'd like to hear the rest of [Name's] thoughts" or "[Name] raised an important point. I'd like to consider it further before we move on."

If you're leading a meeting, reduce interruptions by following an agenda and asking people to contribute in a structured way. You might say, "Let's go around the room and get everyone's ideas."

You can also invite individual women in the room to contribute their opinions.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

MEETING DYNAMICS

You're in a meeting and a woman colleague is spoken over or interrupted.

WHY IT HAPPENS

People tend to value women's contributions less than men's.⁵⁸ One way this plays out is in meetings, where women—and in particular, women of color—are interrupted more and get less time to speak than men do.⁵⁹

Rooted in attribution bias

At an all-staff meeting, your company's leaders share concrete goals for hiring, promoting, and retaining women, but it's clear they haven't set goals for women of color specifically.

WHY IT MATTERS

If companies don't set goals by gender and race combined, they are not explicitly prioritizing the advancement of women of color. That means women of color, who face a uniquely challenging combination of sexism and racism, are more likely to be overlooked.⁶⁰ It can also send the message that the company hasn't made the advancement of women of color a priority.

HIRING

At an all-staff meeting, your company's leaders share concrete goals for hiring, promoting, and retaining women, but it's clear they haven't set goals for women of color specifically.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

If you feel comfortable, you could raise the question directly in the meeting: "Do we set these goals for women of color?" You could also speak to your manager or HR team afterward about the importance of setting goals that combine gender and race.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

HIRING

At an all-staff meeting, your company's leaders share concrete goals for hiring, promoting, and retaining women, but it's clear they haven't set goals for women of color specifically.

Intersectional card

WHY IT HAPPENS

Many corporate diversity efforts focus on either gender or race, but very few focus on the two together. In fact, only 7 percent of companies set representation targets for gender and race combined. This may happen because company leaders aren't aware of the importance of an intersectional approach to diversity efforts.

Situation adapted from *The Memo: What Women of Color Need to Know to Secure a Seat at the Table*, by Minda Harts

Someone suggests that a woman on your team be given a big, high-profile project, and a colleague says, “I don’t think this is a good time for her since she just had a baby.”

WHY IT MATTERS

Your company likely wants to retain and promote talented women. Sidelining them—even with good intentions—works against that goal by denying them opportunities that can lead to advancement.

REVIEWS & PROMOTIONS

Someone suggests that a woman on your team be given a big, high-profile project, and a colleague says, “I don’t think this is a good time for her since she just had a baby.”

WHAT TO DO

Remind your colleague that this could be a career-changing project for whoever gets it, so it’s better to let the new mom decide for herself whether or not she wants to take it on.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

REVIEWS & PROMOTIONS

Someone suggests that a woman on your team be given a big, high-profile project, and a colleague says, “I don’t think this is a good time for her since she just had a baby.”

WHY IT HAPPENS

Motherhood triggers assumptions that women are less competent and less committed to their careers. As a result, they are held to higher standards and presented with fewer opportunities. Studies show that the “maternal wall” women face when they have kids is the strongest gender bias.⁶¹

Rooted in maternal bias

In a private conversation, a coworker expresses resentment about “special treatment” for a woman with a disability who is allowed to work flexible hours.

WHY IT MATTERS

People with disabilities may need flexibility for many reasons—for example, to manage pain or for medical treatment. When those needs are questioned, they may feel undermined, stigmatized, and unhappy at work.⁶² But when employees with disabilities are fully supported, they’re usually just as happy as their colleagues.⁶³ This has a big impact, since 1 in 6 working-age Americans has a visible or invisible disability.⁶⁴

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

In a private conversation, a coworker expresses resentment about “special treatment” for a woman with a disability who is allowed to work flexible hours.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Tell your coworker WHY IT MATTERS. You can also talk to HR and ask them to clarify your company’s general policies on flexible work, so that people are less likely to view specific situations as unfair.⁶⁵

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

In a private conversation, a coworker expresses resentment about “special treatment” for a woman with a disability who is allowed to work flexible hours.

Intersectional card

WHY IT HAPPENS

This can happen when people don’t understand that accommodations like flexibility aren’t “nice to have” for employees with disabilities—they’re essential. Additionally, because people with disabilities tend to be seen as less valuable and competent, coworkers may question whether they really need or deserve extra support.⁶⁶ This is especially true for women with disabilities, who face more bias and disrespect at work than almost any other group.⁶⁷

Your team holds regular happy hours after work for networking and bonding at a local bar. You realize that one colleague, a Muslim woman, has never come.

WHY IT MATTERS

Some Muslims avoid alcohol and may therefore feel uncomfortable in a bar.⁶⁸ If most networking events are held in bars, it means they miss out on the team bonding that can lead to career opportunities.⁶⁹ It can also send a message that employees who don't drink—and other groups like caregivers who need to be home soon after work—are not considered when social events are planned.⁷⁰

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

Your team holds regular happy hours after work for networking and bonding at a local bar. You realize that one colleague, a Muslim woman, has never come.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Talk to your team leader and explain WHY IT MATTERS. Encourage them to plan a wide range of events that leave out as few people as possible. For example, if your team goes out every week to a bar, consider moving it to a restaurant sometimes. Move a few evening events to lunchtime so working parents can join. And make the changes with sensitivity, so no one gets blamed. If happy hours are simply canceled, it may create bad feelings among some employees.⁷¹

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

Your team holds regular happy hours after work for networking and bonding at a local bar. You realize that one colleague, a Muslim woman, has never come.

Intersectional card

WHY IT HAPPENS

Many teams—and companies—don't realize how much thoughtfulness is needed to ensure that work events are inclusive to as many employees as possible. This might happen because teams fall into the habit of replicating bonding events that have been offered for decades—many of which were designed for less diverse and inclusive workplaces.

A manager describes a woman who reports to her as “overly ambitious” when she asks for a promotion.

WHY IT MATTERS

When a woman is criticized for competing for a promotion, it can have a negative impact on her and on the company as a whole. She may miss out on the chance to grow at work. Other women may hear the message that they shouldn't ask for promotions. And the company may miss an opportunity to advance a talented team member and make her feel valued.

REVIEWS & PROMOTIONS

A manager describes a woman who reports to her as "overly ambitious" when she asks for a promotion.

WHAT TO DO

Prompt your colleague to explain her thinking. For example, you can say, "Generally, I think we like ambition as a company. Why does it bother you in this case?" You can also suggest that there may be a double standard at work by saying something like, "How do you feel when a man on your team asks for a promotion?" And if you think that women at your workplace are often criticized when they seek promotions, this would be a good opportunity to say so.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

REVIEWS & PROMOTIONS

A manager describes a woman who reports to her as “overly ambitious” when she asks for a promotion.

WHAT TO DO

Because of stereotypical expectations that women should be selfless and giving, they can face criticism when they appear to be “out for themselves”—for example, when they compete for a bigger job.⁷² By contrast, we expect men to be driven and ambitious, and we tend to think well of them when they show those qualities.⁷³

Rooted in likeability bias

The day after a high-profile killing of a Black person by the police, coworkers are discussing the news but nobody brings up this story.

WHY IT MATTERS

The silence suggests that non-Black colleagues are not outraged at the injustice or that they aren't aware of the Black community's grief and trauma.⁷⁴ Left unaddressed, these perceptions—accurate or not—can contribute to a workplace where Black employees feel like they don't belong.⁷⁵ When a Black person is killed by the police, it reminds all Black people of the violence that threatens their lives. It can make it hard to focus on work, and depression and anxiety can follow.⁷⁶

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

The day after a high-profile killing of a Black person by the police, coworkers are discussing the news but nobody brings up this story.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

In the moment, say something. Mention the incident and how awful it was. Depending on your relationships with Black coworkers, let them know you are there to talk if they need to.⁷⁷ Be understanding if Black coworkers seem distracted or not themselves. In the longer term, you can further educate yourself on the incident by reading about it in a Black news outlet, such as *Blavity* or *Essence*. If you're a manager, check in with Black members of your team to see how they're doing and if they need any additional support.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

The day after a high-profile killing of a Black person by the police, coworkers are discussing the news but nobody brings up this story.

Intersectional card

WHY IT HAPPENS

Non-Black coworkers may believe it's insensitive to mention incidents of police violence toward Black people. But in fact, doing so conveys that they care.⁷⁸ They also may not realize how traumatic these events are to the entire Black community,⁷⁹ perhaps seeing them as isolated one-offs instead of ongoing systemic abuse.

A coworker says, "I don't see color."

WHY IT MATTERS

This comment denies a fundamental part of people's identities. It also suggests that if we choose to ignore racism, it will go away on its own. In fact, many studies show that when people or institutions claim to be "color-blind," they often perpetuate racism by failing to take action against it.⁸⁰ To combat racism, you first have to face it head-on, then actively work to challenge racist stereotypes and behavior—both your own and those of others.⁸¹

A coworker says,
“I don't see
color.”

WHAT TO DO

You could ask a question to make your coworker reflect: “What’s wrong with acknowledging someone's race? Everyone’s identity is unique and should be appreciated.”⁸² Explain that while you understand they think they’re being fair and objective, “not seeing color” can make racism worse. Point out that this way of thinking signals that someone’s not interested in challenging racist behavior, whether or not that was the intention.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

A coworker says,
“I don't see
color.”

Intersectional card

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your coworker may wish to deny that racism still exists.⁸³ Or they may be falling into the trap of thinking that “not seeing color” is a way of avoiding racism, when in fact it perpetuates racism.⁸⁴

During lunch a client asks your colleague, “What does your husband do?” Your colleague is a lesbian and has a wife.

WHY IT MATTERS

The question assumes your colleague is straight and married, which puts lesbians, bisexual women, and single women in an awkward situation. Your lesbian colleague now has to correct a client and come out to them at the same time. The question could also make your lesbian colleague feel at least somewhat uncomfortable or marginalized.

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

During lunch a client asks your colleague, "What does your husband do?" Your colleague is a lesbian and has a wife.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

If your colleague answers that she has a wife, not a husband, you can support her by responding warmly and asking questions, as you would when someone straight talks about their family. This signals your support, and it's also helpful because people often experience distressing, awkward silences when they refer to their same-sex partners at work. However she responds, do your best to be a good listener, ask questions, and fill the silence.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

Intersectional card

During lunch a client asks your colleague, "What does your husband do?" Your colleague is a lesbian and has a wife.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Often straight people, even those who mean well, can assume that others around them are also straight. But the comment could have a darker motive and reflect prejudice against gay people. Either way, questions like this are far too common. More than 60% of LGBTQ+ people say they've had to correct colleagues' assumptions about their personal lives, and nearly half say that in the past month, they've had to come out at work at least once a week.⁸⁵

After interviewing a Black woman, a coworker expresses surprise over “how articulate she sounded.”

WHY IT MATTERS

Comments like these may sound like compliments, but they definitely are not. They are microaggressions that perpetuate a stereotype that Black people aren't articulate or educated, which is not only insulting but can also lead to fewer career opportunities.⁸⁶

After interviewing a Black woman, a coworker expresses surprise over “how articulate she sounded.”

WHAT TO DO

Asking a probing question can prompt your coworker to examine their assumptions. You might ask, “Why wouldn’t you expect her to be articulate?” You can also talk to the hiring manager responsible for making sure job candidates are evaluated fairly and explain that comments like these undermine that process.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

HIRING

After interviewing a Black woman, a coworker expresses surprise over “how articulate she sounded.”

Intersectional card

WHY IT HAPPENS

This type of statement is fueled by a centuries-old racist belief that Black people have worse language skills than whites.⁸⁷ It also reflects a narrow view of what “articulate speech” sounds like by reinforcing the idea that to be considered smart or have your words valued, your speech must sound “white.”⁸⁸ This assumption is all too common: compared to any other racial or ethnic group, Black women are the most likely to have others express surprise over their language skills or other abilities.⁸⁹

Rooted in performance bias

Your manager suggests having a “powwow.”

WHY IT MATTERS

This is a misuse of the word “powwow,” a social gathering that often holds spiritual significance for Native American people. Misusing words and phrases like “powwow,” “spirit animal,” and “low man on the totem pole” may feel harmless to non-Native Americans. But to Native Americans, it can seem mocking and derogatory.

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

Your manager
suggests
having a
“powwow.”

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Speak up in the moment by saying, “I’m happy to have a meeting, but I want to mention one thing. You might not know this, but the word ‘powwow’ has real meaning to Native Americans. It doesn’t simply mean a meeting.” You can also explain WHY IT MATTERS. Or you could ask, “Are you trying to say you want to have a meeting?” This can prompt your manager to reflect on their language choice.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

Your manager suggests having a “powwow.”

Intersectional card

WHY IT HAPPENS

This type of cultural appropriation occurs when there is a power imbalance between cultures. People from a dominant culture feel able to use parts of a marginalized culture in any way they choose, including in ways that rob it of its original meaning.⁹⁰

In a meeting, a woman strongly disagrees with a man about how to approach a problem. He says, “We can’t talk about this anymore. She’s getting too emotional.”

WHY IT MATTERS

In a healthy workplace, debates happen all the time—and often result in better ideas, clearer strategies, and stronger teams. Shutting down debate can be counterproductive to your company’s goals. Plus, being tagged as overly emotional can diminish a woman’s standing at work—and send a message to other women that they shouldn’t speak freely.

MEETING DYNAMICS

In a meeting, a woman strongly disagrees with a man about how to approach a problem. He says, "We can't talk about this anymore. She's getting too emotional."

WHAT TO DO

Speak up. You can say something to support the woman's point of view: "I think [Name] is making a good point. We should consider it." You can also push back on the "too emotional" comment directly: "She doesn't seem too emotional to me. Let's keep talking."

Or you can help your team get back to basics: "We're all just trying to come up with the best approach. Let's continue this conversation so we can land on the right solution together."

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

MEETING DYNAMICS

In a meeting, a woman strongly disagrees with a man about how to approach a problem. He says, "We can't talk about this anymore. She's getting too emotional."

WHY IT HAPPENS

Women tend to be stereotyped as overly emotional, while men tend to be viewed as rational—and therefore more professional and better suited to lead.⁹¹ This dynamic can cause people to see a woman with an opinion—especially if she expresses it with conviction—as being overly emotional, while the same view voiced by a man is considered reasonable.⁹²

Women of color can face different and more acute variations of this bias, with Black women often labeled as "angry" and Latinas as "fiery."⁹³

In a meeting about promotions, someone questions whether a Latina candidate has the skills for a manager role.

WHY IT MATTERS

If your Latina colleague is in fact qualified for the promotion, this comment is a problem. It could lead to her being ruled out unfairly, which would be a loss for her and the company. Moments like this contribute to a bigger problem: For every 100 men promoted into manager roles, only 71 Latinas are.⁹⁴ This “broken rung” on the ladder to leadership means there are too few Latina managers to promote into senior roles.

REVIEWS & PROMOTIONS

In a meeting about promotions, someone questions whether a Latina candidate has the skills for a manager role.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Ask your colleague for concrete examples of why they think she lacks the required skills. If he doesn't offer much evidence, say so: "I don't see a problem with her skills." You can also check her skill set against the list of criteria for the role. If she meets all or most of the criteria, that can help settle the matter. Establishing clear criteria for performance reviews and promotions can help minimize biased decision making.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

In a meeting about promotions, someone questions whether a Latina candidate has the skills for a manager role.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Latinas face several layers of bias regarding their skills. As women, they are often stereotyped as less competent than men. As Latinx Americans, they tend to be stereotyped as less intelligent than white people.⁹⁵ And as Latinas, they tend to be stereotyped as very family-oriented and more suited to supporting roles, even if they are qualified for more senior positions.⁹⁶

Rooted in performance bias

A newly hired trans woman asks where the restroom is and a colleague says, "They're over there—I'm not sure which one you want to use."

WHY IT MATTERS

The second part of the comment is disrespectful. It implies that a trans woman's restroom choice is OK to comment on publicly and that her gender is somehow in question. Unfortunately, trans women often face complaints or comments about their choice of bathroom, which can make them feel uncomfortable and judged.⁹⁷

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

A newly hired trans woman asks where the restroom is and a colleague says, "They're over there—I'm not sure which one you want to use."

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Some microaggressions are best addressed in the moment. In this case, it may be more respectful to say something supportive to your new colleague in private, such as, "Please feel free to use any restroom you want, and if you ever feel uncomfortable, I'm here to help." Later, explain to your colleague who made the comment that it's best not to speculate on which restroom someone uses, because you may be wrong. Experts say that the best approach is to tell everyone where every restroom is—women's, men's, and all-gender.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

Intersectional card

A newly hired trans woman asks where the restroom is and a colleague says, "They're over there—I'm not sure which one you want to use."

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your colleague may have made this comment to intentionally cause discomfort because they are prejudiced against trans women.⁹⁸ But more likely, they were expressing an unconscious bias that trans women are different and that this is somehow OK to comment on.⁹⁹ In addition, they may have been genuinely confused because they are not informed about these issues.

You're on a review committee and several members argue against a woman's promotion because she is not "seen as a leader," even though her team delivers outstanding results.

WHY IT MATTERS

The review committee may be making incorrect—and unfair—assumptions about the woman's abilities. Additionally, if the review committee uses a narrow definition of leadership, they may unfairly exclude a lot of people, like this woman.

REVIEWS & PROMOTIONS

You're on a review committee and several members argue against a woman's promotion because she is not "seen as a leader," even though her team delivers outstanding results.

WHAT TO DO

Point out that the woman's team delivers superb results, and suggest that their performance speaks to her leadership. You can also ask them to explain the attributes she lacks. When people are asked to justify their thinking, it can help reduce bias in decision-making.¹⁰⁰

As a longer-term solution, suggest creating detailed metrics for performance reviews, including clear expectations for leaders. This way, all employees will be evaluated based on a more complete definition of good leadership and using the same standards, which reduces bias in the review process.¹⁰¹

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

REVIEWS & PROMOTIONS

You're on a review committee and several members argue against a woman's promotion because she is not "seen as a leader," even though her team delivers outstanding results.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Both women and men more readily associate men with leadership.¹⁰² This bias is so strong that when women work on teams, their contributions are often attributed to the team as a whole. In contrast, when men work on teams, they are more likely to be seen as taking a leadership role.¹⁰³ The bias affects different groups of women in different ways: Asian women often aren't seen as assertive enough to be leaders, while Black women and Latinas can be stereotyped as not talented enough for leadership roles, and Native American women contend with both these stereotypes.¹⁰⁴

Rooted in performance bias & attribution bias

You hear a white coworker say they aren't privileged because they grew up poor.

WHY IT MATTERS

This kind of thinking is fairly common, as 63 percent of white Americans say they don't benefit much or at all from being white.¹⁰⁵ When white people don't accept that there are benefits to being white, they cast doubt on the idea that racial inequality exists at all.¹⁰⁶ The comment also invalidates the lived experiences of nonwhite coworkers, who deal with racial inequality as a part of their daily lives.¹⁰⁷

You hear a white coworker say they aren't privileged because they grew up poor.

WHAT TO DO

You can tell your coworker you know they've worked hard to get where they are.¹⁰⁸ Then explain that benefiting from white privilege doesn't mean they haven't struggled. Their challenges may be economic, health related, or derive from another source, but racism has not been one of their burdens. Put another way, they haven't struggled because they are white.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

You hear a white coworker say they aren't privileged because they grew up poor.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Even though it hugely benefits them, white privilege can be invisible to those who have it.¹⁰⁹ It's the privilege of not being treated with suspicion by store clerks or regularly pulled over by police. It can mean being hired over a Black candidate with similar experience¹¹⁰ or getting a mortgage when a Latino in the same financial situation is denied one.¹¹¹ Even when people know white privilege exists, they can be reluctant to admit it applies to them.¹¹² It can make them feel defensive and as if their own hard work is invalidated.¹¹³

Your manager, who is a man, often meets the men on his team for dinner or drinks—but rarely meets with the women outside of work.

WHY IT MATTERS

Friendships at work are valuable. Important relationship building and information sharing can happen over coffee or pizza. When people are routinely excluded from outings like these, they can miss out. If it's a manager making arrangements, it's especially problematic—part of their responsibility is to make sure the whole team has equal access to networking opportunities.

MENTORSHIP & SPONSORSHIP

Your manager, who is a man, often meets the men on his team for dinner or drinks—but rarely meets with the women outside of work.

WHAT TO DO

This is your manager, so you have standing to raise this with him. Say that you've noticed he goes for drinks with men on the team more than women. Explain **WHY IT MATTERS**. You can also offer solutions: if he's uncomfortable going to dinner with women, suggest that he meet everyone for breakfast or lunch.

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

MENTORSHIP & SPONSORSHIP

Your manager, who is a man, often meets the men on his team for dinner or drinks—but rarely meets with the women outside of work.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your manager may feel more comfortable with men because of affinity bias, which draws us toward people like ourselves.¹¹⁴ Or he may be nervous for other reasons: some men are wary of spending time with women colleagues outside of work for fear of seeming inappropriate.

Rooted in affinity bias

HIRING

You're on a hiring committee and you notice that your colleagues prefer candidates who are men over women with very similar experience.

WHY IT MATTERS

This could be a sign of bias in your hiring process—and may unfairly disadvantage women. When qualified women are overlooked, your company misses out on their talents and on the chance to build more diverse teams.

HIRING

You're on a hiring committee and you notice that your colleagues prefer candidates who are men over women with very similar experience.

WHAT TO DO

Mention to the hiring committee that you've noticed they tend to select men over women with similar abilities. You can also explain WHY IT HAPPENS. Then suggest a solution. Research shows that when teams agree on a set of clear criteria and use it consistently for all candidates, the hiring process is fairer and the most qualified women and men can rise to the top.¹¹⁵

NEXT: WHY IT HAPPENS

HIRING

You're on a hiring committee and you notice that your colleagues prefer candidates who are men over women with very similar experience.

WHY IT HAPPENS

We tend to rate women lower than men, even if they have similar qualifications.¹¹⁶ This can make a real difference in hiring. In one study, replacing a woman's name with a man's name on a résumé increased the likelihood of being hired by more than 60%.¹¹⁷ The impact can be even worse for some groups—including Black women, Latinas, Native American women, and women with disabilities—whose competence is questioned both because they're women and because of stereotypes about their race or ability.¹¹⁸

Rooted in performance bias

Closing activity

When bias occurs, there are a number of ways to respond, some of which you discussed today. Below is a summary of the strategies you can use to combat bias:

- ▶ Speak up for someone in the moment
- ▶ Ask a probing question
- ▶ Stick to the facts
- ▶ Explain how bias is in play
- ▶ Advocate for policy or process change

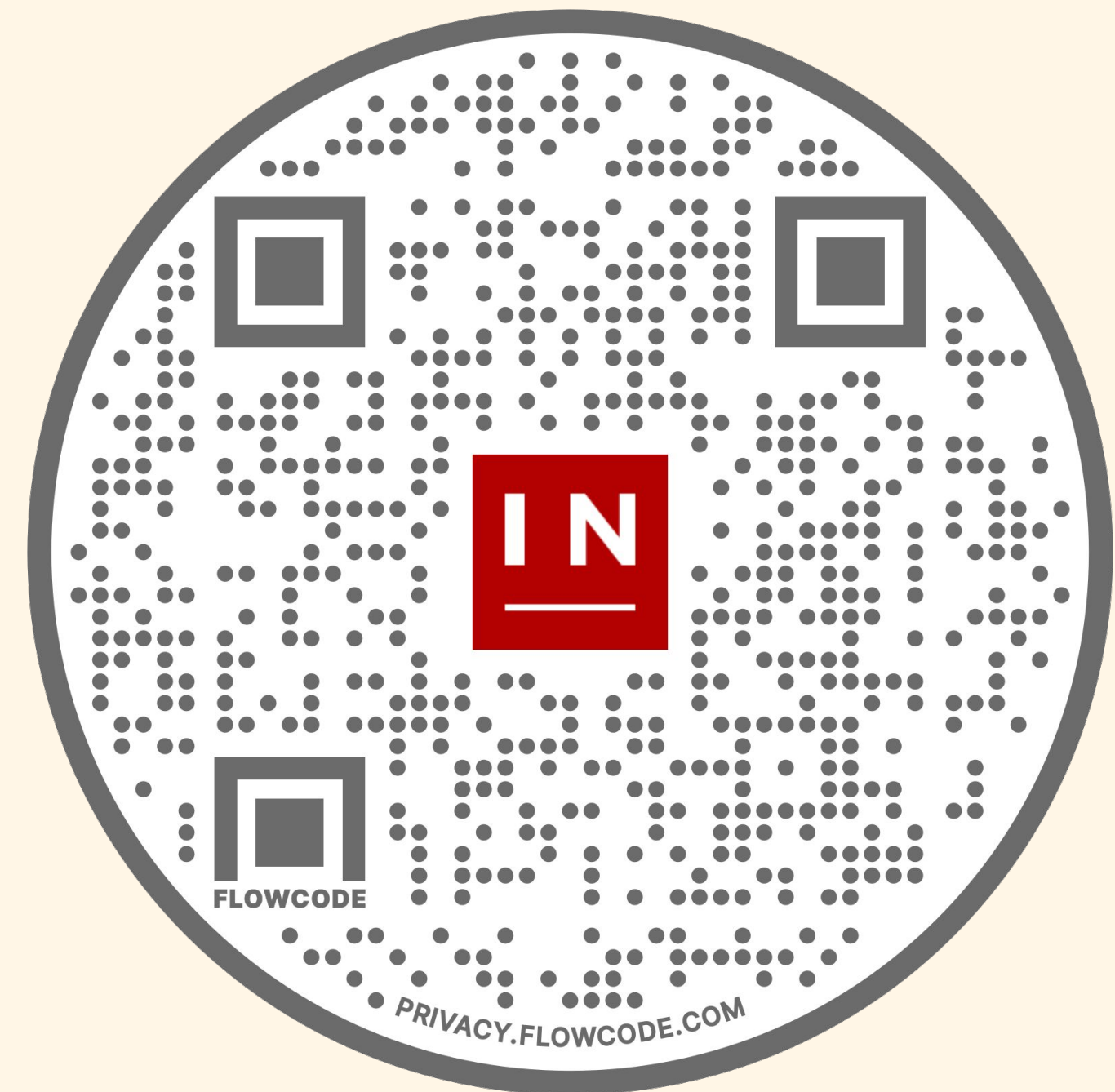
Equity isn't just a nice-to-have, it's a must-have. This International Women's Day and beyond, let's all fully **#EmbraceEquity**.

My One Action to
#EmbraceEquity in 2023 is...

Share your commitment on social media using
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Thank you!

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Together, we can all help create an equal
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