50 Ways to Fight Gender Bias

An activity that helps you combat gender bias (at work)
Gender Bias Overview

• Whether deliberate or unconscious – holds women back in the workplace
• Makes it harder for women to get hired and promoted and negatively impacts their day to day work experiences
• Hurts women and makes it hard for companies to level the playing field
6 Most Common Biases

- Likeability Bias
- Performance Bias
- Maternal Bias
- Attribution Bias
- Affinity Bias
- Double Discrimination & Intersectionality
Remember

1. Bias isn’t limited to gender
2. We ALL fall into bias traps
3. Knowing that bias exists isn’t enough
4. Refrain from storytelling
5. Give people the benefit of the doubt
6. Notice your own defensive reactions and attempt to use these reactions as entry points for gaining deeper self-knowledge.
In performance reviews…

what % of women receive negative feedback on their personal style such as “You can sometimes be abrasive”

& what % of men receive that same type of feedback?
66% of women

1% of men\textsuperscript{136}
How many times more often do men interrupt women than other men?
Almost 3 times more often.\textsuperscript{127}
When hiring managers believed a woman had children because “PTA Coordinator” appeared on her resume,

how much less likely was she to be hired?
79% less likely to be hired.

And if she was hired, she would be offered an average of $11,000 less in salary.¹³⁵
In a study of performance reviews, men who stayed late to help prepare for a meeting got a 14% increase in their rating. What increase did the women get when they stayed late to help?
No increase at all. Research shows that when men help out with office tasks they are rewarded, while women are not. Women are penalized if they refuse.\textsuperscript{133}
Scenarios
1. You’re in a conversation with coworkers and someone without children asks a woman with children, “How do you manage work and raising your kids? You must be overwhelmed.”
1. Maternal Bias
1. Why It Matters

• Reinforces unconscious belief that dedicated mothers can’t also be dedicated employees.\(^77\)

• Assumes that the woman is overwhelmed

• Can make women feel unsupported and make them more likely to leave\(^78\)
1. What To Do

• Feeling overwhelmed is something everyone experiences from time to time
• “I imagine all working parents feel overwhelmed sometimes.”
• “She doesn’t seem overwhelmed to me”
1. Why It Happens

- Trap of believing that women can’t be fully committed to both work and family
- That can fuel skepticism about women’s abilities
- Fathers are often exempt from these assumptions\textsuperscript{79}
2. A coworker asks, 

“Who’s the new girl”
2. Performance Bias
2. Why It Matters

- Can make her seem junior and inexperienced
- Implies that she doesn’t need to be taken seriously
- Disrespectful
2. What To Do

• “The new woman we’ve hired is…”
• “I’m sure it wasn’t your goal, but calling her a girl can undermine her standing here at work.”
2. Why It Happens

• People tend to think that women are less competent than men, and assume they have lower status and less power.

• They would not call a man a boy
3. 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.
3. Attribution Bias
3. Why It Matters

- Credit for ideas is often how employees get noticed
- When people don’t feel heard, they stop sharing their views
- If contributions go unseen, it slows advancement\(^6\)
- Companies end up missing out on ideas
3. What To Do

• “I think [NAME] made that point a few moments ago. I like this direction.”

• Help them get noticed for their contributions
3. Why It Happens

• We tend to underestimate women’s performance and overestimate men’s
• We often don’t give women as much credit for their ideas
4. A manager describes a woman who reports to her as “overly ambitious” when she asks for a promotion.
4. Likeability Bias
4. Why It Matters

- Negative impact on her and on the company as a whole
- Miss out on the chance to grow
- Other women hear that they shouldn’t ask for promotions
- Company misses opportunity to advance a talented team member and make her feel valued
4. What To Do

• “Generally, I think we like ambition as a company. Why does it bother you in this case?”

• “How do you feel when a man on your team asks for a promotion?”
4. Why It Happens

• Stereotypical expectations that women should be selfless and giving, they appear to be “out for themselves” when they compete for a bigger job\textsuperscript{70}

• We expect men to be driven and ambitious, and we tend to think well of them when they show those qualities\textsuperscript{71}
5. You’re at a conference talking to a coworker who is a woman of color.

A colleague from another organization joins you and assumes your coworker is much more junior than she really is.
5. Double Discrimination and Performance Bias
5. Why It Matters

- Happens to women more than men – and to women of color most of all\textsuperscript{50}
- Can feel disrespectful, even humiliating
- Can add up and leave employees feeling unhappy and more likely to leave their job
5. What To Do

• State the woman’s actual title
• “She’s running point on our largest initiative this quarter”
• Implement bias training\(^{52}\)
5. Why It Happens

• Research shows that we strongly associate men with leadership – but not always women\textsuperscript{53}

• Women are twice as likely as men to be mistaken for someone much more junior \textsuperscript{54}
6. You realize that your company gets most of its new employees through referrals by current employees.
6. Affinity Bias
6. Why It Matters

- End up with a lot of employees of the same race or gender, or from similar educational or economic backgrounds
- Failing to get the benefits of diversity – and isn’t necessarily getting the best talent
6. What To Do

- If the new hires lack diversity, talk to HR or someone senior, explain the shortcomings of this strategy.
- Too subjective, “He’s my friend” ends up carrying a lot of weight.
- Suggest list of standardized criteria.
6. Why It Happens

• Affinity bias makes us more comfortable with others like ourselves\textsuperscript{92}

• Makes it feel safer and more comfortable to hire people who are already known and liked by existing employees\textsuperscript{93}
7. A coworker asks a woman to pick up food for an office party, even though that’s not her job.
7. Performance & Likeability Bias
7. Why It Matters

- Women are expected to do more “office housework” than men\textsuperscript{193}
- Takes women away from their core responsibilities
- Suggests their time isn’t as valuable, which can be demeaning\textsuperscript{194}
7. What To Do

• “That’s not really her job”
• “Let’s switch things up and choose someone else this time”
• Take note of who does the office housework on your team.
7. Why It Happens

• Tasks like taking notes, planning events, and onboarding new hires tend to be seen as “women’s work” due to stereotypes that women are more communal and giving than men\textsuperscript{195}

• When women decline requests for help, they are often penalized for it, while men can say no with less pushback\textsuperscript{196}
8. When considering a woman for a promotion, a colleague says, “I’m not sure about her long-term commitment. She just got engaged, and I think she wants to have kids soon.”
8. Maternal Bias
8. Why It Matters

• Assumptions on commitment to work based on personal life unfairly limits opportunities
• Can cause your company to miss out on a highly committed candidate
8. What To Do

- Women should decide for themselves whether or not they want to take on new challenges
- “It’s hard to imagine that we’d say that about a man who recently got engaged”
8. Why It Happens

• When women get engaged or married, studies show that they start to experience maternal bias\(^\text{48}\).

• People start to question their competence and commitment, based on the mistaken belief that women can’t be fully present at work if they have family responsibilities at home\(^\text{49}\).
9. A colleague is talking about a woman who landed a big project. They say “Wow, she got really lucky.”
9. Attribution Bias
9. Why It Matters

• Getting recognized for accomplishments matters, especially for performance reviews and promotions\textsuperscript{33}

• Achievements attributed to luck rather than hard work or skill are minimized
9. What To Do

• “I’m curious - what makes you think it was luck?”
• Is there a reason?
• Can they give an example?
9. Why It Happens

• Overestimate men’s performance and underestimate women’s\textsuperscript{34}

• Attribute women’s successes to “Getting lucky” “having a good team” or other explanations that diminish achievements

• Accept men’s accomplishments as proof of their abilities\textsuperscript{35}
10. 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.”
10. Likeability Bias
10. Why It Matters

- Debates result in better ideas, clearer strategies, and stronger teams
- Shutting down debate is counterproductive
- Being tagged as overly emotional diminishes standing
- Send message to other women they shouldn’t speak freely
10. What To Do

• “I think her perspective is important. We should consider what she’s saying.”

• “She doesn’t seem too emotional to me. Let’s keep talking.”

• “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.”
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.\textsuperscript{118}

People to see a woman with an as being overly emotional, while the same view voiced by a man is considered reasonable.\textsuperscript{119}
11. You overhear a coworker complaining that your company’s gender diversity efforts are a waste of time.
11. Why It Matters

- Signals lack of commitment to gender diversity
- Research shows that only about half of employees are personally committed to diversity\textsuperscript{182}
- To drive change, it’s critical to raise awareness\textsuperscript{183}
11. What To Do

• Explain that diverse teams often produce better results\textsuperscript{184} and that diversity efforts can make hiring and promotions fairer for everyone

• Diversity is good for morale: employees are happier and less likely to leave\textsuperscript{185}
11. Why It Happens

• Many people think that diversity efforts unfairly favor women and other minorities.

• When people think of themselves as fair and objective, they don’t scrutinize their decisions, which opens the door to bias.

• Organizations that believe they’re meritocratic can be more prone to bias.¹⁸⁷
One Action:

How will YOU take action to address gender bias in the workplace?