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Allies and Intersectionality

As COVID-19 vaccinations continue in the U.S., companies are working on plans to reopen their offices to employees. While this can be seen as a positive step toward getting back to normal, many women in the workforce may not see it that way. A recent study done by the Lean In organization determined that 1 in 4 women are considering leaving the workforce or downshifting their careers. Many women have experienced burnout as a result of the professional, social and child-rearing responsibilities that they face. This becomes even more troubling when you consider women of color, as they are 1.5-2 times more likely to be responsible for all childcare and housework on top of their paid work. The first step toward preventing a reversal of gender parity in the workplace is to tackle bias, and to do that we must all become true allies of marginalized workers.

Allyship is a necessary step toward a more positive and productive work environment, but allyship in offices tends to be strictly performative. Many employees with gender and/or racial privilege consider themselves allies to less privileged workers but fail to prove that statement through their actions. The word 'Ally' is defined as "a person or group that provides assistance and support in an ongoing effort, activity, or struggle." A large number of people work to educate themselves about the issues of marginalized groups but are less likely to apply these lessons to their daily lives by holding their privileged peers accountable. True allyship involves the action of "See something, Say something." If a coworker is knowingly or unknowingly behaving in a way that is perceived as a microaggression, it becomes an opportunity to influence change by educating them in order to prevent the perpetuation of harmful biases and hostile work environments.

Society conditions us to think and feel a certain way, which is reflected in how we interact with people of other races, genders and ethnicities. While breaking the habits we have formed over a lifetime can be challenging, we are obligated to do what we can to overcome the biases that are inherently ingrained in each of us. The more you practice breaking through your personal biases and influencing others to see theirs, the quicker we will be able to dismantle the ones that limit what women can accomplish in the workplace. Overcoming bias in any situation requires a certain level of courage, but if everyone were to find the strength to “Say something when they see something”, our professional landscape would become a much happier, healthier place for all.

We must not only acknowledge and dismantle bias when we witness it, but we must also create spaces, opportunities and resources that allow working women – especially working women of color – to succeed. And when we confront bias in ourselves and in others, we work to dismantle the unhealthy, harmful work environments that make it harder for women to do their jobs. I encourage you to read the [Women in the Workplace](#) report, and ask yourself these questions: Have you made a conscious effort to tackle bias in your company and if so, how? When you have observed biased comments or actions, have you maintained the status quo or have you attempted to influence change? What privileges do you possess, and how could you use them to support and uplift marginalized communities?



Here are some additional resources to further your education on this issue:

[Indeed - Become a Better Ally at Work](#)

[Idealist - Allyship at Work](#)

Bias Attitude Indicator



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