



LEAN IN

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

An activity that helps you combat bias against women at work

Bias in virtual workplaces



LEAN IN

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

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

TO GET STARTED:

Download our [Moderator Guide & Speaker Notes](#) to prepare for your session, find links to necessary handouts, and learn what to say.

Use “Slide Show” mode to click on links in this presentation or right click to access the hyperlink when not in “Slide Show” mode.

PRESENTATION STARTS
ON THE NEXT SLIDE

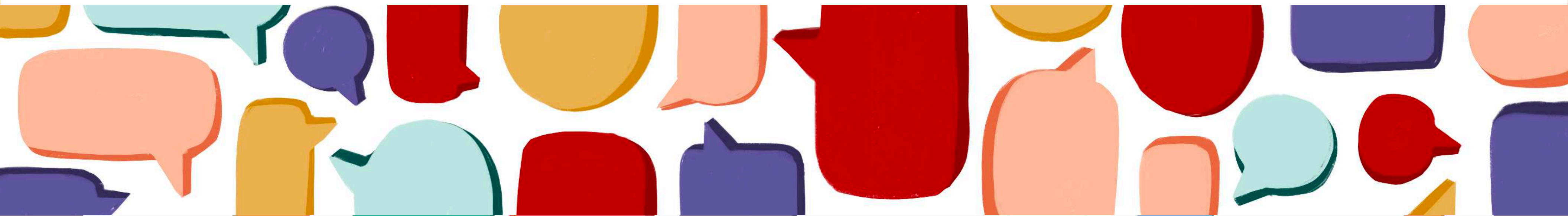


LEAN IN

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

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

©2021 LeanIn.Org, LLC



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:



WHY WE ARE HERE

- ▶ 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 the biases women face 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

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

GROUND RULES FOR TODAY

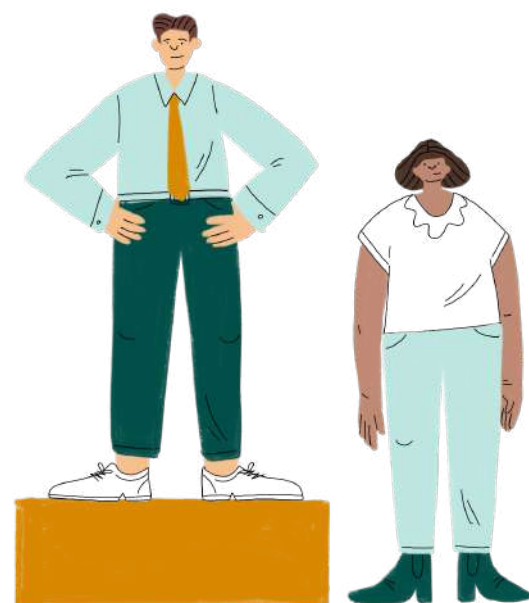
- ➊ Some situations may be difficult to hear.
- ➋ Stories should be anonymous.
- ➌ Give people the benefit of the doubt.

Overview: Common types of biases women face at work

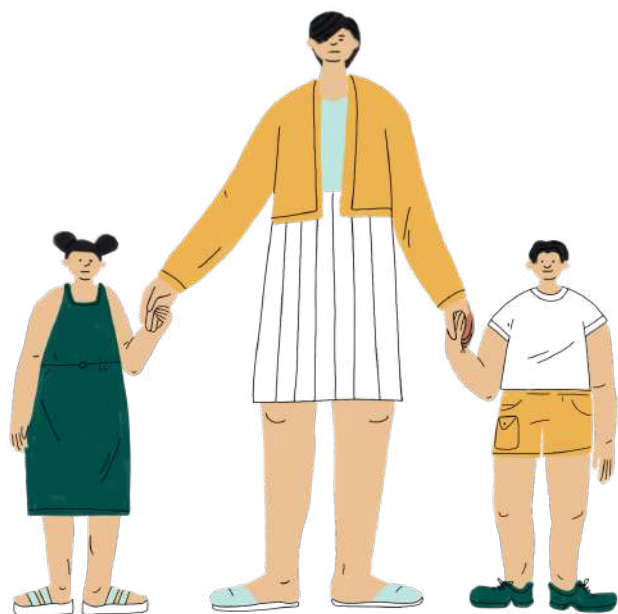
COMMON TYPES OF BIASES WOMEN FACE AT WORK



Likeability bias



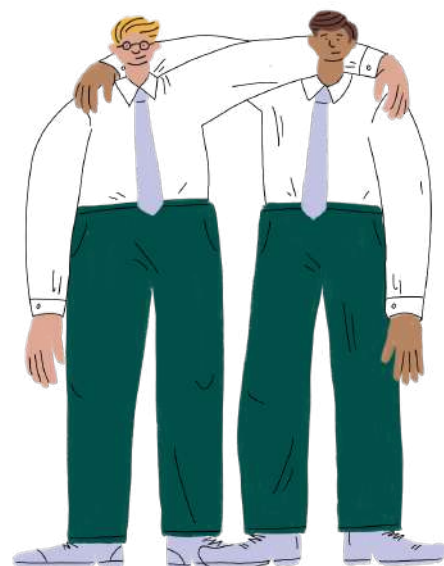
Performance bias



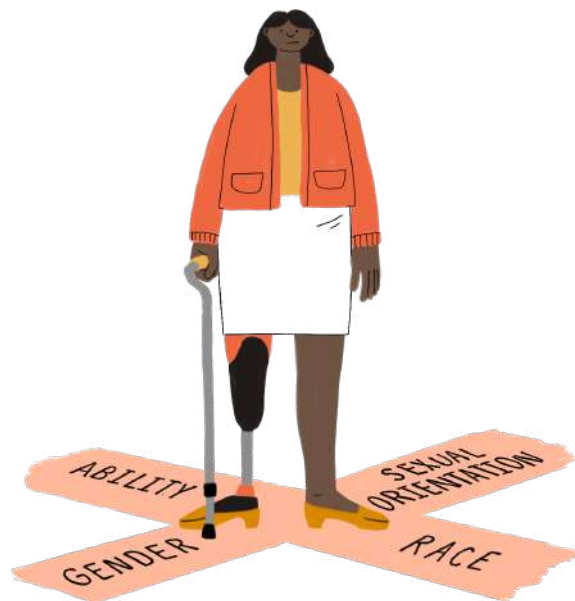
Maternal bias



Attribution bias



Affinity bias



Intersectionality



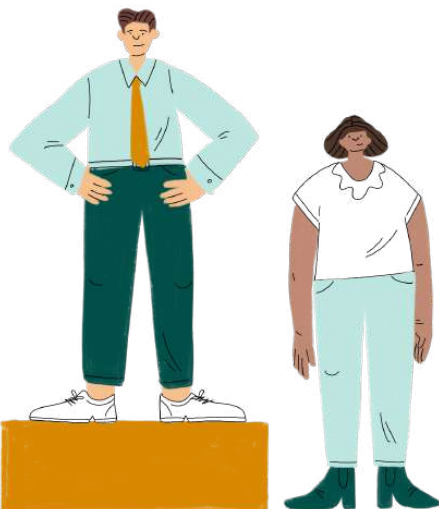
Watch the video:
"Introduction to the Common
Biases Women Experience"

COMMON TYPES OF BIASES WOMEN FACE AT WORK



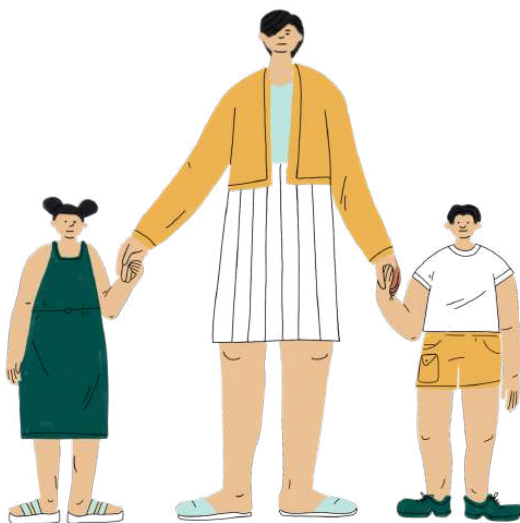
Likeability bias

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



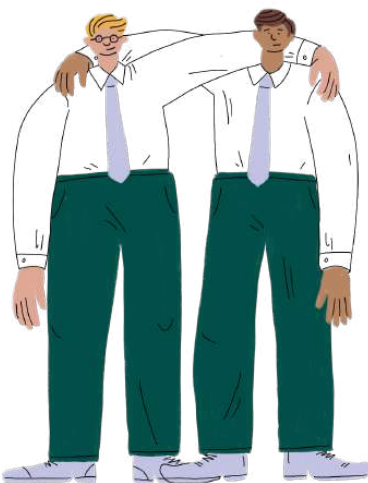
Maternal bias

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



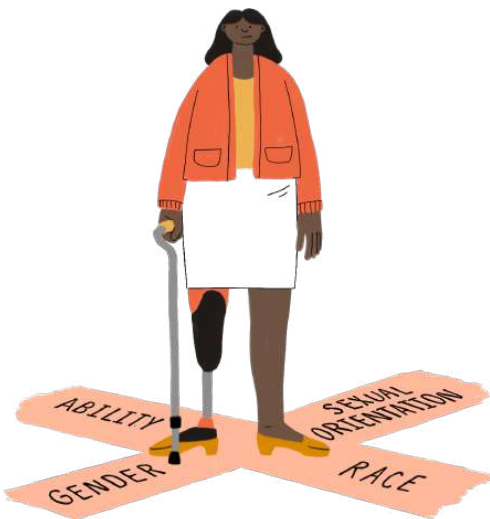
Attribution bias

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

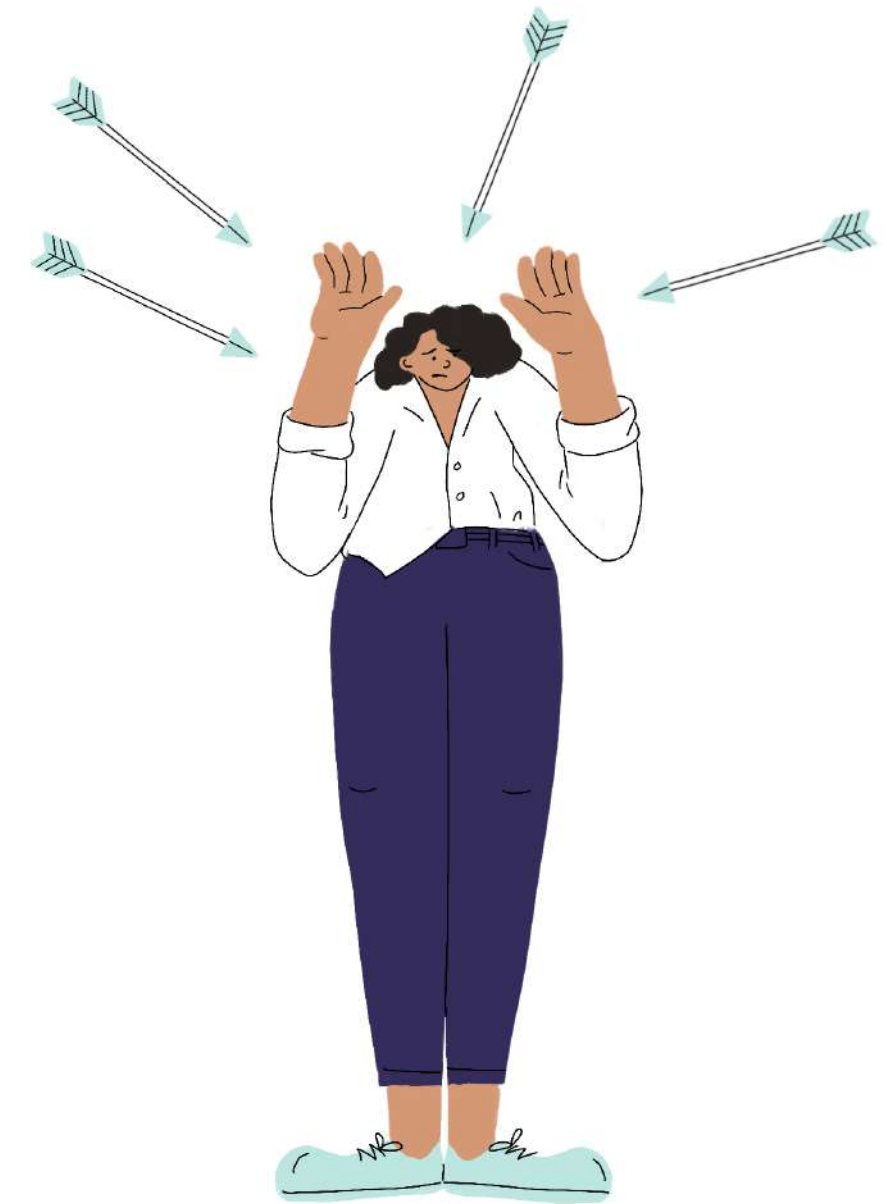
Bias isn’t limited to gender. Women can also experience biases due to their race, sexual orientation, a disability, or other aspects of their identity.

OVERVIEW: MICROAGGRESSIONS

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.⁷³⁷

When parents work from home, how many times more likely are mothers to be interrupted by their children, compared to fathers?

ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

When parents work from home, how many times more likely are mothers to be interrupted by their children, compared to fathers?

ANSWER

More than 1.5 times more likely.⁷³⁸

According to Harvard University's Implicit Association Test, what % of people more readily associate men with "career" and women with "family"?

ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

According to Harvard University's Implicit Association Test, what % of people more readily associate men with "career" and women with "family"?

ANSWER

76%⁷³⁹

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

©2021 LeanIn.Org, LLC

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.⁵² 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.⁵³ 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.⁵⁴

Rooted in likeability bias

LEAN IN

©2021 LeanIn.Org, LLC

MEETING DYNAMICS

You notice that your colleague, who is a woman, gets spoken over and interrupted more often than others during virtual team meetings.

WHY IT MATTERS

It's undermining to be repeatedly interrupted. It means that the team loses out on the woman's ideas and insights. Plus, in a virtual context, meetings can carry more weight than they otherwise might. Without informal interactions in the office, virtual meetings become the central avenue for information sharing, brainstorming, and reputation building.

You notice that your colleague, who is a woman, gets spoken over and interrupted more often than others during virtual team meetings.

WHAT TO DO

In the moment, you can use the chat feature to write something like, “Can we circle back to [Name]?” In the long run, encourage norms that promote equal participation, like everyone using the chat feature when they want to chime in. If you’re brainstorming, have people take turns and mute everyone except the speaker,⁷⁴⁰ or use a virtual brainstorming tool. You can also use breakout rooms to create smaller groups: one study found that women get similar amounts of airtime as men in groups of six or fewer, but less than men when in groups of seven or more.⁷⁴¹

WHY IT HAPPENS

In general, women are interrupted far more often than men. Researchers believe that this happens just as often in virtual settings, if not more.⁷⁴² This may be rooted in a common form of bias: people often value women’s contributions less highly than men’s.⁷⁴³

Rooted in performance bias

Your manager calls out a team member during a virtual meeting for not turning on her video when she seems reluctant to do so.

WHY IT MATTERS

Being put on the spot like this can trigger anxiety and stress. If the employee has her children with her, she may fear being judged as unprofessional—a bias that can affect all parents but impacts women more than men, as women are more likely to be interrupted by their children.⁷⁴⁴ Women are also penalized more than men for not looking well-groomed or put together.⁷⁴⁵ This creates a particular burden for Black women, who have to spend a lot more time than other women on their hair to avoid negative judgments. This is because of biased beliefs that their natural hair is “unprofessional.”⁷⁴⁶

Your manager calls out a team member during a virtual meeting for not turning on her video when she seems reluctant to do so.

WHAT TO DO

In the moment, you can speak up and point out that she's present and participating, even if the team can't see her. If you, too, like to leave your video off from time to time, perhaps point this out. That sends the message that she isn't an outlier. Later, you could talk to your manager about it and explain

WHY IT HAPPENS.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Managers may insist on video because they want their team members to feel connected, especially if they cannot be together in person. Or they may ask employees to turn on video to ensure that everyone is productive and engaged. But this doesn't take into account everything an employee may be balancing while working from home, including childcare and housework. And it doesn't make allowances for the anxiety employees may feel about how they look or their home looks on a busy or chaotic day.

Your manager schedules a virtual team meeting at an hour when your coworker has blocked off time on her calendar to care for her young children.

WHY IT MATTERS

This can seriously interfere with your coworker's ability to balance work and life. Many people plan ahead with partners or caregivers, and last-minute changes can be disruptive or impossible. It can also contribute to a feeling of being "always on"—which more than 30 percent of employees name as one of the biggest downsides to remote work in 2020.⁷⁴⁷ And if situations like this happen often, they can lead to stress or burnout.⁷⁴⁸

Your manager schedules a virtual team meeting at an hour when your coworker has blocked off time on her calendar to care for her young children.

WHAT TO DO

Remind your manager of your coworker's schedule constraint and suggest an alternate time. You could also mention how blocking time like this is vital for maintaining work-life balance and explain that practices like these can help employees be more productive and feel more committed to the company.⁷⁴⁹

WHY IT HAPPENS

This reflects the norm that the "ideal worker" is always available and doesn't need to take time away from work to care for family, pursue personal interests, or simply recharge.⁷⁵⁰ Decades of research on the ideal worker show that this norm can harm mothers more than fathers, since mothers often do more caregiving.⁷⁵¹

Your manager complains to you after a woman on your team was interrupted by her children during a client call, saying, “That was really unprofessional.”

WHY IT MATTERS

Being labeled unprofessional can hurt the woman’s reputation and chances of advancement. And it’s likely unwarranted in situations like this one, when the interruption is irrelevant to her performance and outside of her control. Situations like this are far more likely to happen to mothers: when mothers and fathers work from home, women are interrupted over 50 percent more often by their children.⁷⁵²

Your manager complains to you after a woman on your team was interrupted by her children during a client call, saying, “That was really unprofessional.”

WHAT TO DO

Remind your manager that your colleague is talented, accomplished, and doing her job well. You could also explain that children are far more likely to interrupt mothers than fathers. Knowing this can help your manager effectively support the mothers on their team.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your manager’s judgment is likely based on norms of what it means to be an “ideal worker.” In the United States, the ideal worker is expected to keep work and family separate and prevent their family from interfering with work.⁷⁵³ The comment may also be fueled by maternal bias, the false belief that mothers are less committed and competent than fathers and non-mothers.⁷⁵⁴ Virtual work can make a woman more likely to be affected by maternal bias because her children may be more visible to her employer.

Rooted in maternal bias

On a business call, your colleague who is working from home seems distracted. Afterward, your manager says, “Gosh, was she washing dishes or something in the background?”

WHY IT MATTERS

The comment is disrespectful and may undermine the woman’s reputation with colleagues who hear it. It can also reinforce a damaging stereotype that women can't be fully committed to work and also be focused on home and family.⁷⁵⁵ That stereotype can have real consequences, impacting women’s chances of promotion and other opportunities.⁷⁵⁶

On a business call, your colleague who is working from home seems distracted. Afterward, your manager says, “Gosh, was she washing dishes or something in the background?”

WHAT TO DO

You could try redirecting your manager—for example, by saying, “It didn’t sound like that to me. I could hear her perfectly.” You could treat the moment lightly: “Maybe her husband was!” You could also privately explain to your manager **WHY IT MATTERS**.

WHY IT HAPPENS

People of all genders have off days or moments when they're distracted. For women, those moments are more likely to get chalked up to splitting attention between work and domestic duties. That's because women tend to be stereotyped as more committed to—and more distracted by—family and household duties than men are. This bias may be even stronger when they are working at home.⁷⁵⁷

Closing activity

SUMMARY: STRATEGIES TO COMBAT BIAS

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

“My One Action to address bias against women in the workplace is...”