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We Need Men to Be Better Allies Sooner

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Harvard Business Review

Research shows that men vastly overestimate their effectiveness as allies compared to how the women in their organizations perceive them. In this particular moment, when the retention rates of young women are significantly low, it is important for men to intentionally work to close that gap. As allies, men can take actions that will help workplaces evolve into places where everyone has a fair chance to advance and flourish.

Developing yourself as an ally and learning how to be an inclusive and supportive colleague will serve you well throughout your professional journey. Here's how to get started.

LEARN ABOUT ISSUES THAT MATTER TO WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

A critical first step to active allyship is having a clear understanding of women's needs, challenges and strengths. Remember that women (or any underrepresented group) are not responsible for educating you. You have to make that effort.

There are many ways to learn. You can attend events sponsored by your organization's women's employee and business resource groups. In spaces where you're showing up to learn, prioritize listening before speaking. Another way to educate yourself is to regularly read content written by women thought leaders, as well as research on women's workplace experiences.

AMPLIFY WOMEN'S VOICES

Women are more likely than men to be interrupted and to have their ideas initially ignored but taken up when an idea is subsequently repeated by a man. Intervene when you see these things happening at work.

On social media and within your professional networks, share and amplify women's writing, ideas and thought leadership.

TAKE ON A PROPORTIONATE SHARE OF 'OFFICE HOUSEWORK'

Numerous studies show that compared to men, women are much more likely to be assigned non-promotable tasks. Also called "office housework," this kind of work is often administrative and critical to

moving projects forward or creating a collegial team environment but is unrelated to the primary job responsibilities of the person doing it. Office housework could include ordering the team lunch, planning outings or events or taking notes at every meeting.

Men can do more by volunteering to take meeting minutes, raising their hands to organize social events and leading administrative aspects of projects to ensure that they are contributing equitably to the work of the team. Men can also proactively have conversations with their managers and project leads when they witness these tasks being distributed unfairly to women.

PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE, ACTIONABLE FEEDBACK TO WOMEN

Women receive less constructive, actionable feedback in comparison to men, which slows their career progression and advancement to leadership roles. Women are also less likely than men to receive feedback related to specific business outcomes.

If you're a manager or wish to become one, you need to provide all your team members with the same level of constructive feedback. To overcome the bias that impacts many men in management positions, make sure your feedback to your female employees is as strong and helpful as your feedback to your employees of other genders.

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Men anywhere in the hierarchy can take small, intentional steps to create an environment where women feel included, valued and encouraged. Remember that allyship can show up in different forms, and it begins with recognizing your privilege and using it to influence change.

This article was written by Brandy L Simula and was published in Harvard Business Review on May 29, 2023. To read more go to [HBR.org](https://hbr.org).

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