

## TOOL

# Best Practices To Improve Your Awareness

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Considering what you know about stereotypes, it can be challenging to avoid reinforcing them yourself. Use this tool to help improve your awareness.

### **Be careful with self-talk.**

Avoid negative talk about yourself, either out loud, in front of colleagues, or privately to yourself; i.e., your “inner critic.” If you tell yourself things like “I’m not good at math,” “I’m not good at negotiating,” or “I’m not good at quantitative things,” you will start projecting that incompetence, as opposed to perhaps acknowledging you have some limitations and are working on them.

### **Monitor hiring practices.**

Be conscious of gendered views during the hiring process. Remember that only 10% of CEOs in the S&P 500 are women and still only a handful of women of color hold top positions. Our image of the highest levels of leadership is influenced by the fact that many CEO positions and other C-level positions have always been held by a man. A re-imagining of leadership slots with a gender-neutral focus will help you avoid rejecting a person with the right talents just because they don’t look or sound like the last person to hold the position.

### **Demonstrate self-awareness.**

Be mindful of moments in which you find yourself critiquing a female colleague’s clothing, haircut, or other personal characteristics. Questions to ask yourself include: If this individual is a superstar, will it matter? Are men who are successful in this position held to those same standards of personal characteristics? Answering these questions can serve as a reality check.

### **Avoid the “one-story trap.”**

For example, if you’ve had one woman boss who happened to be difficult, don’t generalize that to all women. Also remember there are fewer women the higher you go, so you don’t necessarily have that balancing experience you get when you have many male bosses. When in doubt, work with objective facts.



**Exhibit an awareness of personality types.**

This will allow you to spot potential communication issues and where personality types may be interacting with gender stereotypes. It is great to read and inform yourself about what research and data have to say, but don't expect that you can apply it to every situation.

**Look for positive stereotypes.**

Organizations need both the "take care" and "take charge" qualities of leadership. Identify situations in which, if the gender stereotype does fit, it could be a positive.

**Use inclusive language.**

Be conscious of the language you use and opt for inclusive and respectful terminology that accurately reflects individuals and their identities.

**Seek feedback.**

Be open to feedback from others regarding potential stereotypical behaviors or language and use it as an opportunity for growth and education.

**Ensure representation.**

Ensure diverse representation in media, literature, and other platforms to combat stereotypes and showcase the richness of various backgrounds.

By incorporating these practices into your daily interactions and behaviors, you can help combat stereotypes and contribute to a more inclusive and respectful environment for all individuals.

