FLIP *the* script

MEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Words reflect workplace culture and can reinforce negative gender stereotypes and norms. Often we can say things that are hurtful and damaging without realizing the impact of our words. Stop using common words and phrases that undermine men's ability to bring their whole authentic selves to work and to effectively partner with others in creating inclusive workplaces.

IMPACT → **RESEARCH SAYS**

"SUCK IT UP AND BE A MAN."

Suggests there is only one "right" way to be a man—ignoring the diversity among men, and making men feel forced to conform.

Pressure to fit masculine norms, including those that demand displays of strength to mask vulnerability, can negatively affect mental health and relationship-building.[1]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Allow men to be true to themselves without imposing external expectations based on gender norms and stereotypes.

IMPACT → **RESEARCH SAYS**

"YOU'RE SO EMOTIONAL. STOP ACTING LIKE A WOMAN."

Polices behavior based on gender. Being emotional or otherwise not fitting traditional ideas of a "manly man" is labeled unacceptable or emasculating. Negative stereotypes about women are also reinforced.

Increased risky, antagonistic, exclusionary, or even violent behavior can result as men attempt to prove their masculinity or recover their standing among other men.[2]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Show empathy. Provide support, not ridicule. Use questions or statements such as "help me understand what you're feeling" or "what do you most need right now?"

IMPACT → **RESEARCH SAYS**

"I CAN'T TONIGHT; I'M BABYSITTING MY KIDS."

Dismisses the role fathers play, categorizing parenting as an isolated chore. Calling a dad a "babysitter" undervalues men as fathers, pressures them to minimize perceived or actual family roles, and assumes women are default caregivers.

Stereotypical gender norms, particularly around caregiving and the division of responsibilities between men and women, can inhibit progress toward equity.[3]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Be transparent about work-life priorities and family obligations, and encourage other men to do the same. Use caretaking responsibilities to role-model work-life effectiveness.

IMPACT		RESEARCH SAYS
Suggests that compromise, helpfulness, and other forms of partnership are inherently negative when displayed by men. Reminiscent of slavery, this terminology can also be insensitive and offensive by making light of a painful tool of oppression.	**"HE SAID YES TO THAT? WOW, HE'S WHIPPED."**	Men can struggle with fear and shame when they feel their masculinity is attacked. Attempts to combat this may entail bluster or bravado that highlights unfavorable gender stereotypes and undermines inclusion.[4]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Seek opportunities to recognize and value men for displaying servant leadership and defying masculine norms, rather than criticizing or demeaning.

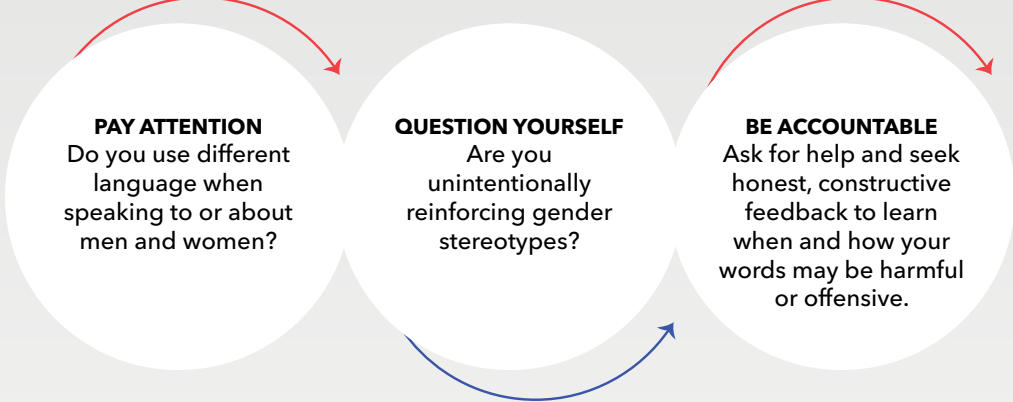| IMPACT		RESEARCH SAYS
Name-calling such as this (or other, harsher versions)—even if intended with humor—confers negativity to behaviors deemed feminine, and attributes femininity to behaviors deemed negative, resulting in a verbal weapon that mocks or punishes men.	**"QUIT BEING SO SOFT."**	Men feel policed by social pressure to reject certain behaviors in favor of more aggressive ones, which can be harmful to both themselves and others.[5]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

If genuine, offer praise or gratitude instead of so-called "jokes." If you find the behavior surprising or off-putting, inquire to learn more. Seek to understand, even if not to agree.

FLIP THE SCRIPT

PAY ATTENTION
Do you use different language when speaking to or about men and women?

QUESTION YOURSELF
Are you unintentionally reinforcing gender stereotypes?

BE ACCOUNTABLE
Ask for help and seek honest, constructive feedback to learn when and how your words may be harmful or offensive.

SOURCES
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2. Jeanine Prime and Corinne A. Moss-Racusin, *Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know* (Catalyst 2009); Michael Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).
3. Diane Kobrynowicz and Monica Biernat, "Decoding Subjective Evaluations: How Stereotypes Provide Shifting Standards," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 33, no. 6 (November 1997): p. 579–601.
4. Jeanine Prime and Corinne A. Moss-Racusin, *Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know* (Catalyst 2009); Michael Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).
5. Jeanine Prime and Corinne A. Moss-Racusin, *Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know* (Catalyst 2009); Michael Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994); Brian Heilman, Gary Barker, and Alexander Harrison, *The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico* (2017).

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