



# Breaking Through Bias

## Discussion Questions

What follows are some questions to start a discussion about *Breaking Through Bias*. There is no magic to these questions, just a way to get a discussion going.

### Chapter 1: The Elephant in the Room

1. Do you see any of the gender stereotypes discussed in Chapter 1 at work? Did some of these stereotypes surprise you? Do you think that gender stereotypes are persistent? Why?
2. How would you describe the women who have advanced in your organization? Do they use a mix of both “communal” and “agentic” characteristics?
3. Have you – or a woman you know – faced the “Goldilocks Dilemma” at work, where you are ignored if you are seen as too communal, and unlikeable if you show agentic behaviors? Do you worry about being likeable?
4. Have gender stereotypes held you back in your career? Would you handle a gender-biased situation differently now that you have read *Breaking Through Bias*?
5. Do you know of some examples of how gender stereotypes affect the ways that *women* interact with other women?
6. Benevolent bias is often a surprise to see how it holds women back at work. Have you experienced or seen benevolent bias against women? What would you do now to overcome a benevolent bias situation after reading *Breaking Through Bias*?

### Chapter 2: The Apple in the Room

7. Can you think of a work task or project that is viewed as a “man’s job”? Any that are viewed as “women’s work”? Would your career benefit if you were assigned a job viewed as suitable for a man?
8. Have you ever applied for a position or a project in which you did not already have all of the job criteria? Does knowing that men typically apply if they meet only 60 percent of the criteria change your opinion about which jobs and projects you will apply for in the future?
9. Do you have the same expectations of senior women that you have about senior men? Have you ever expected senior women to be more supportive than senior men? Why?

### Chapter 3: Managing the Impressions You Make

10. Have you ever changed your behavior in dealing with a colleague based on previous interactions you’ve had with that colleague? If so, what prompted the change?
11. Do you dress in a particular way at work? Can you think of situations when different clothes are more appropriate?
12. Do you factor in nonverbal cues in addition to the words to determine what another person is actually saying? Can you give an example?

#### Chapter 4: Your Attitudes Matter

13. Has grit ever been an important factor in your success? Explain how you face difficult situations?
14. Do you ask for comments about your performance even if you think the comments might be critical or negative? Why or why not?
15. Was there a time when you used humor to overcome an uncomfortable situation? If so, explain.
16. Do you “mind prime” before an important event?
17. Do you “power pose” before an important event?

#### Chapter 5: Nonverbal Behavior

18. Have you made room for another person in a meeting by giving up some of your space? What have you observed about other people using person space at meetings?
19. Do you ever stop to think about how to shake hands as a greeting? Do you ever hug or kiss a business associate as a greeting?
20. Do you nod your head when you are listening to another person who is talking? Will you change your behavior after having read Chapter 5?

#### Chapter 6: Spoken and Written Behavior

21. How do you convey a relaxed, friendly, and happy tone of voice? What do you do to make sure your tone of voice reflects what you are feeling? What do you do if you don't want your voice to give your feelings away?
22. Do you say, “I'm sorry” for things in addition to transgressions and mistakes?
23. Do you feel uncomfortable when someone gives you a compliment? How do you respond?

#### Chapter 7: Difficult and Tricky Interactions

24. Have you ever been asked to handle a project without being totally clear as to what you were expected to do? How did you handle that?
25. Are you ever able to say “no” to a project? Under what circumstances?
26. Is it ever appropriate to cry at work? Do you have any “tricks” you use to avoid crying if you think you're about to cry?

#### Chapter 8: Meetings

27. Do you ever arrive early to a meeting? Where do you sit if you are one of the first people to arrive?
28. How do you handle being interrupted? Is there a way you avoid unwanted interruptions?
29. Can women help each other avoid idea theft by piling on to another woman's ideas?

#### Chapter 9: Advocating for Yourself

30. When have you successfully advocated for yourself?
31. In seeking a raise or a promotion, what personal characteristics do you focus on?

#### Chapter 10: Work and the Rest of Your Life

32. What qualities in a spouse or life partner do you view as important? Would these qualities allow you to pursue your career?
33. What sorts of maternity leave policies should be available to working mothers?  
Have you ever discussed your career with your children to positively influence them?
34. Have you ever discussed your career with your children to positively influence them?