



What follows are some questions to start a discussion about It's Not You, It's the Workplace. There is no magic to these questions, just a way to get a discussion going.

Part I: Women's Workplace Relationships with Other Women

Chapter 1: Women Are Mean to Each Other—Or So We're Told

- Have you found working with other women to be any different from your working relationships with men? The same? Better? Worse? Why?
- Do you think that workplace conflicts between women are more toxic to your workplace than men's conflicts between men? What about workplace conflicts with women and men? Why do you think people believe women's conflicts with women are more toxic?
- Have you read any of the books discussed in this chapter? Any similar books or articles? What were your reactions? What did you think of the theory that some women are just plain mean to other women?
- What are your reactions to Andie and Al's premise in It's Not You that it is not the "way women are" that drives most of women's same-gender workplace conflict but rather the gendered nature of most workplaces? Is this position new to you? Have you thought about women's workplace conflicts this way before?
- What are your thoughts on the suggestions in "Making Things Better"? Are these suggestions realistic?

Chapter 2: Sisterhood

- What do you think about the statement, "Sisterhood is not the same thing as friendship"?
- Have you experienced workplace sisterhoods? If so, which ones worked well, and which ones did not? Why?
- Do you actively support other women at work? In your professional networks? How can you build workplace sisterhoods?

- What happens in your workplace when women actively support other women? If there are any negative consequences, how would you counteract them?

- What are your thoughts on the suggestions in "Making Things Better"? Are these suggestions realistic?

Chapter 3: Not My Sisterhood

- What was your reaction to the discussion (starting on page 40) that identification as a woman is different from identification as a feminist? Do you know women with this sort of split identification? Does this explain any of your workplace relationships?
- Has the political divide over the 2016 and 2018 elections affected your relationships with other women? Would you handle a workplace conversation about politics differently after having read this chapter?
- What are your thoughts on the suggestions offered in "Making Things Better"? Are these suggestions realistic?

Part II: Women's Workplace Relationships with Other Women

Chapter 4: Our Gendered Workplaces

- Many women are surprised that workplace inequality is still a problem for women. Have your workplaces been gendered? Have they become more equal to women during your career? Have you seen a reduction in gender bias? In what ways?
- Did the definitions of affinity bias (page 55) or gender bias (page 57) surprise you? Did these discussions resonate with you?
- What do you think about lose/lose "Double Binds" (page 58), including what Andie and Al call "the Goldilocks Dilemma"? Have you seen women viewed as "too soft" to be leaders or "too hard" to be liked? Have you personally experienced this dilemma? Does the double-bind concept help you understand some women's behavior at work?

- Andie and Al say that women have four choices in gendered workplaces: leaving, accepting second-class status, becoming one of the boys, or following “attuned gender communication” that they address in their first book, *Breaking Through Bias*. What choices have you made in your career? Would you make different choices after reading this chapter?

- What are your thoughts on the suggestions in “Making Things Better”? Are these suggestions realistic?

Chapter 5: Stereotype Straitjackets

- Do you find the stereotype straightjackets discussion compelling? Do the gender norms presented in this chapter resonate with you? Do society and many workplaces expect women to behave in certain ways and men to behave in other ways?

- Have you seen negative reactions by workplace colleagues when women—or men—act outside of traditional gender norms?

- Do you think women’s same-gender conflicts result largely from when women don’t act in accordance with traditional gender norms? How can you better support a woman who does not follow these gender norms?

- What do you think about the description of “The Boy’s Club” (page 82)? Have you seen this in any of your workplaces? What do you suggest women do when they confront a Boy’s Club at work?

- An important topic in *It’s Not You* is that gender is not the whole story and that different social identities are accompanied by their own distinctive stereotypes and biases. What do you think about the intersection of gender with other social identities?

- Do you think the workplace is experienced differently by LGBTQ women? How?

- What are your thoughts on the suggestions in “Making Things Better”? Are the suggestions realistic?

PART III: SOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Chapter 6: Gender Isn’t the Whole Story

- Did you have any personal stories about gender not being the whole story? When did you first think that race, ethnicity, age, and motherhood all came with their own stereotypes and biases?

- What are your thoughts on the suggestions in “Making Things Better”? Are these suggestions realistic?

Chapter 7: Racial Divides

- In writing about race, Andie and Al acknowledge they are writing about social identities very different from their own. What do you think they got right? What did they get wrong? What are they missing?

- Were there any ah-ha’s for you in reading this chapter on race in the workplace?

- What do you think about code switching (page 121), privilege and power (page 129), and being seen as invisible or too conspicuous (page 130)?

- Many women want to be both liked and respected. Have you ever experienced being liked but not respected, or respected but not liked? Have your intentions ever been misinterpreted by another woman?

- What are your thoughts on the suggestions in “Making Things Better”? Are these suggestions realistic?

Chapter 8: Age Matters

- Many of today’s workplaces have three or four generations of women working side-by-side. Do you work with younger and older women? Have you experienced workplace tensions in working with younger or older women?

- Does an awareness of age stereotypes help you bridge the age divide?

- Do you think Andie and Al got this conversation right?

- What are your thoughts on the suggestions in “Making Things Better”? Are these suggestions realistic?

Chapter 9: Mothers and Others

- What did you think about the discussion regarding motherhood bias? Have you ever seen such bias against yourself or another woman with young children?
- Have you ever seen a mother treated as a committed worker but a bad mother, or as a good mother but uncommitted worker?
- What are your thoughts on the suggestions in “Making Things Better”? Are these suggestions realistic?

PART IV:

Chapter 10: Overcoming Women’s Identity Conflicts

- Andie and Al believe that understanding stereotypes and the biases that flow from them is the first step to eliminate conflicts over women’s identity differences. Do you agree?
- In addition to having meaningful conversations with other women, Andie and Al suggest that women should have conversations with themselves. Do you think most people are capable of having honest conversations with themselves? Do you have these sorts of conversations with yourself?
- What do you think about the tips Andie and Al lay out (starting on page 185) for talking with other women about difficult topics? Are their tips helpful? Would you add anything?
- What feedback would you give to Andie and Al to help them in their ongoing efforts to effectively address ways to overcome different social identities?

Chapter 11: Attacking Workplace Bias

- Andie and Al mention seven organizational initiatives to tackle workplace bias:
 - First, establish an educational program for executives and managers—women as well as men—focusing on how and why affinity and gender bias impose serious obstacles to women’s career advancement.
 - Second, implement policies for hiring, evaluation, and advancement that are based on the principle of “blind auditions.”
 - Third, adopt practices and procedures that force executives and managers to use “slow thinking”

when making career-affecting decisions.

- Fourth, impose definitive requirements that eliminate or reduce discretionary decisions.
- Fifth, introduce a reason-neutral, results-flexible work policy.
- Sixth, commit to a program of small, achievable steps toward a quantified diversity goal.
- Seventh, enlist senior men as active allies in the effort to achieve significant gender diversity in senior leadership.

- What are your reactions to this program? Is it enough? Would you add anything to this list?
- How might you seek organizational changes?
- Will you do anything differently after reading It’s Not You? What comes to mind?
- What are some new tools you have for difficult conversations with others after reading It’s Not You?
- Can we create workplaces that focus on talent, not social identities?

Please share your thoughts and reach out to Andie and Al at info@AndieandAl.com. They’d love to hear from you!

Share Your Questions
with Andie & Al at
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