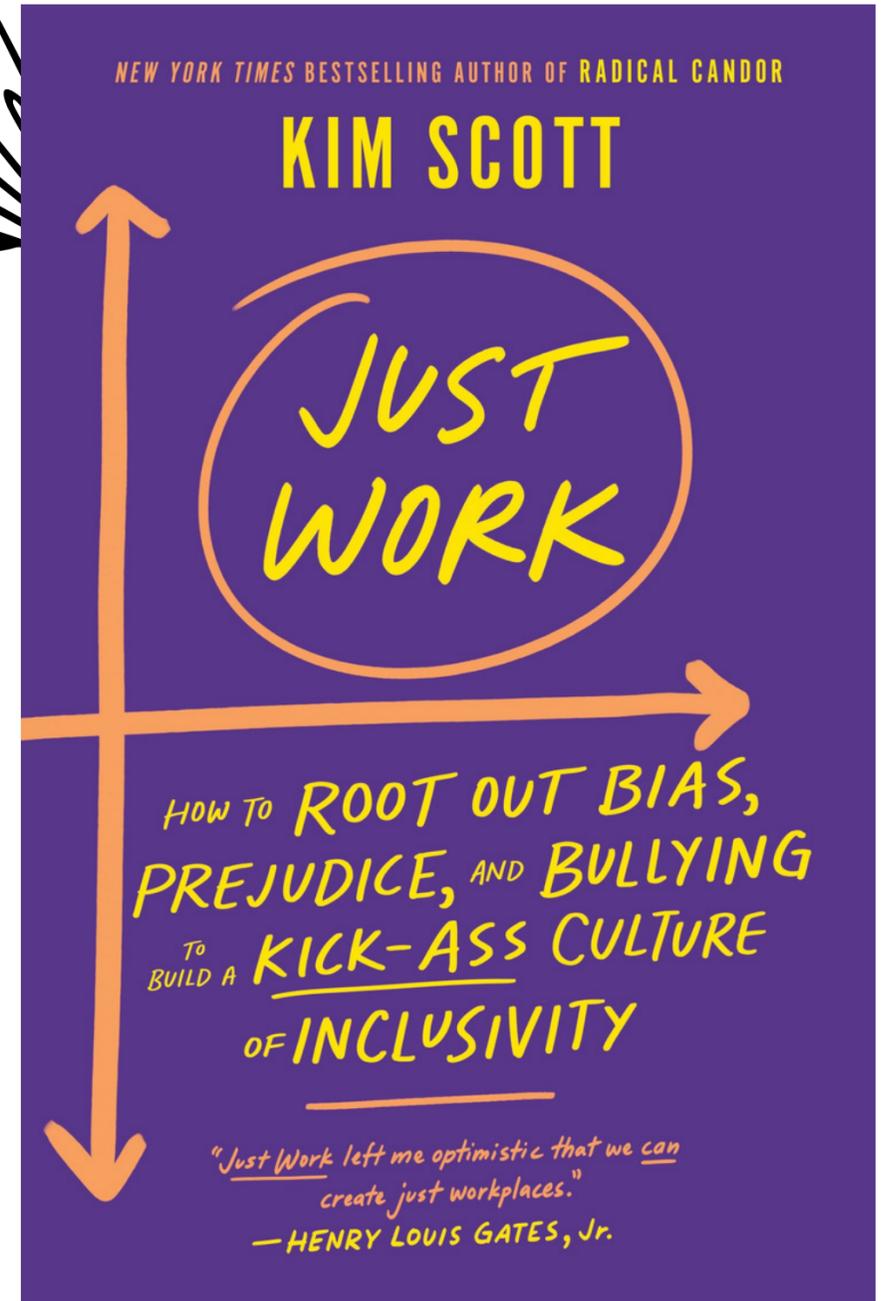
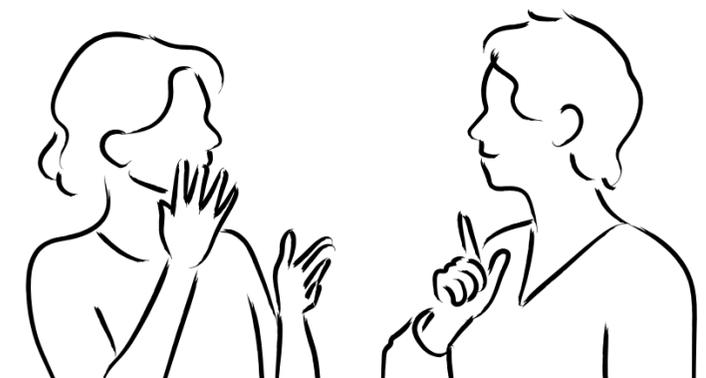


# Just Work

by Kim Scott



→ Let's discuss!





# Today's Discussion

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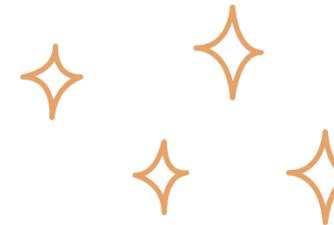
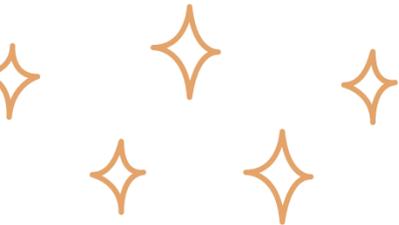
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## #1 Staying silent has hidden costs

There are many reasons to stay quiet instead of responding to such a situation. You may have valid fears that speaking out will land you in trouble. Or the very same attitude you're experiencing might make it harder to be heard. Some people aren't "allowed" to express feelings in the way that others are – they're constantly stereotyped as being "oversensitive" or "angry."

But keeping quiet has its costs as well. You're left to deal with the resentment and no way to express it. Your relationships with your colleagues may suffer, too. And the person demonstrating the problematic attitude will have no opportunity to recognize and change their behavior.



## Examples

Preparing to give a talk to a group of Silicon Valley executives, a man ran up to her shouting that he needed a safety pin for his shirt.

He'd mistaken her for one of the event staff. Scott didn't know how to respond. Was it unconscious bias? Prejudice? Bullying?

Unsure how to approach the situation, she remained silent. This was bad for everyone.

- She felt a loss of agency
- The man didn't learn about his bias
- The staff may have been impacted (if he complained of bad service)

## #2 What to say when you don't know what to say

So, how can you react quickly the next time you hear someone spouting some harmful stereotype?

- Bias is “not meaning it,” usually reflecting an unconscious stereotype that the person doesn't really believe if they stop to think.
- Prejudice is “meaning it,” reflecting a consciously held belief.
- Bullying is simply “being mean.”

If you experience bias, try an “I” statement which invites the other person in to understand things from your perspective. It “holds up a mirror” for them.

Responding to prejudiced beliefs requires an “it” statement; something that can appeal to the law, an HR policy, or common sense to show where the boundary between one person's freedom to believe whatever they want, but not to impose those beliefs on others, lies.

If you're confronting bullying, try a “you” statement or question to push them away just a bit.

## Examples

**Bias:** In the safety pin example, Kim could have said “I don't work here, I'm about to make a speech” - she's able to correct the man and give him a chance to correct his bias.

**Prejudice:** “it is illegal” or “it is an HR violation” or “it is ridiculous” not to ask an expert to be a speaker because she is a woman.

**Bullying:** “You can't talk to me like that.” or, “What's going on for you here?” If that feels too risky, simply “Where'd you get that shirt?” A “you” statement or question puts you in an active role; they must respond to you, you're not responding to them.

## #3 Confront your biases and become part of the solution

All of us have unconscious biases and prejudices, whether they relate to race, sexual orientation/gender identity, religion, political beliefs, or other attributes. But we are not helpless in the face of our own biases; we can invite people to point them out to us, learn from the feedback, and over time change our language, behavior, and thought patterns.

The most important step is to identify what your biases are. Enlist feedback from the people around you to be designated bias busters. If people know you're open to critique they'll be much more likely to speak up and help make you aware of problems so you can fix them. But make sure that you don't expect the underrepresented members of your team to do all the unpaid labor of educating you. If you can afford it, pay professional bias busters – like diversity and inclusion experts – to evaluate your language.

Don't get defensive. Allow yourself to be vulnerable and adopt a growth mindset: what can you learn from this situation? Practice acknowledging your mistakes, apologizing, and taking concrete action to change or make amends.

## Examples

Bart routinely misgendered his colleague, Avery. He kept referring to her using pronouns "he" and "him," even though he knew Avery used "she" and "her." After pointing this out several times, she became understandably angry.

Instead of getting defensive, Bart acknowledged his bias and took concrete steps to combat it. He asked his whole team to jump in when he messed up so that Avery wasn't in the position of always having to correct him. Then he went further: together with the management team, he developed a training program for the whole company designed to support every colleague in expressing their true selves at work. Bart was able to tackle his personal bias and turn it into a growth opportunity for the whole company.

## #4 Upstanders play a vital role in creating just workplaces

Too often, people harmed by bias, prejudice or bullying are also given the work of fixing the problem. But upstanders are an essential part of the solution. Upstanders can intervene in one of five ways.

- 1) They can do it directly (see example).
- 2) They can delegate by asking someone else to intervene – a leader, an official, or just another person in the room.
- 3) They can create a distraction to give the person being harmed a moment to regroup.
- 4) They can document what is going on.
- 5) They can delay and check in with the person who was harmed by the bias, prejudice or bullying after the fact.

It can be tempting for upstanders to try to be knights in shining armor, or “white saviors,” swooping in to save the day. But that attitude is actually counterproductive. Being an upstander doesn’t mean trying to get attention. It doesn’t mean standing up “for” someone who is “weaker.” It means intervening, for everyone’s sake.

## Examples

Aileen Lee, a partner at a venture capital firm, attended a meeting with two (male) partners. When the senior executives they were meeting took a seat at the conference table, they chose to sit opposite Lee’s male partners, so she was facing an empty chair. They then directed all their comments to her partners, rather than to her, even though she had the expertise.

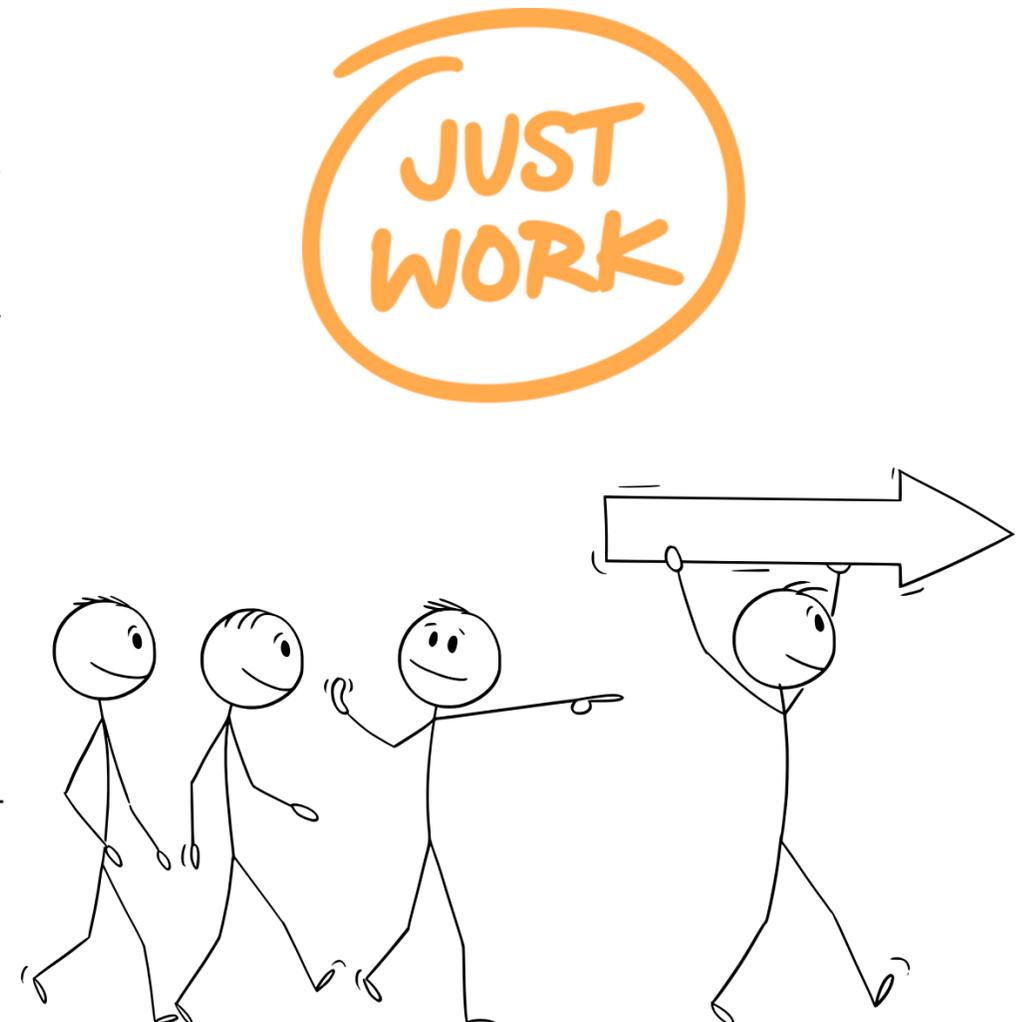
One of her colleagues noticed and switched places with her. Instantly, the dynamic in the room changed. She was automatically included in the conversation.



## #5 Leaders need to be proactive in preventing bias, prejudice and bullying

How can leaders tackle bias, prejudice and bullying in the workplace? Many CEOs enroll their staff in a workshop and call it a day. Or they outsource the problem to HR. But this won't work. Leaders need to do three things.

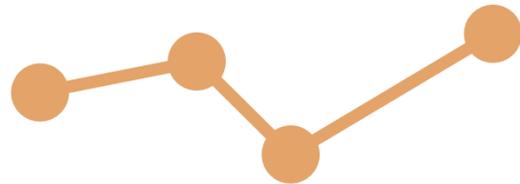
1. Teach the team to disrupt bias in the moment. Make confronting bias as routine as correcting typos. Come up with a shared vocabulary. What is the word or phrase everyone will use when they notice bias? Take shame out of the game by helping people to respond with grace rather than defensiveness when they're the one whose bias has been pointed out. Ensure that everyone is committed to sharing the work of disrupting bias – even your own.
2. Write a code of conduct that makes it clear what the rules of respect and collaboration that you all choose to abide by are. People can believe whatever they want but they cannot say or do whatever they want on your team. Where is that line?
3. Create consequences for bullying. Leaders must create conversational, compensation, and career consequences for bullying if they don't want it to escalate. Don't promote that brilliant jerk!



## #6 Quantify your bias to fix the homogeneity bug

How do you quantify your bias so you can improve the diversity on your team? You have data on hiring, pay, promotion. You can cut that data by gender, by race, and by other important factors. Look for trends. Are women on average getting hired less often? Are your Black employees not getting promoted as quickly as your White employees? Work to understand those trends. Ask why they are happening.

To really quantify your company's bias, you'll need to analyze every step of your employee life cycle: hiring, pay, promoting, mentoring, and more. Look for areas where underrepresentation is present and/or getting worse. Also look for areas where it's getting better. When things are headed in the wrong direction, figure out why, and what to do about it.



## Examples

Alan, Senior VP of engineering at Google, was determined to find out why Google was hiring so few women into the engineering team. He started working with institutions like Harvey Mudd College to discover why its engineering program was graduating more women than other programs. Harvey Mudd had discovered that their “weeding out” courses tended to weed out more women than men. When they scrapped those courses and focused on teaching rather than weeding out students who didn't already know how to code, they graduated more qualified engineers who were women. Eustace shared this knowledge with other institutions and encouraged them to do the same. By applying the same analytical rigor to the problem of underrepresentation on his team that he applied to other problems, he made important improvements.

## #7 Checks and balances can help prevent harassment

Unchecked power creates the conditions for harassment. When people have too much power, they're more likely to engage in bullying that crosses a line and becomes harassment. Managers who have too much power over their employees are prone to abuse it.

If one person has unilateral decision-making power to hire, promote or fire you, you're naturally reluctant to speak up when that person bullies or harasses you. Therefore, it's easier for that person to get away with that kind of behavior, and more likely to happen.

How can you limit power abuses in your company? By making sure that all leaders, from junior managers to the CEO, have to make decisions in consultation with other people. Making important decisions as a team will help to prevent one person from having too much sway. It'll also help you make better decisions.



## #8 Love and Joy

When we learn to recognize how the dynamics of bias, prejudice, bullying, discrimination, harassment, and physical violations operate in similar ways for different people, we can unite in interrupting them and make the workplace – and, indeed, the world – more just. This growing understanding of our interconnectedness is reason for optimism.

We can anticipate the work we must do to create more just workplaces with excitement instead of the deep dread too many people bring to this task. And we can experience this love and joy in small ways, even with people we barely know.



## Examples

In a commencement address, Tracy K. Smith offered a beautiful reminder that we need to bring love and joy to work. “We tend to avoid that word [love] when we talk about politics, demographics and policy, employing in its place a term like “tolerance.” But tolerance is meager. Tolerance means I will make space for you beside me on some kind of imaginary national bus, then slide back over so you don’t get too much of what I never stopped thinking is mine. Tolerance requires no cognitive shift. But love is a radical shift. Love tells me that your needs must be as important to me as mine are; that I can only truly honor and protect myself by honoring and protecting you. Love assures me that giving you what you need is a way of ministering to myself, to the US that you and I together make . . . In order to embrace love, I must move past fear, past a fixation on my own claim to power or authority.”



**Let's**

**keep**



**it**

**going!**

