

# Calling out everyday sexism

*'She only got her promotion because she's a woman'*

*'Oh, Good afternoon'*  
said sarcastically  
to a flexible worker

*'Can you take the notes?'*

## COMMON RESPONSES

*'This is PC gone mad.'*

*'You're working full time? Your kids are only young once.'*

*'She's such a ball breaker.'*

Talking over the top of someone.

## COMMON RESPONSES

*'It was just a joke.'*

*'If I were 20 years younger...'*

*'You sound a lot like my wife.'*

*'Stop being such a girl.'*

## COMMON RESPONSES

*'You're taking it the wrong way.'*

## MANAGER'S ROLE

Talking to a staff member about what they said.

## MANAGER'S ROLE

Explaining why inclusive language is important.

## MANAGER'S ROLE

Talking to a repeat offender.

## BEING CALLED OUT

Someone calls you on something you said.



*She only got her promotion  
because she's a woman*

What would  
you say?

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT

*You know she's outstanding, right?"*

*No, she got her promotion because of her qualifications, experience and performance.*

*I'd be really hurt if someone said that about me. She got her promotion because she deserved it.*



### FACT:

Public Service selection processes are merit-based and do not consider factors such as gender, race or religion.

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO THE PERSON IN PRIVATE LATER



*I just wanted to talk to you about what you said earlier. That sort of comment is unfair to the person.*

*Recruitment processes are merit-based. She got her promotion because she was better than the other applicants.*

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



*I was uncomfortable with something a colleague said earlier today and wanted to talk to you about it.*

*I'm glad you let me know.  
Can you tell me what happened?*

...

*That's not an okay thing to say.  
What would you like to happen?*

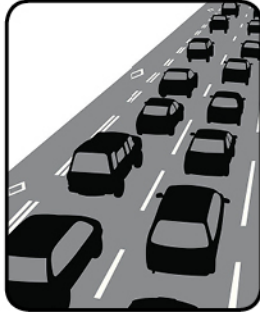
*I think it might be a good idea if you spoke to them.*

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER

Earlier that morning...



What would  
you say?



'Oh, good  
afternoon.'



**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT



*I know you mean that as a joke, but it comes across as quite judgmental.*

*It's not the 1970s – flexible work is the norm now.*

*That's pretty unhelpful. We all do the hours required to get the work done.*

### **FACT:**

All employees are entitled to request a flexible work arrangement.

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

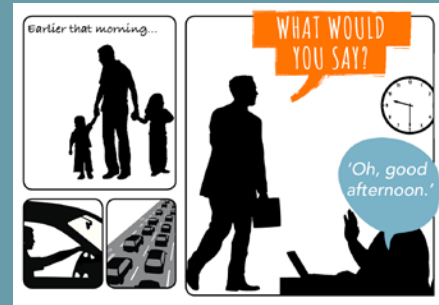
TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO THE PERSON IN PRIVATE LATER

*I just wanted to talk to you about that comment you made earlier. I know you mean that as a joke, but it comes across as quite judgmental and old-fashioned. We're all doing the hours we're paid to do.*



RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



*I was uncomfortable with something a colleague said earlier today and wanted to talk to you about it.*

*I'm glad you let me know.  
Can you tell me what happened?*

...

*I want to tell them that it bothers me.  
But I'm not sure they will take it seriously.*

*That's not an okay thing to say.  
What would you like to happen?*

*We should talk to them. If they don't take it seriously, then we might need to escalate it.*

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER

*'Can you take the notes for this meeting?'*

What would you say?



**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT

*I think we're playing into gender stereotypes here. Maybe we should give a guy a turn.*

*I'm happy to this time. But can we chat about rotating it woman/man in future? Would be pretty good role modelling.*

*I did that last time. Maybe someone else could do it this time?*



### TIP:

Pay attention to who is taking notes, booking meeting rooms, or organising morning teas (and cleaning up afterwards) in your work area. If you see a problem, change things up.

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO THE PERSON IN PRIVATE LATER



*I just wanted to raise with you that it seems like it's always women who are asked to take notes at our meetings. It's probably not an intentional thing, but it's a pretty bad look. Can we rotate it in the future?*

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



**Things you could say to:**

## TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER

*Have you noticed that the women on our team are the ones who are always asked to take notes at meetings?*

*Yes, I had.  
It's really not a good look.*

*I think I'll talk to our director about it.*


*It's definitely worth raising.  
I'll come with you.*



**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



What would you say?

The illustration shows a person in blue pants sitting at a desk with a computer, and another person standing to the right. A large black speech bubble is positioned above the person at the desk, and a large blue speech bubble is positioned above the person standing. The person at the desk is looking at the computer screen. The person standing is looking towards the person at the desk.

*'Don't forget, we need to send that report off today.'*

*'Yeah, yeah. You sound like my wife.'*

**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT

*Awkward moment alert. That's really uncomfortable, however you meant it.*

*Unless you meant that as a compliment, it's just not ok to say that.*

*You know, jokes like that promote stereotypes. They're not appropriate.*



### TIP:

Everyone has unconscious bias and it can play out negatively in the workplace. Slow down your thinking to avoid gender stereotypes.

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO THE PERSON IN PRIVATE LATER



*I wanted to talk to you about something I heard you say earlier. I think you meant it as a joke, but it sounded really awkward and strange. Jokes like that promote stereotypes. Can we not refer to me being 'like your wife' – whatever that meant?*

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



**Things you could say to:**

## TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER

*When I reminded a colleague to do something earlier, he said I sounded like his wife. It really annoyed me. Do you think I'm being too sensitive?*

*Why do you think it bothered you?*

*Because it promotes the idea that all women are nags. I think jokes about wives reflect negatively on all women.*

*That's a fair point. So what do you think should happen?*

*I don't want it to happen again. So I think I should tell them that it bothered me.*



**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



*'You're working full time?*

*Your kids are only young once, you know.'*

**What would you say?**



**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT



*When did you last ask a man that question?*

*You probably don't mean it, but that sounds pretty judgmental.*

*That's quite a sexist question. It's the 21st Century, so we all make it work.*

**FACT:**

Research shows that children can benefit economically, educationally and socially when both their parents work.

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO THE PERSON IN PRIVATE LATER



*I just wanted to talk to you about what you said earlier.  
Asking a question like that is pretty sexist.*

*When did you last ask a man that question?*

*Looking after children isn't a woman's only responsibility  
or choice. We've got the right balance for our family.*

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



**Things you could say to:**

## TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



*A colleague said something to me earlier about missing out on time with my children because I'm working. It really annoyed me. Do you think I'm being too sensitive?*

*Not at all. That's a really judgmental thing to say. What did you say?*

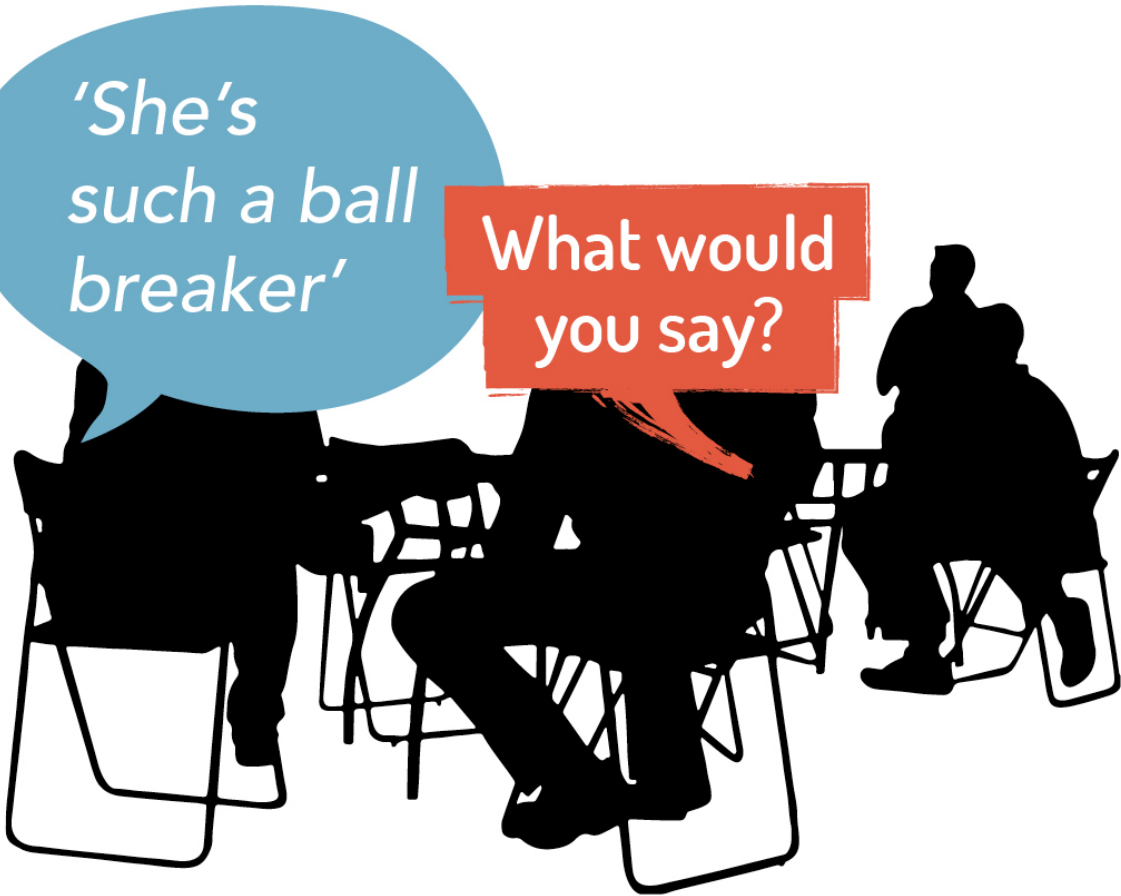
*I didn't know what to say, so I said that I thought I could manage both. But I think they should also know that it upset me. What do you think?*

*Yes, I think you should tell them.*

**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



*'She's  
such a ball  
breaker'*

What would  
you say?

**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT

*No, mate, actually she's outstanding.*

*That's a classic double-bind: if she's confident, she's a ball breaker, if she's quiet, she's not ready to lead. How do we get this one right?*

*That's 1970s sort of language. What you actually mean to say is – she's awesome and gets stuff done.*

### FACT:

Research shows that when a woman is assertive, her colleagues will label her as abrasive or bossy. It is important we respect assertiveness as a trait that is acceptable for everyone to display.



RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO THE PERSON IN PRIVATE LATER

*I just wanted to talk to you about what you said earlier. That sort of comment is pretty sexist. And it's a classic double-bind: if she's confident, she's a ball breaker; if she's quieter, she's not ready to lead. It's just not ok to say that.*



RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER

*I was uncomfortable with something a colleague said earlier today and wanted to talk to you about it.*

*I'm glad you let me know.  
Can you tell me what happened?*

...

*I really think we're better than this comment.  
"Ball breaker" is so old-fashioned and not OK.  
I really want us to lift into a better way to talk  
about confidence and about gender.*

*That's not an okay thing to say.  
What would you like to happen?*

'She's  
such a ball  
breaker'

What would  
you say?



RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER

What would  
you say?

Jess:  
'My point is-'

'Look, I think  
the important  
point here...'



**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT



*Sorry, could we just go back and hear what Jess was saying.*

*I think that's the point Jess was making, isn't it?*

*New rule for this meeting: everyone is allowed to finish their point.*

**TIP:** For more ideas, see the Tips for Chairing Inclusive Meetings.

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO THE PERSON IN PRIVATE LATER



*I just wanted to let you know – at the meeting this morning you cut Jess off while she was talking. You probably didn't even think about it at the time, but it's not a good look. It's just about respect and making sure we hear everyone's voice. And she was making a great point too.*

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



**Things you could say to:**

## TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER

*I just wanted to flag with you, we've got a couple of people on the team who aren't great listeners, so I think it would help if you could call it out when someone is interrupted, or maybe set some ground rules for meetings?*

*Thanks for bringing it up. I've noticed it as well and I'll be more proactive about it in future. As a team, I think we can do better and make sure everyone is heard.*



**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

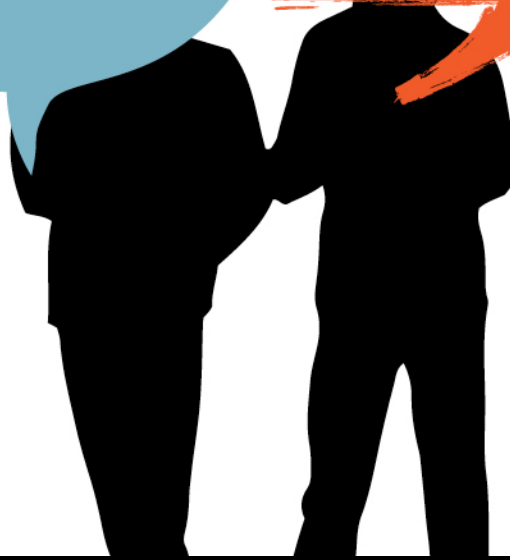
**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



*'If I were  
20 years  
younger...'*

What would  
you say?



**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT



*If you were 20 years younger, you'd still be being inappropriate.*

*Comments like that are just not ok.  
You can't talk about colleagues like that.*

*That could be sexual harassment. It's not ok to say.*

### **FACT:**

Treating everyone with respect is a key element in the APS Code of Conduct which binds all DFAT colleagues. Report sexual harassment to Conduct and Ethics.

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO THE PERSON IN PRIVATE LATER



*I just wanted to talk to you about what you said earlier. It's really inappropriate to say things like that about colleagues. It made me feel uncomfortable. You know sexual harassment is illegal, right?*

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



**Things you could say to:**

## TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



*I was uncomfortable with something a colleague said earlier today and wanted to talk to you about it.*

*I'm glad you let me know.  
Can you tell me what happened?*

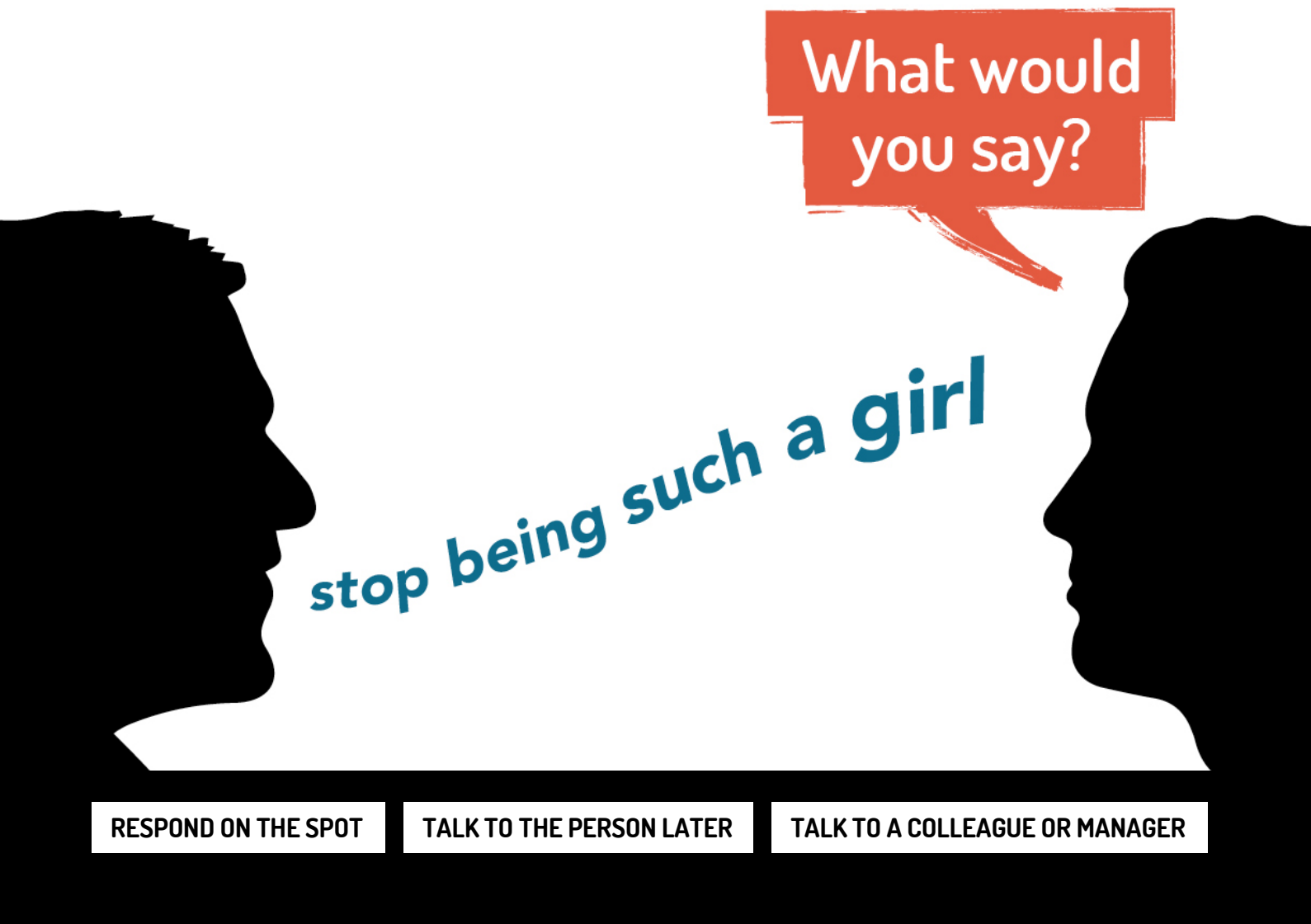
...

*That's not appropriate.  
Let's get advice from Conduct and Ethics.*

**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**

The image features two black silhouettes of human heads in profile, facing each other. A red speech bubble is positioned above the right silhouette, and blue text is written between the two silhouettes. At the bottom, there are three white rectangular boxes with black text.

What would  
you say?

stop being such a girl

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT



*That phrase actually doesn't mean anything. It's just sexist and unhelpful.*

*It's the 21st Century. Can we just stop using that phrase now?*

*Let's just cut that phrase from the office dictionary. Goodbye gender stereotypes.*

**TIP:**

Language reflects and reinforces social norms. Using ungendered language is an important part of solving sexism.

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



Things you could say to:

## TALK TO THE PERSON IN PRIVATE LATER



*I just wanted to talk to you about what you said earlier. I realise you probably didn't even think about it, but a comment like "stop acting like a girl" is actually really old-fashioned. And it promotes stereotypes. Have you seen the viral "Run Like a Girl" videos? You should take a look.*

RESPOND ON THE SPOT

TALK TO THE PERSON LATER

TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



**Things you could say to:**

## TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER



*Something a colleague said earlier today made me uncomfortable and I just thought, "we're better than that," so I'm raising it.*

*I'm glad you let me know.  
Can you tell me what happened?*

...

*You're right. That's not appropriate.  
What would you like to happen?*

*Maybe it would help if you just reminded everyone generally about the sort of language we should be using to be more inclusive.*

**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**

**TALK TO THE PERSON LATER**

**TALK TO A COLLEAGUE OR MANAGER**



*This is PC gone mad.  
You can't say anything anymore.*

What would  
you say?

RESPOND ON THE SPOT



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT



*There have been a lot of changes to what's expected in the workplace and what's accepted in society.*

*This really matters. Insensitive or careless comments can be hurtful, kill confidence and harm productivity. These days it's just not on and we need to learn to adapt.*

*Language is important and it's such a small ask to change a few words to make sure everyone feels included.*



*'But it's just a joke. People shouldn't be so uptight.'*



**What would you say?**

**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**



**Things you could say to:**

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT




*Well, it's not funny. Comments like that might seem unimportant to you, but to other people they can be hurtful.*

*Ultimately, we all want a workplace where everyone is happy to come every day.*

*And if that means being a bit more thoughtful about what we say, that's not such a big sacrifice.*

*If you want to talk more about this, let me know.*



What would  
you say?

'But you're just  
taking it the  
wrong way.  
I didn't mean  
anything by it.'

RESPOND ON THE SPOT



Things you could say to:

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT

*Good to know. But how comments are perceived by others is really important.*

*Now that you know it's not on, let's move on.*





**Things you could say:**

## MANAGER TALKING TO AN EMPLOYEE

*I wanted to have a chat because I got some feedback about something you said and want to talk about how that's perceived. Please keep an open mind in this conversation. I'm raising this early so that you can address it.*

*But I didn't mean anything by it.*

*You might not have meant anything by it, but it's the way that comments are perceived that matters.*

### **FACT:**

As a manager, it is your responsibility to uphold the APS Code of Conduct. The whole team is affected by sexism. Talk to Conduct and Ethics about what you could do to improve behaviour in your team.

MANAGER TO EMPLOYEE

EMPLOYEE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND PROBLEM

REPEAT OFFENDER



## Things you could say:

# MANAGER TALKING TO AN EMPLOYEE WHO DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM

*But I don't see that there's anything wrong with what I said.*

*Even though you don't think it's offensive, you need to know that it's not acceptable in the 21st century. I agree the comment was inappropriate.*

*But it's just a joke. It's ridiculous to be that sensitive.*

*You might think it's an over-reaction, but the fact is that this is not acceptable. And it made someone uncomfortable. As a leader, I expect everyone to be included. Think about what you say.*

### FACT:

As a manager, it is your responsibility to uphold the APS Code of Conduct. The whole team is affected by sexism. Talk to Conduct and Ethics about what you could do to improve behaviour of this individual and your obligations.

MANAGER TO EMPLOYEE

EMPLOYEE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND PROBLEM

REPEAT OFFENDER



Things you could say:

## MANAGER TALKING TO A REPEAT OFFENDER

*We've spoken about this before and I'm raising it again because it keeps happening. You are out of touch with acceptable behaviour in DFAT. You must be more respectful with colleagues and think about how your words can affect other people.*

*This one doesn't feel too hard to get right. It's reached the point where I'll need to consult Conduct and Ethics.*


**FACT:**

As a manager, it is your responsibility to uphold the APS Code of Conduct. Contact Conduct and Ethics about this individual and your obligations.

MANAGER TO EMPLOYEE

EMPLOYEE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND PROBLEM

REPEAT OFFENDER



*'What you said made me uncomfortable. It comes across as quite sexist.'*

**What would you say?**

**RESPOND ON THE SPOT**



**Things you could say to:**

## RESPOND ON THE SPOT

*I'm sorry. It won't happen again.*

*Fair enough. That didn't even occur to me. I'm sorry.*

*Gosh, that wasn't my intent. Good to call me on it. I'll do better.*

**FACT:**

To be a relevant leader now and in the future, being inclusive matters. Perception matters. Language matters. Take the feedback. Do better.

