

STRONG FEMALE LEAD

5 PRACTICAL THINGS MEN CAN DO FOR GENDER EQUALITY AT WORK

"RAISING AWARENESS" IS FINE, BUT IF YOU WANT TO BE A PART OF BRINGING ABOUT REAL CHANGE, THERE'S A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE.

BY KATHLEEN DAVIS

There is no shortage of advice for women who want a more level playing field at work:

We should learn to accept criticism, stop apologizing, change our tone of voice, learn how to negotiate, sit at the table, and "lean in," yet still find that elusive work-life balance at the same time.

But we will never reach equality with only one gender putting forth all the effort.

In fact, studies have shown that the best people to promote both gender and racial diversity at work are . . . white men.

Programs like the recently announced UNWomen initiative #HeForShe campaign aim to raise awareness that women's issues are men's issues too, but once your awareness is raised, then what?

The dismal numbers of women in top positions at many companies (only 4.6% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women), the lack of women in Silicon Valley, and the persistent pay gap (women still earn 78 cents for every dollar men earn) can seem insurmountable. But there are small, yet impactful things that every man can do in the name of equality. Here are five ways to get started:

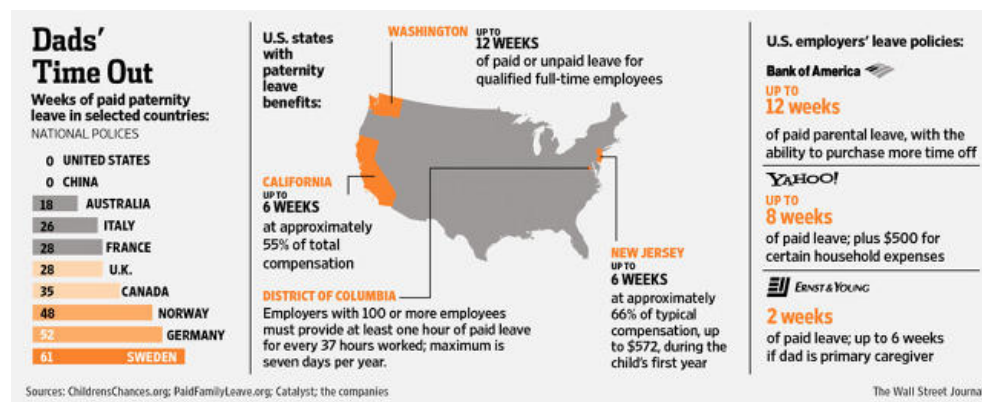
1. IF YOU HAVE IT, TAKE PARENTAL LEAVE (AND ENCOURAGE OTHER MEN TO DO SO TOO).

It's pretty well known that the U.S. policy on paid parental leave is dismal. Out of 185 countries reviewed in a 2014 report by International Labor Organization, only two--the United States and Papua New Guinea--did not have public policies for paid maternity leave.

But parental leave isn't just a women's issue, it's a working parent issue. More accurately, it's an issue for everyone, because stressed-out, finically strained employees aren't good for business.

Not only do too few companies consider extending paid leave to new fathers, when they do, men rarely take advantage of the entire leave. While a 2011 study of men at four large companies found that approximately 85% of new fathers take some time off after the birth of a child, the vast majority of them only took off a week or two. And a 2012 study of college professors found that only 12% of fathers took paid parental leave when it was offered, compared with 69% of mothers.

It's not the norm for men to take off much more than a week or two when they have a child, even though more than 75% of the men in the 2012 survey said they would have liked to have spent more time with their new children.



Via the WSJ

But that doesn't mean that working fathers can't change the precedent. Working moms face the "Mommy Tax"; they are viewed as not as serious or committed to their jobs, or face assumptions that they will leave after they have a baby. Having men shoulder some of the burden can shift that balance.

In two-parent households, parenting should be a partnership. So, instead of pressuring women to figure out how to overcome workplace obstacles or navigate the biases that they'll face when their family situation changes, why don't we shift our perspective to ask the same from the other half of the partnership?

The more men speak up for their wishes to spend time with their families and share the burdens of new parenthood, the less sigma there will be for both men and women to take

"PARENTAL LEAVE ISN'T JUST A WOMEN'S ISSUE,

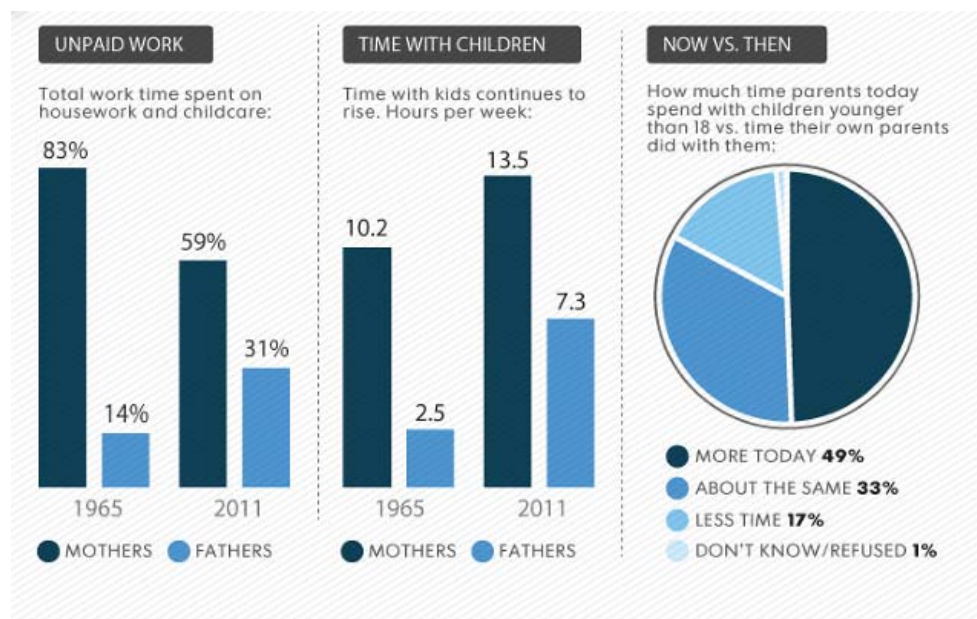
time off, and the less pressure and strain everyone will feel. And the more male managers who lead by example, the more both men and women will feel that parenthood at work isn't a liability.

2. SHARE THE SECOND SHIFT

Speaking of parenting, there can't be gender equality in the office if when working parents get home, women do the lion's share of the housework and childcare. And while we've made considerable strides since this data was recorded in the 1960s, we are still far from an even split.

On an average day, women will spend more than two hours and 10 minutes doing housework while men spend one hour and 17 minutes, . Meanwhile, 2011 data from ATUS and Pew Research Center showed that working fathers spend an average of 7.3 hours a week with their children, while working moms log an average of 13.5 hours a week.

IT'S AN ISSUE FOR EVERYONE, BECAUSE STRESSED-OUT, FINICALLY STRAINED EMPLOYEES AREN'T GOOD FOR BUSINESS."



Via USA Today

This extends beyond just working parents, though. Any couple living together shares household responsibilities, and there is no reason why those responsibilities should fall more women's shoulders than men's. The belief the women are inherently "better" at cooking and cleaning, or President Obama's recent assertion men need to be "trained" by women in domestic matters isn't only embarrassingly outdated, but it's insulting to both genders.

INSTEAD OF

Just as navigating new parenthood and work isn't just a women's issue, neither is work-life

PRESSURING WOMEN TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO OVERCOME WORKPLACE OBSTACLES, WHY DON'T WE SHIFT OUR PERSPECTIVE TO ASK THE SAME FROM MEN?

balance. Sometimes the man in the relationship needs to make dinner or pick up the kids so the women can work late, sometimes it's the other way around.

And if you are a parent, teaching little boys the sorts of life skills that Obama jokingly mentions that adult men lack and modeling that behavior is a great way to ensure that when they are

husbands, their wives don't end up in the same disproportionate relationships women are in today.

Aside from more evenly splitting the work that happens after office hours, we need to change the way we talk about work-life balance--namely, that it's a question we need to start asking men, and that men need to start talking about publicly.

For every female leader who is asked how she manages to find work life balance, let's ask the same of male leaders: How do you manage to be both a father and a CEO?

3. MENTOR (BOTH MEN AND WOMEN)

We've written extensively on the importance of mentorship for career success. But in most cases, mentorships don't cross gender lines. It's extremely important for young women to have role models and get advice from women who have navigated the similar career hurdles.

But with such a lack of women in top positions in almost every industry, especially in STEM fields, there is also a lack of mentorship opportunities for women starting out to learn from the people who have the jobs that we need them to someday fill.

Mentorship A-Z

- **The 3 Stages Of Mentorship**
- **How Mutual Mentorship Can Change Your Career**
- **How Do I Find A Mentor?**

In the most successful mentoring relationships, the mentor learns from the mentee as well, so it behooves men to take on mentees who have different experiences and backgrounds.

4. PAY ATTENTION TO DOUBLE STANDARDS IN LANGUAGE

It turns out that women are guilty of this one in some cases, too. We use different words to describe women than we do to describe men. And those words often promote a double standard. Consider: found that not only did women receive far more critical feedback than men,

the criticism that they received was almost always about their personalities, rather than their actual performance.

Not only that, but the same behavior in men was described differently when it was displayed by women: A man “needed to be more patient” while a woman was “abrasive” or “judgmental.”

Further, we often use words that qualify a woman’s accomplishments by her gender. For example, you likely would never call someone a “male venture capitalist” or a “dadtreprenneur,” yet few bat an eye at using qualifiers like female VC and momtreprenneur.

FOR EVERY FEMALE LEADER WHO IS ASKED HOW SHE MANAGES TO FIND WORK LIFE BALANCE, LET’S ASK THE SAME OF MALE LEADERS: HOW DO YOU MANGE TO BE BOTH A FATHER AND A CEO?

As long as we continue to have one set of language for men and another for women, or put women’s gender in front of their professions, we perpetuate the belief (unconscious or not) that women are or should be on playing by a different (and unequal) set of rules.

5. DON’T PARTICIPATE IN PANELS OF A BUNCH OF WHITE MEN

We have to lead the changes we want to see in our industries. If you are asked to speak on a panel of a bunch of white dudes, be the voice that speaks up for diversity. Ask to bring in women and women and minorities doing interesting work on the topic in question.

Everyone loves to tout their innovative thinking and disruptive businesses, but how innovative or disruptive can you really be when all of your perspective come from the same group of people?

These five things are just the start. We’d love to hear your ideas for how we can move towards a more equitable workplace. Leave a comment below, or join us for our new Strong Female Lead Live Chat series starting soon where we’ll talk to thought leaders about issues surrounding inequality in the office and beyond.

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[Photo: Flickr user [Susan Sermoneta](#)]



KATHLEEN DAVIS

Kathleen Davis is the Leadership Editor at FastCompany.com. Previously, she has worked as an editor at Entrepreneur.com, WomensDay.com and Popular Photography magazine.

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October 21, 2014 | 5:23 AM

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29 COMMENTS

KENNETH > KATHLEEN DAVIS 5 DAYS AGO

"Don't participate in panels of a bunch of white men" - Yes, but please be sure you invite women and minorities on their on merits. Don't invite them "because we need a woman on the panel".

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KATHRYN PRUSINSKI > KATHLEEN DAVIS 5 DAYS AGO

Kathleen - can you provide me your source for "In fact, studies have shown that the best people to promote both gender and racial diversity at work are . . . white men." I would love to be able to use this in our facilitations as we stress to women the importance of finding a male and female sponsor to support them in advancing. thanks so much!

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KATHLEEN DAVIS > KATHRYN PRUSINSKI 5 DAYS AGO

The story that references that study is linked in that line. It's: <http://www.fastcompany.com/3033402/strong-female-lead/damned-if-we-do-how-women-and-minorities->



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NICHOLAS GARRISON > KATHLEEN DAVIS 5 DAYS AGO

I love it. Very simple ideas that can help shape the future of work force and families. Guys time to stand up, support and help make a change.



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ANN-MARIE HEIDINGSFELDER > KATHLEEN DAVIS 6 DAYS AGO

Nice article but people in general don't make behaviorial changes unless there are very compelling reasons to do so . . .There has to be some intrinsic value or Measurable business outcome other than an amorphous "promoting gender equality" or "diverse viewpoints". It's very unlikely that anyone makes changes for change sake and therein lies the buoy that keeps this topic afloat.



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BRIAN K SEITZ > KATHLEEN DAVIS 6 DAYS AGO

1. Don't Participate In Panels Of A Bunch Of White Men Disagree with a blanket don't participate. I think asking why not a mixed gender panel to the organizer is first step. Often I get we don't know of any women SMEs in the domain; then I suggest some: if I know of any --often I know a lot I can recommend with confidence. If I get a passive/aggressive response like we're already filled, I suggest replacing me as a panelist. If I get thanks but no thanks, then its time to ditched the panel and possibly the conference.

Sometimes it takes effort on the other end though. More than once I recommend several women for roles a panel only to hear they rejected the offer. Following up they told me they didn't feel qualified --which shocked the hell out of me, as if they weren't qualified I sure wasn't either as they had way more experience in that specific subdomain than I. So it often takes a push from a colleague to overcome that confidence issue.

[Link](#) [Reply](#)**MICHAEL LANGFORD** > **KATHLEEN DAVIS** 6 DAYS AGO

For #2: encouraging consumption of commercial domestic services (take out laundry, cleaning services, childcare and babysitters, delivered groceries, delivered prescriptions, even eating out) via cutting back on other expenses can help balance the 2nd shift. Some (admittedly well off) men who'd be bad at (long term) putting in 3 more hours a week of child supervision would happily pay for 6 more hours of babysitter time, or a mix of more time and more services.

(It often is women doing these services, which is problematic perhaps on a different level, but they are doing paid work).

[Link](#) [Reply](#)**SHANNON RINALDO** > **MICHAEL LANGFORD** 4 DAYS AGO

The second shift is more than just taking care of kids, doing laundry, etc. The kids need their parents. Fine if you want to pay someone to take care of the household chores, paying someone to parent your kids begs the question of why you have kids in the first place.

[Link](#) [Reply](#)**TATYANA MAMUT** > **KATHLEEN DAVIS** 7 DAYS AGO

Great article, thank you for the constructive contribution to this conversation! To point #5, I'd like to add that if you are a CEO, make sure that your trusted advisors and direct reports are a mix of men and women from different functions and backgrounds. In today's world, leaders must protect themselves from insular thinking. In addition, according to research at MIT, the more women on your team, the better your results will be! (See HBR article: <http://hbr.org/2011/06/defend-your-research-what-makes-a-team-smarter-more-women/ar/1>)

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PASCAL DROLET > KATHLEEN DAVIS 7 DAYS AGO

Interesting article with some good points.

You mention the pay gap (the persistent pay gap (women still earn 78 cents for every dollar men earn)). Is this figure for equal work? If not, why it is omitted in the article? This omission is misleading - it leads the reader to believe that there is systematic discrimination, where for the exact same work, a woman would be paid 0.78\$ compared to men. On the other hand, if this is your contention, would you mind providing the link on the study supporting that?

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KATHLEEN DAVIS > PASCAL DROLET 6 DAYS AGO

The 78 cent figure is widely used as the average difference between men and women's pay. There are a variety of factors in play: some is outward discrimination (when men are offered more for the exact same work), and there are also factors such as male-dominated fields paying more and women having to put their careers on hold to have and care for children and facing the "Mommy Tax," I mentioned in the article. Here are some helpful links: <http://www.aauw.org/research/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap/> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/08/on-equal-pay-day-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-gender-pay-gap/> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/equal-pay#top>

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PASCAL DROLET > KATHLEEN DAVIS 6 DAYS AGO

Thank you for the reply & the links! My understanding of the situation, is while it's true that some part of the gap is unexplained & can be assumed to be pure & old sexism - and that unfair treatment has no place in 2014, it is still important to understand what is what. If someone work 10% more, he deserve 10% more. In your argument #2, you rely on the ATUS & Pew research, which state that men work on average 10

hours more than women per week, and that overall paid work+home work time is pretty even. My point here, is that the article let me to believe that men were paid more for the same work, while they were doing less at home, which is not the case (according to your own answer, article & data). Men & women seems to simply dedicate a different percentage of their time for each task in general.

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DRED SCOTT > **KATHLEEN DAVIS** 7 DAYS AGO

"But that doesn't mean that working fathers can't change the precedent. Working moms face the "Mommy Tax"; they are viewed as not as serious or committed to their jobs, or face assumptions that they will leave after they have a baby. Having men shoulder some of the burden can shift that balance."

Why should we men shoulder some of the burden? Whats in it for us? As a SINGLE person, giving Parents time off for a lifestyle CHOICE, is to me, workplace discrimination. Do single employees get paid time off for their lifestyle choices? Do they get pay increases for picking up the extras workload of the absent employee?

I would like to bond with my motorcycle on a nice 6 month ride around the country. Where is MY paid time off? Until I get it, Im not taking on any of the "extra" burdens @ work for anybody.

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GLORIAWANDROUS > **DRED SCOTT** 3 DAYS AGO

Fathers should shoulder the burden because both mothers and fathers work. Without people making "lifestyle choices" there'd soon be no consumers for your PUA training tapes or whatever it is you do to make a buck in this world.

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JOHN NESS > **DRED SCOTT** 5 DAYS AGO

Worst. Username. Ever.

 1  [Link](#) [Reply](#)**DRED SCOTT** > **KATHLEEN DAVIS** 7 DAYS AGO

"But that doesn't mean that working fathers can't change the precedent. Working moms face the "Mommy Tax"; they are viewed as not as serious or committed to their jobs, or face assumptions that they will leave after they have a baby. Having men shoulder some of the burden can shift that balance."

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  [Link](#) [Reply](#)**KATHLEEN DAVIS** > **DRED SCOTT** 6 DAYS AGO

I think you missed the first part of the section that you quoted: "But that doesn't mean that working fathers can't change the precedent." I'm not suggesting that single employees take on working mother's work, I'm suggesting that working fathers help shoulder some of the burden of having a child that currently falls disproportionately on women.

But even if you never have children, there is something "in it for you" to have better workplace policies for parents: stressed out, tired, finically strained coworkers aren't great for getting things done.

There is also something in it for you to work at a company or in a country that has compassion for the needs of it's employees (imagine if the family medical leave act offered paid leave instead of unpaid leave -- if you got into a motorcycle accident and had to miss six weeks of work you wouldn't be in danger of not being able to pay rent).

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JACQUELINE S. HOMAN > **KATHLEEN DAVIS** 7 DAYS AGO

How about giving disadvantaged women entering (or re-entering) the workforce fair and equal chances for getting the entry level/junior level dev jobs that we need in order to get work experience in the first place? I see that there is no shortage of people willing to hire young privileged men while they're in college who don't have any work experience, but no chances for jobs ever seem to go to economically disadvantaged middle-aged women in need of a chance for a job who want to enter this field, too.

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BARCLAY ROBBINS POLLAK > **KATHLEEN DAVIS** 7 DAYS AGO

I think work-life balance is almost impossible for anyone to achieve. I think trying to get work-life balance just sets you up for failure. <http://blog.tdsbusiness.com/tips-advice/work-life-balance-is-a-scam/>

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OWEN MARCUS > **KATHLEEN DAVIS** 7 DAYS AGO

Here's an article suggesting what men can do to shift the work place so it's fairer. The suggestions are good. What's missing is how we can shift the box men are put in.

The repression women suffer is real. The repression men suffer is not as obvious. For a couple generations women continue to win more of their freedom, yet men feel stuck in the old paradigm of the masculine and the new liberated one of women. I want to see a model with both sexes win.



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