Qube

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Gendered Language

Many words used to refer to groups of people or individuals have gendered connotations. That means that some words may unintentionally communicate gender or reinforce the gender binary. Examples include "dude", "guys", "ladies and gentleman", and others.

Why should I avoid using gendered language?

Gendered language can sometimes be problematic. As mentioned earlier, such language can reinforce the gender binary or have a gender-specific connotation that some people may not be comfortable with. This is particularly impactul for transgender and nonbinary people. Regardless of whether there is intent behind it, many trans and nonbinary people are so used to being intentionally misgendered that the impact is generally the same regardless of intention. Gendered language tends to rely on assuming someone's gender, which is never possible based on appearance or voice alone. Even in a setting where you do not feel like you need to be cognisant of this, remember that it is impossible to assume gender with complete accuracy. Avoiding such language is a good, inclusive practice.

What words should I use instead?

There are a number of words that can replace gendered language. When you recognize gendered language, you can consider synonyms that mean the same thing without a gendered connotation or a different word that can communicate the same feeling. For example, "hey, dude" can become "hey, partner". "Hey you guys" can become "hey folks" or "hey y'all". The phrase "ladies and gentlemen" can be replaced with the preceding examples or with "distinguished guests," depending on the setting. Language is evolving and flexible, so remember that options are not limited to these examples.

What should I do if I slip up?

Everyone slips up once in a while and says something that they may not have intended to or is not inclusive. When that happens, it is important to acknowledge and take ownership of. The best apology is action, so make sure not to center that and not dwell on it.