

GRAZIA'S LIFE SKILLS

INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY

MASTER

ASK THE EXPERT

Five ways to lift up other women, whatever stage you're at

Georgia Aspinall, acting features editor at *Grazia*

This year, the theme of International Women's Day is #BreakTheBias. That means focusing on how both deliberate and unconscious bias make it difficult for women to move through the world fairly. 'Action is needed to level the playing field,' the IWD organisation states. 'Individually, we're all responsible for our own thoughts and actions. We can break the bias in our communities, workplaces, schools and universities.'

How can you do that proactively to lift up other women? There are many ways. First, think money. It's one of the most powerful tools in your arsenal, not just because donating to women's causes makes a difference to real lives, but because how you spend in everyday life sends a message. Seek out female-owned businesses when you're shopping, and those that donate to women's causes.

When it comes to charity, it's not all



about money, however. Volunteer your time at local community organisations – so many are underfunded and understaffed. The more involved you are in your community, the better you'll understand what needs to change politically too. Write to your local Government representatives and ask what they're doing to support women in the area. Look for bills going through Parliament that make a difference to women's lives and email your MP demanding support.

You can use your voice in the real

world as well, if you feel safe to do so. Calling out male friends, colleagues or family members when they make sexist comments may be uncomfortable in the moment, but let *them* sit with that discomfort! Holding them accountable serves as a reminder that everyday sexism perpetuates a culture that excuses misogyny.

Finally, recognise where you can extend a hand for women at work. Whether it's mentoring or vouching for colleagues being overlooked, sticking together creates power.

WORK WISDOM

Celebrate difference to help end discrimination

Naomi Walkland, vice president of EMEA marketing at social app Bumble

One issue that women – particularly women of colour – continue to face is a lack of representation in positions of power. If you can't see yourself represented it can lead to feelings of disempowerment, which can hold you back professionally and personally.

Growing up, I very rarely saw successful women who looked like me reflected in mainstream media. That's

why, when I came to lead marketing at Bumble, I was quick to advocate for a campaign to better represent people like me. Our #MyLoveIsBlackLove campaign became a representation of what Black love looks like across the UK, featuring leading voices such as Jourdan Dunn, Clara Amfo and George the Poet talking about their own experiences. The social conversation it initiated is one of my proudest moments and shows that leaning into your culture in the

workplace can be a force for change.

Bringing your personal story and experiences to your work context is key to challenging discrimination. My advice is to be open and honest around your experiences. In meetings, proactively share ideas and draw on your personal experiences to give context as to why this matters both for you as a consumer and for the business. Speak about and celebrate your culture, your heritage and your experiences with colleagues.



LIFE ADMIN

Avoid credit's hidden 'woman penalty'

Laura Whateley, author of *Money: A User's Guide*

Women find it harder to save and invest than men, and there's a gender pension gap. On average we earn less and take more time out of paid work for caring duties, plus face messages that the stock market is not for us.

You might not know that we

find it more expensive to borrow money, too. Over our lifetimes, women pay just shy of £17,000 more than men for mortgages, loans, credit cards and the like, according to research from credit reporting company Credit Karma.

It comes down to women having worse credit files, and one of the main reasons for that is our relationships. Credit Karma discovered that nearly a third of women had financial agreements, like car insurance, in their male partner's name. Which means they don't show up on your file and you become invisible. We also don't borrow

as much. Men have bigger loans, mortgages and credit cards. Borrowing helps to show banks that you know how to handle debt well.

Know, too, before you open a joint account, that your credit file will be linked to your partner's. If they don't repay debt on time, your file will be affected. And, says Credit Karma, it also limits your exposure, so if you want to borrow on your own, 'lenders have less confidence in you'. Credit files matter to your financial independence – so checking yours seems like a good way to celebrate IWD.

MODERN MUM DILEMMA OF THE WEEK



'How can I raise my children to be feminists?'

Anna Whitehouse, aka Mother Pukka

Every day that I drop my daughter off at school, I whisper in her ear, 'You can do anything, you can be anyone.' It's a lovely sentiment – and, to be fair, she now laughs in my face and mocks me like any self-respecting eight-year-old – but the truth is, I do that because I know the playing field isn't level.

My career was hit by the culture of forcing out the workforce any person who had pushed out a baby (that's why I started my campaign Flex Appeal, which fights for flexible working for everyone). It got worse for women during the pandemic: mothers were 47% more likely to have had to log off from their careers compared to fathers – just one statistic showing how the playing field gets more imbalanced in times of crisis.

But what can we do about it? How can we raise our sons to, well... raise up our daughters? On a basic level, change starts at home. I'm very loud about the domestic load divide. There are no 'pink' or 'blue' jobs in our house, it's an all-hands-on-deck situation. I think showing rather than telling is one of the most powerful ways to raise a feminist. But telling works, too – even by simply instilling dreams of 'you can be anything or anyone' every morning before school... however much you get giggled at in the process.

@motherpukka

WELLBEING

'Sexism is very common in relationships, but you can stamp it out'

Lucy Clyde is an accredited psychotherapist and co-host of the podcast *How To Cope*

In intimate relationships, sexism often occurs casually, in ways that we don't always immediately pick up on, but it's still corrosive – and it can happen to anyone. In fact, as a counsellor, I find it hard to think of one woman who hasn't experienced it at some point.

Sexist behaviour is experienced as a lack of respect, and respect is fundamental to a healthy relationship. When we want to have a difficult conversation with a partner, it is usually more important to be heard than to be right. How to do that? Describe how certain language or behaviour makes you feel. For example, 'When you leave the washing up, it leaves me feeling taken for granted. How can we change that?' Once you have addressed the emotional aspect, it's easier to explore any underlying sexism without being met with defensiveness.

THREE STEPS TO...

COPING WHEN EVERYDAY SEXISM FEELS OVERWHELMING

Psychotherapist Hannah Beckett-Pratt is owner of *Wellspace Counselling*

- 1. Access your anger.** Anger is a healthy response to misogyny but often one we push down, increasing our chances of becoming overwhelmed. Give yourself permission to safely express your anger – try exercise, journaling or even shouting into the void.
- 2. Talk about it.** Remember, you are not alone. Talk with friends, family or online communities. Solidarity reduces the burden and emotional toll of invisible misogyny. Calling it out is also vital in breaking the cultural norms that excuse this harmful behaviour.
- 3. Create change.** It shouldn't be women's job to eradicate misogyny, but remember you have a voice. Identify who is responsible for instigating change that is accessible to you. If misogyny is happening at work, raise it with HR. If it's community-based, write to your MP or join a local activist group. Any effort to fight sexism helps.

Need some expert advice on money, work or anything else? Let us know what you'd like to see on this page at feedback@graziamagazine.co.uk

