Words reflect workplace culture and can reinforce negative gender stereotypes.

Stop using these common words, which harm women’s advancement opportunities, and focus on performance and outcomes instead.

### Impact on Women in the Workplace

**ABRASIVE**

- “She comes across as abrasive.”

**What to Do Instead**

Shift attention away from style and focus on her work performance.

**Research Says**

- To be perceived as competent leaders women are expected to be both assertive and warm.¹

**Diminishes women’s contributions, relegating them to “supporting” rather than “central/leading” roles.**

**HELPFUL**

- “She’s so helpful.”

**What to Do Instead**

Describe her contributions to the project or team.

**Research Says**

- When women are praised for their supportiveness, they are less likely to be thought of as leaders.²

**EMOTIONAL**

- “She gets overly emotional.”

**What to Do Instead**

Describe the consequences of her behavior without using labels.

**Research Says**

- Women are seen as less competent and less deserving of high status positions when they display anger.³

**Can put women in a stressful double-bind where they are either too soft or too hard and never just right.**

**Shift attention away from style and focus on her work performance.**

**Describe her contributions to the project or team.**

**Describe the consequences of her behavior without using labels.**
RESEARCH SAYS

**IMPACT ON WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE**

Undermines women’s identity and perceptions of their leadership abilities.

**GRAVITAS**

“She lacks leadership gravitas.”

**WHAT TO DO INSTEAD**

Stop using code and explain what you mean other than “not her.”

**IMPACT ON WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE**

Undermines and discredits women’s competence and qualifications to offer critical feedback.

**JUDGMENTAL**

“She should stop being so judgmental.”

**WHAT TO DO INSTEAD**

Don’t make it about leadership style, but whether she is demonstrating good judgment.

**HOW TO FLIP THE SCRIPT**

**PAY ATTENTION**

Is the language you use different for women and men?

**QUESTION YOURSELF**

Are you unintentionally holding women to a higher standard?

**ASK FOR HELP**

Ask someone you trust to review your work for gendered language.

Sources:


