

Navigate Your Own Path

A Toolkit to guide students in finding their professional path



Funded by
the European Union

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation program under Grant Agreement n° 101094497. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

Contributors



Dr. Alexandra Lux

Postdoctoral Researcher,
KU Leuven, Belgium



Anisha de Vries

Research Intern,
KU Leuven, Belgium



Dr. Jenny Veldman

Assistant Professor, Utrecht
University, The Netherlands



Dr. Ruth Van Veelen

Senior Scientist, Netherlands
Organisation for Applied
Scientific Research (TNO),
The Netherlands



Grzegorz Małek

Summer Intern (Master Student),
University of Gdańsk, Poland



Prof. Colette Van Laar

Professor of Psychology,
KU Leuven, Belgium

Please cite as:

Lux, A., De Vries, A., Veldman, J., Van Veelen, R., Małek, G., & Van Laar, C. (2025). *Navigate your own path: A Toolkit to guide students in finding their professional path [Toolkit]*. The RE-WIRING project. <https://re-wiring.eu/>

Contact information:

Website: re-wiring.eu E-Mail: alexandra.lux@kuleuven.be; colette.vanlaar@kuleuven.be

Executive Summary

The present document constitutes Deliverable 6 / Practical Toolkit for Students. It is the 7th deliverable of Work Package 3 on De-biasing Education, which is part of the larger [RE-WIRING](#) (Realising girls' and women's inclusion, representation, and empowerment) project that aims to identify the structural root causes of gendered power hierarchies and create sustainable change to prevent and reverse existing gender inequalities.

This resource is a tool designed to support young people in making more informed, reflective, and unbiased decisions about their educational and career paths.

Many students face hidden pressures — such as societal expectations, stereotypes, or peer influence — that can narrow their perceived options and affect their confidence. This guide helps students become aware of these influences and equips them with practical strategies to overcome them. Through accessible language and a journey-based structure, the tool encourages students to explore their interests, recognize bias, and develop a stronger sense of agency in shaping their futures.

Key themes include:

- Identifying social and personal influences on decision-making;
- Recognizing and challenging internalized biases;
- Building self-awareness and confidence;
- Learning from role models and mentors;
- Overcoming doubt and navigating uncertainty;
- Embracing a wide range of opportunities.

Welcome to this toolkit!

Making decisions about your future can feel overwhelming, with many different paths to explore. Along the way, social expectations and biases might influence your choices, making it harder to see all the opportunities ahead.

This toolkit will be your guiding light in your journey, cutting through the haze and illuminating the obstacles that might steer you away from the path that is truly yours. When challenges arise, the tools in this toolkit will help you stay on course, guiding you toward a future shaped by your own passions, values, and goals.

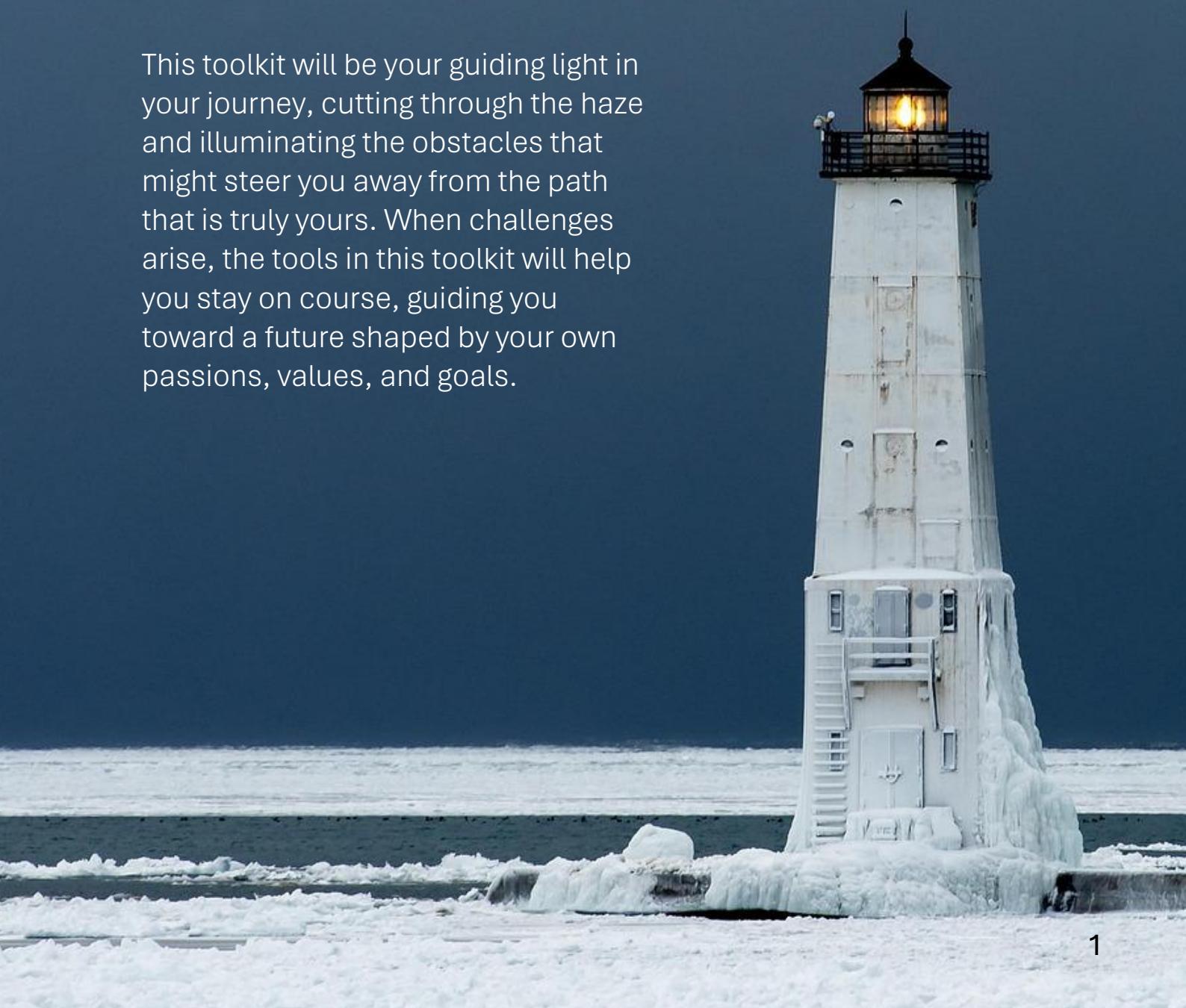


Table of contents

01 Setting Sail: An Introduction

02 Identifying the Signposts

Understanding Societal and Personal Influences

03 Clearing the Fog

Recognizing Biases

04 Calibrate Your Compass

Developing Self-Awareness

05 The Power of the Stars

Role Models and Mentors

06 Navigating the Storms

Overcoming Obstacles and Doubts

07 The Open Horizon

Embracing Opportunities

08 Setting a New Course

Empowering Future Generations

09 Extra Resources

10 Get To Know Us

11 Glossary

12 References

1 Setting Sail: An Introduction



Why is this important?

At the start of your journey, you may hear messages about what paths are “right” for you — suggestions that certain careers or subjects fit one type of person more than another. But what if those ideas are wrong? What if your interests and strengths are the best guides for your future, not outdated expectations?

Gender stereotypes act like invisible currents, pushing students toward certain subjects or careers based on old assumptions. You might have heard things like “boys are better at math” or “girls are more caring.” These are not truths — they are assumptions that can limit your choices without you even noticing. Recognizing them is the first step to choosing your own path, based on what you truly enjoy and are good at.

Breaking free from stereotypes means choosing your own direction. Whether you are interested in engineering, teaching, coding, or fashion design — your gender should not determine your options. When students follow their real interests, they are more likely to find success and satisfaction in what they do.

A world where everyone can explore all fields equally is better for everyone. When people with different backgrounds and experiences work together, new ideas grow. Think of the brilliant scientist, artist, or entrepreneur who never got the chance to shine because of a stereotype — imagine what the world missed out on.

This toolkit is here to support you. It will help you notice biases, question outdated expectations, and make choices with confidence. Your future is full of possibilities — do not let old ideas limit them.

What can you find in this toolkit?

Chapter 1 (p. 3 - p. 12): Setting Sail: An Introduction

This chapter (the one you are reading now!) explains the purpose of the toolkit, what it covers, and how to use it.

Chapter 2 (p. 13 – p. 23): Identifying the Signposts: Understanding Societal and Personal Influences

This chapter explores how societal norms, cultural expectations, and personal experiences might shape your career choices. Learn to identify the forces that may be influencing your path.

Chapter 3 (p. 24 – p. 36): Clearing the Fog: Recognizing Biases

Learn how gender stereotypes and hidden biases affect decisions, often in subtle ways. Discover ways to spot and challenge these biases in daily life.

Chapter 4 (p. 37 – p. 41): Calibrate Your Compass: Developing Self-Awareness

Think about your own strengths, interests, and passions. Learn how to make choices that match what truly excites and motivates you.

Chapter 5 (p. 42 – p. 58): The Power of the Stars: Role Models and Mentors

Learn how seeing different role models in various fields can inspire you, and how having a mentor can help guide you on your path.

Chapter 6 (p. 59 – p. 69): Navigating the Storms: Overcoming Obstacles and Doubts

Learn how to face challenges, whether they come from external pressures or internal doubts.

Chapter 7 (p. 70 – p. 77): The Open Horizon: Embracing Opportunities

Learn how to broaden your perspective, push past limitations, and confidently explore options you may not have considered before.

Chapter 8 (p. 78 – p. 83): Setting a New Course: Empowering Future Generations

Learn how to inspire and help others break free from stereotypes. Be a strong supporter of inclusivity and diversity in education and careers.

Chapter 9 (p. 84 – p. 87): Extra Resources

Links to other toolkits and useful materials.

Chapter 10 (p. 88 – p. 89): Get To Know Us

More information on the team and the project.

Chapter 11 (p. 90 – p. 93): Glossary

Look up tricky terms with simple, easy-to-understand definitions.

Chapter 12 (p. 94 – p. 98): References

Find a list of the sources and studies that this toolkit is based on.

You will also find some technical terms, and they will always be accompanied by a  the first time we mention them. This means that you can find an explanation of these terms in a box on the same page, and also in the glossary.

Progress so far!

Understanding how gender stereotypes influence educational choices is crucial. But alongside the challenges, it is also important to recognize the progress that *has* been made.

This section celebrates some of those achievements. It is a reminder that progress is possible, and that each step forward brings us closer to a world where everyone can learn, grow, and choose their path freely. Consider the following examples to see what development has already taken place!

Worldwide wins:

Achieving gender equality and empowering women (including promoting their participation in the STEM fields) is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations organization in 2015.

Men in traditionally female-dominated fields:

In the United Kingdom, more men are entering the nursing profession. Between 1991 and 2001, the number of qualified male nurses nearly doubled, with an increase of 96%! This shows that nursing is becoming a more accepted and attractive career path for men (Curtis, Robinson & Netten, 2009).

Many countries are changing their parental leave systems to encourage fathers to take more time off to care for their children. For example, in Quebec, Canada, the introduction of a well-paid, father-only leave period led to a 250% increase in fathers taking leave (Lütolf, 2024).

Women in traditionally male-dominated fields:

After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda focused on rebuilding with gender equality as a core principle. Women now hold nearly 50% of parliamentary seats (the highest in the world). Rwanda's gender-inclusive policies have encouraged women to take leadership roles in all sectors.

In the UK and Ireland, 80% of female students say they felt encouraged to study science and tech subjects, and 87% feel like they belong in their courses. Events like STEM Women career fairs helped 91% discover new job options, showing that old gender stereotypes are starting to fade (STEM Women).

In 2018, Iceland became the first country in the world to make it mandatory for companies to prove they pay men and women equally for the same work. Thanks to the Icelandic Equal Pay Standard (IEPS), companies with over 25 employees now need to get certified to show they follow fair pay practices. This policy shifted the burden of proof from employees to employers and introduced fines for noncompliance (Wagner, 2022).

Let's talk gender

In this toolkit, we often refer to “boys and girls” or “women and men”. At the same time, we recognize that some people do not necessarily fit with one gender or the other, or that they experience their gender in a unique way.

Sometimes it is impossible for us not to rely on the binary concept of gender  — for example, we cannot write about gender stereotypes without referring to the labels of “a man” and “a woman”. When we do this, our goal is to show you how these stereotypes can be an obstacle in choosing a career path — and that they can affect everyone, regardless of their gender! Still, they tend to be especially strong when we talk about the binary gender categories, which is why we focused on that aspect. That being said, we also realise that it might be very challenging to face gender stereotypes if they are directed to you based on the gender you do not identify with.

Our goal is ultimately to guide you towards learning more about your own preferences, strengths and opportunities. So if you are a boy, girl, other, or none, you can still benefit from exploring this toolkit!

Binary concept of gender =

The idea that gender falls into two distinct categories: male and female. This concept excludes people who may not feel they fit well with either of these two labels, such as transgender or non-binary.

There are no “right” or “wrong” choices

This toolkit is here to help you make study and career choices that really *fit who you are*.

Sometimes, people feel pressure to choose certain paths based on their gender — because of ideas about what’s “for girls,” “for boys,” or “for someone like you.” We want to help reduce that pressure so that everyone can choose freely.

But just as importantly: **If you feel good about a path that’s traditionally associated with your gender — or how others see your gender — that’s perfectly okay too.** There are no “right” or “wrong” choices. What matters most is that your path reflects *you* — your interests, your strengths, and what you enjoy doing. So if you are a boy, and you want to be a firefighter, we support that! You deserve to explore all your options and choose what feels right for you. Your voice matters, and your choices are valid.

Take What You Need

This toolkit is designed to be flexible and user-friendly. You do not need to read it from start to finish. Feel free to explore and use the resources that best match your current knowledge, interests, and stage in life.

A Quick Note Before You Begin

Some of the exercises in this toolkit ask you to reflect on your interests, strengths, and future plans. To get the most out of them, it's best to work through these activities on your own, in a quiet space, without parents, teachers, or friends around.

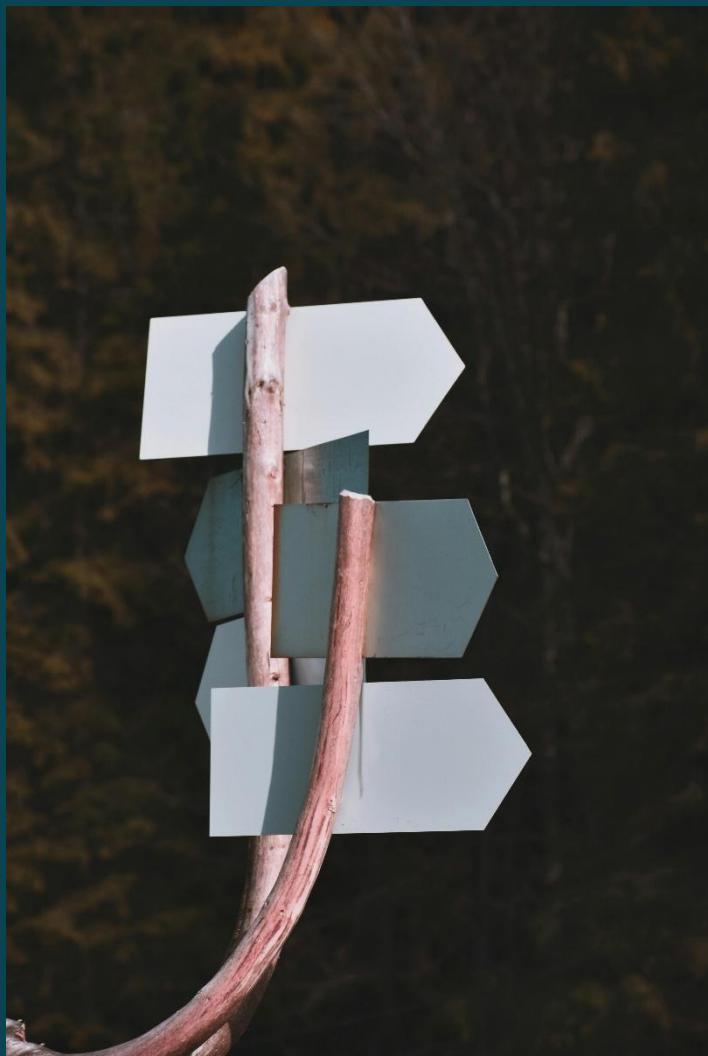
This is not because their opinions do not matter — but because it is easier to be honest with yourself when you do not feel watched or influenced. People often mean well, but their hopes for you can sometimes make it harder to think clearly about what you truly want.

Taking time to reflect privately gives you the best chance to focus on what feels right for your future — not anyone else's.

You are the captain of your own ship!

2

Identifying the Signposts: Understanding Societal and Personal Influences



When you think about your future job, it might seem like it is all up to you. But many different things around you can shape your choices — sometimes without you even noticing. Gender stereotypes  are one of these influences. In this chapter, we will explore how schools, rules, and even politics can affect the options you see. We will also look at how your experiences with teachers, parents, and friends can guide you in certain directions. And we will talk about how everyday things — like language, media, and even technology — can send hidden messages about what is “normal” for boys or girls. Understanding these influences can help you make choices that truly match your own interests and strengths.

Gender stereotypes =

Fixed ideas that say boys and girls have certain skills and should act a certain way just because of their gender.



Institutions

Many things in society shape your career choices, including the economy, culture, and the rules of your country. For example, the subjects you can study in school or decisions you have to make early on can limit your options. If you are not given a wide range of choices, you might not consider all the possibilities available to you.

Beyond school, a country's political and gender beliefs also have an impact. Some cultures have specific ideas about which jobs are "right" for men and women. For instance, girls might be encouraged to become teachers or nurses, while boys may be pushed toward fields like engineering or technology. These beliefs can pressure students to follow certain paths, even if they are not what they truly want.



Experiences you have

Your teachers, parents, and peers — whether they mean to or not — can influence the subjects and careers you consider. For example, the advice or support they give you might encourage you to explore certain fields or stick to safer, more familiar options. Your experiences in the classroom, like discussions about gender equality, can challenge old ideas. Over time, the experiences you have with your family, friends, and educators can guide you in different directions. While they have an impact, their advice might not always reflect the full range of possibilities. They can also be influenced by stereotypes, even if they do not intend to be.

Parents and Caretakers Can Be a Big Support — But Their Advice Is Shaped by Their Own Experiences

Parents often want what is best for you — but their views and experiences can shape the advice they give. Sometimes, they might encourage you to choose subjects or careers they see as secure, practical, or more socially accepted. This usually comes from a place of care and concern, but it can also be influenced by gender stereotypes or ideas from their own generation.

For example, some parents might feel more comfortable with their child choosing a familiar or “traditional” path, even if it does not fully match the child’s interests or strengths. Others might unintentionally treat certain subjects as more “appropriate” depending on their child’s gender.

It is important to remember that while parents have a strong influence, your path is your own. Talking openly with them about your interests, dreams, and the full range of options can help shift their perspective — and make it easier to choose what is right for you.



Questions can help you reflect:

How does what *you* want relate to what your parents want for you?

Are there any differences — and if so, how do you feel about them?

Do you want to include your parents in the conversation?

We have also created a toolkit for parents to help them understand how to better support you in exploring all kinds of educational and career paths. You can find it here: <https://re-wiring.eu/outputs/>

Teachers Want to Help — But They Are Human Too

Teachers play a big role in your learning and in shaping how you see yourself. The way they talk about different subjects, the examples they use, or the encouragement they give can all influence what paths feel “open” or “possible” to you. They can boost your confidence — or sometimes, without meaning to, steer you away from something you might actually be great at.

Like everyone, teachers carry their own ideas and experiences. These can include unconscious biases about what types of learners “fit” in certain subjects or careers. For example, research shows that gender expectations can affect how students are graded, what feedback they receive, or which careers they are encouraged to explore.

That does not mean teachers are trying to be unfair — it just means no one is completely free from bias. And sometimes, those biases reflect bigger patterns in society.

If you ever feel that something does not sit right with you — like being encouraged to drop a subject you enjoy or being pushed toward a path that does not feel like a good fit — it is okay to ask questions or speak up.



Questions can help you reflect:

- Have you ever noticed how the way a subject is taught — or how teachers talk about it — made you feel more (or less) like it was meant for someone like you?
- Has a teacher ever supported you in a way that made a big difference in what you felt confident doing?
- Have you ever held back from asking a question, choosing a subject, or applying for something because you were not sure if a teacher would take you seriously?
- Can you think of ways your teachers' advice might be shaped by their own background or beliefs?

Friends, Classmates, and Partners Can Influence Your Path — Sometimes Without Realizing It

The people you spend time with — friends, classmates, or even romantic partners — can shape how you feel about certain choices. Sometimes that is through encouragement and support. But other times, it can come from pressure to fit in, stay in your “lane,” or not stand out.

Maybe you have heard things like:

“That subject is more for guys/girls.”

“Why would you want to do *that*?”

“You are too smart for that.”

“That career will not suit your future relationship or family.”

Comments like these — whether serious or meant as a joke — can carry unspoken rules about what is “acceptable,” and they often reflect gender stereotypes. These ideas can come up in friendships, group chats, or even in close relationships. And over time, they might make you question your interests or second-guess your decisions.

But your goals, values, and interests matter. It is okay to choose something different — even if others do not fully get it yet.



Questions can help you reflect on this:

- Have you ever changed your mind about a subject or career because of what a friend or partner thought?
- Have your classmates or friends ever teased or judged someone for choosing something outside the norm?
- Do your relationships support the person you want to become — or make you feel like you have to shrink yourself?
- Have you ever stood up for someone who made an unexpected choice — or wished someone had stood up for you?

Support makes a difference.

When friends, classmates, or partners support each other in choosing what really fits them — not just what is expected — it creates space for everyone to grow, lead, and feel seen.



Masculine generics =

Using male words to refer to all people, like saying "fireman" instead of "firefighter," which can make women and others invisible.

Symbols

Symbols can act like signs, showing which paths seem possible and which ones feel out of reach. For example, using masculine generics💡 like "chairman" instead of "chairperson," or having gender stereotypes in school materials, like science books showing mostly male scientists, can create hidden barriers. Media can also show certain jobs, like nursing, as mostly for women, while jobs like engineering are shown as more for men. Even things like artificial intelligence (AI) can support these old ideas. AI systems, like those used in hiring processes or career recommendations, are often trained on past data, which may include biases from previous generations. As a result, these systems can reinforce traditional gender roles, suggesting careers based on outdated stereotypes. When students often see their gender in certain jobs but not in others, they may feel pushed toward the expected choices instead of exploring all the options available to them.



3 Clearing the Fog: Recognizing Biases



Sometimes, the way we see the world — and the choices we make — can be shaped by hidden biases  . These are ideas or beliefs we pick up from the world around us, often without even realizing it. They can affect how we see ourselves, how we see other people, and what we think is possible. In this chapter, we will learn what bias is and how noticing bias is the first step to seeing things more clearly. You will explore tools like the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and discover how talking to others and hearing different points of view can help. It might take time, and that is okay — every step you take to understand and challenge bias helps create a fairer and more open world.

Bias =

Treating people unfairly or thinking they are less important because of their gender, race, or other traits.

Gender Bias: It Is About More Than Just Personal Choices

When we talk about gender bias — like the idea that some subjects or jobs are only for certain people based on gender — it is not just about individual choices. It is about bigger systems and rules in society that shape what feels “normal” or “expected” for everyone, no matter their gender identity.

These systems affect what subjects or careers people think are “right” for them and how much support they get from family, teachers, or friends. For example, some jobs like law, business, or science are often seen as more important than others like art, social studies, or technical work. This can make some learners feel pressured or like they do not have many options.

Choosing something that does not fit what people expect can be hard. You might face pushback or feel alone because society is not always ready for change. And even after finishing school and starting work, these expectations do not just disappear. You might still face them from coworkers, clients, or the workplace culture.



But the good news is that change does not depend only on you. Real progress happens when we all work together to change the bigger systems and rules that keep these ideas in place. By following your own interests — even if they do not fit traditional ideas — you are helping open new paths for others. It might feel like swimming upstream, but every step makes it easier for you, and for people who might follow the same course.

Your choices do not just affect you — they can also influence others, including those who make policies and decisions about education and work. By making thoughtful decisions and sharing your experiences, you can help shape a fairer future for everyone. Change happens when we support each other and understand that some challenges come from bigger systems, not just from individuals. Together, we can build a future where everyone can choose their own path freely!

Recognizing Invisible Forces

Stereotypes are like familiar currents — they help our minds navigate the world quickly by sorting information into categories. While this can be useful, it can also create hidden undertows — **unconscious biases**  that shape our assumptions without us even realizing it.

These currents are not always negative or intentional. They are shaped by cultural norms  , personal experiences, and the media we take in. But even gentle tides can **steer us off course**. If we believe certain subjects or careers belong to one gender, we may unknowingly drift away from our true potential — or discourage others from setting sail toward their own.

The good news? **Recognizing these invisible forces allows us to adjust our course.** When we question unfair assumptions, we clear the way for new possibilities. Instead of following outdated maps, we can chart our own path — guided by our real interests, skills, and dreams.

Unconscious bias =

Automatic, unintentional preferences or stereotypes about people based on their gender, race, or other traits, without even realizing it.

Cultural norms =

The everyday behaviors or traditions that are seen as normal in a particular group or society.

Uncovering Hidden Biases

Gender bias in education is not always easy to spot. It can quietly shape how you see yourself and the subjects or careers you think are right for you. These ideas often come from old stereotypes and can push you toward certain choices — or away from others — without you even noticing. But once you learn to recognize these hidden influences, you can start to make decisions that truly match your interests and strengths.

A great way to begin is by checking out the [Learning for Justice website](https://www.learningforjustice.org/the-learning-center) (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/the-learning-center>). They offer tools to help you look at your own thinking more clearly. One example is the [Implicit Association Test](#) , a short quiz that helps you discover any hidden biases you might have. It is a helpful step toward understanding how your thoughts are shaped — and how to make more informed choices.

There are different variations of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) by Project Implicit that you can try. For example:

- **The Gender-Career IAT:** Measures how you categorize career and family as male or female
- **The Gender-Science IAT:** Measures how you categorize liberal arts and science as male or female

Implicit Association =

When we automatically link certain ideas or groups with others in our mind, without even realizing it.

The Act Like a Man/Woman Task¹

You can also challenge yourself and uncover hidden biases by taking the "Act Like a Man/Woman" self-test.

To begin, create two columns titled "Act Like a Man" and "Act Like a Woman."

<i>Act Like a Man</i>	<i>Act Like a Woman</i>
...	...
...	...
...	...

Then, take five minutes to write down anything that comes to mind for each — behaviors, roles, or expectations you associate with each gender. This is for your eyes only, so allow yourself to freely jot down whatever thoughts surface!

Continue on the next page after these five minutes.

¹ Adapted from the [Engaging Boys and Men in Gender Transformation](#) toolkit

After these five minutes, you should have some answers written in these two columns. Then you can take some time to analyze these answers. Common answers can look like this:

Act Like a Man	Act Like a Woman
Be tough	Be passive and quiet
Do not cry	Be the caretaker and homemaker
Be the breadwinner	Be smart, but not too smart
Take risks	Do not complain
Do not ask for help	Be pretty
Do not talk about problems	Produce children
Make decisions for others	Be seen, not heard

These responses may seem stereotypical, like a thick fog that distorts how we see others and ourselves. As we discussed, everyone holds some form of bias, and that is not inherently wrong. However, just as a sailor can clear a foggy path with the right tools, we too can challenge these stereotypes to prevent them from keeping us from living authentically or doing what we love.

For the next part of this self-test, you can imagine a world where men and women hold equal opportunities. In this world, what does it look like to act like a man or to act like a woman? Again, take five minutes to fill in two new columns, now named ‘Transformed Men’ and ‘Transformed Women’. Here, you can repeat the task you did earlier but now envision you describe male and female behaviour in a gender equal world.

After the five minutes are up again, take a look at what you wrote down. For example, your list may now look something like this:

Transformed Men	Transformed Women
Be loving	Be loving
Act caring	Act caring
Be an assertive communicator	Be an assertive communicator
Express emotions constructively and when appropriate	Express emotions constructively and when appropriate
Speak out in favor of gender equality	Speak out in favor of gender equality
Challenge others to recognize their harmful gender norms and change themselves	Challenge others to recognize their harmful gender norms and change themselves.

After the test, discuss your insights with a peer or a teacher. Together, you can discuss whether you hold similar biases and when it is important to challenge these biases.

Talk to the people around you

One of the best ways to challenge stereotypes is to start with the people around you. Stereotypes can be like a fog — they make it harder to see things clearly. These ideas do not just come from inside us. They are shaped by what we hear in conversations with friends, family, and others, often without us realizing it. When we believe these messages, they can affect how we see ourselves and others, and how we make decisions. But once we notice them, we can start to think more clearly and choose our own way forward.



Think of these biases as pieces in a Jenga game, stacked one on top of the other. Some are large, solid blocks formed over years of experience, while others are smaller and more subtle, built from recent encounters or media messages. At first, the game seems stable, but as the pieces accumulate, the structure becomes more fragile. Every assumption we hold adds another block to the tower, and when you least expect it, a single wrong move — perhaps a biased thought or action — could cause everything to come crashing down.

However, just like in Jenga, you can only challenge these biases piece by piece. By questioning assumptions and discussing them openly with others, it is like carefully pulling out those blocks, dismantling the structure one piece at a time. As you remove these biases, it is like clearing the fog that has been clouding your judgment, allowing you to see the truth more clearly.

It might take time, and you might make mistakes along the way, but each effort to challenge biases — whether by learning, reflecting, or engaging with different viewpoints — is like another step toward lifting the fog and creating a clearer, more inclusive understanding of the world around you.



Ways to engage with different viewpoints

Once you have taken time to think about any hidden biases you might have, it can help to look at tools or resources that show you new ways of thinking — like a light that helps you see more clearly.

[The Representation Project](#) offers films that can help you see things from a new point of view. These films challenge old stereotypes and encourage you to think more openly about gender. They are a great way to learn how to spot bias and better understand the world around you. Watching stories from different perspectives can help you build a more inclusive and fair mindset — for yourself and others.



Example films from the Representation Project

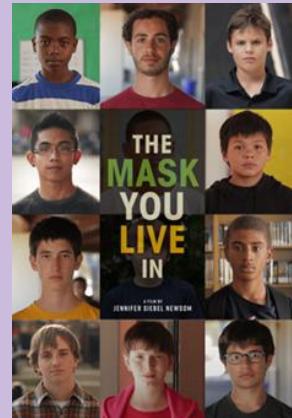


FAIR PLAY:

Fair Play takes a deep look at domestic inequity💡, making visible the invisible care work historically held by women. The film aims to inspire a more balanced and equitable future.

THE MASK YOU LIVE IN

The Mask You Live In follows boys and young men as they struggle to stay true to themselves while negotiating America's narrow definition of masculinity💡.



MISS REPRESENTATION

Miss Representation exposes how mainstream media and culture contribute to the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America.

Domestic inequity =

unfairness or unequal treatment within a household, often related to tasks, responsibilities, or decision-making, based on gender or other factors.

Masculinity =

The qualities, behaviors, and roles that a society considers typical or appropriate for men.

4 Calibrate Your Compass: Developing Self-Awareness



Just like a sailor needs a reliable compass to find their way across the vast ocean, you too need a clear sense of direction to navigate your life and future. Your personal compass is shaped by your values, interests, and abilities. Tuning into these aspects of yourself helps you make decisions that align with who you truly are, instead of drifting in the direction of societal pressures or expectations. In this chapter, you will learn how to calibrate your compass to guide you toward more informed, authentic choices in all aspects of your life, especially when it comes to your future career and aspirations.

Career Compass

Focusing on deep-level diversity — such as your interests, skills, and values — rather than surface-level demographic factors is like adjusting your compass to a true north that reflects who you really are. This shift helps you break free from gendered career expectations.

Career exploration tools serve as navigational tools. They can capture your unique professional profile based on your skills and interests and suggest relevant fields and professions.

This approach encourages you to focus on what you can do and what excites you, rather than being swayed by societal expectations about gendered careers.

Emerging research, such as that by Adhikari et al. (2024), shows how a skills-based approach to job searching and recruitment can clear away the fog of bias in occupational choices. By helping you explore careers that align with your interests and values, rather than assumptions about gendered jobs, these methods open up a wider sea of opportunities. These programs aim to guide you toward a balanced view of both STEM and HEED  fields, matching your potential careers with your individual strengths and desires, not limiting you by gender roles.

HEED =

an acronym that stands for Health, Elementary Education, and Domestic work. It refers to fields that are often associated with care, social responsibility, and support roles.

Career Exploration Tools

Your interests and skills are the wind in your sails, guiding your career journey — not outdated stereotypes that try to anchor you. Yet, many students steer clear of certain professions, simply because they have never spotted anyone like them working in those professions. But by charting new courses, you may discover horizons brimming with opportunities you never imagined.

Set your course with these career exploration tools — your compass to navigate through uncharted territories, free from the currents of gender bias.

O*net Interest Profiler :

A tool that helps match your interests with a wide range of careers, focusing on skills and job tasks rather than traditional gender roles.

Personal Strengths

Test: Helps you identify your strengths and see how they can show themselves in your everyday life.

5 The Power of the Stars: Role Models and Mentors



In life and education, it can sometimes feel like you are moving forward without a clear direction. Just as travelers look for signs to guide them, you can turn to mentors, role models, and support systems to help you find your way. These trusted people offer insight, encouragement, and perspective, helping you navigate challenges and make thoughtful decisions about your future. In this chapter, you will learn how to find and connect with the people who can guide you — those who inspire you, share their experience, and support you in reaching your educational and personal goals.

When we see diverse role models breaking traditional norms — such as women in technology or men in caregiving — it serves as a powerful reminder that many career paths are possible. Seeing diverse role models broadens our perspective and encourages us to explore new opportunities.

Look for Role Models and Mentors



Sometimes it can feel like you are expected to choose certain subjects or careers just because of your gender — but that does not mean you have to follow that path. Mentors and role models can help you make choices based on your real interests and strengths. A mentor supports you and helps you figure out what you want, while a role model shows you what is possible, especially in fields where people like you might be underrepresented.

You can find mentors and role models in many places — teachers, older students, community members, or even people you follow online. Programs and school counselors can also connect you with inspiring individuals. The key is to stay open, ask questions, and seek support.

Mentor =

An experienced person who provides advice, guidance, and support to help someone make career decisions, develop skills, and navigate their career path.

Find Stories of Others

When you see someone like you succeeding confidently in a non-traditional field, it becomes easier to imagine yourself pursuing a similar path. Role models offer inspiration, guidance, and proof that your direction should be shaped by passion and talent — not outdated expectations. By exploring diverse stories and connecting with mentors, you open yourself to new possibilities and gain the confidence to follow your own path without limits.



Set sail with these inspiring resources to begin your journey!

[**MenTeach**](#): is an organization that promotes male participation in education. Their platform features testimonials and resources to support men entering teaching.

[**National Girls Collaborative Project \(NGCP\)**](#): NGCP curates high-quality role model and mentoring resources aimed at inspiring girls in STEM. Their platform includes stories and information to help students explore careers beyond traditional gender expectations.

Role models on social media

Another simple way to expand your perspective is by following YouTubers and influencers who share their experiences in careers that challenge gender norms. Here are a few accounts that might inspire you to explore new possibilities:

Ali Diamond

Ali is a tech content creator who shares what it is like to work in software engineering. She also streams hacking and coding on Twitch. She is on YouTube, Twitch, and TikTok.



Greg Smedley-Warren

Greg shares experiences, materials and tips related to his work as a kindergarten teacher. He is on [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).

Sundas Khalid



Sundas is a self-taught data scientist from a non-tech background. She shares tips for people interested in entering data science and makes complicated topics digestible for everyone.

You can find her on [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).

Melvin

Melvin is a clinical social worker and psychotherapist who works in schools. Through his channel, he shares what it is like to work in social work.



You can find him on [Instagram](#).

Lilly Singh



Lilly is an actress and entertainer who creates comedic videos that challenge gender stereotypes, promote equality, and advocate for inclusivity.

You can find her on [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).

Male Teachers

A YouTube [playlist](#) by Teach Teachers with a collection of different impressions from men who work in teaching.

1		How this man found his calling as an early elementary teacher PBS NewsHour • 17K views • 7 years ago 7:12
2		What Is It Like Being A Male Elementary Teacher? Teacher Vlog Kyle Thain • 32K views • 7 years ago 13:23
3		A Week In The Life Of A Teacher \ First Week Of School Kyle Thain • 17K views • 7 years ago 22:43

Women in STEM

A dedicated [YouTube playlist](#) from the Museum of Science that highlights the contributions of women in STEM fields.

10		First Black Woman to Pilot Spaceship: Meet Dr. Sian Proctor Museum of Science • 16K views • 10 months ago 1:00
11		How Jane Goodall Ended Up Studying Chimpanzees Museum of Science • 16K views • 1 year ago 0:50
12		Cardiologist Explains What Happens To Your Body When You Run a Marathon Museum of Science • 15K views • 1 year ago 0:56



Intersectionality

Intersectionality  is like a watercolor painting made up of many different colors. Each color represents an aspect of who you are – your gender, culture, social class  , religion, abilities, interests, nationality, sexual orientation  , and more. These colors do not exist separately; instead, they blend together and overlap, creating a unique masterpiece. Just like in a painting, where the different strokes come together to form a picture, your multiple identities  combine to shape your experiences and struggles. No two people have the same combination of colors, which is why everyone's life journey is different and unique. The beauty of intersectionality lies in this blend of identities, showing that we are all complex and multifaceted individuals.

Intersectionality =

the idea that people have many different identities, like gender, race, and class, and these identities overlap, affecting their experiences and challenges in unique ways.

Sexual orientation =

who someone is attracted to, whether it is people of the opposite gender, the same gender, both, or no one at all.

Social class =

the group someone belongs to based on their income, education, and job, which can affect their opportunities and lifestyle.

Identity =

who you are, including your beliefs, values, culture, gender, and other characteristics that make you unique.

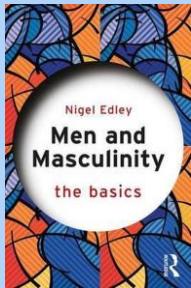
When looking for role models and mentors, it also helps if they are similar to us in other aspects and not only gender. They could, for example, also:

- Come from the same country as you
- Have the same religion
- Also be the first from their family that went to university
- Be using a wheelchair

The more similar we are to people, the easier it is to identify with them and to see ourselves following their path.

Recommended Reads to Challenge Gender Stereotypes

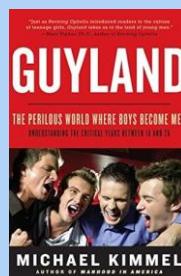
About how gender bias impacts men:



Men and Masculinity:
The Basics
By Nigel Edley



The Will to Change: Men,
Masculinity,
and Love
By bell hooks



Guyland: The
Perilous World
Where Boys
Become Men
By Michael
Kimmel

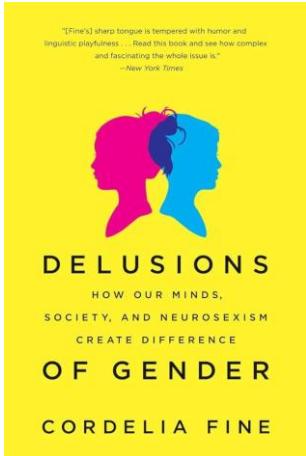


For the Love of
Men: From
Toxic to a More
Mindful
Masculinity
By Liz Plank

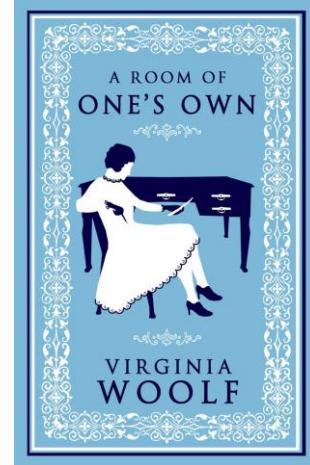


You can also read about the "[Man Box](#)," a metaphorical structure that outlines the narrow set of behaviors and traits society often expects from men.

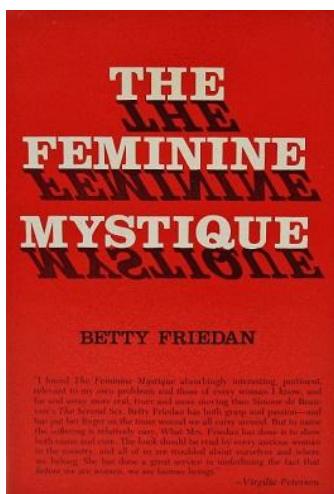
About women's experience with bias:



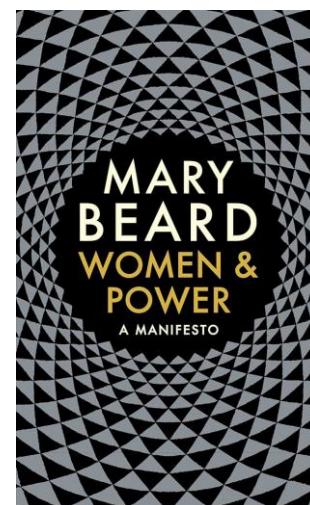
Delusions of Gender
By Cordelia Fine



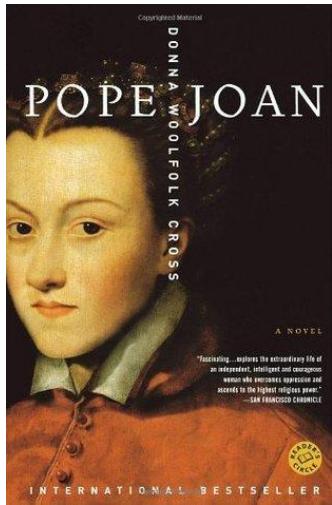
A Room of One's Own
By Virginia Woolf



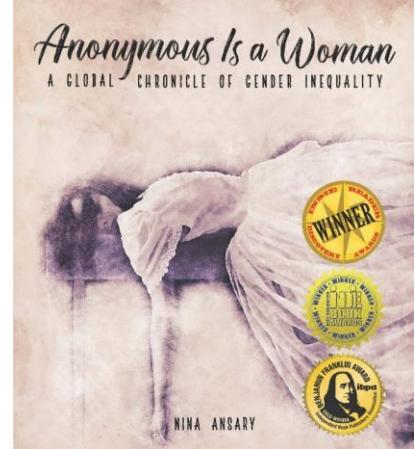
The Feminine Mystique
By Betty Friedan



**Women & Power: A
Manifesto**
By Mary Beard

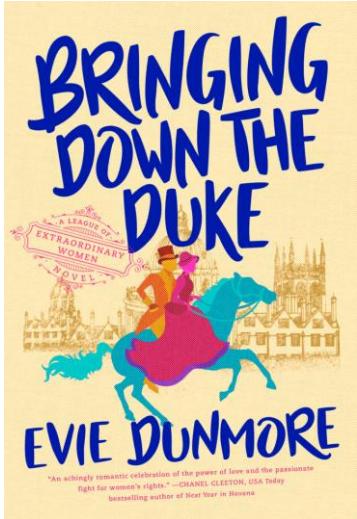


Pope Joan
By Donna Woolfolk
Cross

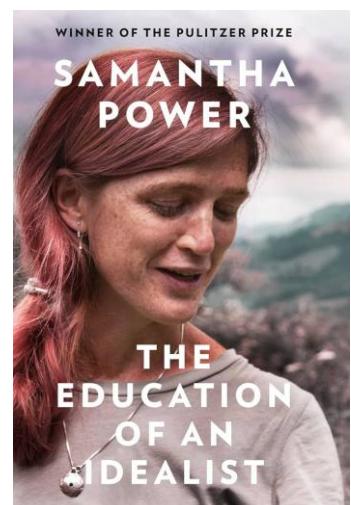


Anonymous is a
Woman: A Global
Chronicle of Gender
Inequality

By Nina Ansary

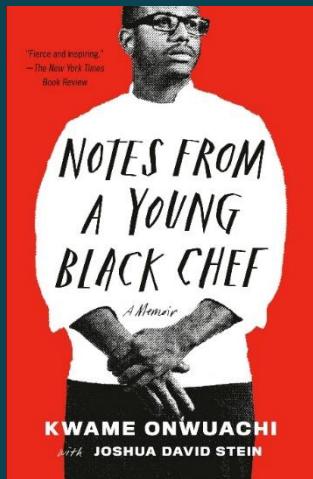


Bringing Down the
Duke
By Evie Dunmore

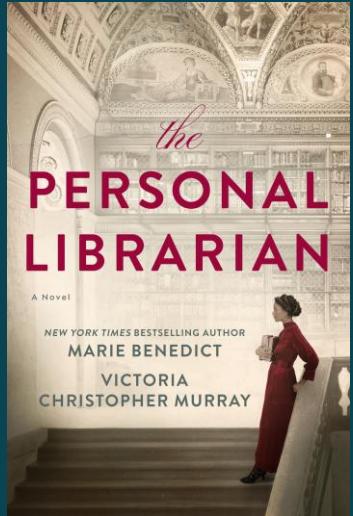


The Education of an
Idealist
By Samantha Power

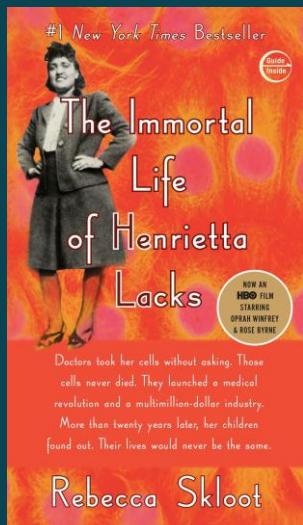
Expanding Perspectives: Books on Identity, Gender, and Representation:



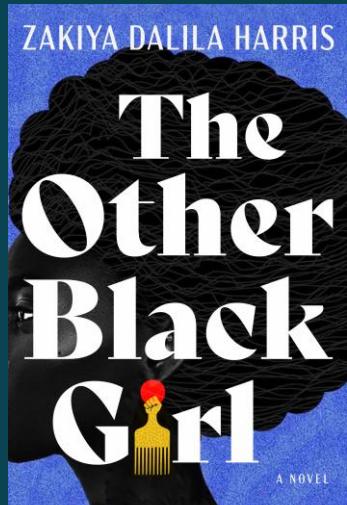
Notes from a Young Black Chef
By Kwame Onwuachi



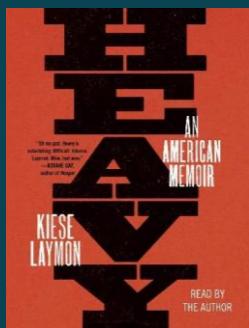
The Personal Librarian
By Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray



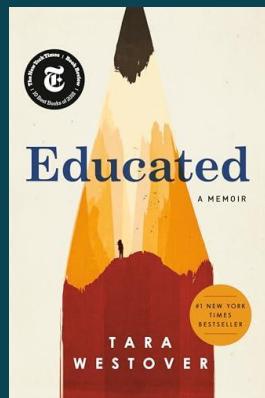
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
By Rebecca Skloot



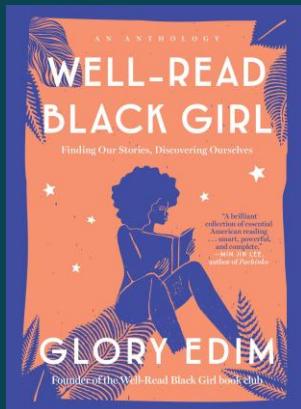
The Other Black Girl
By Zakiya Dalila Harris



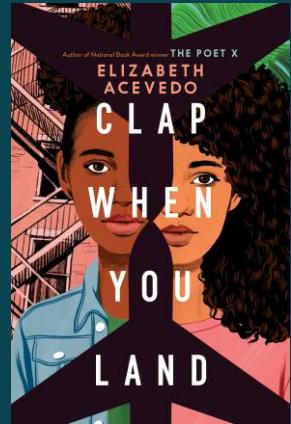
Heavy: An American
Memoir
By Kiese Laymon



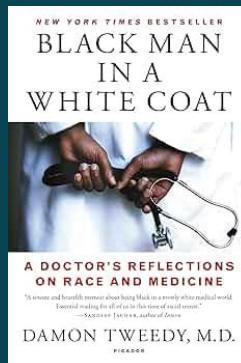
Educated
By Tara Westover



Well-Read Black Girl
Curated by Glory Edim



Clap When You Land
By Elizabeth Acevedo



Black Man in a White Coat: A Doctor's
Reflections on Race and Medicine
By Damon Tweedy

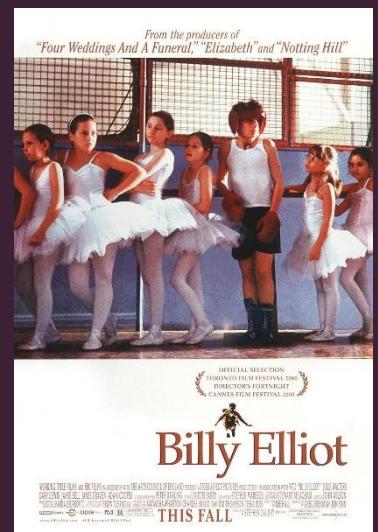
Movies

Also consider watching these movies!

The Six Triple Eight: This film tells the inspiring story of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion — an all-Black, all-female U.S. Army unit. During World War II, they broke racial and gender barriers by efficiently handling a massive backlog of mail for American troops in Europe. The movie highlights how these women defied stereotypes and discrimination, showcasing their significant yet historically overlooked contributions in a male-dominated military context.



Billy Elliot: This film tells the story of an 11-year-old boy growing up in a working-class town in Northern England who discovers a passion for ballet. Despite facing ridicule and opposition from his family and community, Billy pursues his dream, challenging traditional ideas of masculinity. The movie highlights themes of self-expression, resilience, and acceptance, showcasing how one boy's determination can defy rigid gender norms and inspire change in others.



Movies

Wonder Woman: This movie tells the story of a powerful female superhero who leaves her home to fight in a great war. Strong, compassionate, and determined, she challenges traditional ideas of what heroes look like. The film has played an important role in shifting how women are represented in action and superhero stories.



Hidden Figures: This film follows the story of three women who worked behind the scenes during an important moment in history. Despite facing many obstacles, they made crucial contributions to a major scientific effort. The movie highlights their overlooked achievements and raises questions about gender and racial barriers of their time.



6 Navigating the Storms: Overcoming Obstacles and Doubts



Every journey comes with its challenges — moments when things feel uncertain, overwhelming, or off track. Choosing your own path in education and career is no different. Doubts may creep in, and external pressures — whether from societal norms, expectations, or your own inner critic — can make it hard to stay true to what feels right for you.

But confident people do not give up at the first sign of difficulty. They adapt, trust themselves, and use their values and goals to guide their next steps. In this chapter, we will explore how to build resilience  , stand firm in the face of doubt, and manage external pressures with confidence. You will learn how to recover from setbacks, lean on your support network, and stay focused on your goals — knowing that tough times pass, and you will come through them stronger, more self-assured, and ready to keep moving forward.

Resilience =

The ability to bounce back and stay strong when facing challenges, setbacks, or difficult situations. It means being able to adapt and keep going, even when things get tough.

Defying Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes can create challenges that influence your educational choices, shape your career goals, and discourage you from exploring new possibilities.

But just as people learn to adapt and respond to obstacles, you can face these challenges with the right tools. Resources like *A Call to Men* and the resource *Girls Leadership* can help you recognize and challenge limiting beliefs. They empower you to make decisions based on your true interests and strengths — not on the expectations others place on you.

By engaging with programs like these, you can strengthen your sense of direction, build the confidence to face challenges, and shape a path that reflects your passions — free from outdated gender norms.

A Call to Men provides training and resources that encourage boys and young men to critically examine traditional ideas of masculinity. By questioning harmful gender norms  , they can explore a wider range of educational and career opportunities without fear of judgment or restriction.

While this resource is rooted in the US-American context, you can also often find similar resources in your own countries!

Girls Leadership equips girls with confidence-building tools and leadership skills, helping them challenge gender expectations and step into roles where they may be underrepresented.

Their resources support girls in expressing their beliefs and embracing their full potential.

Gender norms =

the standards and expectations that society has for how men and women should behave, based on what is considered normal or acceptable in that culture or community at a certain time.

Anchoring Yourself

When entering unfamiliar environments, it is easy to feel like you do not belong — especially in fields where people like you are underrepresented. Doubts can build up, making you question your place and your abilities. A values-affirmation💡 intervention💡 can help ground you, reminding you of who you are beyond the challenges you face. By reflecting on your personal values and the obstacles you have already overcome, you strengthen your sense of self and resilience, making it easier to stay focused and move forward. On the next few pages, we will show you an example of how you can do it.

Value affirmation =

the practice of reminding yourself of your most important beliefs, strengths, and qualities to boost your confidence and sense of self-worth, especially during challenging times.

Intervention =

an action or program aimed at supporting improvement or development in a certain area.



Find Your Footing

If you need some more confidence to feel like you belong in a field where you do not see a lot of people similar to you, a writing exercise can be very helpful! They can help you feel more motivated, and can help you when you are struggling with self-doubt (Casad et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2017; Walton et al., 2015). These exercises can also be useful when you start with lower grades and want to improve (Kost-Smith et al., 2012; Miyake et al., 2010; Sherman et al., 2013).

When the world around you feels uncertain, reminding yourself of your values and past strengths can help steady the ship. You have faced challenges before, and you can navigate these, too. To help you on your journey, you can give the following writing exercise a try:

Writing Exercise: Navigating Your Values²

Just as stability is important during challenging times, your core values  help keep you grounded when you face difficulties. This exercise will help you reflect on what truly matters to you and how your values have supported you through tough moments.

Step 1: Identify Your Values

Below is a list of values. Read through them and choose the three that feel the most important to you. If your top values are not listed, feel free to write them in.

Example Values	Kindness
Family	Curiosity
Friendship	Honesty
Creativity	Leadership
Learning	Helping others
Independence	Ambition
Perseverance	Responsibility

Values =

the beliefs, principles, or qualities that are important to a person or society, guiding their actions and decisions.

² Created based on the research of Casad et al. (2018)

Step 2: Reflect on Your Values

For each of your three values, answer the following questions:

- Why is this value important to you?
- How has this value influenced your decisions or goals?

Step 3: Connect Your Values to a Challenge

Think back to a time when you faced a stressful or difficult situation — perhaps in school, with friends or family, or during a time of self-doubt. Then, write about:

- What happened and how you felt during that time.
- How one or more of your values helped you get through it.
- What you learned from the experience.

Step 4: Looking Ahead

Now, imagine yourself facing a future challenge in your education or career path. Write a short paragraph about how your values can guide you through uncertainty and keep you on course toward your goals.



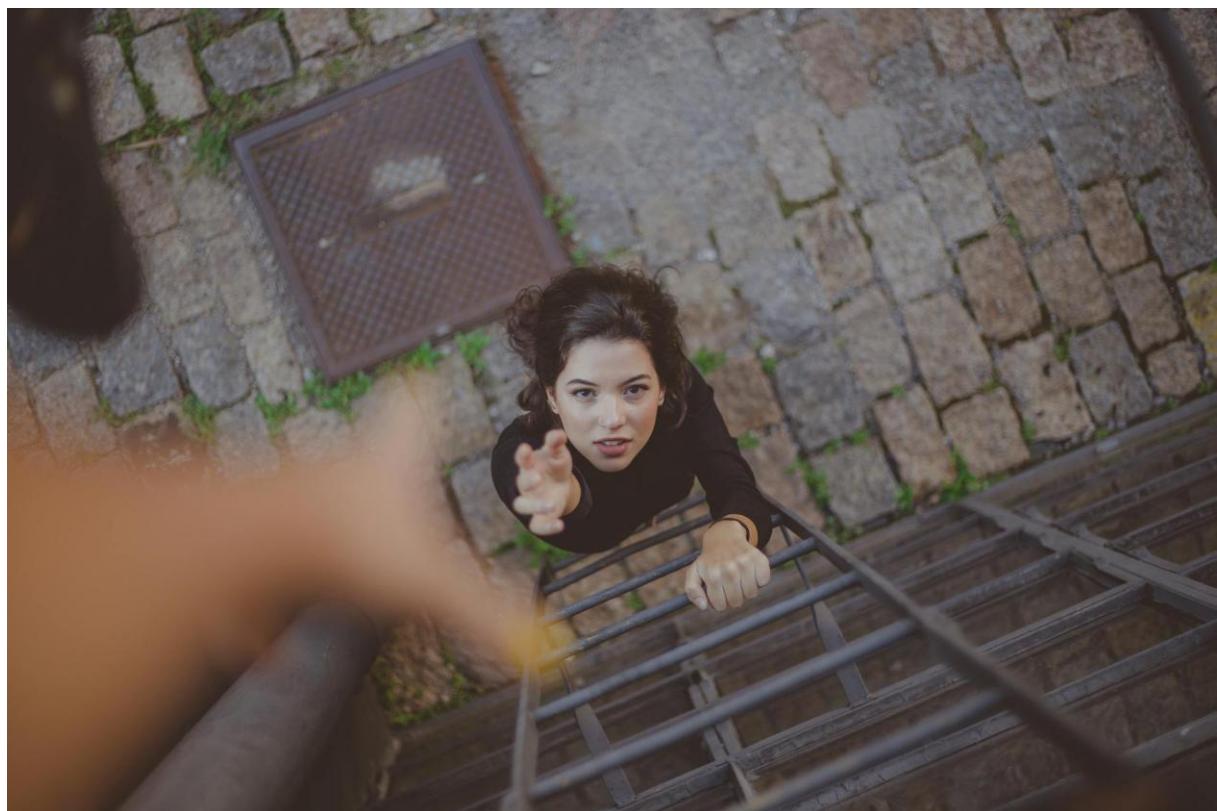
Inform Yourself About Others' Hardships

When doubt creeps in and the pressure of expectations threatens to throw you off balance, remember — you are not alone in this experience. Many have faced the same challenges, confronting the weight of gender stereotypes while staying true to their path. Reading their stories, learning about their struggles, and seeing how they carved out their own way forward can offer clarity and encouragement, reminding you that others have walked this road before. Their experiences show that challenges can be overcome — and with resilience and determination, you too can achieve your goals.

For example, a study has shown that students who heard more about the difficulties faced by Albert Einstein and other great scientists found more motivation for their science courses (Lin-Siegler et al., 2016). It shows that everyone faces hardships, and hearing the stories of others might help you work through difficulties of your own.

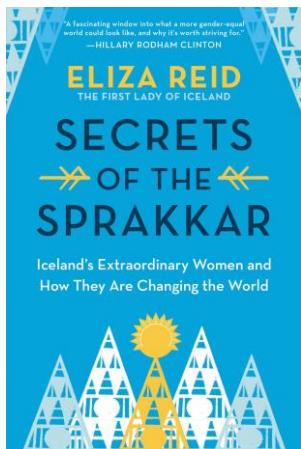
Similarly, it is important to realize that it is very normal to experience struggles! Realizing that everyone faces difficulties can help you reach out to those who can offer you support (Yeager et al., 2016). Your difficulties are just as important to your overall journey as your achievements are, and knowing this can help you stay motivated to work towards your goals (Huang & Aaker, 2019).

It can also help to read the stories of others that are similar to you. For example, when you are the first in your family to go to college, it can help you to find the right resources when you hear stories of others from similar backgrounds (Stephens et al., 2014).



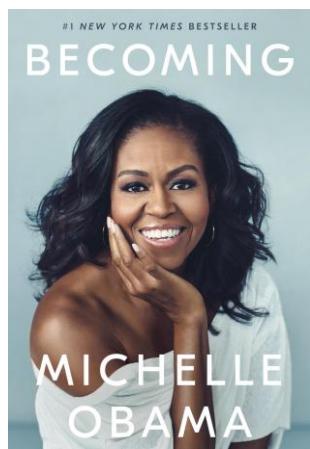
Books

You can also read some of the following books to gain insight into how others have dealt with bias. Their experiences can help you see that you are definitely not alone on this journey!

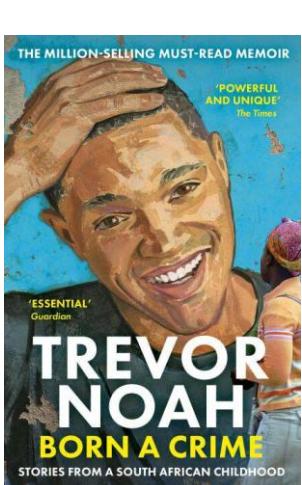


Secrets of the Sprakkar

By Eliza Reid

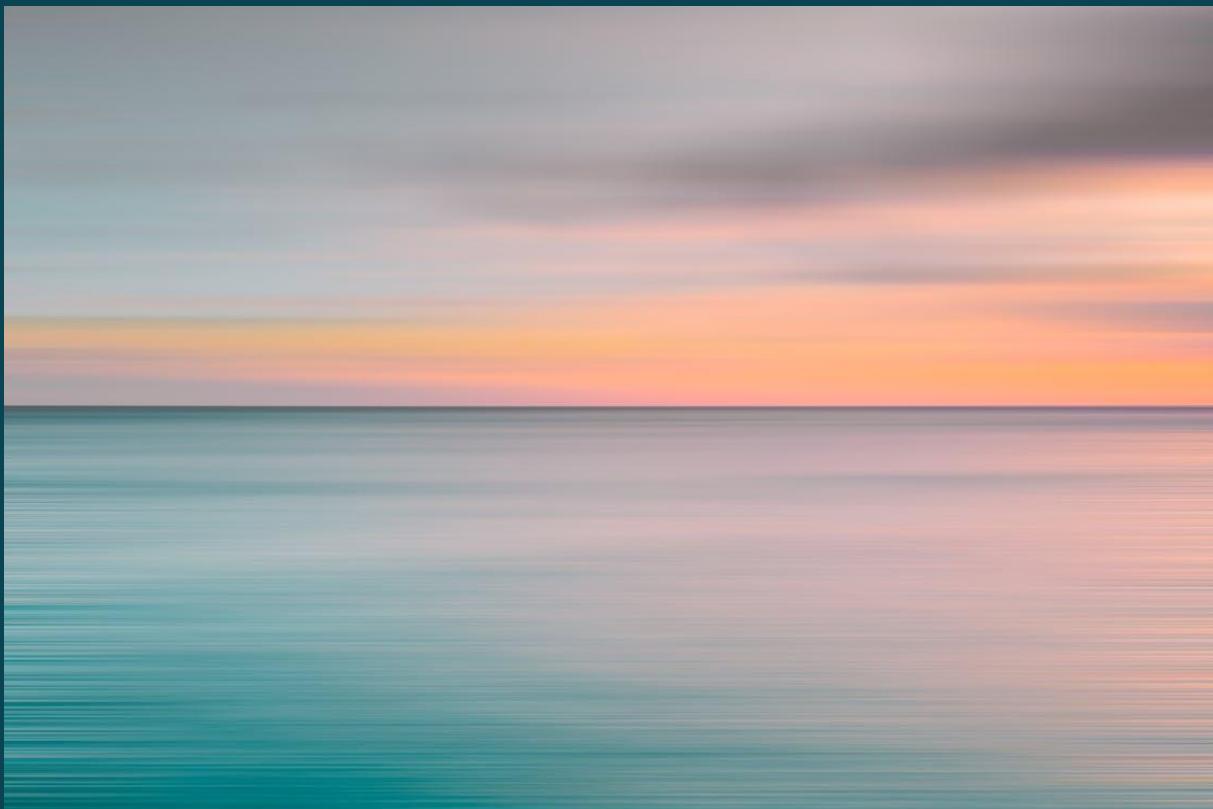


Becoming
By Michelle Obama

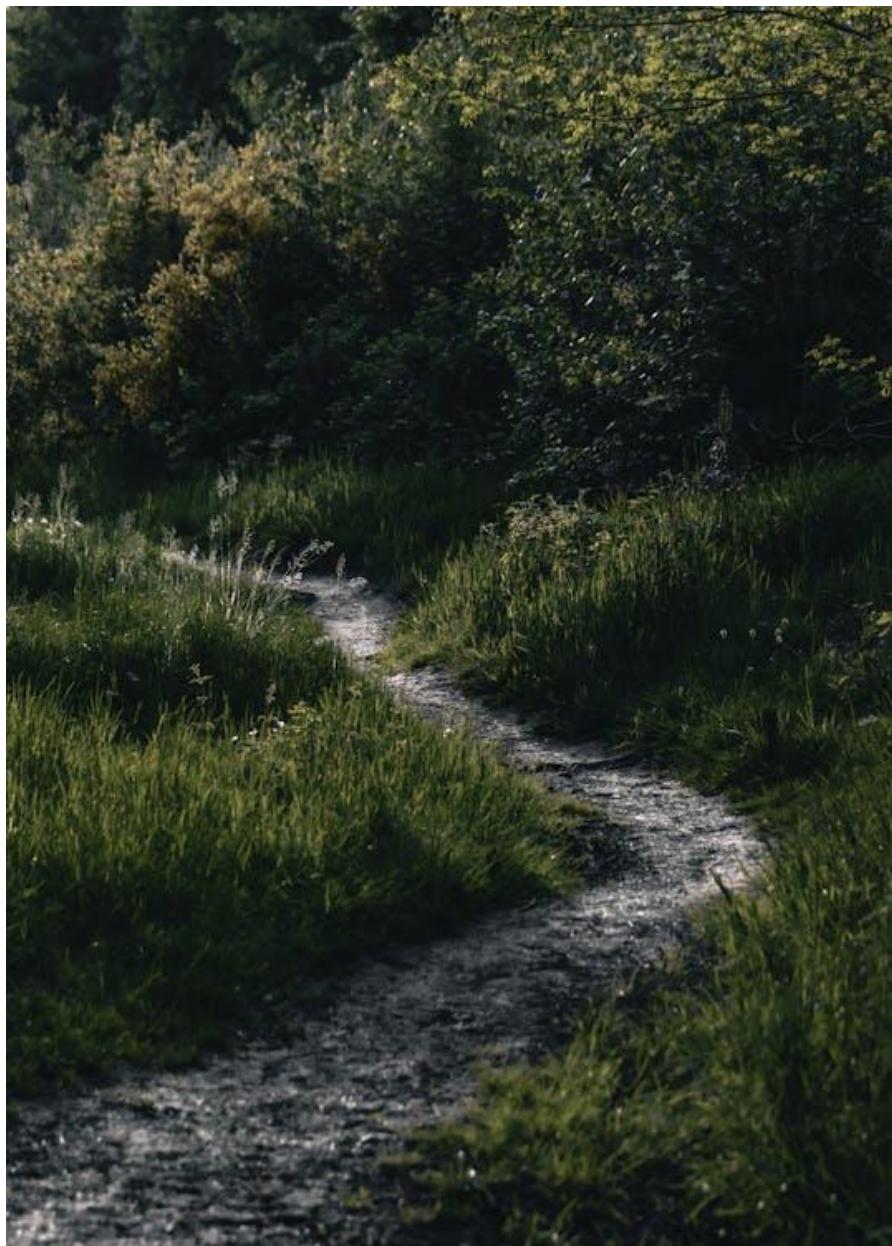


Born a Crime
By Trevor Noah

7 The Open Horizon: Embracing Opportunities



As you look ahead to your future, a world of possibilities lies before you. But sometimes, the options that seem most visible are the ones that are most familiar — the paths that feel expected or “normal” for someone like you. Gender norms and societal expectations can subtly influence your choices, guiding you in a certain direction before you have had the chance to reflect on what you truly want.





But what if you looked beyond the usual paths? What if you pursued opportunities that truly excite you, even if they do not fit traditional expectations? History is full of people who challenged stereotypes and found success in fields they were once told were not meant for them. By embracing new experiences, questioning outdated norms, and staying open to unexpected possibilities, you give yourself the freedom to follow a path that reflects your passions, talents, and goals — not what others assume is right for you.

In this chapter, you will learn how to broaden your perspective, push past limitations, and confidently explore options you may not have considered before. The world is full of possibilities, and your journey is just beginning. Will you stick with what is familiar, or take the leap into something new?

Online Learning Tools

When planning your educational journey, it is important to be guided by your own interests and strengths — not by outdated gender expectations. Free, high-quality learning platforms like Khan Academy give you access to a wide range of knowledge, from science and math to literature and coding. These tools let you explore different subjects at your own pace, helping you discover new areas that spark your curiosity and align with your goals.

Khan Academy : This online learning platform offers free, high-quality educational resources, including video lessons, interactive exercises, and practice tests across subjects like math, science, coding, and humanities.

Cultivate a Growth Mindset



When facing new challenges, your mindset plays a powerful role — it can either help you move forward or hold you back. A growth mindset encourages you to move beyond the belief that intelligence and skills are fixed. Instead, it shows that your abilities can grow through effort, persistence, and learning from setbacks (Aronson et al., 2002; Blackwell et al., 2007; Dweck, 1999; Dweck, 2006). Just like any skill, your talents can be developed through experience and by embracing challenges rather than avoiding them.

Growth mindset =

teaches you that your abilities can improve with effort, persistence, and learning from challenges, while a fixed mindset believes that abilities are set and cannot change.



Believing that you can grow and improve — what we call a *growth mindset* — can really change the way you learn. Whether it is through mentoring, online programs, or even simple reflection activities, these mindset tools can make a big difference. Studies have found that tools facilitating growth mindset do not just help students feel more positive about learning — they also help teachers teach better, which can lead to higher grades and stronger academic performance (Aronson et al., 2002; Blackwell et al., 2007; Chao et al., 2017; Good et al., 2003; Outes et al., 2017; Paunesku et al., 2015).



What is even more encouraging is that the biggest benefits of growth mindsets often show up for students who start off struggling or who believe their abilities cannot change. With the right support, real progress is possible — even when school feels tough (Bettinger et al., 2018; Broda et al., 2018; Chao et al., 2017).

By adopting a growth mindset, you open your horizon to greater possibilities. Challenges become stepping stones, failures become lessons, and your potential stretches far beyond what you once thought possible. Keep adjusting your sails, and you will find new destinations waiting just beyond the waves. Try this simple reflection exercise to get started³:

Step 1: Identify fixed mindset thoughts

Think of a recent challenge or setback you faced. Write down any negative thoughts you had in the moment. For example:

“I am just not good at this.”

“I will never be as smart/talented as them”

“If I fail, it means I am not capable.”

Step 2: Reframe with a growth mindset

Now, challenge each thought by turning it into a growth-oriented statement. For example:

“I am not good at this yet, but I can improve with effort”

“I can learn from others and develop my skills.”

“Failure is part of growth. What can I learn from this?”

³ Based on insights given by Carol Dweck on: <https://fs.blog/carol-dweck-mindset/>

Step 3: Apply it moving forward

Pick one area where you would like to improve (e.g., a skill, subject, or habit). Write down one small action you can take this week to develop in that area.

Step 4: Reflect

At the end of the week, journal about your progress:

- What did you try?
- What challenges did you face?
- What did you learn?
- How did adopting a growth mindset help?

By consistently recognizing and shifting your mindset, you will build resilience and confidence in your ability to learn and grow.



8 Setting a New Course: Empowering Future Generations



You have faced challenges, explored new possibilities, and discovered the power of shaping your own path. Now, you have the chance to support others who may still be finding theirs. Just as you have learned from those who came before you, your experiences, struggles, and successes can help guide and inspire others.

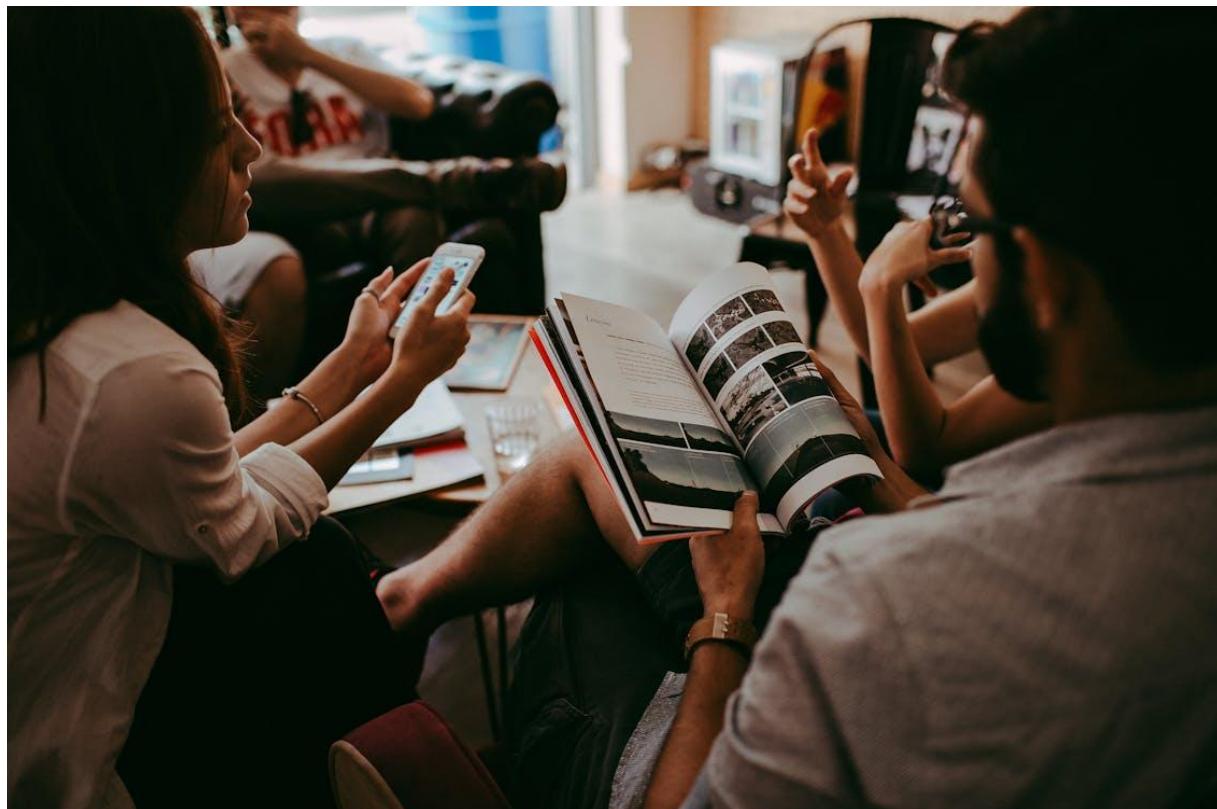
By mentoring, sharing your story, or challenging outdated norms, you contribute to a world where more students feel free to follow their true passions — without limitations. Every time you break a stereotype, support a friend’s ambitions, or encourage someone to take a chance, you are not just moving forward — you are helping to open doors for others.

This chapter is about creating change — not just for yourself, but for future generations. How will you use what you have learned to empower others? How can you make the path clearer for those who come after you? Meaningful change begins with individuals who are willing to lead the way. Now, it is your turn to step up and make a difference.

So what can you do to empower those on similar journeys as you?
Try some of the following techniques:

Share Your Story and Experiences

Hearing real stories from peers can make a huge impact on someone questioning their own path. When students learn about the struggles and successes of those who have gone before them, they gain confidence in their own abilities (Lin-Siegler et al., 2016). Whether through conversations, social media, or school events, sharing your experiences can help others see that challenges are normal and that perseverance matters more than fitting into expectations.





Challenge Stereotypes in Everyday Conversations

When you hear someone say a career or subject “is not for girls” or “is not for boys,” do not be afraid to challenge that mindset.

Research shows that when students recognize and push back against gender biases, they become more confident in exploring their true interests (Casad et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2017). A simple response like, “Actually, anyone can be great at that if they are passionate about it,” can plant a seed of change.

Support Friends in Their Interests – No Matter the Field

Encouragement from peers is one of the strongest influences on students' career and educational choices (Darensbourg & Blake, 2014; Kim et al., 2023; Zhang & Huang, 2018). If a friend wants to pursue something outside traditional gender norms, support them! Celebrate their successes, help them find resources, and remind them that they belong. Just knowing someone believes in them can give them the confidence to keep going.



Become a Mentor or a Role Model

You do not have to be an expert to inspire others. Research shows that students benefit greatly from having mentors or role models who break gender norms in their chosen fields (Dasgupta & Stout, 2014). You can volunteer at school events, lead discussions, or simply be someone others look up to as an example of following their passions.



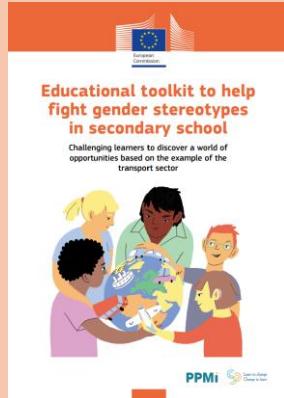
9

Extra Resources



In the following pages, you will find extra resources that can help you recognize stereotypes, question them, and make decisions that reflect who you are. Whether you are exploring your options or already have a direction in mind, these tools are designed to support you in making informed, confident choices based on your strengths and passions.

You do not have to fit into someone else's mold. This chapter is here to help you shape your own path. Below, you will find a selection of additional toolkits and resources that dive deeper into specific topics — each offering practical tips, inspiring examples, and useful guidance to help you make choices free from stereotypes.



[Educational toolkit to help fight gender stereotypes in secondary school](#)

In this toolkit, you will find simple activities and examples that help challenge gender stereotypes at school. It is made for teachers and students (like you!) to start open conversations, so everyone feels free to explore their own interests and talents without being held back by old ideas about what is “for boys” or “for girls.”



[Learning and teaching resources for educators and independent learners](#)

In this toolkit, you will find how-to guides to get you started, simple explanations of big ideas, smart tips for schools and companies, cool reads, handy tools, and even lesson plans for teachers (yep, they get homework too!).



[Talent Development of Boys: A Guide for Professionals In and Around Education](#)

In this toolkit, you will learn how unequal treatment based on gender affects everyone — including boys — why it is important to address this, and what can be done in schools to help make things fairer for all students.



[The IMAGINE toolkit](#)

In this toolkit, you will find tips, activities, and real-life examples to help boys and young men understand how to build respect, speak up, and take action to help prevent sexual harassment and violence against women and girls.

10 Get to know us!



Get to know us better!

This toolkit has been prepared as part of the international Horizon Europe project “RE-WIRING - Realising Girls’ and Women’s Inclusion, Representation and Empowerment”.

We use a science-based approach to answer questions such as

- What are the key factors that create power differences between men and women in society?
- How can we make lasting changes to eliminate and reverse gender inequality?

You can learn more about the project by visiting [our website](#). There, you can find additional information on how we deal with [de-biasing education](#). You can also listen to [episode 3 of our podcast](#), where we talk more about gendered educational choices. You can also find more detailed reports on our work on our output overview: <https://re-wiring.eu/outputs/>.



About the project ▾ About us ▾ News & Blog Outputs ▾

Contact

Realising Girls’ and Women’s Inclusion, Representation and Empowerment

The RE-WIRING project has been awarded funding by the European Union and aims to properly identify the structural root causes of ‘gendered’ (gender-blind or gender-neutral) power hierarchies in European countries and elsewhere. RE-WIRING seeks to rewire institutions to prevent and reverse gender inequalities, catalyse change processes, and actively involve diverse stakeholders in the research process.

[Know more](#)

11 Glossary



Bias

Treating people unfairly or thinking they are less important because of their gender, race, or other traits.

Binary concept of gender

The idea that gender falls into two distinct categories: male and female. This concept excludes people who do not tightly fit with either of these two labels, such as transgender or non-binary people.

Cultural norms

The everyday behaviors or traditions that are seen as normal in a particular group or society.

Domestic inequity

Unfairness or unequal treatment within a household, often related to tasks, responsibilities, or decision-making, based on gender or other factors.

Gender norms

The standards and expectations that society has for how men and women should behave, based on what is considered normal or acceptable in that culture or community at a certain time.

Gender stereotypes

Fixed ideas that say boys and girls have certain skills and should act a certain way just because of their gender.

Growth mindset

Teaches you that your abilities can improve with effort, persistence, and learning from challenges, while a fixed mindset believes that abilities are set and cannot change.

HEED

An acronym that stands for Health, Elementary Education, and Domestic work. It refers to fields that are often associated with care, social responsibility, and support roles.

Identity

Who you are, including your beliefs, values, culture, gender, and other characteristics that make you unique.

Implicit Association

When we automatically link certain ideas or groups with others in our mind, without even realizing it.

Intersectionality

The idea that people have many different identities, like gender, race, and class, and these identities overlap, affecting their experiences and challenges in unique ways.

Intervention

An action or program aimed at supporting improvement or development in a certain area.

Masculine generics

Using male words to refer to all people, like saying "fireman" instead of "firefighter," which can make women and others invisible.

Masculinity

The qualities, behaviors, and roles that a society considers typical or appropriate for men.

Mentor

An experienced person who provides advice, guidance, and support to help someone make career decisions, develop skills, and navigate their career path.

Resilience

The ability to bounce back and stay strong when facing challenges, setbacks, or difficult situations. It means being able to adapt and keep going, even when things get tough.

Sexual orientation

Who someone is attracted to, whether it is people of the opposite gender, the same gender, both, or no one at all.

Social class

The group someone belongs to based on their income, education, and job, which can affect their opportunities and lifestyle.

Unconscious bias

Automatic, unintentional preferences or stereotypes about people based on their gender, race, or other traits, without even realizing it.

Values

The beliefs, principles, or qualities that are important to a person or society, guiding their actions and decisions.

Value affirmation

The practice of reminding yourself of your most important beliefs, strengths, and qualities to boost your confidence and sense of self-worth, especially during challenging times.

12 References

Adhikari, A., Vethman, S., Vos, D., Lenz, M., Cocu, I., Tolios, I., & Veenman, C. J. (2024). Gender mobility in the labor market with skills-based matching models. *AI and Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-023-00410-5>

Aronson, J., Fried, C. B., & Good, C. (2002). Reducing the effects of stereotype threat on African American College students by shaping theories of intelligence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38(2), 113-125. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.2001.1491>

Bettinger, E., Ludvigsen, S., Rege, M., Solli, I. F., & Yeager, D. (2018). Increasing perseverance in math: Evidence from a field experiment in Norway. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 146, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2017.11.032>

Blackwell, L. A., Trzesniewski, K. H., & Dweck, C.S. (2007). Implicit theories of intelligence predict achievement across an adolescent transition: A longitudinal study and an intervention. *Child Development*, 78, 246–263. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.00995.x>

Broda, M., Yun, J., Schneider, B., Yeager, D. S., Walton, G. M., & Diemer, M. (2018). Reducing inequality in academic success for incoming college students: A randomized trial of growth mindset and belonging interventions. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 11(3), 317-338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2018.1429037>

Casad, B. J., Oyler, D. L., Sullivan, E. T., McClellan, E. M., Tierney, D. N., Anderson, D. A., Flammang, B. J. (2018). Wise psychological interventions to improve gender and racial equality in STEM. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 21(5), 767–787. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430218767034>

Chao, M. M., Visaria, S., Mukhopadhyay, A., & Dehejia, R. (2017). Do rewards reinforce the growth mindset?: Joint effects of the growth mindset and incentive schemes in a field intervention. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 146(10), 1402–1419. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000355>

Cheryan, S., Ziegler, S. A., Montoya, A. K., & Jiang, L. (2017). Why are some STEM fields more gender balanced than others? *Psychological Bulletin*, 143(1), 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000052>

Curtis, L., Robinson, S., & Netten, A. (2009). Changing patterns of male and female nurses' participation in the workforce. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 17(7), 843–852. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2834.2009.00982.x>

Darensbourg, A. M., & Blake, J. J. (2014). Examining the academic achievement of Black adolescents: Importance of peer and parental influences. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 40(2), 191–212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798413481384>

Dasgupta, N., & Stout, J. G. (2014). Girls and Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: STEMing the Tide and Broadening Participation in STEM Careers. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1(1), 21-29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732214549471>

Dweck, C. S. (1999). Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

Dweck, C. S. (2006). Mindset: The new psychology of success. New York, NY: Random House.

Good, C., Aronson, J., & Inzlicht, M. (2003). Improving adolescents' standardized test performance: An intervention to reduce the effects of stereotype threat. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 24(6), 645-662. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2003.09.002>

Huang, S., & Aaker, J. (2019). It's the journey, not the destination: How metaphor drives growth after goal attainment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 117(4), 697-720. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000164>

Kim, J., Park, D., & Shin, Y. J. (2023). Friendship dynamics of career decision-making self-efficacy: A longitudinal social network approach. *Current Psychology*, 42, 28771–28782. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03887-1>

Kost-Smith, L. E., Pollock, S. J., Finkelstein, N. D., Cohen, G. L., Ito, T. A., Miyake, A., Rebello, N. S., Engelhardt, P. V., & Singh, C. (2012). Replicating a self-affirmation intervention to address gender differences: Successes and challenges. *AIP Conference Proceedings*. <https://doi.org/10.1063/1.3680037>

Lin-Siegler, X., Ahn, J. N., Chen, J., Fang, F.-F. A., & Luna-Lucero, M. (2016). Even Einstein struggled: Effects of learning about great scientists' struggles on high school students' motivation to learn science. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 108(3), 314–328. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000092>

Lütolf, M. (2024). Caring breadwinners? A comparative analysis of parental leave policies to promote fathers' care work. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 30(4), 385–406. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12629>

McGee, P. (2024). *STEM Women whitepaper: Understanding the gender imbalance in STEM* (2024 release). STEM Women. <https://www.stemwomen.com>

Miyake, A., Kost-Smith, L. E., Finkelstein, N. D., Pollock, S. J., Cohen, G. L., & Ito, T. A. (2010). Reducing the gender achievement gap in college science: A classroom study of values affirmation. *Science*, 330(6008), 1234-1237.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1195996>

Outes, I., Sánchez, A., & Vakis, R. (2017). Cambiando la mentalidad de los estudiantes: evaluación de impacto de ¡Expande tu Mente! sobre el rendimiento académico en tres regiones del Perú. *Documentos de Investigación*, 83. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56515-2>

Paunesku, D., Walton, G. M., Romero, C., Smith, E. N., Yeager, D. S., & Dweck, C. S. (2015). Mind-set interventions are a scalable treatment for academic underachievement. *Psychological Science*, 26(6), 784-793.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615571017>

Peters, E., Shoots-Reinhard, B., Tompkins, M. K., Schley, D., Meilleur, L., Sinayev, A., Tusler, M., Wagner, L., & Crocker, J. (2017). Improving numeracy through values affirmation enhances decision and STEM outcomes. *PLOS ONE*, 12(7), e0180674.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0180674>

Sherman, D. K., Hartson, K. A., Binning, K. R., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Garcia, J., Taborsky-Barba, S., Tomassetti, S., Nussbaum, A. D., & Cohen, G. L. (2013). Deflecting the trajectory and changing the narrative: How self-affirmation affects academic performance and motivation under identity threat. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104(4), 591-618. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031495>

Stephens, N. M., Hamedani, M. G., & Destin, M. (2014). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition. *Psychological Science*, 25(4), 943-953.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613518349>

Wagner, I. (2022). Equal pay for work of equal value? Iceland and the Equal Pay Standard. *Social Politics*, 29(2), 477-496. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxaa032>

Walton, G. M., Logel, C., Peach, J. M., Spencer, S. J., & Zanna, M. P. (2015). Two brief interventions to mitigate a “chilly climate” transform women’s experience, relationships, and achievement in engineering. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 107(2), 468-485. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037461>

Yeager, D. S., Walton, G. M., Brady, S. T., Akcinar, E. N., Paunesku, D., Keane, L., Kamentz, D., Ritter, G., Duckworth, A. L., Urstein, R., Gomez, E. M., Markus, H. R., Cohen, G. L., & Dweck, C. S. (2016). Teaching a lay theory before college narrows

achievement gaps at scale. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(24). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1524360113>

Zhang, H., & Huang, H. (2018). Decision-making self-efficacy mediates the peer support–career exploration relationship. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 46(3), 485–498. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.6410>

We used Generative AI assistance (ChatGPT) as a language assistant to tailor our content to the readers of this toolkit.