

A Preview To

WORK

WITH ME



The 8 Blind Spots  
Between Men and Women  
in Business

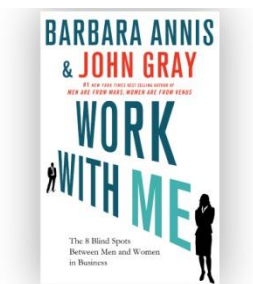
BARBARA ANNIS  
& JOHN GRAY



**John Gray** is the leading relationship expert in the world and best-selling relationship author of all time. His book, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, is ranked by USA Today as one of the top 10 most influential books in the last 25 years. His books have been published in 50 different languages and he is a popular keynote speaker for international organizations and Fortune 500 companies.



**Barbara Annis** is a world-renowned expert on Gender Intelligence and inclusive leadership, advocating the value and practice of Gender Intelligence in over 60 Fortune 500 companies, ten governments, and numerous organizations across the globe. Her insights and achievements have pioneered a transformational shift in cultural attitudes on the importance of gender unity to personal and organizational success.



John Gray's newest book  
***Work with Me***  
is available at:



## **Introduction**

Less than 20 percent of the executives in the United States are women. Only 3 percent of CEOs are women, with no change since 1996. The rest of the world is not much different. Globally, only 20 percent of senior management positions are held by women.

For over 30 years, we have tried to tackle this problem of gender imbalance by forcing affirmative action policies and quotas on companies, with little positive change.

These practices create resentment in men, who think the process is unfair. Women aren't happy about them either. Many feel undervalued, unappreciated and are becoming frustrated in the male-dominated workplace.

Our pursuit for gender equality is causing a cultural breakdown in society. We have painted ourselves into a corner with the idea that women and men are no different from each other.

Women have been forced to change themselves and act more like men. Men have been forced to change themselves and behave more like women. The result is an endless cycle of miscommunication and misunderstanding instead of the equality breakthrough we expected by now.

***Work with Me*** is a book that guides men and women as coworkers to find greater success at work through a better understanding and appreciation for our differences.

Revealed for the first time in ***Work with Me*** are the Eight Gender Blind Spots that create misunderstanding and miscommunication between the sexes at work and in their personal lives. We framed them in the form of questions:

- 1. Do Women Want Men to Change?**
- 2. Do Men Appreciate Women?**
- 3. Are Women Being Excluded?**
- 4. Do Men Have to Walk on Eggshells with Women?**
- 5. Do Women Ask Too Many Questions?**
- 6. Do Men Listen?**
- 7. Are Women Too Emotional?**
- 8. Are Men Insensitive?**

Throughout **Work with Me**, we uncover these blind spots with science, case studies and the gender-based research from consulting firms and leading universities. We also use the results from a very candid survey of over 100,000 men and women executives in Fortune 500 companies. These results revealed not only *what* men and women value and prioritize at work, but *why* and *how* they value and prioritize at work.

Emerging from our data and research were **eight gender blind spots**—the leading false assumptions and opinions that men and women have of each other and themselves. We were able to see the biological and social influences that compel men and women to think and act as they do. We were also able to better understand how each gender communicates, solves problems, makes decisions, resolves conflict, leads others, and deals with stress.

We learned that men and women truly want to see each other clearly, but they often do not read the other gender well enough. They don't know how to listen or what to listen for. They're trying their best to work together effectively and find greater happiness at work, but they're coming up short in so many ways.

The purpose of **Work with Me** is to expose and eliminate our gender blind spots. It's time for a cultural shift in our thinking. We need a new level of awareness and attentiveness to each other's needs with a depth of understanding that we call "gender intelligence."

Gender intelligence is an awareness of the intrinsic nature of men and women beyond the physical and cultural. It's a greater understanding and appreciation for our differences.

We are not all alike. And we should not have to modify our behavior or learn new behaviors that are not authentic to ourselves. Gender is a function of both nature and nurture—first informed by nature, then shaped by society and culture. When we better understand the nature of our gender differences, we can learn how to nurture, develop, and complement those differences for greater success and satisfaction at work.

**Work with Me** will help you learn how to put yourself in the shoes of the other gender, how to truly listen, and how to get your own message across more effectively. Men will discover ways of building trust with women, and women will discover ways of increasing credibility with men.

This journey is about increasing your understanding and personal awareness so the learning process remains authentic to you. This is about expanding your intelligence, making you more attentive, and deepening your understanding of how and why men and women think and act as they do.

## **Blind Spot #1: Do Women Want Men To Change?**

From the boardroom to the conference room to the call center, women feel valued differently than men. Many women feel they have to work harder than men to prove themselves, and they feel doubted for their competence and commitment. Many feel dismissed for their ideas and excluded from events and opportunities for advancement.

Men, on the other hand, are generally comfortable with the rules of engagement in today's corporate culture. They're not aware of how their behavior affects women, nor do they feel that they're acting intentionally against women. They just assume that women are prepared to engage in work as men typically do when they are prioritizing issues, solving problems, participating on teams, leading others, or making decisions.

Deliberately or not, men's and women's misunderstanding and misinterpreting of each other's meaning, actions, and reactions impedes their ability to work together in an authentic and productive way. Much of the time, women don't realize men's good intentions, while men are often unaware of the value of women's consequential thinking.

**Do women want men to change?** Many women believe, and with good reason, that if men change their behavior, it will improve the working environment for women. But the solution may not be that simple. Our research revealed two reasons why a change in men's behavior would still not bring a change in how women feel valued or included.

The workplace is based on a male model of work and male code of behavior.

The male model makes sense to men because when men designed the corporation generations ago, the majority of the workforce was male. The structure and functioning of the corporation was fashioned after the military model of command and control. This created a highly competitive work environment that rewards speed in decision making, individual performance, and goal achievement. This work model supports the way men naturally think and behave, making it difficult for men to see their workplace and their performance in it any differently.

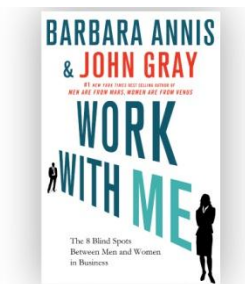
However, women don't feel comfortable with this model of work. It doesn't fit with how women naturally think and act. Many women are forced to endure and adapt to the command-and-control model each day to get ahead. This is one of the primary reasons that more than half of the women we meet in our workshops and seminars are considering leaving their companies.

The cold, hard reality for women usually starts after college, the last time they and their male classmates worked in an atmosphere of collaboration and sharing. Most men

naturally adapt to the corporate world, while many women find themselves entering an unnatural world that they would have designed quite differently if given the chance.

And now is their chance. Today, the labor market is comprised of as many women as there are men. And the marketplace is no longer domestic but rather global and increasingly diverse. The centralized planning and decision-making model that worked in the industrial era is not the most effective way of leading and succeeding in business today. A more collaborative model benefits the global information era and is actually more aligned with the way women think and act.

In ***Work with Me***, we show how to create a collaborative atmosphere to improve communication and management in the workplace. We share real-life examples of how women and men are discovering ways to work together more effectively and, as a result, are finding personal satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment in their careers.



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## Blind Spot #2: Do Men Appreciate Women?

In the late 1940s, companies began surveying employees to try to understand what motivated them to perform at their best and find out what they desired most from their job. A pattern emerged and revealed **a formula for motivational success** that became the principles found in every management-training book then and now:

- 1. Offer employees a challenging job that matches their skills and interests.**
- 2. Give them the time and resources needed to accomplish the task.**
- 3. Allow them the autonomy to get the job done.**
- 4. Recognize and reward them for their accomplishments.**

These management principles supported how men preferred to work and receive appreciation for their results. And it is still widely believed that women seek appreciation for the same reasons men do.

Our data suggest otherwise —recognition for results alone works great for men, but not for the other half of the workforce.

- 79% of men feel appreciated at work.*
- 48% of women feel appreciated at work.*
- 89% of men want to be recognized for just their results.*
- 82% of women want to be recognized for their effort in achieving the results.*

When someone doesn't feel appreciated, they disengage. Disengagement ultimately leads to separation. This is why women have been voluntarily leaving the workforce at twice the rate of men, yet it's often blame don work-life issues.

We recently conducted in-depth interviews with 2,400 women who left their leadership positions in Fortune 500 companies in a variety of industries across the Americas, Europe, and Asia, and uncovered the top five reasons why women were quitting, the least of which was for personal reasons.

### Why Do Women Really Leave?

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| <i>1. Not valued in the workplace</i>              | <b>68%</b> |
| <i>2. Feeling excluded from teams or decisions</i> | <b>65%</b> |
| <i>3. Male-dominated environment</i>               | <b>64%</b> |
| <i>4. Lack of opportunity for advancement</i>      | <b>55%</b> |
| <i>5. Work vs. personal life issues</i>            | <b>30%</b> |

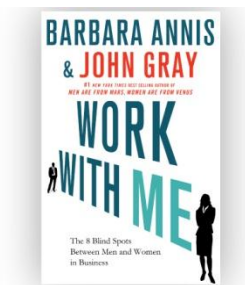
Women will often cite their reasons as “personal” when they leave a job to avoid burning bridges. Men believe they are hearing the truth, which perpetuates the myth that women’s personal issues will usually override their seriousness about business or their desire for career advancement.

However, many women are not opting out of business careers altogether. They’re migrating to companies with environments that value their talents and skills or starting their own businesses, and they are doing so in record numbers.

While men thrive on recognition for their results, women feel most appreciated and validated when they’re acknowledged for the challenges they faced in attaining success. Most women value the journey as much as the destination, if not more.

This is often very difficult for men to understand. Men tend to think that women should feel appreciated simply because they have gained responsibility, a good salary, and the opportunity move up in the company. Men don’t realize that for many women, a collaborative work environment with support from their peers and supervisors are as important as money, status, and power.

In **Work with Me**, we will explain how the blind spot for men is that they assume that women value the same things and in the same way they do. We use real-life, common scenarios to show how women are not feeling heard, validated, and acknowledged for their actions in the workplace. You will understand how to reward a woman for how she achieves an objective as much as when the objective is achieved.



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## **Blind Spot #3: Are Women Being Excluded?**

*82% of women feel excluded from business social events and casual meetings. 92% of men don't believe they're excluding women.*

A woman's feelings of exclusion usually don't come from one specific incident. Certain small, pattern-like behaviors by men tend to chip away at a woman's confidence and feeling of acceptance. Her feelings of exclusion are also directly related to how men and women also define and approach teamwork.

Women generally have a much greater need to be part of the team and think of teamwork as an opportunity to collaborate and communicate with others. Women find gratification and support by questioning issues, sharing discoveries and making decisions together.

Men tend to work independently until a task or issue is resolved. They generally view teamwork as a quick, agenda-driven exercise to confirm a course of action before they return to independent problem solving and decision making.

During our workshops, we ask women and men what teamwork means to them and find two very divergent notions on the purpose of a team:

### **What teamwork means to women**

- "Share ideas with others and build on each other's ideas."
- "Give everyone a chance to speak their mind."
- "Arrive at better decisions."

### **What teamwork means to men**

- "Assign and prioritize work."
- "Make sure there's no duplication of effort."
- "Ensure everyone is working as effectively and efficiently as possible."

In *Work with Me*, we show how inclusion is valued more by women than men. As a result, a woman may misread a man's behavior as being aloof and indifferent, which makes her feel excluded. While a man may misread a woman's need to collaborate, share, and question as a sign of indecisiveness, insecurity and may even misinterpret a woman's questions as a mistrust of his intentions.

## **Blind Spot #4: Do Men Walk on Eggshells with Women?**

- **79%** of men feel they have to be careful when providing feedback to women
- **82%** of women say they want to receive direct feedback from men

The phrase “walking on eggshells” describes the way a person approaches a sensitive topic while trying not to offend the other person’s feelings. Men often find themselves walking on eggshells with women in the workplace, feeling apprehensive and hesitant when they interact with women.

The men in our survey told us they feel most uncomfortable when giving feedback during performance reviews and when they are joking around the office with profanity. The most surprising discovery is many men felt uncomfortable when opening doors, holding elevators, buying lunch or offering to carry heavy packages for women.

Men want to work with women, whether they are subordinates, peers, or supervisors. Yet, men often feel they can’t express their ideas or act natural without the fear of saying or doing something that may upset a woman.

Walking on eggshells around women in the workplace is not beneficial for men. It detracts from a man’s self-confidence, personal performance, and job satisfaction. More importantly, it’s not advantageous for women.

A man will tend to minimize interacting with a woman he feels uncertain around. He may avoid topics that could raise too many questions, derail an agenda, or slow down progress. And he may withhold candid feedback during performance reviews and mentoring with women.

For instance, we were told by many of the male supervisors that they held back criticism to women during performance reviews out of concern that he may upset her and provoke an emotional reaction.

When men avoid collaboration with his female peers, it jeopardizes his own chances of advancement. This also tends to work against a woman’s sense of inclusion and her opportunities for advancement.

We provide a supportive approach for male supervisors to feel confident when giving feedback to female employees. Our approach respects her emotions and encourages further collaboration at the same time. **Work with Me** helps men feel more confident in their communication with female coworkers and supervisors.

## **Blind Spot #5: Do Women Ask Too Many Questions?**

*72% of men think women ask too many questions.*

*80% of women ask questions even when they know the answer.*

Men often state that women ask too many questions. Some men even say it's a major problem during meetings because they slow down progress on action items and delay decision making.

Women generally acknowledge that they do ask more questions than men, but that their questions are intended to stimulate an exchange of ideas to find the best solution.

We found that many corporate cultures are designed to suppress a woman's feeling to ask questions instead of recognizing its incredible strength. Women often ask questions to build partnerships, strengthen trust, or show support. A woman formulates her thoughts by talking things through. Just letting express her feelings and ideas aloud and freely helps her to access her memories and experiences, explore consequences, and reduces her stress.

This process is perfectly normal and quite beneficial for her, but not for most men. Men typically don't ask as many questions. Men tend to think and process their ideas alone, even when they're working with others. They often announce their opinions in meetings and seldom ask for support.

Many men misinterpret a woman's natural tendency to ask questions. Even worse, if a man doesn't know how to respond, he often doesn't say anything at all or very little. This in turn gives a woman the impression that he's not listening, isn't interested in what she's saying, or doesn't care. This is a big gender blind spot that needs more understanding today.

## **Blind Spot #6: Do Men Listen?**

Men listen, but not always in ways that show a woman she is being heard.

One of the leading ways men sabotage their success at work is by not taking the time to show that they are listening to their women coworkers. At the same time, women tend to sabotage their success at work by showing irritation or holding resentment for a man's silence, assuming he isn't paying attention or doesn't care.

Men are used to interrupting each other, whether in group meetings or one-on-one meetings. They don't take it too personally when it happens to them wither. Men collaborate to compete, even where there's nothing to compete over. They'll cut in to a conversation to toss in their opinion or build on someone else's contribution with their own variation of the original idea.

Interruptions are very natural to a man's way of thinking and acting but unnatural to women. If a man interrupts a woman to make a point or offer advice, he expects her to say, "Good point!". But many times she may be thinking, "I'm not really looking for advice. I just wanted to think this through with you, so please let me finish."

Men love to solve problems and often feel honored to have the opportunity to help resolve an issue. Bringing a problem to a man is an open invitation for his advice. If he senses frustration or anxiety in a woman's voice, a man will tend to assume that it's his responsibility to step in and put her mind at ease.

Women will feel that a man isn't listening if he interrupts her in midsentence with something like, "No, no, no, here's what you should do." He thinks his quick reaction and the relevance of his solution proves he was listening. The woman may only have wanted him to lend an ear, not render a decision.

But when a man understands he is not expected to share, he is much more willing to listen. If it can make her happy and it doesn't require him to be someone he is not, then he'll become even more willing to listen and actually begin to share more.

**Work with Me** gives men different techniques they can use to show women they are listening at work. We also suggest how a woman can get a man to just sit and listen without interrupting her or suggesting solutions.

## **Blind Spot #7: Are Women Too Emotional?**

Yes, women are emotional. And they tend to express their joys and frustrations more often than men do. But does that mean that they're *too* emotional? Women don't think so and many women believe that men simply don't show enough emotion.

Men can be just as emotional as women, but men tend to conceal their feelings and will only expose that personal side of themselves to the people closest to them. Women, on the other hand, tend to express their feelings outright and will openly share their experiences with friends, family and even strangers.

The differences in how each gender expresses their experiences and reactions were evident in our research. Women tend to react with stronger emotions than men do to joy, passion, and problems. In fact, our data revealed a woman's reactions to different experiences are often unpredictable to a man.

He'll assume she's struggling with something major when all she needs is a few minutes to share and reduce her stress. Men will often misread a woman's outburst and assume his role is to swoop in with an immediate solution like, "Don't worry about it," when all she requires is for him to listen with interest.

Women cope with stress by airing their views and sharing their experiences. This doesn't mean she's complaining or that her issues need to be resolved immediately. Nor does it mean that women are less rational during an emotional moment and can't deal with the problem.

Actually, women are far more capable than men of having an emotional outburst and thinking rationally at the same time. By sharing her experience, a woman is, in a way, listening to herself think. She's able to recall, connect, and release her memories. In the process, she will usually near a solution and relieve her stress. Not being able to share her feelings with someone else can prolong her distress or delay her happiness.

Men are a lot less emotional. Men typically feel a need to be self-reliant and an emotional outburst does not show self-control. This mindset is learned in childhood and reinforced through the heroic male figure celebrated in books and film. Fearless, resourceful, stoic, and usually facing adversity alone. These fictional characters tell us what is expected of men and what is considered ideal male behavior in our society.

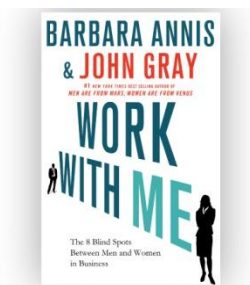
More influential than film characters are the roles we see our parents play. Many men have fathers who were emotionally distant, rarely expressed affection and never cried. The ways our parents behaved when we were growing up is very influential towards our own behavior as adults.

Men tend to have a difficult time communicating their feelings. In result, they are viewed as inflexible, unfeeling, or uncaring. But men have feelings. They just have a harder time sharing than women do.

This is why men can feel confused and uncomfortable around a woman who is sharing her feelings, especially at work. Sharing emotions also tend to handicap women in the workplace, too. Many women feel they have to hide or hold back their emotions and come off as calm and emotionally detached as the men around them.

Our research in **Work with Me** revealed that women don't feel comfortable or safe showing their true feelings at work. Whether, it's happiness, sadness, anger, or frustration, they don't want to be perceived by the men in the office as being weak or emotional.

**Work with Me** includes many real-life examples where emotional outbursts were misread by both men and women in the workplace. We also offer suggestions and solutions for sharing feelings in a productive way.



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## **Blind Spot #8: Are Men Insensitive?**

*72% of women say that men are not as attentive as women to people's feelings, situations, and environment.*

*68% of men tend to agree.*

Women often read and react to people and environments differently than men do. They tend to bring more memory and empathy to virtually every relationship and situation.

Men are generally not as attentive to things as women. Men simply tend to focus only on those things directly related to an objective, and often have less concern for details than women.

These different attributes in men and women create the perfect conditions for the eighth gender blind spot — that men are insensitive and unmindful.

Most men in the workplace understand that successful leadership requires being mindful of the needs, motivations, and interests of the people around them. Nevertheless, being sensitive does not come natural to men.

When a woman knows this, she can be more understanding of a man who appears to be indifferent, self-absorbed, or non-collaborative. It's usually not intentional on his part, but stems from his preoccupation with his own thoughts.

A man's tendency is to be focused and sequential, and to make decisions as quickly as possible. It's natural in men and complements a woman's tendency to take in more information before making a decision. Studies show far greater success when the two mindsets are blended together into one "collective intelligence."

Many male business leaders have learned to come out of their comfort zones and seek out the input of their female colleagues to ensure there are no underdeveloped ideas or quick decisions being made.

The blind spot preventing change is men's and women's inability to understand what's most valued by the other gender and why. Remove the blind spot and men and women are able to allow both genders to complement each other strengths.

Our research in ***Work with Me*** reveals what type of communication, behaviors, tasks and actions men and women value most in the workplace. We also detail ways to complement these values so that everyone is involved in improving performance and maximizing productivity.

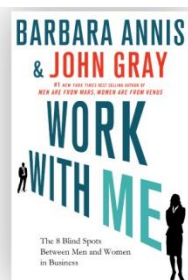
## Conclusion

Multinational companies are made of thousands of employees in dozens of countries with different cultural and political backgrounds. These employees also have a different work ethic, reporting structures and performance goals. No one leader can possibly hold all the answers to all the problems, challenges, and opportunities facing such vast organizations.

The responsibilities that used to be for one leader will be shared among other leaders in the company and in other regions of the world. The leader of the future will not be a powerful individual who makes decisions in isolation. He or she will be a team player, willing to collaborate and obsessed with enabling value through others — traits that women leaders bring to the table.

When we combine the collaborative attitudes and behaviors of women with the systematic thoughts and actions of men, we achieve something neither gender could ever do on its own.

We envision a day when our gender blind spots will become a thing of the past and a book of this nature will no longer be required. We envision a day when gender-intelligent men and women will seek out each other's authentic nature and work and live together in a naturally occurring and openly inviting way. This is a goal worth attaining — a world deserving of all men and women, in partnership and unity.



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