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# 5 Ways To Fight Gender Inequality In the Workplace: Advice From A Female Pilot



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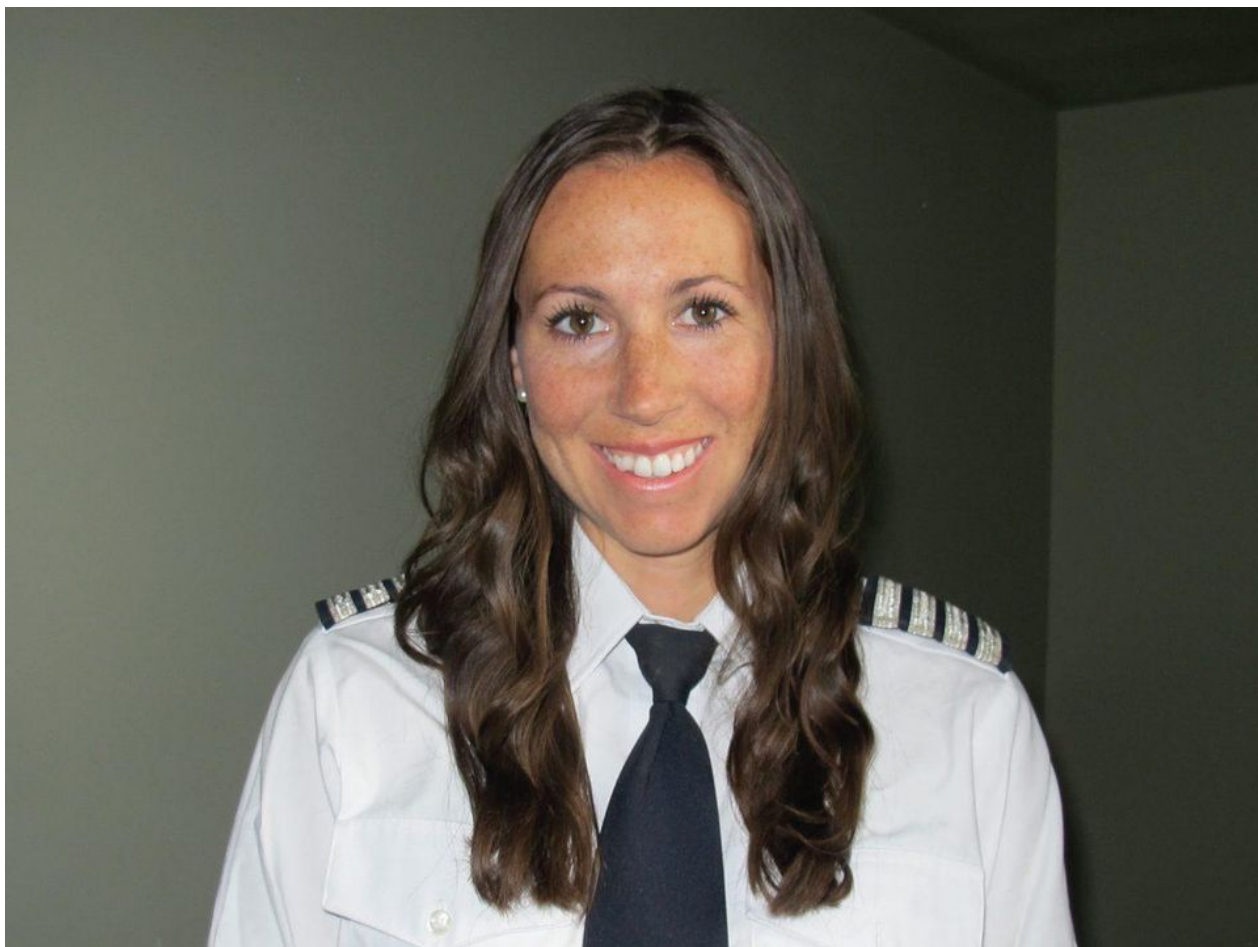
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Don't try to "be one of the guys" or feel like you need to alter yourself to fit into the stereotypical persona of a male-dominated field

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Amelia Earhart may be one of the most famous and celebrated pilots of all time, yet today, [only six percent of pilots are women](#). Shockingly, this statistic has [barely changed in the past four decades](#).



Kimberly Perkins is a professional pilot and founder of Aviation for Humanity. KIMBERLY PERKINS

Kimberly Perkins – a professional pilot, the founder of the non-profit [Aviation for Humanity](#), a board member of the Pacific Northwest Business Aviation Association, and the mother of two – is dedicated to combatting what she says is all-too-prevalent gender bias in this male-dominated industry. She advocates for scholarships for female student pilots and women who have taken a break from flying and need a boost to get back in, writes about gender inequities for various publications, and encourages girls to enter STEM fields.

“I am honored to be part of the conversation that reshapes societal norms that perpetuate harmful stereotypes which box girls and women into specific roles and prevent them from entering STEM fields,” Perkins says. “I feel an immense pressure to use my progress in aviation to help reshape the industry culture to make it more family-friendly, inclusive, and gender equitable. I never imagined that I’d be a spokesperson for the aviation industry, but I feel an overwhelming responsibility to use my experiences as a female pilot to make the flight deck door more accessible to our youth. We must change the industry from the inside out.”

Based on her professional experience in the aviation industry and as a mentor and speaker, Perkins offers these five ways to battle gender inequity in the workplace:

### **1. Be an ally and create allies.**

Support diversity and cultivate a culture that is inclusive by making room at the boardroom table and allowing others to lean in. Don't allow harmful stereotypes to be perpetuated. Be an ally for women.


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### **2. You be you. Don't change!**

Don't try to "be one of the guys" or feel like you need to alter yourself to fit into the stereotypical persona of a male-dominated field  . You can help change the stereotype one original thought at a time.

### **3. Speak up about work/life balance.**

If you need to take sick days for childcare, take them. It will empower others to feel okay with doing the same thing. Break down the stigma of "careerism" conflicting with parenting.

### **4. Encourage your company to offer equal parental leave for fathers and mothers.**

When parental leave is only offered to women, or if men don't take it, that perpetuates a negative stereotype that devalues the father's role in the rearing of children. It also supports the assumption that raising children is mainly a mother's responsibility. This puts unnecessary responsibility on women's shoulders, promulgates harmful stereotypes, and devalues the important role two parents can play in equally raising a child.

## 5. Promote inclusivity.

If you're in the job market, look for companies that have an inclusive organizational culture. And if you already have a job, promote inclusivity in your organization by offering unconscious bias training.

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As the captain of a Gulfstream 650 and Global Express based in Seattle, about 60 percent of Perkins' flying is international. She has worked as a pilot in the U.S., Nigeria, and Malaysia. These experiences are what inspired her to found Aviation for Humanity, a non-profit that brings school supplies to underfunded schools and shelters worldwide.



Perkins delivers Aviation for Humanity supplies in Tanzania. DIRK VAN DER MEYDEN

Perkins believes that your life purpose manifests differently throughout the phases of your life and is shaped over time through your experiences and knowledge. "It is important to find something that you're passionate about,

something that helps others and makes you feel good about what you're doing," she says. "Setting a goal and working towards it with fierce determination and tenacity is extremely important. But remember that goals do, and should, evolve."

She herself didn't know that she wanted to be a pilot from a young age, Perkins explains. She only knew that she wanted to travel and experience different cultures. However, flying back and forth across the country several times a year to visit her separated parents who lived on opposite coasts, she loved listening to the pilots talking on the air traffic control radio station. She also adored *Popular Science* magazine and high school science classes. Eventually, she says, her love of science and desire to travel morphed into a career in aviation.



Perkins with a LearJet she pilots. KIMBERLY PERKINS

But while she loves flying, Perkins' true passion is helping others. "Traveling has allowed me to experience many cultures and witness first-hand the rampant inequities that exist worldwide. These experiences laid the foundation for

creating the non-profit Aviation for Humanity, which uses the traveling public to bring school supplies to children and shelters throughout the developing world. It is a way for the industry to give back to those affected by aviation but not necessarily benefiting from it. My goal for the non-profit is to support youth education, empower children, and offer travelers an opportunity to expand their broad-mindedness and receptivity to new cultures through humanitarian aid. This is a way for the aviation industry to give back one traveler and one backpack at a time.”

**MeiMei Fox** is a *New York Times* bestselling author specializing in health, wellness and positive psychology. As a writer and life coach, she helps people align careers with their life purpose.

*I am a New York Times bestselling author, coauthor and ghostwriter of over a dozen non-fiction books and hundreds of articles for publications including Huffington Post, Self, Stanford magazine, and MindBodyGreen. I specialize in health and wellness, spirituality and psychol... MORE*