There are many ways to support one another and create a culture of inclusion and equity. In addition to changing policies and systems, we can shift how we show up for ourselves and others through small, everyday behaviors and actions.

Below are some “fight moves” that can be used to interrupt and change problematic behaviors and systems. Some are inspired from the book, FEMINIST FIGHT CLUB, while others are suggestions from our own campus community. (Page numbers refer to paperback edition.)

UNDERSTAND THE BIAS
We all have unconscious bias. Biases surrounding parenthood are rooted in strong cultural assumptions about what it means to be a parent in the United States. Seek out bias in yourself, call it out and then correct for it. Bonus points for owning up to bias in front of others so they can learn from your learning process, too.

BIAS: REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES
Just because the majority of women in the US have a child by the time they are 45-years-old, it does not mean all women want or are able to have children. Questions about reproductive choices are unprofessional, usually uncomfortable, and often hurtful. Stop yourself before asking someone about their reproductive choices.

BIAS: THERE ARE IDEAL TIMES IN LIFE TO BECOME A PARENT
The arrival of a new family member is an exciting time for most people, but many expectant parents experience stress in sharing the news with their supervisor, often worried that it’s bad timing. Sure, a unit may need to reshuffle responsibilities or hire additional staff, but stress and anxiety about personnel decisions should not be placed on an expectant parent—they have enough to worry about! If you are a supervisor, work together with your expecting staff member to cover responsibilities and staffing concerns. Reassure the expectant parent that everything is under control, regardless of when they choose to come back to work.

BIAS: PARENTS WHO TAKE A STEP BACK DON’T CARE ABOUT THEIR CAREERS
Parents who choose to reduce paid hours or spend time outside the paid workforce raising children may be seeking more work/life balance or have extenuating family needs. This doesn’t mean they aren’t smart, dedicated individuals who have much to offer. If you are a supervisor, explore all options with your employee about how they can juggle the demands of parenthood and maintain their career so that they don’t think it is an “all or nothing” circumstance.

FIGHT MOVES FOR: SUPPORTING WORKING PARENTS

FEMINIST FIGHT CLUB AT CSU
PURPOSE:
The Feminist Fight Club at Colorado State University provides an inclusive space for community, growth, learning, and support for all members. We seek to develop our skills in identifying and addressing problematic behaviors that disadvantage women and other marginalized groups in the workplace and on campus by building upon the research and strategies presented in the book, Feminist Fight Club. We also focus on holding ourselves accountable to one another as we model and practice behaviors that foster a campus culture and climate that supports the success of all students and employees. To this end, we commit to support one another through honest reflection, courageous dialogue, and collective action.

CSU’S PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY
INCLUSION:
We create and nurture inclusive environments and welcome, value and affirm all members of our community, including their various identities, skills, ideas, talents, and contributions.

INTEGRITY:
We are accountable for our actions and will act ethically and honestly in all our interactions.

RESPECT:
We honor the inherent dignity of all people within an environment where we are committed to freedom of expression, critical discourse, and the advancement of knowledge.

SERVICE:
We are responsible, individually and collectively, to give of our time, talents, and resources to promote the well-being of each other and the development of our local, regional, and global communities.

SOCIAL JUSTICE:
We have the right to be treated and the responsibility to treat others with fairness and equity, the duty to challenge prejudice, and to uphold the laws, policies and procedures that promote justice in all respects.
BIAS: MOTHERS WOULDN'T WANT TO WORK OR SHOULDN'T HAVE TO
Many mothers work after the birth or adoption of a child for several reasons — financial, personal or otherwise. Don’t make assumptions about why parents return to work or suggest that families would be better off if a mother chose to step back from work. Help all working parents achieve their career goals and support what works for their family.

BIAS: INVOLVED FATHERS ARE AN EXCEPTION, INVOLVED MOTHERS ARE A LIMITATION
Research indicates that fathers who leave work to care for children are applauded (“Joe picked up his sick child, what a great dad!”) while mothers face backlash for the EXACT same thing (“Jane left work to pick up her sick child, again…”). Be mindful of your language when speaking about working parents’ on and off-the clock duties.

BIAS: BREASTFEEDING DOESN'T BELONG IN THE WORKPLACE
Nursing parents at CSU have expressed TONS of awkwardness around the topic of breastfeeding. Help support nursing parents by asking about their needs and addressing transition concerns prior to their return to work. Proactively ask about scheduling breaks and privacy needs; look up lactation room locations; connect nursing parents to others who have been through the experience (pgs. 30-31).

CONNECT AND SUPPORT
Support in the workplace is key to happiness in a career, especially for working parents. If you’re a working parent or you have colleagues who are, look for ways to encourage connection and provide needed support.

UNDERSTAND FMLA AND PARENTAL LEAVE POLICIES
There is a lot to figure out as a working parent, so one way to support them is to help navigate complicated systems, ESPECIALLY if you are a supervisor. Leave policies and options are different based on employee classifications, so learn about those differences. Talk to HR about policies and resources, maybe even BEFORE you have an employee who needs to access them.

CONNECT WITH OTHER WORKING PARENTS
Being a working parent in an office of non-parents (or parents in different life stages) can feel isolating. Find your people and connect to others in similar life-stages to discuss coping strategies. P.S. Check out the CSU NEW MOM’S GROUP among other listed resources.

BE AND HAVE A BOAST BUDDY
It’s not always easy to speak up for yourself, even when you know you’re a stellar professional. Strike up a deal to get someone to boast on your behalf and then reciprocate (pg. 79). (e.g. “Have you seen her latest design? She nailed it!”) When you highlight a coworker’s success, they shine, you shine and everyone looks better (pg. 84).

BE MINDFUL WHEN PLANNING MEETINGS
Many working parents either pick up or drop off children in the early morning or late afternoon, but that shouldn’t exclude them from being in crucial meetings. Public school calendars often dictate when working parents need time off. Get to know your colleagues’ childcare obligations and scheduling needs, and then plan accordingly.

QUESTIONS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN CONSIDERING PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORS
1. How might an example of problematic behavior differently affect people based on other identities? To whom is this most often directed? For whom might this show up in other ways?
2. Are there specific conditions within your unit that make it uniquely difficult to identify and address these behaviors? Who might be especially vulnerable? What else is at stake?
3. Are there intersecting systems, practices, or policies in place that hinder effective intervention or protect perpetrators of bad behaviors?

WHEN CONSIDERING FIGHT MOVES
1. Does considering other identities (in addition to gender) shift how this fight move might be put into practice? Can this fight move be effective for everyone? Consider what might make a fight move less appropriate for others to employ or use to support someone else.
2. Is there anything about this fight move that is exclusionary, alienating, or not supportive of other subordinated identities? How could you make it more inclusive and supportive?
3. Are there intersecting systems, practices, or policies in place that make it difficult to access available resources, opportunities, and support by those who need them?

CONTACT INFORMATION:
The Women & Gender Collaborative:
thecollaborative.colostate.edu

Follow the Women & Gender Collaborative:
facebook.com/WGCollaborativeCSU

Questions, or to join the Feminist Fight Club at CSU
Contact Cori Wong; cori.wong@colostate.edu
ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS
If you’re a working parent, advocating for yourself can be helpful for getting what you want and need, but it’s important for ALL of us to advocate for better support of working parents, especially if you’re not a parent!

LAY OUT YOUR CAREER GOALS
Don’t be afraid to lay out what you want for your career regardless of the reasons why. Whether it’s stepping back, stepping up or somewhere in between, know what you want and be prepared to ask for it.

BELIEVE YOUR OWN HYPE
If you’re not getting the affirmation or support you want (it’s them, not you, by the way), write it down for yourself. This practice is known to boost confidence and improve performance (pg. 136).

HIRE AND PROMOTE WORKING MOMS
Studies indicate that working mothers are seen as less capable than men and women without children and more frequently passed over for promotions as a result. But research also shows that working mothers outperform other groups in the workforce. Looking to disprove assumptions and improve productivity? Trust the research. HIRE and PROMOTE working moms!

CREATE A FLEXIBLE WORKING ENVIRONMENT THAT BENEFITS EVERYONE
Working parents are often singled out when they use flex-time to care for their children, BUT we all have situations arise when we need some additional leave. Help create a supportive environment by being understanding and offering coverage for leave of any type. Your colleagues are likely to respond in kind, and everyone benefits (pg. 29).

BE A WINGPERSON AND BUILD A SUPPORTIVE OFFICE CULTURE
Speak up on behalf of your coworkers, especially working parents, when you encounter others who hold negative assumptions about working parents (pg. 90). For example, remind folks that employees are entitled to take leave when and how they choose and need to, regardless of their status as a parent. Demonstrate how making internal policies and schedules more friendly for working parents is an ALL-employee issue (e.g. “I’m not my best at 3pm, can we have a 10am meeting instead?”). Build an office support network and be someone who will step in to help others when life happens. Because life happens to us all!

RESOURCES

EDUCATE YOURSELF: Read articles related to work, family, and gender at https://thecollaborative.colostate.edu > Educate Yourself > “Parenthood, Children and Family”

CSU NEW MOMS GROUP: A group to support each other as new moms.
Contact Haley Richards; Haley.Richards@colostate.edu

LEAVE POLICIES

Admin Pro & Faculty
FMLA: http://www.hrs.colostate.edu/benefits/timeoff-fml.html
Parental Leave:
http://www.hrs.colostate.edu/benefits/Parental-leave.html
Paid and unpaid time off:
http://www.hrs.colostate.edu/benefits/timeoff-fap.html
Leave and flexible work arrangements:
https://provost.colostate.edu/work-life-resources/leave-time-off-and-flexible-work-arrangements/

State Classified
FMLA: http://www.hrs.colostate.edu/benefits/timeoff-sc-fml.html
Paid and unpaid time off:
http://www.hrs.colostate.edu/benefits/timeoff-sc.html

CSU MAP: Inclusive Resources > Lactation Rooms
https://maps.colostate.edu

TRAINING AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
Professional and career development programs
http://training.colostate.edu/

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: Assistance after impactful events or loss, referrals for low or no cost services, counseling, legal advice, financial planning and work-life balance support
https://ombudsandeap.colostate.edu/employee-assistance-program/

CSU DEPENDENT CARE TASK FORCE: A university committee tasked with examining issues for CSU employees related to their responsibilities as primary caregivers of dependent children and adults and illuminating those issues for university administration.
Contact Yongli Zhou; Yongli.Zhou@colostate.edu

COMMITMENT TO CAMPUS: Especially Family and Health and Wellness
https://commitmenttocampus.colostate.edu/

RAM KIDZ VILLAGE: Supervision of children so student parents can study
https://lib.colostate.edu/about/hours/ramkidz-village/