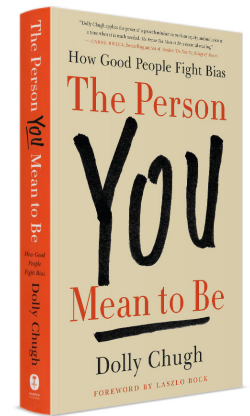


The Person You Mean to Be

How Good People Fight Bias

by **Dolly Chugh**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Many of us believe in equality, diversity, and inclusion. But how do we stand up for those values in our turbulent world? *The Person You Mean to Be* is the smart, “semi-bold” person’s guide to fighting for what you believe in.

Author Dolly Chugh reveals the surprising causes of inequality, grounded in the “psychology of good people.” Using her research findings in unconscious bias as well as work across psychology, sociology, economics, political science, and other disciplines, she offers practical tools to respectfully and effectively talk politics with family, to be a better colleague to people who don’t look like you, and to avoid being a well-intentioned barrier to equality. Being the person we mean to be starts with a look at ourselves.

Whether you are a long-time activist or new to the fight, you can start from where you are. Through compelling stories and surprising science, *The Person You Mean to Be* guides each of us closer to being the person we mean to be.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- To identify and manage self-threat.
- To use a growth mindset to fight bias.
- To understand how privilege creates systemic headwinds and tailwinds.
- The difference between diversity and inclusion.
- To show meaningful support to those who lack privilege.

Introduction: Good-ish People

Many people believe in the American values of equality and equity, diversity and inclusion, the values underlying the founding of this country and many major spiritual teachings. Race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, ability—they believe bias of all forms is wrong. They are believers.

Seventy percent of Americans, according to a Reuters poll, interact with people of a different race in their circle of friends, co-workers, and relatives. Among people under 30, this number rises to an astounding 90 percent. According to a CBS poll, 77 percent of us now personally know someone who is openly gay (compared to only 42 percent, less than 25 years ago).

Our workplaces are less gender-segregated. Our definitions of gender fixed at birth are evolving. So we are more diverse, and more divided, than ever before. Believing in the values of equality is no longer enough. We need to be people with the skills to make it better. We need to learn how to fight bias.

Claiming an Identity

In speech and action, we express how we see ourselves and how we want to be perceived by others, a process that organizational scholars Caroline Bartel and Jane Dutton call “identity claiming.” Psychologically, identity claiming is an ordinary and universal process. Each of us claims multiple identities.

Each of us has an intense craving for others to see and acknowledge our various identities, a phenomenon that Bartel and Dutton call “identity granting.” We are vigilant for clues about whether our identity has been granted.

When we are unsure of whether an important identity has been granted by others, our craving for affirmation becomes more intense and urgent. Psychologists call this a moment of self-threat—our identity is being challenged or dismissed. Just as moments of physical threat trigger a hyper focus on self-preservation, moments of psychological self-threat do the same.

For example, if you value being seen as a do-gooder, then you feel self-threat when people judge you as a greedy person.

Threat, especially self-threat, is stressful. Threat-motivated stress can lead to bad performance, negative health conse-

quences, and poor behavioral choices. We do not feel good and we usually do not treat others well. We become defensive. Our hopes of being a good person are diminished at times like these. Research reveals how our need for affirmation overrides our genuine desire to be a good colleague, friend, and ally.

We all fall into this pattern. We fish for affirmation. We center our needs, nudging away the needs of others. We seek what activists call “cookies,” acknowledgments of our good intentions, even when the impact is costly to the cookie giver. We especially crave that affirmation when faced with a situation that challenges the believer identity we are claiming. The affirmation relieves the self-threat, but ironically, we end up acting less like—not more like—the people we mean to be.

The Psychology of Good People

While none of us are good all the time, and some of us are far from good a lot of the time, we still see ourselves as good. How do we sustain this view of ourselves? We hold a faulty assumption that our behavior pivots around our ethical standards and our moral values. That is not how our minds actually work. Our behavior pivots around our identity. Even when we fall short, our reflex is to claim an identity as a good person. Evidence to the contrary is a self-threat.

As a result, people are prone to what researchers call “bounded ethicality.” Bounded ethicality is the psychology of “good-ish” people. Good-ish people are sometimes good and sometimes not, sometimes intentionally and sometimes not, like all of us. This model of bounded ethicality challenges ways of thinking and talking in which you are either a good person or not, a racist or not, an unethical human or not.

Here, we expand on the model of bounded ethicality with a model of “ethical learning.” This redefines what it means to be a good person as someone who is trying to be better, as opposed to someone who is allowing themselves to believe in the illusion that they are always a good person.

With that in mind, the following is for and about people of all races, ethnicities, genders, religions, physical and mental abilities, and sexual orientations, good people who believe in building a better workplace and world.

To do so, let’s now learn the four ways in which builders are different than believers.

The difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset lies in whether we believe we have blind spots.

Part I: Builders Activate a Growth Mindset

Mindset refers to our belief about our capacity to learn and improve. If you have a growth mindset about drawing, you believe that you can improve your stick figures with effort, time, and feedback. The alternative, a fixed mindset, is where you see yourself as fully formed—either as someone who is terrible at drawing or wonderful at drawing or somewhere in between—and destined to stay that way.

The fixed mindset is an “either/or” mindset because it allows no room for being a work-in-progress.

When Growth Mindsets Matter the Most

The difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset lies in whether we believe we have blind spots. As builders, we should never make claims of not being racists, sexists, etc. These claims are rarely accurate and usually lower our credibility. Rather, we should say, and believe, “I know that I have work to do in this area.” That statement, if made with sincerity, reveals movement from a reflexive fixed mindset to a more intentional growth mindset.

When people are angry at you, activating a growth mindset is critical to learning why they are angry. It is easy to write off the anger as sour grapes. This defensive dismissal—typical in a fixed mindset—is unwise.

As believers, we know that inequity is real in this country. Inequity triggers anger. Therefore, anger is a natural response from people from marginalized groups—whether they be women, or people of color, or gay people, or immigrants. However, the resulting anger can generate heat and self-threat. It can confuse or shut down fixed mindset observers.

As builders, our opportunity is to learn from this anger, not to recoil from or “tone police” it. When people are expressing anger about something being unfair, consider listening with the intent to grow from what you hear. Even if the anger makes you uncomfortable, do not let it stop you from listening.

Research says that when we view ourselves as works-in-

progress, we are more willing to hold ourselves accountable for our actions. We are more likely to apologize to people we have hurt, and we offer better, more complete apologies. Accountability is higher, not lower, when we give ourselves room to grow.

Thankfully, psychologists such as Carol Dweck and others have tested a host of ways to help us activate a growth mindset. The gist of these interventions lies in listening to what our “mindset voice” tells us about who we are and our capabilities. Let’s say you make a comment that you feel is legitimate and inoffensive. To your surprise, people are offended, and you are told that your comment is racist.

Your fixed mindset voice might lead you to think, “That is ridiculous. I am not a racist. I should have kept my mouth shut. I will just say that I am sorry the other person was offended and get out of this conversation as fast as possible.”

Try to activate a different voice, which leads you to say, “That was not my intention. Would you be willing to tell me what I did wrong?”

One of the “Good Guys”

At first glance, Rick Klau seems like the prototypically successful, straight, white Silicon Valley guy. He has had a bunch of cool jobs at Google, including working on their Blogger, Google+, and YouTube products. He is now a partner at an offshoot of Google called GV (formerly Google Ventures) that invests in and helps launch tech startups.

Rick’s work straddles two industries that many people want to break into: venture capital and technology. He hires, manages, and evaluates the potential and performance of many ventures and people.

In that capacity, Rick says, “I felt strongly that women and underrepresented minorities should have equal opportunities in the workplace. And I would have told you that, as someone in a position to hire people, I had done a good job of ensuring equal opportunities. I would have told you that I was one of the good guys.” Like so many of us, Rick is a believer.

Rick’s boss insisted that he and his peers attend an uncon-

scious (sometimes also called implicit) bias training. Google, like many organizations, was (and is) trying to address the overwhelming whiteness and maleness of their organizations.

Rick took the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and received his implicit bias score. The web-based IAT was developed by the world's experts in unconscious bias, psychologists Mahzarin Banaji, Anthony Greenwald, and Brian Nosek.

Taking the test is like playing a video game in which you need to be both fast and accurate. The goal is to quickly categorize words and pictures, with less than a second allowed for each response. There is little time to think, which is the point. The test is not measuring what you would do if you had the time to think it over. It is measuring what your brain associates with what when you are on autopilot.

Rick did not like his Gender IAT score. Like more than 75 percent of us, he was faster at associating women with things related to family and home and slower at associating women with things like career and work. On the flip side, he was slower at associating men with things like family and home. This implicit result directly contradicted his explicit egalitarian gender beliefs. He emerged “spooked.” His moral identity was at stake. Self-threat flooded his mind.

Getting to Work

What happens next is a choice between growth and fixed mindsets. Individuals can use their IAT scores as a first step, not a last step, in examining how implicit bias might manifest itself in their work and world, which is precisely what Rick did.

Opening up his laptop and phone, he scrolled through his contacts. To his dismay, only 20 percent of the people in his contact list were women. Next, he reviewed his connections on Twitter and LinkedIn. The ratio was the same: 20 percent. What he believed and what he built did not match.

So Rick actively sought out connections with people who “didn’t look” like him. He shifted the gender ratio of people with whom he interacted on social media. He made himself vulnerable by making that ratio publicly available and by publicly committing to change. He declined invitations to all-male panel discussions and suggested alternatives. He stopped referring to mixed-gender groups as “guys.”

Rick knew he was not the only “good guy” with an unconscious bias and 20 percent problem. So he rolled out the unconscious bias training to all of the hundreds of companies in the GV portfolio. He even had the sessions recorded

and posted publicly on YouTube. He encouraged others to take the IAT, study their contacts, and analyze their calendars. He shared what he was learning in online articles, blogs, and frequent tweets. He shared his slipups and his progress. He took a strong stand that we all could do better.

Part II: Builders See and Use Their Ordinary Privilege

Visual attention researcher Jeremy Wolfe and his colleagues say we see what we expect to see. They re-created the airport security screening process in a lab and had study participants screen bags for “weapons.” When the participants were told that the dangerous objects would appear 50 percent of the time, participants had a 7 percent error rate.

When the participants were told that the dangerous objects would appear only 1 percent of the time, their error rate increased to 30 percent. They did not expect to see something, so they did not see it, even when it was right there.

This is an example of what researchers call “bounded awareness.” Bounded awareness is our tendency to not see, seek, or use readily available and relevant information.

Similarly, Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman and his collaborator Amos Tversky demonstrated that our eyes and ears and minds approach the world with a point of view. Then we (unconsciously) set out to find evidence to confirm that point of view. This “confirmation bias” is the natural reflex to pay more attention to the stuff that supports your point of view while discounting or not even noticing the stuff that contradicts your point of view.

Stereotypes, both conscious and unconscious, also trigger the confirmation bias. Studies show that we are more likely to notice, remember, and search for additional information when it confirms a stereotype.

We can move from believer to builder when we see what is not visible and challenge it.

How to See More, Respectfully

As you make your own efforts to counter the confirmation bias by entering conversations and spaces where people from marginalized groups are speaking more freely than usual, be prepared. Know that you will feel self-threat and that affirmation will not always be provided.

Do not allow yourself to write off what you are hearing

as “divisive.” Stay where you are, so you can learn more, rather than exiting. Don’t give up that access. Second, avoid jumping into others’ conversations, arguing for your perspective, or sharing your views and experiences. You will feel self-threat that will make you crave affirmation. Don’t let that cookie craving lead you to crowd out or hijack the discussion.

Third, notice the judgments you are having about other people. Challenge yourself to hear their experience without questioning its expression. Avoid being the tone police.

Systemic Headwinds and Tailwinds

In this context, privilege may or may not have anything to do with money. Privilege is about whether cultural, legal, and institutional systems are experienced equally by everyone. The key insight is that many systems privilege some people over others.

Have you ever flown east-west versus west-east in the United States? You may have noticed a difference in flight times. It takes as much as 40 additional minutes to go from New York to L.A. versus L.A. to New York, for example. The difference lies in the headwinds one faces going west versus the tailwinds going east.

Antiracist educator and author Debby Irving uses an often-cited headwinds and tailwinds metaphor to explain the invisibility of these systemic, group-level differences. Headwinds are the challenges—some big, some small, some visible, some invisible—that make life harder for some people but not for all people. When you run against a headwind, your speed slows down, and you have to push harder.

When you have a tailwind pushing you, it is a force that propels you forward. It is consequential but easily unnoticed or forgotten. When you have the tailwind, you will not notice that some runners are running into headwinds. They may be running as hard as, or even harder than, you, but they will appear lazier and slower to you. When some of them grow tired and stop trying, they will appear self-destructive to you.

Our failure to see systemic headwinds and tailwinds in the world around us leads us to blame the people facing the headwinds. As a result, we confuse equality and equity. Equality says we treat everyone the same, regardless of headwinds or tailwinds. Equity says we give people what they need to have the same access and opportunities as others, taking into account the headwinds they face, which may mean differential treatment for some groups. We see a

meritocracy where one does not exist.

The Power of Ordinary Privilege

Ordinary privilege is the part of our everyday identity we think least about, because we do not need to. People who can walk are less likely to think about their legs than people who cannot walk. White people are less likely to think about their race. Straight people are less likely to think about their sexual orientation. The upwardly mobile are less likely to think about their economic mobility.

It is important to realize that this is not because there is anything inherently better about legs, whiteness, straightness, or upward mobility. Rather, the society in which we live is structured around these identities. Those whose identities do not vary from the norm are lulled into thinking that their experience is universal.

Since each of us has a multifaceted identity, each of us probably has at least one domain of ordinary privilege. What makes ordinary privilege a *privilege* is that it usually brings us some influence not easily given to those who lack it.

For example, psychologists Alexander Czopp and Margo Monteith found that white people who confronted a person expressing racial stereotypes were judged less negatively (by the offender) than black people doing the same. They also found that offenders felt more guilt and were more likely to apologize if confronted about their behavior by a white person than by a black person. Both black and white confronters were equally effective in decreasing the offender’s future stereotyping.

Whether in organizations or on social media, ordinary privilege is a secret weapon. When those who are outside of the targeted group get involved, for better or for worse, they will be heard differently. The result of this reality is a great opportunity for each of us to see and use our ordinary privilege.

How to Use Ordinary Privilege to Fight the Headwinds

Subha Barry, former head of diversity at Merrill Lynch and Freddie Mac, encourages us to share the work among multiple people, including those with ordinary privilege. “In organizations, we typically tap the same person to take the lead on these issues,” Subha observes. “But, instead, we need to learn from how a flock of birds flies.” The lead bird of the V formation literally flies into the headwind, cutting the wind so that the other birds can coast in the jet stream. The key to the flock’s success is that the lead bird is not per-

manent. The lead rotates backward, allowing another bird to step into the role.

In her current role leading Working Mother Media, Subha advises organizations to “find other people to step up. Do it for a limited period of time and see what they come up with.”

Do not rely on the same people, especially the people facing the headwinds all the time, to lead the flock all the time. Invite others in to be educated and to use their ordinary privilege. More of us can do more than we realize.

Part III: Builders Opt for Wilful Awareness

There are four modes of behavior that prevent believers from humanizing others and from engaging in builder behaviors. In these four modes—savior, sympathy, tolerance, and typecasting—good intentions are counterproductive.

By trying to be a hero, by feeling bad, by treating difference as something to be tolerated or ignored, or by typecasting someone to be someone they may not be, we operate in modes that do more harm than good. Look out for these four “good” intentions.

Savior mode. We have a range of motivations for helping others. We volunteer our time and contribute our dollars to people and causes and, in doing so, we feel good when others let us help them. Social scientists call this the “warm-glow effect.”

That warm glow is a few favors away from being a serious problem in which we see ourselves as saviors who sweep into causes and communities to perform a rescue mission. In the savior trap, we get hooked on the warm glow. The work becomes more about us than others. We miss opportunities for others to take the lead or gain capabilities because we would lose the opportunity to be a savior. The way out of savior mode is to redirect your attention to the person or issue you care about.

Sympathy mode. The sympathy mode is much like the savior mode, but it is less about solving the problem and more about being the one who does not have the problem. We feel bad for those who do have the problem, but not in a way that connects us. Our well-intended sympathy makes it more about us than about them. Our own feelings are at the center. When we feel sorry for someone, we inadvertently put ourselves in the high-power position. For believers,

this feeling of power can lead us to unintended perceptions and actions.

Tolerance and difference-blindness mode. We talk about tolerating gay people, and Muslims, and immigrants, and so on. Author Suzanna Walters explains the problem in her book *The Tolerance Trap*. Tolerance is not an end goal, she says, but a dead end. Tolerance otherizes difference.

Corporate efforts to “manage diversity” are another well-intended but misguided example of the tolerance mode. Business school professor Martin Davidson explains in his book *The End of Diversity As We Know It* that managing diversity suggests there is a problem to be solved. The alternate approach is leveraging difference, where there is an opportunity to be seized. When organizations opt for managing diversity rather than leveraging difference, they engage in different activities and reap different outcomes as a result. The tolerance mode is defensive and narrow.

Color-blindness is another flavor of tolerance, and in America it is a popular flavor. Color-blindness is a version of difference-blindness and tolerance that ignores headwinds and tailwinds. When we do this, we unintentionally mask the reality that we are not all walking through life having the same experiences and the same conversations. In America, being black or gay or Muslim affects one’s daily reality in ways both positive and negative. When we “don’t see difference,” we don’t see the reality of headwinds and tailwinds.

The typecasting mode. The typecasting of women as “wonderful, more nurturing and benevolent than men” is what psychologists call “benevolent sexism.” When “women are wonderful,” they are penalized for “nonfeminine” behavior, such as competitiveness, ambition, conviction, and career focus. Women are put on a narrow pedestal, and the fall is steep. We also penalize men for behavior we expect from women.

Typecasting also emerges from other positive stereotypes, like the “model minority” stereotype of Asian Americans as smart, hardworking, docile, and wealthy. When we assume academic orientation, we miss athletic potential. When we assume financial security, we miss economic need. We see the pedestal, not the person.

All of us will fall into all of these modes some of the time. If we can approach that reality with a mindset of getting better, rather than of not being bad, we will feel less taxed by the fear of doing something wrong.

Inclusion is what happens before and after the official decisions in which people are formally brought into a group.

Part IV: Builders Engage

Some people use “diversity” and “inclusion” as interchangeable buzzwords. However, building diversity and building inclusion are distinct.

Inclusion is what happens before and after the official decisions in which people are formally brought into a group. Think of diversity as the gateways to schools, organizations, and communities, and inclusion as the pathways leading up to and after that gateway. In other words, gateways are the decision points when we track the diversity numbers, such as admissions, hiring, promotions, and salary decisions. Pathways are the moments that shape those outcomes, but they are not tracked by a formal statistic.

Meetings Are a Big Opportunity

The average employee spends about six hours per week in scheduled meetings with three or more attendees. Given how hard it is to synchronize multiple people’s presence and attention in a single time and potentially a single space, one might expect meetings to be sources of great value. Instead, employees report a high failure rate that would be unacceptable in most activities; nearly half of their meetings are ineffective.

Tony Prophet, the chief equality officer at Salesforce, thinks this is a missed opportunity. Meetings are filled with “thousands of moments” that reflect the culture of an organization and the culture of more or less inclusion.

Meetings can operate as a keystone habit for inclusion. Just as systemic patterns in society will continue unseen and unfelt, so will systemic patterns in meetings. Meetings will replicate the headwinds and tailwinds of the organization and society unless we design them to do otherwise.

More “deliberative design” of meetings has the potential to redirect headwinds and tailwinds. One easy way to redesign meetings is to think about who sits next to whom. If you are noticing patterns in who sits with whom, and you have influence over the seating, consider assigning seats with a particular purpose in mind or even randomly.

At the core of an effective meeting is effective listening. Even if we are not in formal, senior positions and even if we do not attend meetings often, listening is still critical to inclusion. How well we do it has great influence over how others experience what communication scholars call the “talk-saturated” moments of our lives.

Few of us are good listeners. Most of us think faster than others speak, creating the potential for significant mind wandering. To make things worse, we are not as good at listening to some people versus others. Being a better listener also tunes us in to whose voices are being discounted or muted. This kind of pathway bias is hard to measure and prove to others, so it becomes critical that we bear witness to it when it happens (or listen to those who did bear witness). Then we can amplify those who are muted and include those who are excluded.

Show Meaningful Support

Rabbi Eric Solomon welcomed his guests to the Beth Meyer Synagogue in Raleigh, North Carolina. As the new rabbi, his installation ceremony marked the beginning of his service in 2005. Many members of the synagogue, local community leaders, and leaders of nearby churches were arriving to participate in this long-standing tradition.

And something was different from tradition. When Rabbi Solomon first arrived, he had reached out to his counterpart in the Muslim community, Imam Mohammed Baianonie. They spent some time getting to know each other over tea and biscuits. Rabbi Solomon invited the imam to the installation ceremony, and he came, bringing members of his congregation and his blessings. Some people were surprised to see them walk in.

Surprise quickly melted into hospitality. For the first time that anyone could recall, a Jewish community leader had reached out to a Muslim community leader. “My congregation received our honored guests as if they were entering the Tent of Abraham. It was one of the proudest moments of my career,” Rabbi Solomon later wrote.

Over the following decade, the relationship between the

rabbi and the imam grew. They talked about religion. They ate together. They brought their congregants together to do volunteer work in the community. They built a relationship between themselves and their communities.

Then a grisly triple murder became national news in 2015. Three immigrant Muslim graduate students were shot in the head in nearby Chapel Hill. Conflict over a visitor's parking spot in their apartment complex had presumably escalated. Amid growing Islamophobia, the Muslim community felt terrorized.

The funeral services were held on a soccer field to accommodate more than 5,000 attendees. From across the world, people and religious organizations reached out to express their condolences. The mosque was overwhelmed by the outpouring and needed help coordinating with all those reaching out. Because of the trusting relationship they had built with Rabbi Solomon, the leaders of the Muslim community chose him to play this delicate role.

Lessons for Offering Support

Through this and other relationships, Rabbi Solomon has learned a few lessons about how to offer support. First, Rabbi Solomon explains, open your heart to what the other party needs, if anything. "It is very humbling to sit and say 'Let me let you lead. Let me ask questions and be curious and listen deeply. Let me listen to what you need.'" Showing support does not begin with having a solution. They know more than he does.

Second, he acknowledges that he sometimes experiences inner conflict while listening to people. Third, Rabbi Solomon explains, be prepared to be uncomfortable. "Sometimes, when I am proximate to someone's problems, I begin

to realize how much privilege I have as a male, as someone with light skin, and so on," he confesses. "It can be very discomfobulating internally. Even though I'm trying to be helpful, they are angry at me. And they have the right to be angry. But it can be socially, psychologically dangerous to feel attacked. It's very hard work."

Rabbi Solomon's description—hard work—perfectly explains how it feels to cope with self-threat. We will not always get the affirmation we crave. Craving the affirmation does not make us bad people as long as we work to see the craving for what it is and prevent it from being a burden to others.

All of us can opt for willful awareness rather than willful ignorance. All of us can engage. Each of us can find our own way to be builders and to support builders. The only wrong way is to settle for only being believers.

IF YOU LIKED THIS SUMMARY, YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE:

- *Making Diversity Work: 7 Steps for Defeating Bias in the Workplace* by Sondra Thiederman
- *The 2020 Workplace: How Innovative Companies Attract, Develop, and Keep Tomorrow's Employees Today* by Jeanne C. Meister, Karie Willyerd



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