

# *The Conscious Style Guide: A Flexible Approach to Language That Includes, Respects, and Empowers*

**Madison Brown**

Book Review: *The Conscious Style Guide: A Flexible Approach to Language That Includes, Respects, and Empowers*. Karen Yin. New York: Little, Brown Spark; 2024. 281 pages. ISBN 978-0-316-47854-0.

What does conscious language mean to you? Karen Yin, author of *The Conscious Style Guide*, asserts that conscious language is “aware, mindful, and intentional about how we treat ourselves and others through language.”

Yin is the founder of the ConsciousStyleGuide.com,<sup>1</sup> a resource for anyone interested in learning more about implementing respectful language. *The Conscious Style Guide* packages Yin’s wealth of knowledge gained as an editor and writer into a practical resource filled with helpful examples. However, if you are expecting a list of dos and don’ts when it comes to the English language, this is not the book for you. Instead, Yin has created a book that can challenge a reader’s perception of language and that encourages critical thinking toward what we speak, write, and edit.

*The Conscious Style Guide* consists of five chapters: Prepare, Plan, Practice, Pause, and Persuade. In chapter 1, “Prepare,” Yin explains her philosophy of conscious language and introduces its 5 core components. These components are content, context, consequence, complexity, and compassion. Yin says inclusion of these components differentiates conscious language from other styles of thoughtful language.

Chapter 2, “Plan,” addresses implicit biases, bias activation, and how we can shift our perspectives. Yin says we can do this by questioning our motivations when using language and ultimately deferring to credible sources,

including journalism affinity groups, such as the National Association of Black Journalists and the Asian American Journalists Association.

In chapter 3, “Practice,” guidelines for implementing conscious language are presented. Here, Yin provides advice on how to ensure that one’s wording is not outdated, how to speak up when encountering ignorance, and which metaphors make sense depending on the situation. For example, did you know that statements that include everyone (for instance, “all lives matter”) can actually lead to exclusion? Yin artfully explains how this can occur and why the use of conscious language can avoid this situation.

Chapter 4, “Pause,” addresses common doubts involving conscious language and even provides step-by-step instructions for alleviating stress! Yin is certified in Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), a relaxation method that employs tapping on the body’s acupressure points. *The Conscious Style Guide* walks readers through how to self-perform EFT in order to combat stress or anxiety that arises from working with language or dealing with people.

The book ends with chapter 5, “Persuade,” which teaches readers how to peacefully spread conscious language practices. For example, Yin identifies ways that readers can appeal to others’ interests and priorities. Yin encourages us to remind ourselves and others that conscious language “liberates instead of limits.”

Yin states, “This book is an invitation to think and question, not to perform.” She indicates that adopting conscious language not only promotes compassion and equity but also keeps us continually evolving as people. Whether science editors will be updating language guidelines for their publications, editing text that talks about people, striving to communicate respectfully with authors or others, or just trying to develop further as thoughtful members of the profession, *The Conscious Style Guide* is an excellent addition to their bookshelves.

## References and Links

1. <https://consciousstyleguide.com/>

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