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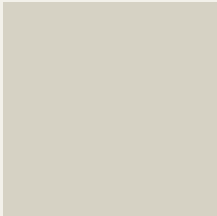
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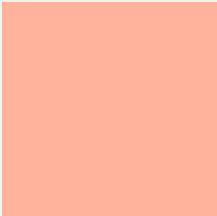
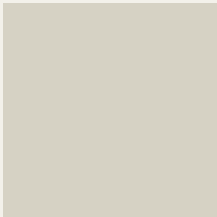
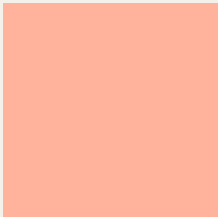
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When Women Resist Change



When Women Resist Change

By Sally Helgesen and Marshall Goldsmith

So if you recognize that you need to change in order to move ahead, why is changing so hard? Because resistance is a powerful force. If you've ever struggled to stay on a diet, incorporate more exercise into your daily routine, become a more patient and engaged listener, or just be present for your moments instead of letting your mind constantly rush ahead, you know what it's like to battle the demon of resistance.

And make no mistake, resistance is a demon. It keeps you from having the life you want and imagine for yourself –at work, with your family, with friends, in regard to your health. That's why learning to recognize and work through your own resistance is one of the greatest favors you can do yourself.

Two factors are at play when you resist making changes you know could make a positive difference in your life.

First, there's the simple physiological fact that your entire neural system is designed to favor the path of least resistance, the path you've created by your prior thoughts and actions. When you repeat behaviors, you establish neural pathways, as if you're wearing grooves in your brain. This practically guarantees that you'll think or act in a similar way next time.

Those established pathways are the reason that changing familiar behaviors is an uncomfortable experience: basically, your brain tries to fight back. It sends urgent signals that you're missing familiar cues. Hey, it's 3 p.m., why aren't you eating something sweet? Hey, that fragment running through your mind right now is more important than what the person you are talking with is saying. Hey, aren't you supposed to be feeling like a victim?

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Ignoring these signals requires neural energy and constant focus, which is especially hard when you're dealing with a lot of demands or trying to accomplish something. So you give in to the familiar signals (okay I'll just have half that doughnut), even though doing so only strengthens the neural pathways that keep you bound to the habit you are trying to break.

Compounding the difficulty is the fact that you also invent rationales for continuing behaviors that have become comfortable or have served you in the past. If you reach for the sweet, you promise yourself you'll start dieting tomorrow. If you keep interrupting someone instead of listening, you tell yourself that they need to hear what you're saying. If you go down the self-pity rabbit hole, you wonder why the other person has chosen to attack you. All of this seems plausible until you consider that giving in to familiar

signals today means they will be back to haunt you tomorrow. All you've done is given your established behaviors twenty-four hours to become more entrenched.

Successful people are particularly skillful at coming up with rationales to continue workplace behaviors that no longer serve them for the simple reason that these behaviors seem to have worked for them in the past. After all, they've received a few big promotions and gotten some excellent feedback over the years. They feel relatively on track. So if it's not broken, why try to fix it?

In *What Got You Here*, Marshall shows how resistance is often rooted in what he calls the success delusion—the belief that because you have been successful, not only do you not need to change, you probably should not change. Because if you do, you might lose your advantage.

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As a coach, Marshall most often sees resistance to change manifest in three stages.

Stage One

- The person decides that whoever is suggesting he needs to change must be confused.

Stage Two

- The person begins to recognize that, while the general suggestion about change might be valid, the critique does not apply to him—if it did, why would he be so successful?

Stage Three

- The person simply attacks whoever suggests he needs to change something about himself. He just blames the messenger. This enables him to continue buying into his own rationales.

Marshall has grown accustomed to seeing this pattern. But most leaders and powerful people are men. So the question we need to ask is whether this pattern of resistance is also typical among women.

Of course, some women react this

way. Women, as we all know, are not all alike. Neither are men. Gender is only one factor in determining how each of us responds to feedback, observations, suggestions, and critiques—to any evidence that we might need to change a behavior.

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That said, women often have very different experiences at work and may evoke different responses from those they work with. What they say is often heard differently, or not at all—a phenomenon popularly known as “speaking while female.” They may carry more responsibilities, especially at home. They may define success differently, as we have seen.

So it's hardly surprising that women's resistance can surface in distinctive ways. Ways that can keep them stuck but that also give them a springboard for moving forward.

Let's go back to Ellen in the last chapter, the fast-track Silicon Valley engineer whose boss gave her low marks during her annual performance review because he didn't perceive her as well connected in the organization. His critique confused and upset her (Stage One in Marshall's original template). But she did not reject his observations out of

hand based on the belief that she'd always been successful (Stage Two). Nor did she decide he was the one with the problem or blame him for what he had said (Stage Three).

No. Her emotional energy was engaged not in ramping herself into a defensive posture but rather in feeling bad. She was hurt rather than disdainful. Far from dismissing his assessment, she took it deeply to heart. If she hadn't conveyed what she was contributing, it must be her fault.

This response paralyzed her for a few weeks because she felt ashamed of not having lived up to her boss's expectations and a bit hopeless about being so misunderstood. It was only after she heard a career coach talking about the need to actively bring attention to the value you provide instead of expecting others to notice what you're doing that she began to ask herself why he had not accurately conveyed the value she was providing to her boss.

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You'll note that, although she had enjoyed quite a bit of success in her short career, Ellen did not defensively focus on that in responding to her boss's critique evaluation. The stuckness she experienced did not come from any kind of success delusion, but rather from the inhibiting pain and sense of failure she felt upon hearing what he had to say.

Like Marshall's examples, her first response was resistance, but it was the resistance of hurt. Once she got past this feeling, she was able to move ahead rather than rationalizing, becoming defensive, blaming her boss, or concluding that she just couldn't cut it.

Stage One

- A woman will react to the suggestion that she needs to change by feeling discouraged and undervalued. This can be quite painful and result in a degree of paralysis.

Stage Two

- A woman will begin to consider why whoever offered the assessment might have made it. Were there valid grounds? What were the circumstances? Did the critique have to do with her being a woman?

Stage Three

- A woman will start to examine how her own behavior may have played a role in shaping the perceptions that led to the critique. What might she have done or neglected to do? What might she do differently? Instead of focusing on the messenger, she looks at her own actions.

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As you can see, resistance still operates in this model, but it takes a different form. And Stages Two and Three both offer a bridge to constructive action. They are potentially far more productive than Stages Two and Three in Marshall's model of what does not work.

Please note, we are not saying that women always follow this

template. We have both worked with women who reject any critique out of hand and are highly skilled at blaming the messenger. But responding with hurt, so long as you can avoid feeling paralyzed or discouraged for too long, sets you on a different path that over time can actually yield positive results—if you can harness that hurt into action.

RESISTANCE AND STEREOTYPING

All of this is fine, you may be saying, but women still don't play on a level field, and this can affect how they are evaluated. To take a well-known example, research has shown that, when being considered for a promotion, women are most likely to be evaluated based on their contributions, while men are most likely to be evaluated based on their potential—nebulous criteria that can result in a less qualified man getting the job.

Stereotyping can also play a role



in shaping the feedback women receive, leading to various “damned if you do, damned if you don't” scenarios. You speak too much or not enough. You are too aggressive or you fail to assert yourself. You smile all the time or you're always frowning.

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So it's not surprising that the positive template of stages outlined above can become distorted. If you believe that whoever is offering you negative feedback is basically clueless about women, you're going to be less receptive to it. You may feel hurt—or irritated or amused or angry—but you're also likely to be skeptical and to consider the source.

A female investment banker Sally worked with in New York provides an example. “Our firm is famous all over the world for being dog-eat-dog,” she noted. “Our people are ferociously ambitious and basically take the attitude, I'm moving fast so you need to get out of my way. Nevertheless, I was constantly critiqued by male bosses for having 'sharp elbows.' I always saw this as an example of unconscious bias. Everyone in our culture had sharp elbows, so it was basically a crock. I knew it, so I ignored the feedback.”

Of course, men aren't the only ones who exhibit unconscious bias. Women can also be highly critical of one another. If you routinely receive negative assessments from a female boss, you may find yourself dismissing what she says based on your perception that she is hopelessly competitive with other women. Or you may have reason to believe she is jealous of you—because of the attention you receive, because you threaten her status as Queen Bee in a heavily male organization, because you're younger, or because of your looks.

Stereotypes can become particularly complicated when racial or ethnic differences get added to the mix. If you're African American, you may have good grounds for believing that your boss evaluates you using different criteria than he would use for white people.

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Or you may perceive that his communications with you feel stiff and inauthentic because he is only comfortable talking to people who look like him.

As Marshall's client Kemala confided,

"The head of our division was constantly telling me that 'my attitude' made people uncomfortable. But I think he said that because he felt awkward around me as a black person. He seemed to be projecting his discomfort onto others so he could somehow make it my fault and retain the image he had of himself as a great guy who could get along with all kinds of people."

After a bit of time stewing with resentment, Kemala decided to

confront her boss in a direct but somewhat humorous way, presenting him with clippings that showed how common it was for African Americans to be criticized for having "an attitude problem."

She then said she recognized she had room to improve and requested he be more specific in his feedback. "After that," she says, "our relationship began to change. He later told me how helpful my little intervention had been."

Similarly, if you're Latina, you may feel that stereotypes play a role when you get feedback about being "too emotional." If you're Asian, you may be suspicious when you're told you don't speak up enough. In either case, you may feel quite sure that these behaviors do not characterize you at all. And you may suspect that the feedback is based on unconscious bias.

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You may be right about this, and if so, you might choose to confront it, as Marshall's client with the alleged "attitude problem" did. But it's also helpful to balance the recognition that stereotyping may be at work with a willingness to consider what role you might also be playing in creating a specific perception.

If you find yourself routinely dismissing feedback because you believe it is biased, you might ask yourself if this could be some form of resistance.

After all, even if a degree of bias is involved, you are still being given information. It is important to remember that our key stakeholders' perceptions are real to them. Focusing only or even primarily on what's wrong with whoever gives the feedback is rarely the most effective route for reaching the next level of success.

Instead, it can become a subtle form of blaming the messenger, which is a good way to keep yourself unproductively stuck.

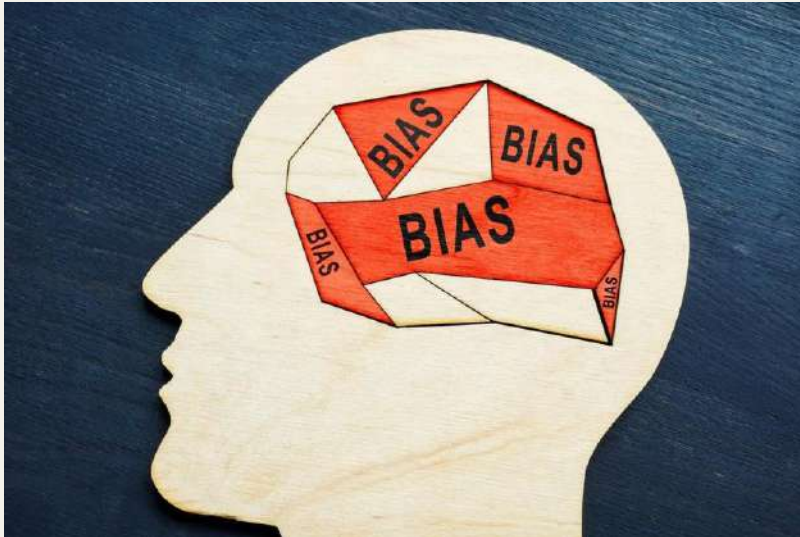
One of the reasons Ellen the engineer was so successful in turning around her boss's perception was that she spent exactly zero time thinking about his potential faults. She worked in a unit of several thousand people, so she didn't really see her boss all that much.

Almost all his direct reports were men, so he may have been uncomfortable with women—she really had no way of knowing. But she didn't focus on trying to find out. Once she'd gotten over her shock and hurt, she asked herself how her own behavior might be contributing to his evaluation and what she could do to change it.

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In other words, she shifted her attention to what lay within her power. She put her energy into identifying what she could control.

As noted, biases are still alive and well in the workplace and can shade how women are seen and judged. But that doesn't mean feedback that might sound stereotyped has no validity or can't be helpful. Take the case of the "sharp elbows" investment banker. When Sally worked with her, she was about to make a transition to a high-profile government job that required

significant diplomatic skills. The hard-charging manner she'd developed in banking would not serve her in this different culture. It had gotten her here but it would inhibit her rise going forward.

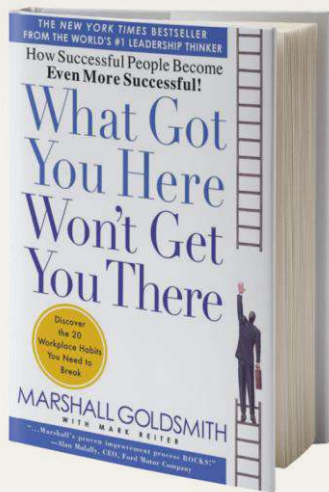
So she began listening more attentively to the feedback she received, asking for specific examples instead of dismissing it as absurd. "What I heard might have been sexist and probably was," she said. "But now that I needed to change, I also found it helpful."

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OUR BELIEFS SHAPE OUR RESISTANCE

Trying to change a behavior that gets in your way rarely succeeds unless you understand the beliefs that inform it. Beliefs create the framework that shapes your actions. They provide rationales for how you behave and offer logical reasons for why you actually don't need to change.



In *What Got You Here*, Marshall identifies several pervasive beliefs that keep successful people stuck. These beliefs may have enabled them to achieve wonderful things. But these same beliefs can get

in their way as they try to reach the next level or move to more challenging and satisfying terrain. These beliefs serve the cause of resistance.

A main theme running through the beliefs Marshall addresses is overconfidence, the belief that you have succeeded, will succeed, should succeed, and have the power to succeed by doing what you've always done. In his coaching practice, Marshall is very familiar with top executives whose unshakable (and at times delusional) belief in their own godlike self-efficacy and rightness can make them highly resistant to any kind of behavioral change. They view success as their due, the inevitable result of their hard work and strategic brilliance. In this schema, good fortune and other people play minor roles.

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Certainly, there are women who share these core beliefs, women who rarely seem to question themselves, who walk into a room expecting to own it and view themselves as marked for success. But this is not always or even usually the case. Even high-achieving women often have to fight to maintain their confidence. They have to goad themselves into declaring what they're good at or remind themselves why they deserve a seat at the big table. They may read self-help books aimed at instilling confidence, or listen to inspirational audiobooks or podcasts while driving. They may practice positive

affirmations, such as I am bound to be successful in this endeavor! They may act "as if" and try to fake it till they make it.

Even at the highest levels, overconfidence is rarely a major female failing.

Our experience suggests that there is a different set of core beliefs that often operate for women. These beliefs lie at the heart of their resistance, providing a rationale for behaviors that keep women stuck.

Belief 1: Ambition is a bad thing

High-profile women who seek to rise are routinely criticized as being "too ambitious." This is most notably true of female politicians. But it's also true of

women in business, nonprofits, associations, education, or partnership firms who actively and openly seek their own advancement.

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You'll even hear the criticism leveled at women who are trying to position themselves to lead a volunteer effort.

What does “too ambitious” even mean?

It seems to mean that any woman who is ambitious is unseemly, over-the-top, too nakedly self-interested to be trusted. Men are often described as ambitious, of course, but rarely with the qualifier too. It seems primarily to be reserved for ambitious women. So it's not surprising that even very successful women are often reluctant to describe themselves as ambitious.

The psychiatrist Anna Fels, who works with some of New York's top women in finance and law, noticed this reluctance when researching her

wonderful book, *Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Changing Lives*. So she asked some of her clients what associations came to mind when they thought about ambitious women. The most common words and phrases they used were egotism, selfishness, self-aggrandizement, and the manipulation of others for one's own ends. Given how they defined it, it's not surprising that even top achievers insisted to Fels that they were “just not ambitious.”

Sally saw a similar reluctance when working with Nicki, a senior partner in one of the world's largest law practices. Now in her early forties, Nicki had joined her firm immediately after graduating near the top of her class at Harvard Law School.

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She was named partner a bit later in her career than some of her cohorts, but thanks to strong mentors and outstanding performance, she rose quickly into the senior ranks.

Despite literally being one of the most successful female lawyers on the planet, Nicki informed Sally within minutes of their meeting that she does not consider herself ambitious. "I'm driven, yes," she said, "but it's not the same. I think of ambition as being like a politician who knows from the time he's a kid what he wants to be, so he lives his entire life in that mold." She named a well-known U.S. senator who was a member of her Harvard class. "He was super-ambitious and acted like a politician from the day he arrived at school. Every relationship, every course, was chosen for the

purpose of promoting his future career."

Nicki sees herself as very different. "I came to this firm because I thought it would be a great place to start my career, not because I saw myself as a partner. I ended up staying because I love the work and because I love the feedback I get for my work. I've always been motivated by good feedback. That's why I got good grades in school. It's the same here: I enjoy pleasing the client, the judge, or the partner in charge. That's basically been my motivation."

Clearly, Nicki views ambition through a negative lens. She doesn't want to be associated with the word, even though one might think that climbing to the top of a major global law firm would both require and give proof of ambition.

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Nicki also associates ambition with being focused solely on positional power, which she says does not motivate her. “My work at the firm has never been about position. I’m here because I find the work satisfying and enjoy the challenge.” Her attitude reflects the research cited in Chapter 2 showing that women tend to be more engaged by a high-quality work experience and the belief that they are having an impact than by abstract measures of position and rank.

Yet it's striking the extent to

which women allow ambition to be defined for them. There's no reason that aspiring to have satisfying work and make a difference in the world cannot be a form of ambition, no reason ambition must automatically be viewed as arrogant, self-centered, or untrustworthy. Ambition might more usefully be defined as the desire to maximize your talents in the service of work you find worthwhile and rewarding. Choosing to believe otherwise, or making negative judgments about ambition, can become a way to rationalize resistance.

Belief 2: Being a good person means not disappointing others

Many women we work with are deeply invested in being wonderful people. This is a great thing and helps make the world a better place. But this

desire can work against you if it is allied with the belief that being wonderful means never disappointing others.

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We already saw this with Miranda, the senior law firm associate who stuck with a time-consuming commitment that undermined her effectiveness because she was reluctant to disappoint a casual colleague. Even though that colleague had volunteered her for a role that he preferred to avoid.

Marshall worked with a consultant who was beloved throughout her firm and industry. She was known among colleagues and clients as “the wonderful Lina.” Other firms had tried to hire her, but she refused to consider any

offer because she did not want to break up her team. In part, this was savvy: she knew that she benefited from the work of those she had nurtured. She therefore did not imagine that what she had achieved could be duplicated in any circumstance simply because of her own brilliance, as many of her peers clearly believed about themselves.

Finally, a competing firm made an offer for Lina and her entire team, with a contract that gave her unprecedented latitude and support. She was thrilled, but when she approached her team, several members were reluctant to move for personal reasons. They also expressed disappointment that she would consider leaving a practice that had been so good to her.

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This pushback was deeply upsetting to Lina. She began thinking about all the mentors, sponsors, and senior leaders in her firm who had gone out of their way for her over the years. How would they react to her leaving? Would they view her as ungrateful? And how could she still be “the wonderful Lina” if she not only bailed on her colleagues but took part of her team along with her?

After a lot of angst, she decided to turn down the offer. There

were some good reasons for doing so. But her desire not to disappoint people in order to maintain her self-image as a wonderful person got in the way of her ability to objectively analyze the pros and cons of the offer. Her inability to separate her own interests from the expectations of others had become for her a form of resistance. Ultimately, Lina ended up regretting her decision when two of her most important team members left for better offers.

Belief 3: Women should always be role models for other women

Marissa Mayer was still CEO of Yahoo! when she became pregnant with twin girls. Although she had led a revamp of the company's parental leave

policies to be far more generous, she announced that she herself would be taking limited time off for the births and working throughout.

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Her decision caused a storm of protest, the primary criticism being that Mayer was failing to serve as a role model, not only for her own employees but, as one press commentator put it, "for women everywhere." Another critic lamented, "What kind of message does it send? She's really setting back what all women have worked for. When you're at her level, there's no such thing as a personal decision because other women are looking to you for guidance."

The idea that high-profile women do not get to make their own life choices without first considering the potential impact upon all other women is a pernicious trap. Being successful at a demanding job while trying to maintain a

rewarding personal life is tough enough for anyone in today's demanding work culture. Expecting women to also calculate personal decisions based on how others will interpret them adds an extra burden. It's certainly not a burden men are expected to bear.

Yet women often find their decisions and setbacks scrutinized through the role model lens. This can become a source of shame and guilt, while also setting women against one another. The burden is particularly intense for minority women, who are often expected to carry the aspirations of not only other women, but their entire ethnic or racial group on their shoulders.

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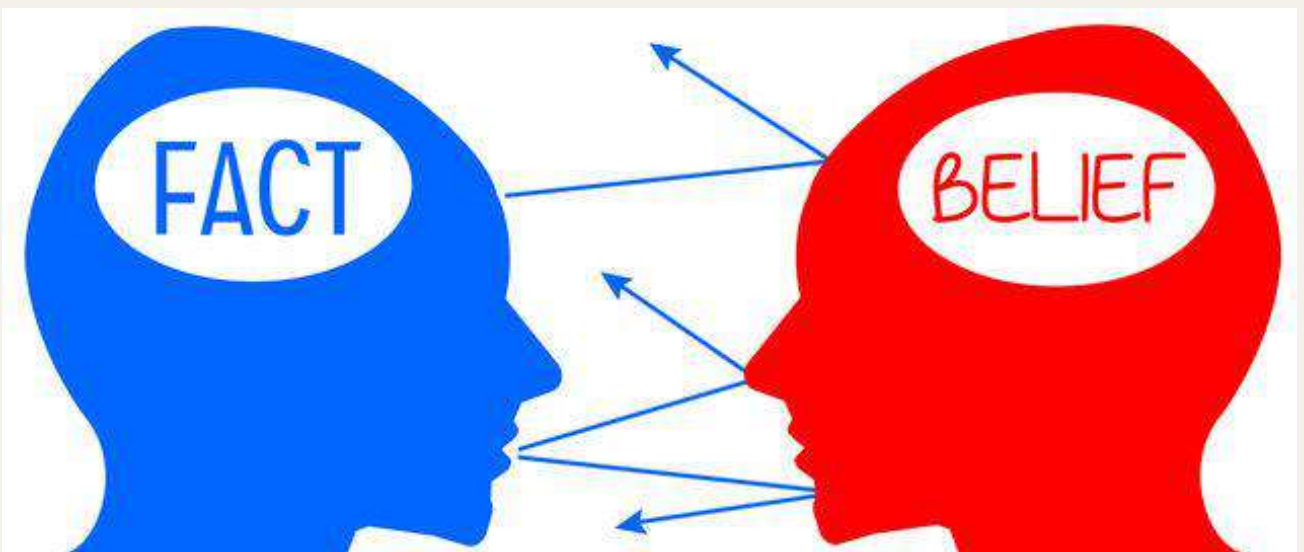
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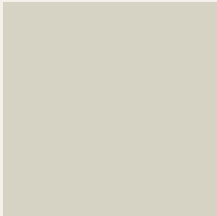
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If you find yourself bound by such expectations, it may be time to plot your escape from role model hell. Holding it as a core belief can undermine you. Which, when you think about it, doesn't do other women any favors.

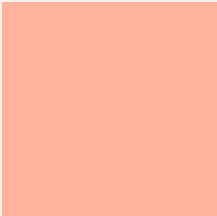
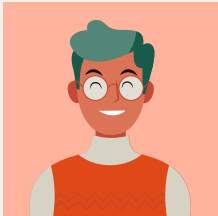
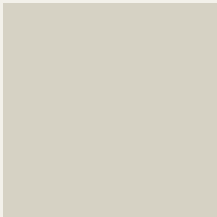
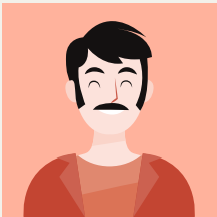
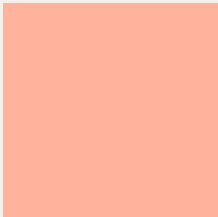
The beliefs described above all have their root in society's expectation that women should put the needs of others ahead of their own. This expectation

begins early. In general, girls are rewarded for being thoughtful and obedient while boys are given more latitude. Both men and women carry this legacy with them into the workplace. While altering societal attitudes will take decades, you can in the meantime benefit from considering whether you have internalized beliefs and expectations that seem almost designed to hold you back.





**Hr Key In Helping Employers
Achieve Gender Equality**



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By SHRM

“Men still run the world—and it’s not going that well,”

said Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg before a packed room of world leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, earlier this year. While Sandberg’s assessment of the state of the world is debatable, a spate of recent surveys and reports make clear that men and women still aren’t equally represented in the workplace, particularly at the senior leadership level.

In fact, at the current rate of progress, it will take more than 100 years to achieve gender parity at the C-suite level, according to a report from McKinsey & Co. and LeanIn.org. And Mercer’s 2016 *When Women Thrive* report, which analyzed data from 42 countries, found that women are underrepresented on all rungs of the corporate ladder, making up roughly 20 percent

of executives. Moreover, merely 1 percent of board members of Fortune 1000 companies are women, according to a new report from 2020 Women on Boards.

While the underlying issues are daunting and complex, human resource professionals are in a unique position to effect change. Not only are HR leaders in charge of their organizations’ recruiting, diversity and compensation efforts, but the profession itself is dominated by women. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates that almost 80 percent of HR managers are women, as are 49 percent of HR officers at the top 100 U.S. corporations. (However, there is ample room for improvement in terms of pay equality, with male HR managers earning 40 percent more than their female counterparts, on average, according to the BLS.)

Hr Key In Helping Employers Achieve Gender Equality

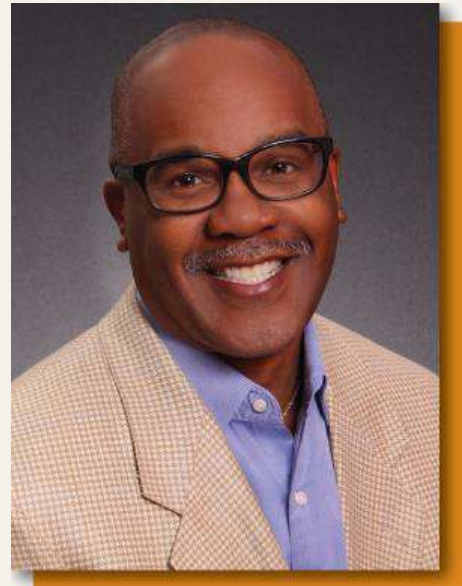
By SHRM

“People working at companies often see HR as the key agents of change when there’s a problem like a lack of women in leadership,” says Ursula Mead, CEO and founder of InHerSight, a website that allows users to rate how female-friendly companies are.

“So if HR isn’t committed to gender diversity and isn’t championing it, the needle won’t move.”

At its roots, the issue often comes back to culture, says Barry Coleman, a former HR manager at The Washington Post Co. who now runs his own HR training consultancy, bcole group LLC. Although companies have made progress toward becoming more diverse and inclusive, most still operate in environments where the default is to value women’s contributions less than men’s, he says.

And that is where HR can make an impact.



“HR needs to be a part of each step in the employee life cycle, I think HR needs to have authentic conversations with company leaders around the numbers. They need to say, ‘This is what they look like. They are upside down. What are you going to do about it?’ and then help the leaders get there.”

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By SHRM

Mind the gap

A report released in April by the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress' Democratic Staff, titled Gender Pay Inequality: Consequences for Women, Families and the Economy, found that women in 2016 earn only 79 cents for every dollar men earn. Black and Latina women see the biggest discrepancy, bringing in 60 cents and 55 cents, respectively, for every dollar earned by white men.

Women's median incomes are lower at every level of education as well. A woman with a graduate degree typically earns \$5,000 less annually than a man with a bachelor's, the report found. Even when research accounts for factors known to influence

differential pay between the genders, such as women being more likely to take time off to raise children or gravitating toward lower-paying fields, as much as 40 percent of the gap can't be explained.

That's a concern, given that the U.S. Equal Pay Act of 1963 requires that men and women in the same workplace be given equal pay for equal work. While inequalities have persisted for years, recent state and federal legislation has been more focused on addressing them. And it has fallen to employers—and HR specifically—to be proactive about ensuring that compensation is fair, such as by conducting pay analyses.

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By SHRM

Mind the gap

Perhaps surprisingly, the U.S. military is a leader in this area: All branches of the armed forces rely on a battery of standardized assessments of female and male service members as the main basis for hiring and promotion decisions.

“The military gives us a good example of how to eliminate [bias] from the decision-making process as a whole. Human resources should demand a consistent method for rating, ranking and qualifying talent. This kind of system would democratize employment by exposing any management bias.”

HR is naturally positioned to take the lead. “Human

resources has all the data and can see the big picture,” says Katie Donovan, founder and equal pay consultant for Equal Pay Negotiations LLC. According to a Harris Poll conducted for CareerBuilder in February, 20 percent of HR professionals are aware that there is a gender pay gap in their own companies.

“They are probably aware of the problem long before anyone else,” Donovan says. “They can’t solve [it] alone, but they can lead, inspire, advocate ... and push back when managers are about to put the organization at risk with questionable compensation decisions.”

Hr Key In Helping Employers Achieve Gender Equality

By SHRM

Eliminating Biases

Unintentional name bias starts the moment a woman submits an application or resume, according to Donovan. One way around it is for companies to use a human resource management system or applicant tracking system that incorporates a blind candidate view so that recruiters and hiring managers can do a first cut without accessing applicants' identifying information. HR can also rely on tech tools such as Textio, which helps employers create gender-neutral job descriptions.

In addition, she advocates that HR move away from the common practice of requiring job candidates to provide salary history as part of the application process, since women are more likely to be coming into a new position with lower previous compensation than their male counterparts.

Another often-overlooked piece of the pay puzzle may have to do with the negotiating process. While conventional wisdom holds that women are less skilled negotiators than men, in reality women may face unfair obstacles the minute the salary discussion begins, Donovan says.

According to a 2014 study in the journal *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, for example, both men and women admitted to being more likely to lie to women than to men during a series of mock real estate negotiations.

“This means women need to successfully overcome more roadblocks in the negotiation to get higher pay”

Hr Key In Helping Employers Achieve Gender Equality

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Being Flexible

“One of the most significant reasons for the gaps between men and women is tied to parenthood, with mothers typically taking on more caregiving responsibilities,”

says Sara Sutton Fell, CEO and founder of FlexJobs, a service devoted to helping people find flexible job options such as telecommuting and freelance work.

According to recent Pew research, roughly 4 in 10 mothers say they have taken a significant amount of time off from work or reduced their hours to care for a child or other family member, compared with one-quarter of fathers. And 27 percent of women have quit a job altogether due to familial responsibilities. Studies show that such job interruptions translate into a loss in career

momentum and, ultimately, reduced long-term earnings.

Offering more-flexible workplaces is one way HR can help retain more women and move toward gender equity at all ranks and pay levels. “HR leaders should embrace options like partial or full telecommuting, flexible work schedules, and professional part-time roles,” Fell says.

“These aren’t just perks that benefit employees,” she says. “They are sound business decisions that help to support the long-term success of organizations. If fewer women [experience] career interruptions, think about the institutional knowledge companies will retain; the benefits of keeping productive, well-trained employees; and the turnover costs [employers] won’t have to pay.”

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Throwing Stones at the Glass Ceiling

Of course, another factor in the pay gap is women's underrepresentation in senior leadership roles, says Brian Levine, Mercer's innovation leader for global workforce analytics. Top positions command higher salaries, so the real challenge is to ensure that women have greater access to those roles. "Those organizations that are best situated to drive real change are assessing the processes by which roles are filled and employees are promoted, ensuring equity in access to such roles, and are focused too on providing diverse employees with the experiences that are required to be successful," Levine says.

Companies that don't promote or hire women to senior leadership do so at their own peril, according to a 2016

analysis from the audit, tax, and advisory firm Grant Thornton. The assessment of 1,050 companies in the U.S., the U.K., and India found that companies with men-only boards of directors forgo potential profits to the tune of \$655 billion across the three economies.

Globally, the proportion of senior leadership roles held by women—24 percent—has risen just 3 percent in the past five years, according to the analysis, while the percentage of businesses without any women in senior management has remained static over the past five years at around 33 percent. "That means a third of companies still have no female input into executive decisions and no women helping grow the business at a leadership level," the study stated.

Hr Key In Helping Employers Achieve Gender Equality

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Getting There from Here

Meanwhile, an April report from the McKinsey Global Institute indicated that the United States could add up to \$4.3 trillion to its annual gross domestic product by 2025 if women were to attain full gender equality in the workplace.



“The business case for gender diversity in the workplace has been made,” Mead says. “Studies show companies are more successful with more

women in the ranks. They have higher average returns, fewer incidences of fraud, better decision-making, lower turnover and higher productivity.”

Female-friendly companies have an edge when attempting to attract and retain the best talent, since increasingly women have easy access to tools that help them seek out the cultures that best suit them. Mead’s InHerSight platform, for example, allows women to anonymously rate companies on 14 metrics, including flexible work hours, maternity and adoptive leave, family growth support, salary satisfaction, mentoring, management opportunities for women, and female representation in leadership positions.

Hr Key In Helping Employers Achieve Gender Equality

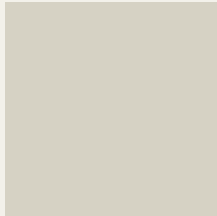
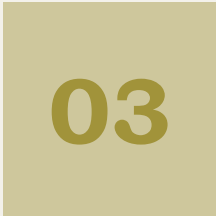
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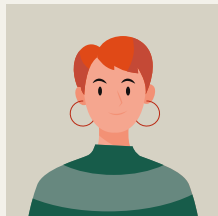
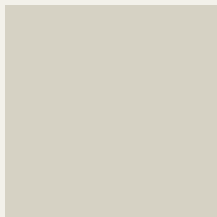
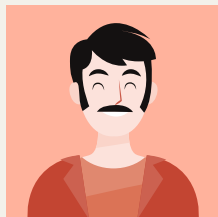
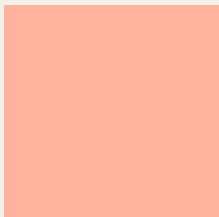
But while HR professionals play a pivotal role in shaping processes and culture, they can't do it alone. "For the HR team to be effective change agents, it's critical that their gender diversity initiatives have buy-in from top leadership, that they have a voice ... and the ability to influence the decisions being made at the top," Mead says. "Then it becomes a partnership between HR, top leadership, finance, managers and the company as a whole."

No one claims it will be easy. "When you hear it might take 80 to 100 more years to reach gender equality in the workplace, it can be rather sobering," she says. "But these kinds of assessments can also be incredibly motivating. ... Do I believe it could take 80 to 100 years? Yes. But I also believe that, with good data, transparency and accountability at the company level—which is what we're focused on—we can get there a lot sooner."





5 Ways to Reduce Gender Inequality at Work



5 Ways to Reduce Gender Inequality at Work

By SHRM

Generation Z women have lower pay expectations than men have when entering the workforce, according to a recent report by career app Handshake.

The survey of more than 1,800 college-graduate job seekers revealed that women in the class of 2023 expect about a \$6,000 lower average annual salary compared with men. Women respondents across all racial groups set a lower "high" starting salary than men did.

According to Handshake researchers, "[The difference in pay expectations] highlights the long-standing issue of gender pay disparity: Women's salary expectations are lower from the start, potentially reflecting historical pay gaps."

The report was released ahead of International Women's Day—an annual campaign

devoted to raising awareness for gender inequality and other women's issues. Gender inequality can manifest at work via unequal pay and disparity in promotions.

These inequities can influence the way men—who largely hold corporate power—view female workers, according to Tina Opie, an associate professor who focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) at Babson College in Wellesley, Mass.

"Gender inequity frames how men see women [in the workplace], how they see systems," Opie said, while noting how women are underrepresented in the higher-paying positions and are paid less for the same work as their male counterparts.

5 Ways to Reduce Gender Inequality at Work

By SHRM

A Glimpse into Gender Inequality

Multiple studies show how dire gender inequality is in the workplace. For example, a 2022 McKinsey & Company report explored gender inequality at work and factors that influence it:

Just 1 in 4 C-suite leaders is a woman, and only 1 in 20 is a woman of color.

Men

100 men who are promoted from entry-level roles to manager positions

Women

Only **87** women are promoted.

Women experience microaggressions that undermine their authority, making it more difficult for them to advance.

Female leaders are twice as likely as male leaders to be mistaken for someone more junior.

Latinas and Black women are less likely than women of other races and ethnicities to report their manager supports their career development, negatively influencing their ability to ascend professionally.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2021:

Women made up about 44 percent of the total workforce but only 41 percent of managers.

5 Ways to Reduce Gender Inequality at Work

By SHRM

A Glimpse into Gender Inequality



Overall, women earned about 82 cents for every dollar men earned.

Hispanic or Latina women earned about 58 cents and Black women earned about 63 cents for every dollar white men earned.

"The widening gap is worse for women from historically

marginalized [racial and ethnic] backgrounds, such as women who are indigenous, Black, Latinx/Hispanic, Asian and Middle Eastern," Opie said. "This suggests that organizations are not doing a good job addressing inequities and could follow a few steps to improve."

5 Ways to Reduce Gender Inequality at Work

By *SHRM*

How to Improve Gender Equality in the Workplace

Leeatt Rothschild is the founder and CEO of Packed with Purpose, a Chicago-based woman-owned business dedicated to creating meaningful social impact and strengthening human connections. She offered five tips for companies to improve gender equality:

Invest in DE&I.

- Spend resources to improve DE&I within your company. This could mean investing in unconscious bias training or enlisting outside expertise to educate and raise awareness for women's issues to build the skills to counter inequality.

Show empathy and offer flexibility.

- Developing a culture of openness, empathy and flexibility can make everyone feel comfortable in the workplace and reduce barriers to growth. Rothschild said companies should allow employees to address their needs at home.

Promote more women.

- How can young women starting their careers envision an equitable path for their career if they cannot see women in leadership positions? Promoting women into executive roles can help promote DE&I.

Support women's professional development.

- Mentorship, networking and other professional development opportunities help grow careers.

Make employee well-being a priority.

- Focusing on employee mental health can also help to address equity in the workplace. Be flexible in the way you support your employees' well-being, whether through exercise, meditation or just a day off.

5 Ways to Reduce Gender Inequality at Work

By SHRM

How to Improve Gender Equality in the Workplace

Opie said that she routinely encourages organizations to:

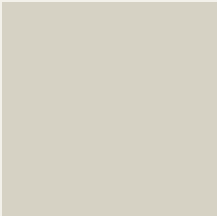
Speak with their executive team to convey why gender issues like pay inequity are a problem.

Offer reward structures, metrics and trainings that reflect the value of equity.

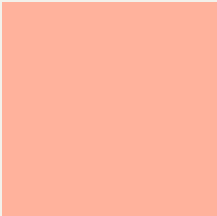
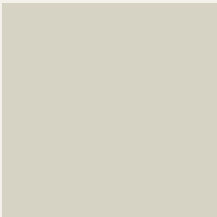
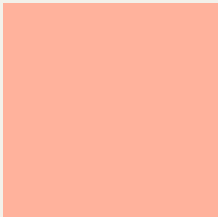
Conduct equity audits examining pay by race, gender, division and rank.

"If there is evidence of inequities, the executives have to determine how or if they will redress those inequities," Opie said. "It can be extremely harmful for organizational leaders to say that they will redress inequities, conduct an equity study, find inequities and then fail to [act]."





**How To Promote Women's
Leadership Development**



How To Promote Women's Leadership Development

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of promoting women's leadership development. Women have traditionally been underrepresented in leadership roles in many areas of society, and efforts to address this issue have become increasingly important in the 21st century. We will explore some of the most effective strategies for promoting women's leadership development.

Provide Mentoring and Coaching Programs

- Mentoring and coaching programs are key to developing women's leadership skills. Women benefit from the guidance and support of mentors who can provide feedback and advice, and coaches who can help them identify their strengths and weaknesses. These programs should be tailored to meet the specific needs of individual women, providing them with the tools and resources they need to excel in their roles.

Create Networking Opportunities

- Networking is crucial to women's leadership development. Women need to connect with other women in leadership roles to learn about opportunities, gain insights, and build supportive relationships. Organizations can create events and programs that bring women together, such as conferences and workshops. By providing both formal and informal networking opportunities, women can expand their professional networks and grow as leaders.

Provide Training and Development Opportunities

- Leadership requires a diverse range of skills, from communication and problem-solving to strategic thinking and decision-making. Providing training and development opportunities is essential to help women build these skills. Organizations can offer workshops, courses, and on-the-job training, as well as leadership development programs specifically for women. By investing in women's development, organizations can cultivate a strong pipeline of future leaders.

How To Promote Women's Leadership Development

Encourage Work-Life Balance

- Balancing work and family responsibilities is one of the biggest challenges facing women leaders. Organizations can support work-life balance by providing flexible work arrangements, parental leave, and childcare assistance. Cultivating a culture that values work-life balance can also help support women's leadership development. By recognizing the importance of family responsibilities and encouraging managers to be flexible, organizations can create a more inclusive workplace that supports women's growth and success.

Address Unconscious Bias

- Unconscious bias can be a significant barrier to women's leadership development. It occurs when people make judgments based on stereotypes or preconceptions without realizing it. To address unconscious bias, organizations can provide training and education to raise awareness of the issue and encourage people to examine their own biases. For example, organizations can provide training that helps managers identify and address bias in the hiring process or that encourages employees to be more inclusive in their communication and decision-making. By addressing unconscious bias, organizations can create a more diverse and inclusive workplace where women can thrive as leaders.

Overall, promoting women's leadership development requires a multifaceted approach that includes mentoring and coaching programs, networking opportunities, training and development opportunities, support for work-life balance, and addressing unconscious bias. By taking these steps, organizations can help women reach their full potential as leaders, contributing to the success of their organizations and communities.

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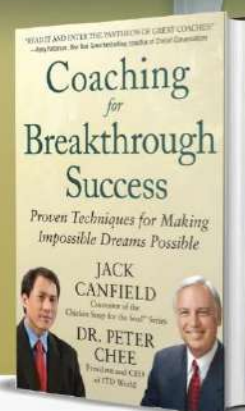
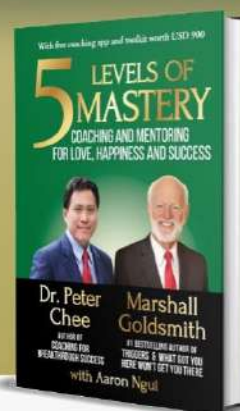
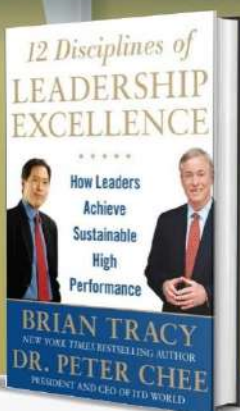
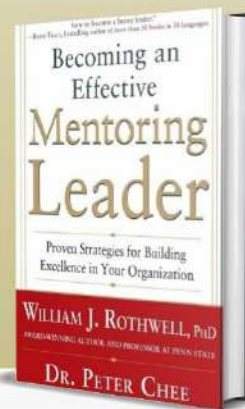
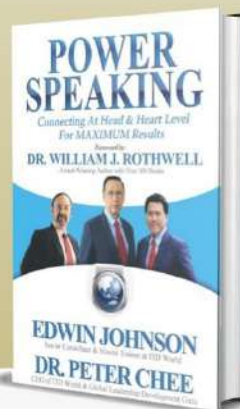
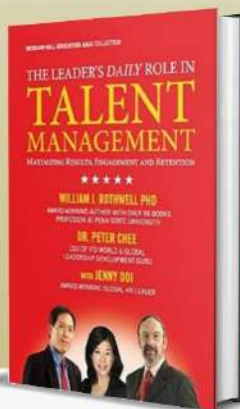
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