

NICE GIRLS DON'T SPEAK UP OR STAND OUT

How to Make
Your Voice Heard,
Your Point Known,
and Your Presence Felt

Lois P. Frankel, PhD

AUTHOR OF THE NATIONAL BESTSELLER

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**GRAND CENTRAL
PUBLISHING**

NEW YORK BOSTON

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Grand Central Publishing

Hachette Book Group

1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104

grandcentralpublishing.com

twitter.com/grandcentralpub

First ebook Edition: June 2020

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ISBN: 978-1-5387-1921-3 (ebook)

E3-20200514-JV-NF-ORI

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*This book is dedicated to my great-niece, Juliana
Roussillon, a budding author with a voice that will be
heard and a presence that is already felt.*

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Introduction

In 1984, I was just finishing up coursework for my doctoral program at the University of Southern California, working full-time in human resources at the oil company ARCO to pay for my advanced degree, writing my dissertation, and completing the internship hours required for graduation in counseling psychology.

I was juggling about as many balls as I possibly could when a new neighbor moved in down the block, a rooster. The first few times I was awakened, literally at the crack of dawn by this barnyard animal alarm clock, I found it mildly amusing. After two weeks, it was annoying. At the end of a month, I'd had it. It was bad enough that I arrived home late most nights and had to get up early to be at work by 7:30 a.m. This daybreak *cock-a-doodle-doo*, at a decibel reminiscent of fingernails scratching across a blackboard, put me over the edge. We were talking Los Angeles here, not exactly a farming community.

Determined to come up with a win-win solution to this dilemma, I walked down the road to the rooster's home and knocked on the door, and when a man answered, the conversation proceeded like this.

"My name is Lois Frankel and I live up the road from you. You may not be aware of it, but your rooster wakes me up every day at daybreak." I said this in the most respectful and neutral tone I could possibly muster.

"Okay, I'll shoot him," the man responded without a smile, a blink, or a hint that he was joking. Then he silently waited for my reply.

I must admit that his response caught me off guard. I was trying to do the right thing and engage in a dialogue about how the problem could be amicably resolved. I thought for a moment and then I said, "What you choose to do with your rooster is up to you. I only know I don't want to be awakened by it any longer," and with this, he slammed the door in my face.

Although it took a few weeks longer and several calls to the county Animal Control department for the rooster to find a new neighborhood in which to reside, I was proud of how I handled myself. I didn't acquiesce to the man's remark, which is precisely what a remark like that was intended to have me do, and I didn't stoop to his level of trading equally childish barbs, which would only have inflamed the situation.

I was clear about what I wanted as a result of the conversation, and if he didn't want to maturely discuss the matter, I was willing to do whatever was needed to restore peace to the neighborhood. It couldn't be said that I didn't give him fair notice.

How many times have you asked yourself why you didn't speak up in a situation where you felt your rights or needs were being ignored? Or perhaps you didn't ask for something you believed you earned or deserved because you didn't want to come across as too pushy? Then there's the going along to get along, doing things you don't really want to do, but you don't want to rock the boat.

That's the essence of being a nice girl. Someone who always puts everyone else's needs before her own, who believes she doesn't have the same rights as the next person, and who will do everything possible to avoid being called the B-word—*bitch*. Unfortunately, too often, doing everything possible to avoid being called names means doing nothing at all.

If you've read any of my books, visited my blog, or attended one of my workshops or keynote presentations, you know that I'm big on providing women with the tools needed to achieve their personal, professional, and financial goals. *Nice Girls Don't Speak Up or Stand Out* is no different.

In fact, it was born out of the questions women ask me all the time, questions like, How can I ask for a raise? How do I handle office gossip? How do I get myself invited to important meetings? How can I put a positive spin on being fired from my last job? How do I deal with a direct report who used to be my peer? How can I showcase my achievements?

In short, women want to know how to have their voices heard and their presence felt using tact and diplomacy without losing an ounce of their femininity, or, as the saying goes, "How to tell people to go to hell in a way that makes them look forward to the trip."

When I'm signing books after I've done a keynote presentation, I often ask people what they are going to do differently as a result of having

attended the event. Not surprisingly, it's a tangible tool or tip around communicating with confidence that a woman is most likely to add to her repertoire of skills. Even then, she might add, "I just wish I had you on my shoulder whispering in my ear when I want to stand up for myself," or "I just can't think quickly enough on my feet to say what I'd really like to say."

As I tell them, communicating confidently, courageously, and clearly doesn't happen by accident, except for a very few uniquely gifted, silver-tongued orators. It takes conscious effort and practice.

Powerful communication is an underused muscle for most women. The reasons for this are many, and they include being unsure how the message is going to be received; taking time to choose words that aren't going to offend anyone, in this case usually men; using more words than necessary so that their messages will be softened; not wanting to be accused of bragging; fearing being seen as too emotional; having a dearth of female role models; and believing they aren't smart enough.

The majority of these reasons are the result of a woman's socialization by her family of origin, the educational system, the media, and Madison Avenue. From the use of preambles to unnecessarily long explanations, women unconsciously sabotage their best efforts. As a result, their communications are diluted by behaviors that are antithetical to what they want most—to be heard and respected.

Well into adulthood, most women are hampered by childhood messages about the importance of being nice. As I made clear in *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office*, nice is necessary for success, but it's not sufficient. Everyone, both men and women, is expected to be nice. In fact, likability is a key factor to success, but if it's the only tool in your kit for influencing others, you won't feel confident or competent to deliver a wide variety of messages communicating how you really feel about something.

Fortunately for most men, they don't suffer from the same inhibitors to saying what they think and asking for what they want. It's an interesting contrast that if men don't communicate assertively, they're seen as weak, whereas assertive women are often stereotyped as overly aggressive. It presents quite a challenge for women who want to be heard and known in the workplace.

The term *thin pink line* was coined by author Kathleen Kelley Reardon.

It refers to the narrow tightrope a woman must walk to achieve her professional goals. If you go far over one side of the line, you're considered too passive, and in that case, you're not taken seriously. That's the nice girl side. If you go too far over the line in the other direction, you're accused of being too aggressive, or worse yet, you're called that dreaded B-word.

Women are constantly trying to figure out how to achieve the balance between feminine and professional, yet sooner or later they find themselves coming up short in one way or another.

As one Latina lawyer in Miami told me, "My boss said I didn't have a good sense of humor. Then when I tried to lighten up, he said, 'Women just aren't funny.'" Or then there's the woman from South Africa who wrote to me: "I was told I didn't speak up enough. When I spoke out more, I was given feedback I was too domineering." That's the thin pink line that women walk all the time.

The challenges, however, go beyond learning to communicate more powerfully. Women have the added burden of having to find ways to tactfully cope with things like mansplaining, when a man explains things to a woman in a condescending manner; maninterrupting, when a man interrupts a woman before she conveys her entire message; manterpretation, when a man incorrectly interprets what a woman said; and bropropriating, when a man takes a woman's idea and claims it as his own.

Even Supreme Court justices have to learn to deal with interruptions. Researchers at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law found that the pattern of men interrupting women on the high court accounted for 32 percent of interruptions overall, while female justices interrupting others accounted for just 4 percent of the interruptions overall.

Then there's the flip side, women who don't adhere to social expectations for how women should communicate and are accused of being too pushy, needy, or greedy. These are women who have no problem telling it like it is, only to find they're marginalized, ignored, and overlooked for opportunities because others can't hear the message due to the manner of delivery. They don't understand this basic truth of women and communication. Unlike men, women are expected to communicate their opinions, suggestions, and proposals with the utmost tact and diplomacy.

I'll be the first to admit that there are plenty of books written about women and communication. Peggy Klaus, Kathleen Kelley Reardon,

Deborah Tannen, and Carol Frohlinger are just a few of the authors who do a great job of talking about the challenges women face, yet when I've been asked for a reference book that will help a woman learn how to communicate with greater confidence and courage, I've been hard-pressed to identify one that really demonstrates the array of tools available for handling a wide variety of situations.

So this book takes the form of my other *Nice Girls* books, short anecdotes about a particular challenge followed by specific coaching tips. This time, a communication challenge, rather than a career or financial challenge, is followed by a solution and an example of how that solution would sound in real time.

Finally, I ask you to take the risk of stepping outside of your comfort zone. I can provide you with all the tools, tips, and techniques you need to communicate effectively in almost any situation, but you are the one who has to implement them. I encourage you to take a measured approach in practicing the skills that will help you most in any given moment.

Avoid the tendency to read the book and say to yourself, "Oh no, I make all of those mistakes! I have so much to change." Instead, think about your greatest communication challenges right now and which two or three tips will help to best address them. Less is more in this case. What you will find is that trying out just two or three new behaviors, instead of attempting a dozen, will lead to subtle behavioral changes in other areas of your life. Get good at those and then go back and try a few more.

Like the salami method that I will be talking about shortly, you don't usually sit down and eat an entire salami at once—you slice it into pieces. The same holds true for any kind of change. Rather than get discouraged with how much you aren't doing or can't do, ensure success by taking small steps toward your ultimate goal of having your voice heard without unnecessarily damaging relationships. I would love to hear your feedback and how the challenges you make impact your life. As always, I can be reached through my website, drloisfrankel.com.

Chapter One

The Basics

About six years ago, my beloved little four-year-old rescue dog, Ellie, died suddenly on the operating table. We brought her in for what we thought was minor surgery, but she didn't come home. I was distraught. She was my very first dog and she taught me so much about loving and life. I needed something to distract me from the loss and don't ask me why, but I took up baking bread of all things. It was something I always wanted to do and it was also something that required following an established set of procedures. I couldn't just wing it. I had to learn how to do it properly.

Communicating with confidence and courage is a little like baking bread, minus the calories of course. There are basics that have to be learned that will apply across many situations and can be used in conjunction with a variety of more advanced techniques. So as Julie Andrews sang in *The Sound of Music*, let's start at the very beginning. It's a very good place to start.

This first chapter is all about the foundation for strong communication. For example, it's so much easier to deliver a difficult message if you've already built a relationship with the person, and sometimes you have to listen, really listen, before you can persuasively give your opinion. So even though some of what this first chapter contains may seem fundamental to you, it forms the foundation on which all other communication can take place. Master these techniques to start and you'll be in good shape when the going gets tougher.

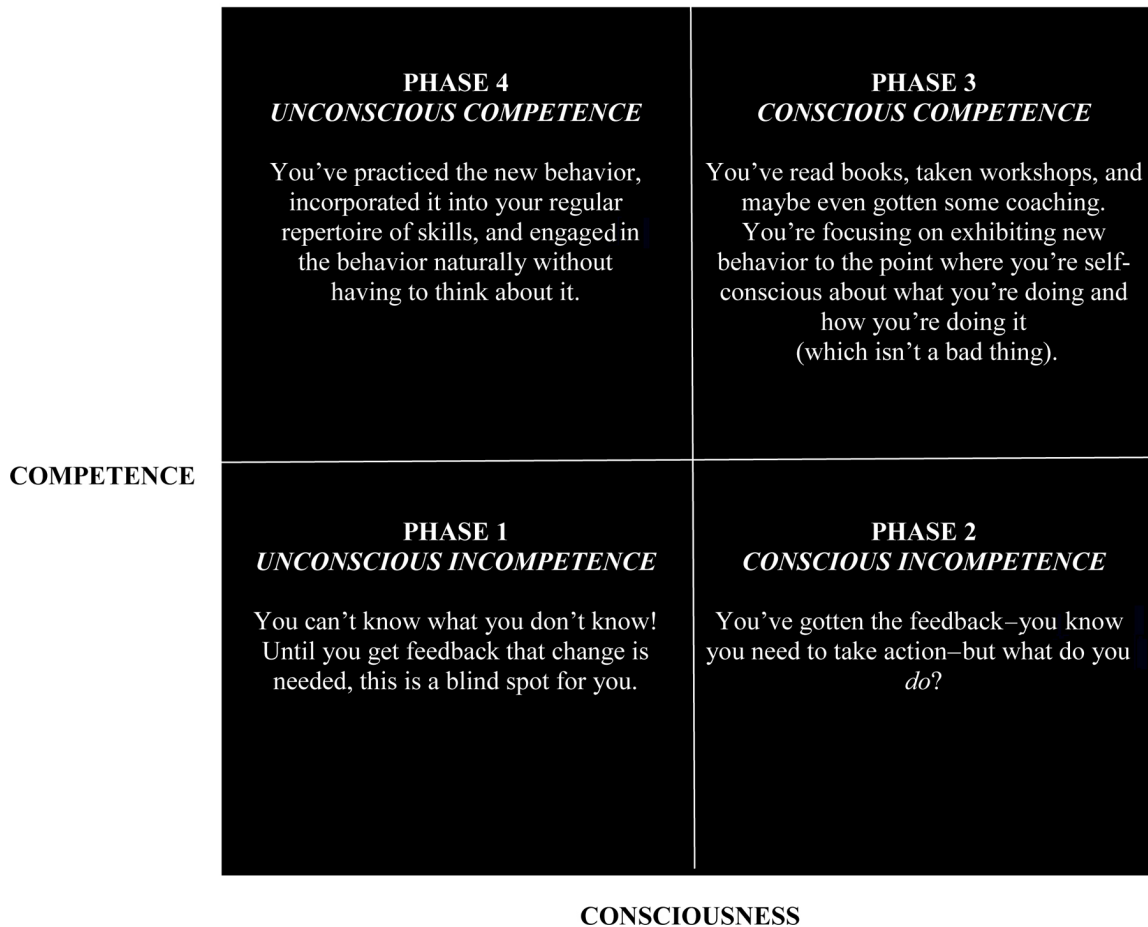
Tip 1: Build Rapport

Rapport is defined by Merriam-Webster as a friendly, harmonious relationship, especially a relationship characterized by agreement, mutual understanding, or empathy that makes communication possible or easy. I think rapport is like the WD-40 of relationships. It makes everything glide effortlessly.

Think about it. When someone you like delivers difficult or bad news to you or even tries to influence you to be on their side of an issue, you are so much more likely to respond positively or at least not negatively. On the other hand, if you don't have rapport with that person or the relationship has been contentious in the past, you're more likely to be resistant to the message. This is what's known as the *halo effect*, or a bias in how we interact with others based on our past associations with them. Rapport doesn't happen by accident. It usually happens because at least one party in the communication has consciously or unconsciously worked at making it happen.

If this isn't something you've thought of before, then in the beginning you're going to have to work consciously at developing rapport. Over time and with practice, it will become more natural to you. You may find the model of unconscious competence helpful as you start developing this and the other techniques contained in this book. Here's a chart to help visualize this concept:

UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE



Beginning with the box on the lower left, you have low consciousness and low competence. Let me give you an example here. A few years ago when I wanted to take up golf, I had no idea how to hold the club, how to swing it, how to address the ball, how to get the ball out of the sand trap, and so forth. In other words, I had no consciousness of what I was doing wrong because I had never done it before, so how could I be competent about something that I had no consciousness around? That's why we call it *unconscious incompetence*.

Now I want you to picture the lower right-hand box. This is high consciousness but still low competence. At this point, you're aware of the mistakes you're making, but you still don't know what to do about it. Using the golf example, after I'd had a few lessons, I would say to myself, "Oh,

I'm supposed to be bending my knees. Oh, I'm supposed to be bringing my club back farther. Oh, I'm supposed to be keeping my eye on the ball." Okay, now I'm conscious about what I'm incompetent at, and this is what's called *conscious incompetence*, but being aware is movement.

So now I want you to move to the upper right-hand box, or high consciousness and high competence. That's called *conscious competence*. Now that I've had lessons for a year or more and I'm playing golf and I'm doing pretty well at it, I can go out and play a whole game and I can play with other people and not be embarrassed, but I'm always having to think about what I am doing with my club. What am I doing with my body? Am I looking at the ball enough? That's why this is called *conscious competence*. I can do it, but I'm always conscious of what I'm doing. You would think that that would be a good thing, but it's not enough. It means you still have to remind yourself to do something differently, how to do it, when to do it, and so forth. And that takes a lot of energy.

But with practice over time, you eventually move to the upper left-hand box, low consciousness and high competence, and we call that *unconscious competence*. So now after a number of years when I go out on the golf course, I'm not focusing so much on all these little things that I have to do. They tend to come more naturally and you naturally engage in behaviors as if they were old hat to you. When you've practiced them, they become part of what's known as your cellular memory, so be patient with yourself as you move through the model from unconsciously incompetent to unconsciously competent. As with learning anything new, you begin by not knowing what you don't know, and through focus, practice, and feedback, you eventually become unconsciously competent.

Let's go back to rapport. Someone we look to as being really good at building rapport is former U.S. president Bill Clinton. Even people who don't particularly like him have told me that when they met him, he made them feel as if they were the only person in the room. This is a common theme among those who have interacted with Clinton. When asked how he achieved this, they report behaviors like, he looked me in the eye when he was speaking to me, he really listened to what I was saying, he asked questions about what I said, he circled back to me later and commented on something I said. These things aren't rocket science, but you'd be surprised how many people find them hard to do or just don't want to do them.

Following my FEME model of building rapport will put you on the path to establishing warm, mutually beneficial relationships.

BUILDING RAPPORT WITH FEME®

Find common ground: Look for things you have in common with people. Whether it's where you were born or went to school, whether you are married or not married, favorite places you've traveled or where you would like to travel, it's all grist for the rapport-building mill.

Express genuine interest: This is something you just can't fake. I always know when someone is genuinely interested based on the questions they ask me. Are they questions designed to bring the topic back to them or to delve more deeply into understanding me or my position? Expressing genuine interest requires you to delve more deeply into what the other person is saying.

Match body language: Research shows that we tend to gravitate toward people who we perceive to be just like us. One way this is communicated is through body language. Does the person lean in when they speak to you or do they want more physical distance? Do they maintain steady eye contact or do they tend to look away more often? Do they smile often or are they more serious? Learning to read and respond to body language is helpful not only in building rapport, but also in a host of other situations. It's pretty hard to do this if you're only focused on yourself. It requires you to suspend your own needs for the moment and read between the lines.

Exhibit empathy: Not to be confused with sympathy (feeling compassion or sorrow), empathy lets the other person know you understand how it feels to be in their shoes. To be effective at exhibiting empathy, you often have to read between the lines and read body language. A person may not say she feels devastated at the loss of a dear friend, but the look on her face and her description of the person's passing might lead you to say, "It sounds like this is a devastating loss for you." Now she knows you understand how she *feels*.

One important thing to note—you should be building rapport with everyone you come in contact with. Not only those people you think can do

something for you or from whom you may need something. I'm a firm believer in the maxim, "When you need a relationship, it's too late to build it." The easiest way to build rapport is to do it early and often. Rapport usually isn't built through one interaction, but through a series of consistent interactions. In fact, behaving consistently is one of the best things you can do to gain trust. If you have the tendency to want to jump in and fix people's problems, this isn't the place for it. In fact, it can be perceived by some as intrusive. With rapport, you simply take the other person's lead and try to connect it with a similar experience you or someone you know may have had.

Here's an example of how it sounds to build rapport:

Lois: Pam, I just noticed that picture on your desk of a beautiful baby.

Pam: Oh, that's my niece Amy. She's a year old now and I can't get enough of her.

Lois: When you say that you have the biggest smile on your face.

Pam: Oh, I know. They live up in San Francisco, so I really don't get to see her as much as I'd like.

Lois: I've got a few kids in the family who I feel the same way about. How do you handle the distance?

Pam: Now that she's getting a little older, my sister actually puts her on FaceTime and we can have a call that way and I make a point of going to San Francisco for long weekends whenever I can.

Lois: Still, it seems like it's not enough for you. You seem a little wistful.

Pam: No, it's not, but there's not much I can do about it.

Lois: I hope as Amy gets older you have more FaceTime calls and visits.

Pam: Me too.

Remember, this is just one of many interactions you will have with Pam.

You can build on the conversation in the future by asking about her niece and if she's been to visit lately.

Tip 2: Talk Back to Self-Talk

Often there's a little voice inside the heads of nice girls that warns us not to be too direct, too assertive, too demanding, too bossy, needy, greedy... or otherwise people might not like us. It could be that voice developed in you in response to feedback you've been given or just observing what's happened when other women speak up and speak out. As crazy as this may sound at first, you have to talk back to that fearful voice. You have to counter the old messages and replace them with new ones in order to move forward. If your fearful girl's voice says, "But no one will like me if I say this," let your woman's voice respond with, "I can't control what people think. I can only act with the best of intentions."

I know I have a message that I use when the nice girl is screaming, "Who are you to think you have the right to say that?" I respond with, "Not only do I have a right, but I also have a responsibility to say this." I let the phrase repeat in my head as many times as necessary until I build the courage to stand up and say it for myself. Yes, as a recovering nice girl, even I practice what I preach.

So what should *your* self-talk be? If I asked you what you want to say to that voice, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Come on. I know you can come up with something. What is it you want to say to that voice in your head that tells you that you should just keep quiet? Now say it out loud.

Here are a few more phrases you can use to counter those messages that hold you back from expressing what you're really thinking or feeling:

- I am an adult with all the privileges that accompany it.
- No one has the right to put me down. No one.
- My voice is just as important as the next person's.
- I have the right to ask for what I need.
- And my personal favorite is a quote from Quincy Jones: "Not one drop of my self-worth depends on your acceptance of me."

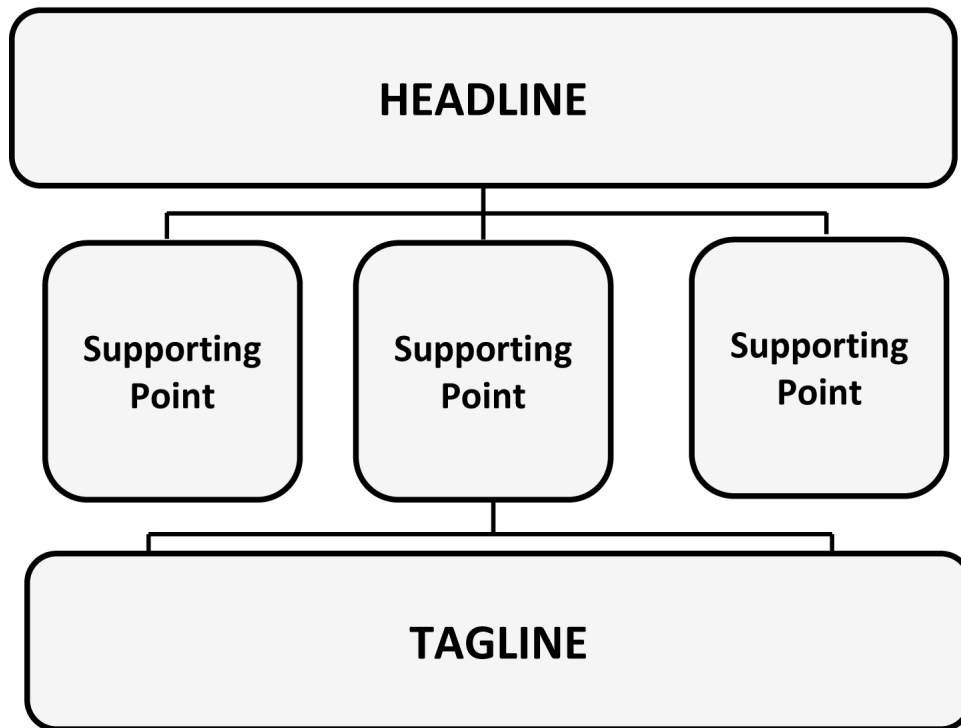
No matter what your mantra, let it be your place to go when you hesitate to say what's really on your mind.

Tip 3: Communicate in Headlines

“There’s something I want to talk to you about. It’s about an idea I’ve had for a while now. In fact, I’ve been researching it for about eighteen months. I wanted to make sure I had all the facts before I sat down and talked to you about it. Just the research has been an interesting experience because I was able to look at the best practices that companies similar to ours have been using for ensuring their recruitment efforts are productive and targeted to the growing parts of the market, and this is something that we all have struggled with: attracting and retaining talent in the tech field. We’re always talking about it in staff meetings. Did you know that 90 percent of the graduates at the top of their classes at schools with engineering programs, like MIT, Princeton, Stanford, and UCLA, go to 10 percent of the tech companies in Silicon Valley? Isn’t that pretty amazing?”

Were you as bored reading this as I was writing it? Did you find yourself asking, “What the heck is she talking about and when is she going to get to her point?” Of course! Now, be honest with yourself. Are you the kind of person who uses more words when fewer would be better? Do you find yourself verbally tap dancing to fill in the silence? After you’ve given your opinion or answer to questions, do you sometimes lose your train of thought when explaining complex issues? Then you *really* need to practice headline communications.

HEADLINE COMMUNICATION



The top box represents your headline. The three smaller boxes each represent a key point or piece of data, and the box on the bottom represents a tagline. Let's talk about each of the boxes and what you should put in them if you want to deliver clear, cogent, and crisp messages.

First, the top box, as I said, is your headline. It's what you want someone to remember if you were to be interrupted in the first thirty seconds of your conversation. Too often women use far too many words before they ever get to the point and as a result their messages are diluted. Sometimes people even tune them out altogether before they ever get to the point. I'm sure that's probably what you did with my cold lead-in to this tip.

Next, the three square boxes just below the headline box are for the points that support your proposal or sometimes even your opinion. Picture the boxes numbered one, two, and three. This is important because it's a reminder to number the points as you say them. This cues both you and the listener to listen for three points.

Once you've made your three points, it's time to stop and get input. For

women, this is in the form of an inclusive tagline. Men can often get away with just stopping, and they tend to be more comfortable with the ensuing silence. Women not so much. So that bottom box is your tagline. The tagline can be a call to action such as, “Do you see any reason why we shouldn’t move forward with this?” Or a call for input: “Do you have any questions or thoughts about what I’m proposing?” Or something even more assertive, such as a statement of your intentions: “You can see I feel strongly about this, so if there are no objections, I’m going to move forward.”

If you’re answering a question, a good tagline is, “Did I answer your question?” or “Do you have any questions about what I just said?” The model works equally well for answering questions on the spot, for giving your opinion, or for making proposals.

One more tip. If someone catches you off guard with a question, don’t be afraid to lead your headline with something like, “I haven’t fully thought this through yet, but off the top of my head, I would say...” then start with your headline model. This way people aren’t expecting a fully cooked response. You could always go back later and revisit the conversation once you have more data.

Let me use the scenario that I started out with to demonstrate how you could put each of these steps together to make that message so much more powerful.

Headline:

“I’d like to propose that we address our recruiting challenge by implementing a summer internship for students from the top five engineering schools.

“I’m suggesting this for three reasons”:

Supporting Points:

“First, my research shows that 90 percent of those who graduate in the top of their class go to just 10 percent of the tech firms in Silicon Valley, and every one of those firms has a summer internship program.

“Second, our corporate culture with its employee-centric focus

appeals to this generation of workers. We just have to expose them to it.

“And third, our business always picks up in the summer. This means we could have meaningful work and opportunities for real learning for interns.”

Tagline:

“You can see I feel strongly about this, so if there are no objections, I’ll go ahead and create a formal proposal for the HR team and present it at our quarterly meeting.”

You can see that the way I just said that using headlines and taglines was so much more powerful than the way that I did at the beginning of this tip. Start thinking and speaking in headlines and watch how your confidence and the confidence that others have in you rises exponentially.

Tip 4: Learn the DESC Script

This nifty little model is perfect for helping you to prepare what you anticipate might be a difficult conversation. I use it myself all the time, and it gives me time to organize my thoughts in what might be a stressful or anxiety-producing situation. What we're going to focus on are the four letters *D-E-S-C*, which you can use to create your written or mental script—hence the term *DESC script*.

THE DESC SCRIPT

D = Describe the purpose of the conversation

I'd like to talk to you about something that happened in our meeting yesterday.

E = Explain your position and elicit feedback from the other person

I observed that each time I took the floor to speak, you started texting and checking emails. It made me feel that what I had to say wasn't important enough for your full attention. How do you see the situation?

S = Specify desired outcomes

Okay. I understand. What I would really appreciate is if you would not only listen to what I'm saying, but also comment on it. You have a lot of knowledge and I have no doubt your input would be valuable to me.

C = Clarify consequences (positive or negative)

Positive

I think if we can better support one another in this way, we would both get a lot out of it and the department would be better for it.

Negative

We can't seem to agree on how to move forward on this issue. I can only tell you that without mutual support, the end product won't have the same quality as if we did.

The *D* stands for: *Describe* the purpose of the conversation. What is it you want to talk about? It should be just one sentence, kind of like a headline. It might be something like, “I’d like to talk to you about something that happened in the meeting yesterday.”

The *E* has two parts: *Explain* your position and *elicit* feedback from the other person. What is it that happened and how did it impact you? How does the other person perceive the scenario?

For example, “I noticed that each time I took to the floor, you started checking your phone for messages. It made me feel as if what I had to say wasn’t important enough for your attention. Do you remember this?”

Now you pause to just listen. No matter what the person says, you aren’t going to argue. You’re simply going to listen and acknowledge that you heard them. The person might get defensive and adamantly say, “No, that’s not true.” Or they might be remorseful and say something like, “Oh, I had no idea you felt that way.” In any case, you’re going to give an indication that you heard them, although you don’t have to agree with them, and then you move toward what you want to see happen in the future.

It would sound like this: “I understand what you’re saying,” or “Thanks for being open to my feelings.” Both of those would be appropriate responses, and that brings us to the *S* of the script: *Specify* desired outcomes. Here’s where you specifically say what you would like to see happen. It’s not a demand but rather a request for a change. Using the same scenario, it might be, “I’d like to ask that you listen to my ideas and proposals and provide me with feedback in these meetings. You have a lot of knowledge that I could benefit from and I would appreciate your input.”

Finally, the *C* refers to *clarify* consequences, which can be positive or negative. If it’s the first time I’ve spoken with the person about the issue, I’m going to point out the positive consequences of what I’m asking for. For example: “We really have a complementarity of knowledge, and if we can support one another, we both win and so does the department.”

On the other hand, if we’ve had the same conversation before and nothing has changed, I might be a little bit more direct. In that case, my consequence might sound like this: “Given that we’ve had this conversation before and nothing’s changed, I can only assume that you don’t want to collaborate, which will in the long run reduce the overall quality of our collective output.”

No technique of communication can guarantee you'll get what you want. The use of the DESC script, however, can increase the likelihood of it and enable you to be a powerful advocate for yourself. As I've already told you, as a recovering nice girl, I remind myself to use the same tools and techniques described in this book.

In fact, just the other day I used the DESC script with a friend that I needed to speak with about a somewhat delicate matter. Barbara is a woman with whom I've been friends for a long time and we sit on a few committees together. Over the past few years, I found myself declining her invitations to get together socially. She could sense it and it was putting a strain on what could be a great friendship for both of us. When I knew that we'd be seeing each other in a casual environment, I used the script that I had practiced to express my feelings.

It went something like this. Now I want you to look at my use of the DESC:

“Barbara, there's something that I'd like to talk to you about that's been on my mind for a while. When we're in meetings or even in conversations, I feel like I never get my entire thought out before I'm interrupted. I know that you're a fast thinker, but sometimes you jump to conclusions based on hearing only a part of what I've said. At other times I just feel like I'm not heard and it makes me not want to talk at all. I'm wondering if you've noticed when this happens.”

Now, to her credit, Barbara responded that she had no idea I felt this way and she wished that I had said something sooner, so I continued.

“I really appreciate you taking it in this manner because that's the manner in which I intended it and in fact I did tell you on other occasions, but you probably just forgot. Be that as it may, what I'd really like is if you would listen more openly to my messages to ensure that you've heard my full meaning. If you can do this for me, I think our interactions will be more frequent and fulfilling for us both.”

Even if Barbara only changes her habit and interrupts me 25 percent less, it will ultimately lead to a better relationship, and she invited me to give her a sign when she's not listening, so that's progress, too.

Tip 5: Use Contrasting

Have you ever been hesitant to ask for something that you want or need because you're afraid you'll come across as too needy or greedy? Maybe someone has done a lot for you, but it's not quite enough or not quite what you want. You don't want to seem ungrateful, but at the same time you feel like you deserve something more or different. Contrasting is a technique that you just have to add to your repertoire. It is so simple but it works like a charm. As the name suggests, you are contrasting what you do want and what you don't want in terms of the person's perception of your request. It isn't a stand-alone practice, but rather something that you use in combination with other techniques. For example, you might use it with the DESC script as your lead-in, or you might use it in conjunction with a headline communication.

Let me give you a few examples here of how this looks combined with other techniques. Let's say you want to ask for a raise from a boss who's been good to you in many ways, but you're still underpaid and someone being nice to you doesn't pay your bills. In this case, you might say, "I don't want you to think I'm not grateful for all that you've done for me because I am. At the same time, I want to discuss the raise I was promised but never received." Then you would shift to the model for negotiating for a raise that I discuss in a later tip.

Or perhaps you were given a beautiful gift that isn't quite you. You know the person put a lot of time and thought into the gift and you don't want to hurt their feelings, but you also know you'll never use it and they will notice for sure. Here you would use contrasting to say, "I don't want you to think I don't realize how much thought you put into choosing this lovely gift because it's clear to me that you did and I would never want to hurt your feelings. At the same time, I had my heart set on something a little different and I'm hoping you won't mind if I exchange it for what I really want." In most cases, the person will say, "Of course, I want you to have what you want." They might have their feelings hurt a little bit, but unless they're narcissistic, they'll get over it and the relationship will be no worse for wear.

Let's do one more, this time with a colleague who constantly interrupts you as you're trying to get your work done. You don't want to damage the relationship, but you do need to set some boundaries. In this scenario, contrasting would sound like this: "You know, Joe, I don't want you to think I don't want to talk to you during the workday because I certainly do. At the same time, I've been swamped with work lately and when I stop to talk, it takes me longer to pick up where I left off and that means I'm going to have to work late. How about if we make a point of catching up over lunch or during the afternoon break?"

Saying something like this would surely not have the impact of hurting someone's feelings, but rather have them understand where you're coming from. Using contrasting when you're delivering what you perceive to be a difficult message is going to help the other person understand exactly what you mean and what you don't mean.

Tip 6: Vary Your Influence Style

When it comes to influence, women tend to overly rely on a style that is open, collaborative, and focuses on maintaining the relationship. It's not to say that that's bad, just that if you use only this one style, you'll miss opportunities to more effectively influence others to accept your ideas, proposals, or requests. It's important that you broaden your scope of influence by using a wide array of techniques, each appropriate for the situation. Although there are many models for influence, the one I like incorporates five behavioral styles: persuading, asserting, bridging, attracting, and moving away. Let me first explain what they are, and then I'll demonstrate how they sound.

INFLUENCE STYLES

STYLE	BEHAVIORS	BEST USED WHEN
Persuading	Proposing Reasoning	You are the expert The other person is not adversarial You are respected for your knowledge
Asserting	Giving feedback Stating expectations Applying incentives	You have legitimate needs and wants You have something the other person wants The other person isn't controlling
Bridging	Listening Involving/Supporting Disclosing	The decision is open for discussion The other person knows something you might not know You want to build or heal a relationship
Attracting	Finding common ground Visioning—looking to	You are selling a unique idea Generating excitement is important You have something in common with the

	the future Emotional appeal	other people
Moving Away	Avoiding Disengaging	Temperatures are too high for anything to be gained It's politically correct—the other person has more power than you Your emotional state is that you can't function effectively

First, persuading. This style of influence involves proposing and reasoning. It's best used when you are the expert on a topic, when you are respected in your field, or when the other person is not adversarial. It uses data, facts, or a body of knowledge to make your case.

The second style, asserting, cranks up the heat a little more. With this style, you are giving feedback, stating your expectations clearly, and applying incentives and pressure. You use this style when you have a legitimate need or want, when you have something others want from you, or when the other person is not controlling. I like to say you use this style when the issue is the hill you're willing to die on.

The style that most women prefer is the third style, bridging. It entails listening, involving, supporting, and self-disclosing. It works well when you want to build or heal a relationship, when the other person knows something that you may not, and when a decision is open for discussion. As I said, it's not a bad style. It's just not the only style you should have in your tool kit.

In my opinion, the fourth style, attracting, can be very powerful, but I don't see it used often in business unless you're in sales. Attracting is about finding common ground, providing a vision for the future, and using an emotional appeal to influence others. You see it used most often when someone is trying to sell a unique idea, when generating excitement is important, or when you have something in common with others.

And finally, most people wouldn't consider the fifth style, moving away, a style of influence—but it is. This involves either disengaging from a discussion or avoiding it entirely. It comes in handy when emotions are high

and nothing is to be gained in the moment. So a time-out may be called for. It's also helpful when it's politically correct to acquiesce to someone who may be more powerful than you. And finally you might use this style when your own emotions preclude you from communicating effectively in a particular situation.

So those are the five styles: persuading, asserting, attracting, bridging, and moving away. Let me give you examples of how they each sound. For illustrative purposes, I'm going to use the same situation in each of the five demonstrations. This will enable you to really see how the same message is delivered to someone senior to me in very different scenarios.

Beginning with persuading. This is where I'm proposing and reasoning:

"Based on my experience working in human resources for over twenty years and the research that I've done into best practices at other firms our size, I recommend that we implement company-sponsored affinity groups for women, people of color, and LGBTQ employees. I say this for three reasons:

"First, our competitors are doing it and it appears that it's working to attract younger workers to their teams throughout the United States.

"Second, our attrition rate for women has been increasing by about 2.5 percent each year. The woman's affinity group would help us to identify the reasons why they're leaving and how to improve retention.

"And third, it's consistent with our business model for increasing diversity at all levels of the organization and the goals we've set in this arena. Is there any reason why I shouldn't get started developing the program?"

You can see that I use the headline communication model and emphasized logic and reason.

Now let's see how it sounds using the assertive approach:

"I'd like to provide some feedback as to how we're doing in the area of diversity and inclusivity. Despite an eighteen-month focus on the desire to improve in this arena, we've seen virtually no

movement in the numbers. In fact, women continue to leave our company at the same rate as they have in the past. This makes us far less competitive with attracting and retaining the talent we need to grow according to our business plan.

“As the person responsible for implementing our affirmative action plan, I believe we must act now before we lose any more ground. My plan is to implement company-sponsored affinity groups for women, people of color, and LGBTQ employees. These groups will help management to achieve the diversity and inclusion goals and for far less expense and more return on investment than traditional training programs.

“Before I get started, I wanted to give you a heads-up and see if you have any input for how we can ensure success.”

As you can see, I upped the ante on this one. I provided an assessment of the situation, provided feedback, stated my expectations, and suggested incentives. This is because it's my role to create these changes and meet these goals.

Turning now to the bridging style, you'll see that this is far more conversational and more aligned with many women's natural preferences. You'll see that I'm actively listening, involving, and supporting before I disclose my own ideas:

Lois: Donna, I'd like to get your input on our diversity and inclusion program. As you know, it's been in place for about eighteen months now, so we have a track record to take a look at.

Donna: My opinion is that we're doing great. I haven't heard any complaints.

Lois: Can you explain more to me what doing great means to you in addition to the lack of complaints?

Donna: Well, no complaints is a big deal in my book. Usually when we talk to managers about affirmative action, they think it's all about quotas and hiring unqualified people. Since they haven't complained, I'd say that's a plus.

Lois: Is there anything else you think is going well?

Donna: People seem to like the clever posters that are around the café. I hear them repeating phrases like “Diversity is getting invited to the party and inclusion is getting asked to dance.” It helps them look at the concept in a different light.

Lois: That’s great. So no complaints and there’s buzz about the posters. Sounds like a good start for us.

Donna: Yes, I think so.

Lois: Given what you said, we can start to build on these wins because people don’t have a negative perception of diversity and inclusivity. They may be open to taking even another step.

Donna: Like what?

Lois: Like affinity groups.

Donna: I’ve heard about these at other companies. It’s when people with similar challenges get together to meet, like groups of Latinos, women, blacks, gays, right?

Lois: In a nutshell. Yes, that’s it.

Donna: What good do they really do, though?

Lois: They’ve been shown to improve employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and in some cases even impact earnings. For a relatively low investment, the returns can be significant. I’d like to get started with laying the groundwork by the end of the quarter. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Donna: You know, it can’t hurt. Why don’t we go ahead and do it.

If only it was so easy, right? Although nothing is ever easy. Varying your influence style for the situation can make it easier to get your ideas put into action.

And now the fourth style of influence, attracting. This relies on you to find common ground with your audience and paint a picture of the future

using an emotional appeal rather than an intellectual one. Look at how different this style is from the previous three:

“We’ve often talked about how we can become recognized as one of the best places to work in America, and I know how to achieve this—affinity groups. I want you to picture employees joining groups of people who share common career challenges in our company and learning how to overcome those challenges within our company.

“Picture them sharing best practices, inviting inspiring speakers, and becoming involved with plans to make our company both diverse and inclusive. Companies around the world are doing this, and with a little effort and lots of communication, we can too. The impact of affinity groups on a company is remarkable. Increased satisfaction, lower turnover, greater cooperation, and creativity. Who doesn’t want that? My plan is to get these groups up and running by the end of the quarter, and I’d appreciate your support. Do you have any questions I can answer about affinity groups at this time?”

You’ll notice that the attracting style of influence works best with people who are also visionaries or who are at least open to cutting-edge ideas.

Remember, enthusiasm is caught, not taught, so use yours to your advantage. And now we come to the last style of influence, moving away. This style suggests that you simply don’t bring up the idea if the timing is wrong, or that you disengage from a conversation when it’s clear that continuing would be counterproductive. It might go something like this:

“I can tell that you’re not as excited as I am about this affinity group idea. Your concerns seem to revolve around cost and time. Why don’t I take those back and do some research about how other companies our size address those issues and then we can meet again when I have more data.”

As you can see, I don’t give up on the idea. Instead, I use the information gleaned from the interaction to prepare a better pitch, one that includes ways to overcome objections. Hearing those objections is actually

a gift because they enable you to go into future presentations or negotiations armed with the data you need to make a compelling case.

Remember, varying your influence style to meet the needs of the people that you're communicating with and based on the topic that you're trying to influence them to accept can really work to your advantage. Don't rely on just one style.

Tip 7: Never Say No

Okay, let's make that "don't say no, except in extreme situations." Of course there are times when there's nothing like a good old-fashioned no, no way, uh-uh, negative, not going to happen. When it comes to safety, sexual harassment, impending danger, and a host of other scenarios, no may be the only way to go, and in this section I am not providing suggestions for how to manage unreasonable expectations. That's entirely different.

This section is designed to help you when yes is simply not an option. It's important to remember that people don't like hearing the word *no*. As a stand-alone word, it's ugly and frustrating. It makes others feel as if a brick wall is put between them and their desires. It's like putting a red flag in front of a bull. Even if someone asks you to do something illegal or unethical, which of course you're going to decline to do, you still don't have to say no.

The reason why this is important is because you don't want to damage your relationship, and you know what they say about karma. I'm old-fashioned like that. I think there are enough people in the world who are willing to be hurtful to others, intentionally or otherwise, that I just don't need to be one of them. There are a few stock phrases that you can add to your vocabulary if you want to tell someone no in a way that doesn't deflate their balloon.

Here are some common phrases that you can use in a variety of situations to say no without ever having to say no.

NEVER SAY NO

Stock phrases for communicating a negative response without saying no.

- In response to an invitation:

As much as I would love to attend, my calendar is already over-scheduled for that week.

- In response to a statement that may have some truth to it:

Be that as it may, it doesn't change the fact that I'm not able to provide you with a loan at this time.

- In response to someone asking you to do something that actually benefits them more than you:

Thank you for thinking of me. Unfortunately, I am not able to take advantage of your kind offer.

- In response to someone you care about and to whom you genuinely wish you could say yes:

If I could, I would. I really value our relationship and wish the situation was different.

- In response to someone asking for yet another favor:

Although I've been able to help you out in the past, this time I just don't have the bandwidth.

- In response to a somewhat unreasonable request:

I'm sure you understand that I receive many similar requests and that I'm just not able to be of help at this time.

- In response to someone who uses flattery to get you to accept their request:

I'm flattered and at the same time I'm not able to accept your gracious offer.

- When you are genuinely sorry that you must decline:

I'm so sorry that this isn't going to work out. I hope it might in the future.

You can see that there are many ways you can say no without ever using the word *no*. Try practicing some of these in low-risk situations and then work up to using them when the stakes are higher.

Tip 8: Be a Broken Record

I realize that some of you reading this book have never owned a vinyl record—the kind you put on a record player and listen to through speakers. What you may not know is that when the record has a scratch in it, the needle gets stuck in that groove and plays in the same place over and over and over again. When that happens, we have no choice but to either discard the record or kick the record player so that the needle will move to the next hopefully unscratched groove. Sometimes you have to be like that broken record. You have to repeat your point or request over and over again until the other person moves the needle to the next groove—by agreeing with you, negotiating with you, or at least understanding you. When you are a broken record, you don't say and repeat the exact same thing but rather repeat the gist of the message using different words.

Let me give you an example. Many years ago, I went to the Hollywood Bowl for a concert I'd really been looking forward to. When some friends and I arrived on Saturday night and we went to our seats, we found that they were already occupied. I asked the people seated to see their tickets and sure enough they had the same seats we did, so I called an usher over and they informed me that my tickets were for Friday night, the previous night. I looked at the tickets, and sure enough they said Friday. Now, I had bought the tickets at the box office the previous Sunday and clearly recalled a conversation that I had with the ticket seller. When I asked for tickets on Saturday night, he said there were better tickets available for Friday. At that point, I informed him that I would be in New York until Friday night on business.

Given this conversation, I knew he had made the mistake. Nonetheless, the usher told me there was nothing he could do, so I asked to speak to the supervisor. Although the supervisor was sympathetic, he, too, told me there was nothing that could be done and that the policy was you're supposed to check your tickets before you leave the box office. At that point, I asked to speak to his supervisor, who turned out to be the manager of the venue. Within a few minutes, a very pregnant woman came to talk to me about the situation. She, too, was sympathetic, but she was not yielding to this policy

about having to check your tickets before you leave the box office.

Now look at how I used the broken record and some other tactics that we've already discussed to resolve the issue:

Lois: I understand what your policy is and I also recall my discussion with the ticket seller and therefore believe the mistake was his, not mine.

Julie: Well, he's off tonight, so there's nothing we can really do.

Lois: The policy is only fair if a mistake is made by the person purchasing the ticket. It seems to me if the mistake was made by one of your employees, you would want to make good on it.

Julie: I don't know that he made the mistake. That's just your side of it.

Lois: Be that as it may, a mistake was clearly made and the issue needs to be resolved. I realize that you don't know me, but I have all these guests with me and our car is parked in the middle of a lot where we can't get out until after the concert.

Julie: Well, I can sell you more tickets.

Lois: I don't think it's fair that I have to buy more tickets for a mistake that wasn't mine.

Julie: I'll tell you what, if you're so sure the ticket seller will remember you, then you'll be willing to buy more tickets, and if you come back tomorrow when he's working and he does remember you, I'll refund your money.

Lois: That's fair because I know he'll remember me and our discussion.

At that point we got new tickets and we enjoyed the concert in seats that were actually better than those we originally purchased. And when I returned the next morning, guess what? The ticket seller didn't even let me finish my sentence. When he handed over a refund, he said, "I already heard all about it." And that's how the broken record works. Sometimes you

just have to wear people down.

One other tip: Be aware of when someone is using the broken record on you. This happened to me just the other day when I was on the phone with a customer service representative who was located in India. I only know that because I asked where she was.

Clearly she had been taught to use the broken record when someone could not provide their password. In my case, my password had been changed by a hacker and so I couldn't get into my account, which was why I was calling. The woman just kept repeating in every way she knew how that she could not help me without a password.

Recognizing that none of my influence tactics nor the broken record was helping me in the situation, I simply elevated the request to someone who understood my situation and did have the authority to help me without a password. That's why it's important to recognize when someone is using the broken record on you. If it's not going to solve your problem, you almost always have to elevate it to someone with more authority.

Tip 9: Speak to the Types

Have you ever been in a discussion with someone who was so detail-oriented that you just couldn't stand to listen any longer? Or maybe it was someone who refused to take a stand on an issue because she didn't know what other people thought about it. Maybe when you are speaking to others, you notice their eyes start to glaze over and their minds start to wander. This happens because people have distinct communication preferences. Although we can't put people into neat little boxes that account for those preferences, most people do give us clues as to how they like to give and receive information.

By paying attention to those clues, you can prepare and deliver your message in a way that's more likely to be heard, understood, and hopefully accepted. There are four primary distinct preferences when it comes to communication.

- A person who prefers data, facts, and figures.
- A person who prefers to communicate in feelings.
- A person who values action.
- A person who prefers ideas.

I use the word *primary* because we typically use at least one of the other modes in many of our day-to-day communications.

If you're the kind of person who communicates your ideas using feelings, as many women prefer, and you're trying to influence someone who likes to communicate using facts, as many men prefer, then there's going to be a natural disconnect. When you say, "I feel this is the right thing to do," the other person is thinking, I don't care what you *feel*; give me a logical reason why we should do this. In situations like this, great ideas are often overlooked or even ridiculed because they weren't communicated in a way the other person could process. The antidote to this dilemma is to vary your communication style based on the preferences of the person you're

trying to influence.

If you think this smacks of being phony, think again. Your message doesn't change, just the words you use to deliver it. With a little practice, you can identify the preferred styles of other people.

SPEAK TO THE TYPES

If the other person...	Then...
Has an office that looks like no one works there, is always extraordinarily well groomed, and doesn't like small talk...	It's likely they will want you to communicate using data, facts, and figures. Do not try to schmooze with them; it will backfire. Come prepared to meetings with all the information needed to make or support your case so that a decision can be made logically and rationally.
Is someone who is always organizing the holiday parties or picnics, remembers everyone's names and the names of their dogs, and has a lot of personal memorabilia in the office...	It's likely they will respond best to communications using feelings, values, and precedents. Start your conversations with a little small talk, then shift to the business at hand. When trying to influence this person, show that you've checked with others and your proposal was well received or explain how it will benefit the people impacted by it.
Usually has little time or patience for long conversations, has an office that looks like a bomb went off in it, and shows little concern for style or fashion...	Use an executive summary, communicating only in bullet points. Present your ideas in a way that suggests action can be quickly taken and results will be happen sooner than later. Be prepared to answer questions, but don't provide more information than is absolutely required to make your point.
Seems like a big-picture	Your best bet to effectively influence them is to

thinker, someone who sometimes lives in a world of ideas more than reality, can be creative, and has an office with sports items, toys, novelty items, or modern art...	present your ideas as state-of-the-art or cutting-edge in ways that will competitively position your company or department. Speak logically and factually, but with an emphasis on the future or how your proposal will distinguish the company from others in the field.
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First, I want you to picture someone who has an office that looks like no one works there. Someone who's always extraordinarily well groomed and doesn't like small talk. If you're not like this, you might even find this person kind of cold or aloof. If that's the kind of person you know that you're speaking with, then if you want to be able to influence them, you have to be able to communicate using data, facts, and figures.

Do not try to schmooze them. It's going to backfire. Come prepared to meetings with all the information needed to make or support your case so that a decision can be made logically and rationally.

Now I want you to picture a person who's always organizing the holiday parties or picnics, remembers everyone's names and the names of their dogs, and has lots of personal memorabilia in the office, like pictures of the kids, trophies, or souvenirs from past off-sites. To influence these people, you have to play to their feelings, their values, and past precedents or traditions. Start your conversations with a little small talk. Then shift to the business at hand. Show that you've checked with others and that your proposal was well received or explain how it will benefit the people impacted by it. That's how you're going to influence people who communicate using feelings.

The third type of communication style usually has little time or patience for long conversations. They have an office that looks like a bomb went off in it and show little concern for style or fashion. That's because they value action over all else. You need to use an executive summary communicated in only bullet points. Present your ideas in a way that suggests action can be taken quickly and that it has to happen sooner rather than later. Be prepared to answer questions but don't provide more information than is absolutely required to make your point. These people are fast thinkers.

And finally you have the big-picture thinkers. Those who sometimes live in a world of ideas more than reality are often creative people with offices that display sports items, toys, novelty items, or modern art. Your best bet to effectively influence them is to present your ideas as state-of-the-art or cutting-edge in ways that will competitively position your company or department. Speak logically and factually, but with an emphasis on the future or how your proposal would distinguish the company from others in the field.

Now let me give you some examples of how you can deliver the exact same message to people with different communication styles. The scenario is one where I want to hire twenty seasonal employees to help with a holiday rush. I will say the same thing in four different ways:

First, with the person who values data, facts, and figures:

“I propose that we hire twenty seasonal employees to help us manage the increase in orders over the holidays.

“There are three reasons why I think this is a good idea.

“First, the cost for the employees for a three-month period beginning November first and ending December thirty-first is less than the overtime we’ve paid to our employees in the past.

“Second, last year, orders couldn’t be sent out for forty-eight hours after the order was placed, and this delayed shipments.

“Third, we’re anticipating a 23 percent increase in online orders this year. Our current staff won’t be able to handle the additional holiday sales. Do you agree it’s the most logical and cost-effective course of action?”

Next, with the person who communicates using feelings:

“I’m going to say I’m concerned about our employees and the overtime they’re going to be forced to work this holiday season. Last year the average overtime for each employee was two hours per day, or ten hours per week. By the time Christmas came, they were exhausted and really didn’t have time to spend with their families.

“By all indications, this year we will see an even greater number of

online orders, which could mean they would need to work even more hours. I checked with them and they feel that they'd rather have the time off with their families than receive overtime pay. You know, most of them are millennials who value family over all else. That's why I'd like to hire twenty seasonal employees for the period November first through December thirty-first. How would you feel about it?"

With the action-oriented employee:

"I'm going to say we need to hire twenty seasonal employees from November first through December thirty-first. Online orders should be up 23 percent, and we just don't have the bandwidth to fulfill those orders in a timely fashion, even with people working overtime. Do you see any reason why I shouldn't put the ball in play and get this going?"

And finally with the idea person, it would look like this:

"As you know, online sales have become the way people shop for the holidays. In fact, we anticipate at least a 23 percent increase this year alone, and the trends indicate it's going to continue to climb in the coming years as brick-and-mortar stores disappear.

"So our online efforts are perfectly poised to adapt to the trend, perhaps even more so than our competitors. What we need to do to meet the growing numbers of online sales is hire seasonal employees. I'm suggesting twenty. The resulting head count will put us on par with our competitors and give us a good benchmark for future years."

Hopefully you can see that with a few slight variations in the style of delivery, I've spoken to the communication preferences of each of the types. However, also be prepared to shift if you can see your delivery method isn't on target.

I remember once meeting with a potential client and as I looked at him and around his office, I pegged him as wanting data, facts, and figures, so I geared my presentation that way. Soon I noticed his foot start to tap. TMI for this guy. Too much information. I quickly shifted to a more bottom-line approach, bulleting the benefits of the training program I was selling and asking him how soon he'd like to do it, and with that I walked out with a signed contract in my hand.

Tip 10: Seek First to Understand, Then Be Understood

It is so much easier to tell someone what *you* really feel when they know you understand what *they're* feeling. So often we make assumptions about how people feel or what they're thinking and we couldn't be more wrong. The only way to ensure understanding of another person's position is to engage in active listening. It's not just about emptying your own cup. It's about allowing others to empty theirs first so that they can take in your message. Active listening is so easy and effective that I don't understand why people don't make a habit of it. And before you skip to the next section because you're thinking to yourself, *Oh, I'm already a good listener*, take a minute to make sure you are really engaging in active listening.

Active listening involves three steps:

- The first is paraphrasing. This is the act of repeating in your own words what you think the speaker said. If you haven't really listened, you can't do it. If you haven't surrendered yourself to the speaker, paraphrasing isn't as easy as it sounds. You need not worry about repeating the message verbatim. When you paraphrase, the other person will let you know if you correctly heard the message. Paraphrasing also has the secondary benefit of allowing the speaker to hear his or her message played back. After a paraphrase, it's not unusual to hear someone say, "That's what I said, but it's not what I meant." It allows clarification for both you and the speaker.

- The second part of active listening is asking appropriate questions. By asking questions, both you and the speaker delve more deeply into the content of the message. An appropriate question is always one that is based on what has just been said. All too often the listener changes the direction of the conversation by asking a question unrelated to what the speaker just said. On the surface, it may appear appropriate, but closer examination reveals that it's really just a polite way to change the subject.

- And the third step in active listening is reflecting feelings. This is the toughest part of active listening. It involves taking a guess about how you think the other person must feel. It brings the relationship to an even deeper level of understanding. People who have difficulty expressing their own feelings have difficulty with listening to and reflecting the feelings of

others. If you reflect feelings and they're ignored or the conversation comes to a grinding halt, then of course it's best to drop this step. Part of being an active listener and listening with a third ear includes the ability to respond to the needs of the speaker. If talking about feelings makes him or her uncomfortable, don't push it. Not everyone wants his or her feelings reflected, but those who do will appreciate a well-timed reflection.

Let me show you how combining active listening with other techniques paves the way for you to deliver a difficult message in a way that increases the likelihood of it actually being heard in the way you intended it. The situation is this: You have a coworker who has been complaining about the workload. There have been layoffs and everyone is being asked to work double duty. It's been a struggle to keep up with your own work, but this coworker makes it even more difficult by not responding to your requests for data in a timely fashion, thereby making you late on your deliverables. You know how frustrated people are with the situation, and at the same time you need to speak with him so that you aren't the next one who gets laid off. Pay attention to how I combine active listening with the previously described DESC script in an effort to get what I need from this coworker:

Lois: I hear you've been under the gun lately.

Joe: That's an understatement. I'm doing the work of three people and still getting paid my same measly salary.

Lois: Whose responsibilities have you had to assume?

Joe: Tina's, Greg's, and Jeff's. They each played an important role in the product we're trying to launch by next spring and now they're gone. But the deadlines don't change. Just the amount of work.

Lois: You've really had to shoulder a lot more responsibilities since this layoff started, haven't you?

Joe: And some of what they did, I don't even understand. So there's a learning curve on top of that.

Lois: I'd say that's really doing double duty, taking on more responsibility and having to learn about it as you go along, and that's in addition to your regular job, which was always

challenging.

Joe: Yeah. Some days, I don't know how I do it. I go home tired and frustrated.

Lois: It sounds like you're just about at your wit's end and feeling frazzled on both ends.

Joe: I'm so far beyond frazzled. I'm just burned out.

Lois: I'm sorry to hear that this has been so difficult for you, Joe. I've always known you to be a real team player, and it sounds like that's gotten to be more of a challenge.

Joe: I feel like I want to be a good team player. It's just that there aren't enough hours in the day.

Lois: I know what you mean. I feel that way, too. At the same time, if we want to keep our jobs, we've got to keep focused on not only delivering on our goals, but delivering high quality, too.

Joe: Yeah, it's tough.

Lois: I've noticed that the data you usually get to me by Friday of every week is coming later and later. Is that because you just don't have the time to send it over?

Joe: It's not so much about the time. It's about the priorities. The boss sees everything as a number one priority and it makes it impossible to please her.

Lois: Yeah. I've encountered that, too, and I know it's frustrating.

Joe: I don't mean to take it out on you. I know you're facing the same challenges.

Lois: Well yeah, we're facing them together. That's for sure. I was hoping we might be able to help each other out. The boss is all over me for delivering these weekly reports late. Is there some way I could help you with some of your deliverables in exchange for getting that data on time like you always gave it to me?

Joe: I don't know. What could you help me with?

Lois: Well, I'm pretty good at project planning. I could develop a spreadsheet of realistic time frames and we could go and talk to the boss about it together. You know, there's safety in numbers and with the two of us saying the same thing, we're more likely to be able to influence her to be reasonable. We might even be able to get her to let go of some of the old tasks because there just aren't enough people to do them.

Joe: Actually that sounds like a good plan.

Lois: I'm so glad you think so because together we are much more likely to succeed than each of us just working with our own heads down. So is it a deal? I'll do the project plan and you'll start getting me the data by noon on Fridays?

Joe: It's worth a try. I'm in.

What I really want you to notice is that this conversation would have gone south quickly if I hadn't started with the DESC script. Joe was already feeling overwhelmed and underappreciated. To ask him for more would be counterproductive. But once I knew and understood how he felt, we could work together on a solution. That's the beauty of active listening. It helps to strengthen relationships so they can withstand difficult conversations.

Tip 11: Choose Powerful Words

When was the last time you said, “I strongly urge you to consider...” or “It is without equivocation that I propose...” And how about, “The data makes it abundantly clear that...” Phrases like *strongly urge*, *without equivocation*, and *abundantly* are ways to telegraph your confidence, which is part of gravitas, which we’ll be talking about later. But if you’re a nice girl, you may have the tendency to choose words that instead sabotage your best efforts at being taken seriously when you’re trying to communicate a serious message.

In addition to using too many words, we often use words that are designed to soften the message and make it more palatable to the receiver. I call this *warding off the evil spirits*. It’s quite a conundrum. If I don’t communicate clearly, I’m not taken seriously, and when I’m not taken seriously, I feel as if I don’t have the right to communicate more assertively, so I speak more carefully, thereby assuring I won’t be taken seriously. Did you follow that? Don’t avoid using powerful words because you think they’ll make you sound too strident. That’s what the taglines are for.

If you recall, I talked earlier about using a tagline to mitigate what could be perceived as overly confident by easily intimidated folks. Look at how this works. You can decide which one is more likely to have me be taken seriously:

1. “I’ve been feeling a little frustrated lately with the assignments I’ve been getting. I kind of feel like they aren’t using all my skills. There’s a lot to be done around here that I could help with next.”
2. “I’m really angry that the assignments I’ve been given don’t provide me with enough stretch or exposure to senior management. The product conversion project is a good example of one that I should be working on. It’s good for the company and it’s good for my career.”
3. “I strongly believe that the assignments I’ve been given lately don’t allow me to make the greatest contribution possible to our

organization. Applying my analytical and organizational skills to the product conversion project would help to ensure that we meet or maybe even beat the fourth-quarter deadline. I'm really anxious to be involved and make a difference. Is there any reason why I shouldn't start attending those meetings?"

Hopefully you agree that the third option is the most likely to achieve its goal, and while you're at it, ditch those qualifiers and minimizing words like *just*, *sort of*, *a bit*, *kind of*, *maybe*, and *I may be wrong*. Don't give the people with the guns any ammunition to use against you.

Tip 12: Turn Feelings into Facts

When your landlord refuses to pay for repairs, if you're a nice girl, you probably waste time and energy begging and cajoling rather than pointing out the provision in your lease that makes repairs the landlord's responsibility. Or if you're quoted a ridiculously high price for an appliance you want to buy, you may simply walk away, instead of using the research you've done in advance to show the going rate is actually lower. The fact is, facts speak louder than feelings. People can rebut your feelings with their own feelings, but facts focus the conversation on the issues.

Take, for example, the situation Linda faced when she was negotiating with her plastic surgeon's office. Ever since Linda was a teenager, she wanted a nose job. Whether or not she needed it is another story, but she felt it would give her a boost of self-confidence.

She visited several plastic surgeons and settled on the one she liked the best and who had the best testimonials from patients. The problem was he wasn't the cheapest, and Linda was on a budget. She considered appealing to his caring nature by telling him how important it was to her that the surgery was done there and how upset she would be if she had to wait another year while she saved up the money she needed to afford his rate. These are all feelings. Women too often rely on them when instead they should focus on the facts.

What Linda did was put together the following facts that she could use to negotiate the surgeon's fee: His fees were 10 to 15 percent higher than other surgeons in the area. If he gave her a discount, she would pay with cash up front, not on installment or on a credit card. She would be happy to appear in advertising as a before-and-after picture, something many patients won't allow. She would have the surgery done at a time when his schedule was lighter than usual so he wouldn't have to turn away a patient willing to pay his full fee in order to do her surgery.

The points appeal on a rational rather than emotional level. She could confidently ask for the reduced fees that she wanted without hesitation or apology. She knew what she had to give in exchange for the discount and included those in her talking points.

Although the surgeon's manager didn't significantly reduce the fee, she did reduce it enough that Linda found a way to swing it, and she felt good about creating a win-win situation. Because facts aren't in the control of either person, they are friendly to each side. They are what they are.

When your expectations differ from those of someone with whom you want to reach an agreement, think about how you can use facts to resolve your differences more easily. Here are a few places where you can use facts to your advantage.

Let's say that you're trying to agree with your husband about the value of your home because you're divorcing. He had agreed to buy out your share and is therefore interested in paying the lowest amount possible. You, of course, want the maximum amount possible. Instead of going back and forth about what you each feel the house is worth, you hire an appraiser who appraises your home objectively, so in your negotiations you're able to say factually and with confidence, "I didn't want us to make such an important decision without having the facts on hand. Here's an appraisal that was done by a local Realtor who's familiar with the comps in the neighborhood. If you would like to do the same with the Realtor of your choice, we can compare and make a decision."

When emotions are high—and divorce is a terrific example of this—agreeing to let the facts solve the problem can save you not only a lot of money in lawyer's fees, but also a lot of stressful arguments.

Or let's say your customer or client is requesting to pay your bills in sixty days instead of thirty. You're thinking to yourself, *Hey, I've got bills to pay too*, but using facts, instead you say, "I would be happy to extend it an additional thirty days. I hope you understand that my policy is to add 5 percent to the amount due for each month of extension. How many months would you like total? I'll prepare a revised invoice." In this case, you show good faith in trying to meet your client's needs without shooting yourself in the foot.

Whatever the source you are using to get your facts, be sure it's credible. Citing facts that are unreliable will make you seem careless at best or dishonest at worst, and although there's a wealth of information available online, be particularly careful to check that information. You have to make sure it's trustworthy.

If facts aren't available, substitute standard practices. Sometimes you

can point to usual policy or standard practices as a way to solve a problem. For example, if you work for a bank that has a firm policy requiring customers to show identification before you can provide information about their account, then you can tell a complaining customer that it's the bank's policy and explain that it's for their protection.

Or if you're negotiating compensation, don't even think about doing it without researching what the position is worth. Women are much more successful at getting paid what they deserve when they have good information. Do your homework regarding what the salary should be, whether or not bonuses are usually paid, and the customary benefits at companies similar to the one where you're applying. Don't go into your negotiation with comments like "I feel as if I've earned it" or "I feel like I deserve it." Remember, facts are friendly.

A factual salary negotiation would sound like this:

"As delighted as I am to receive this offer, I don't think you would respect me nor would I respect myself if I accepted less of a compensation package than the position warrants. My research into similarly sized companies with similar positions in our geographic location shows that the salary range is between \$100,000 and \$135,000 annually, with four weeks of vacation, a company car, and a parking stipend. Given my experience, education, and qualifications, a starting salary of \$125,000 annually with three weeks' vacation the first year, moving to four weeks in the second year of employment, and a company car seems more in keeping with the market."

Tip 13: Use More Words

I'm sure those of you who have read my previous books or heard me speak will find this one confusing. I am forever preaching that if women want to be taken seriously, they need to use fewer words, and I stand by that. Short phrases are memorable and emphasize a point. You may recall when, during Britain's poll tax controversy, Margaret Thatcher expressed her unwillingness to back down with the proclamation, "You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning." Or during the 2016 presidential election, when Michelle Obama reminded us to be civil, with her statement, "When they go low, we go high." At the same time, when delivering a direct message, more words can be an advantage. You see, whereas fewer words strengthen a message, more words soften a message.

It's not always appropriate to use more words. In fact, women often sabotage their best efforts at communication by softening every message with too many words, especially when fewer words would be more effective. But when it comes to situations such as disagreeing without being disagreeable, negotiating with allies, bridging ideas, and giving constructive feedback, all of which I'll discuss a little later, a few more words can be helpful.

Look at how it works.

You could say, "That's it. You're fired," to make your point. Or you could make the same point saying, "Despite both of our best efforts to make this work, your performance has not reached the place it needs to be at this stage of your tenure. Unfortunately, that means your separation from the company will take place immediately."

You can see how more words soften the message.

How about, "No way, no how," compared with, "Going to your mother's for our summer vacation wasn't how I envisioned spending our time off. Let's talk about finding a way we can both be happy with what we do together as a family."

Using the former makes discussion difficult, which may be your intent, but at what cost in the long run? Remember, use fewer words when you want to make a memorable point. Use more words to soften the message

when you want to build or maintain a relationship.

Chapter One Key Takeaways

Chapter One is an explanation of the skills that form the foundation of speaking up and standing out.

- **Build rapport by finding common ground, expressing genuine interest in what others say to you, matching the other person's body language, and exhibiting empathy.** Rapport is like the WD-40 that helps ease the way of difficult conversations.
- **Talk back to self-talk.** Every time you hear a negative voice in your head, answer it with a powerful and positive countermessage, either mentally or right out loud.
- **Communicate in headlines.** There are three parts to this. Your main message, which is a headline that can be stated in just a sentence or two; your two to three points that support your headline; and a tagline, a short statement to wrap it up and cue both you and your listener that you're finished with the message and it's their turn to speak.
- **Learn the DESC script.** This model is designed to help you initiate conversations that may be difficult for you and perhaps the other person, too.
- **Use contrasting.** If you're afraid that what you're about to say might be misunderstood or create conflict, contrasting helps you to set it up so that you are clear about what you do want or don't want or what you do mean and don't mean. It almost always starts with a phrase similar to "I don't want you to think..." and ends with the phrase, "At the same time, I do want to talk about..."
- **Vary your influence style.** Most women prefer the bridging style of influence, which is a great style, but not the only one. Choosing the style that best suits the situation increases the likelihood that you will

communicate in a convincing way.

- **Never say no.** There are very few situations in which an unequivocal no is called for, and these are usually related to ethics, morals, or other serious breaches of propriety. In most other situations, you can take the edge off a negative response by providing alternatives or setting boundaries.
- **Be a broken record.** A record with a scratch plays one piece over and over and over. Sometimes you need to be that broken record by repeating, using different words or phrases to make your point.
- **Speak to the types.** *Type* refers to the Jungian concept of personality types. If you remember the four types discussed earlier and what influences them, you will be speaking the language of the other person.
- **Seek first to understand, then be understood.** The trick to doing this successfully is to be an active listener. Active listening ensures you heard the message the speaker intended.
- **Choose powerful words.** If you want to be taken seriously, then avoid equivocating words like *maybe*, *kind of*, and *sort of*. Replace them with words and phrases of certitude, such as *I strongly believe*, *I disagree*, or *I am 100 percent behind that*.
- **Turn feelings into facts.** Facts are friendly and they're harder to rebut than feelings, whether it's asking for a raise, a promotion, or a perk. When your expectations differ from those of someone with whom you want to reach an agreement, think about how you can use facts to resolve your differences more easily.
- **Use more words.** There is a proviso here—only use more words if you are intentionally trying to soften a message. More words soften a message; fewer words strengthen it.

Chapter Two

Advocate for Yourself

Now that we have the basics down, kind of like the core ingredients in baking bread, let's explore a very specific kind of message, one that requires you to stand up for yourself. Even women I know who are great advocates for others don't always apply the communication skills to their own needs. Never get in the way of a woman who's advocating to get her child into a prestigious preschool! Yet that same tiger mom is often reluctant to ask for the raise she's been promised, quick to acquiesce to unreasonable demands, or unwilling to confront someone who has taken her ideas and presented them as their own. As we discussed at the beginning of the last chapter, you might have to do some self-talk when it comes to self-advocacy.

As women, we have learned through both implicit and explicit messages that we aren't entitled to the same latitude as men. So let me reframe that for you. Yes, we are entitled to the same latitude, and to achieve it, we have to apply different tools and techniques than men.

Whereas a man can get away with saying, "Are you kidding? There's no way I can get that done with my current staffing level. Increase my head count by three and we're on." A woman who says the exact same words will be accused of things like not being a team player, or being an obstructionist. Yes, when it comes to advocating for yourself, women are challenged with having to tell people to go to hell in way that makes them look forward to the trip. This chapter will give you the words and phrases to do just that.

Tip 14: Establish Boundaries

Why is it when there's a miracle to be made, it's always a woman who's asked to make it? It seems that women take pride in the fact that they can do more with less, meet or beat impossible deadlines, and get blood out of a turnip. They actually believe others will recognize and appreciate their herculean efforts. When the truth is, every time you make a miracle, you've set the bar higher in terms of what people expect from you. Not only that, but also while you're busy jumping through hoops, your male colleagues are doing things that give them more visibility, and ultimately more rewards. As I said earlier, you can simply say no to an unreasonable request.

I'm a big believer in saying yes to almost everything that's requested of me. And when I have no choice but to say no, I use the same techniques I described in Tip 7, never say no. But managing the expectations of a client, a boss, or even someone close to you who you don't want to disappoint is something entirely different.

These situations require setting boundaries. A simple phrase that should serve you well when something is asked of you that is unreasonable, unfair, or even just unappealing is, "I would be happy to do that. Let me tell you what realistically can be accomplished within those limitations." Then you go on to present two or three options from which the person can choose. Don't worry if you can't provide those options off the top of your head. It's okay to say something like, "I'd be happy to do that. Give me an hour or so to come up with a plan for how that can be accomplished within those limitations." This will buy you a little time to prepare your response.

So let's take a look at some scenarios where this can work. The first is one that women are all too familiar with: planning the company holiday party or other event. I'm sure you've noticed that men are never asked to do this. It's one of those necessary but thankless tasks. No matter what you do, someone won't be happy. On top of that, you're usually given a pretty puny budget for it.

So let's say the boss wants you to plan the summer picnic for a hundred employees and their families and gives you a budget of \$1,500. Assuming

each person attends and brings just two guests, that's three hundred people for a whopping \$5 per guest for food and drinks. Many women will take on the challenge and start turning themselves into pretzels to get things donated, arrange for other women to make and bring food, or start making calls to people like their brother-in-law, who's a beer distributor, or their great-aunt Sally, who makes wonderful potato salad. Stop, stop, stop. This is a great example of a totally unreasonable request, and you have to be an advocate for yourself and your sanity.

So using the technique I just suggested, you say something like this, "I'm happy to organize the picnic. Now with a budget of \$1,500, we can have a few kegs of beer, some soft drinks, chips, and dip. If you'd like to make it a little more special, with a budget of \$5,000 we can have a taco truck come and people can enjoy those with soft drinks. A third option is to bring in a company that does the full barbecue for you with hot dogs, hamburgers, salads, beer, and soft drinks. They charge \$30 a person. So that would be about \$9,000. I can do any of those three things. Just let me know which you prefer."

Then, stop. You presented three options that are reasonable and where you aren't asked to make a miracle. Just remember, miracle workers may get canonized, but they don't get recognized.

In the second scenario, you're asked to meet an unreasonable deadline, given the number of staff you have. Setting boundaries in this situation would sound like this: "I'm happy to do that. I'm sure you realize that we're short two people. And given that everyone is already working overtime, the quality of the final product will not be up to your usual expectation within that time frame. As I'm sure you know, that amount of time just doesn't give us the leeway needed to proof the work and ensure it is error-free. However, if you can give us an additional forty-eight hours, I'll make sure it's delivered on time with high attention to quality. Which would you prefer?"

Of course, it's always possible that the boss will come back and say, "I need it sooner, and I need it to be high quality." In this case, you just might have to be a broken record and explain using different words that you will do your best, yet the constraints of time and staff will impact the final product.

Let's try one more. This is a personal situation. Let's say your mother-

in-law calls and says she's coming to visit and planning to spend the entire summer. As much as you love her, an entire summer will test the limits of your sanity. Setting boundaries in this case would sound like this: "We are delighted that you're coming. Now, let me explain that the kids have their summer plans, I'm in the middle of a big project at work, and as you know, Steve travels two days a week. So between all of our schedules, there won't be a lot of time to spend together. What's really important is seeing you and having quality time with you, not just quantity of time. What would work best is if you could plan on coming out a few days before July 4, joining us for a few days at the beach, then returning mid-July when the kids start their summer camps. In this way, we get to spend time with you doing fun things as a family." She may not like it, but you have been a great advocate for yourself and your family.

Tip 15: Ask for That Raise, Promotion, or Perk

Personally, I don't think employees should ever have to ask for what's owed to them. There's no better way to demoralize staff members than to fail to recognize their contributions and renege on your promises to them. With that said, I do know that many bosses are not good advocates for the people reporting to them, and so you have to be willing to speak up if you want to get the things you've earned and deserve. And that's exactly how you should think about it. It's not as if you're asking for something unreasonable. You're asking for what's fair, and in some cases, what's owed to you. But as I've already said, what's fair has to be supported with facts.

There are a number of tools you can use to ask for raises, promotions, or perks that were promised but that you did not receive. This is slightly different than negotiating for compensation that was not previously promised to you. That I'll get to shortly. Contrasting and asserting often work well as follow-ups to forgotten promises and are used in different ways. Using the same scenario to illustrate the differences between them, and when to use each, let's examine how you can make them work for you.

You'll recall, in contrasting, Tip 5, you clearly state what you don't want and what you do want. Asking for a raise might sound something like this: "Steve, I don't want you to think I'm not grateful for the opportunities you've given me to grow in my role, because I surely am. At the same time, I was told that if I meet my sales goals for the quarter, I would be given an 8 percent raise. Given that I not only met but also exceeded those goals, I'd like to know when I can expect to see that raise in my paycheck."

Now, let's say Steve hedges and suggests that the company can't afford to give you a raise at this time. Then you add the broken record tab and go right back to your contrasting. It sounds like this: "I wouldn't want you to think I'm insensitive to the company's situation. At the same time, it was promised to me and I was counting on it. I don't want to do an end run because I value our relationship too much. But if it will help, I'm happy to go to HR to discuss it." Advocating for yourself in this way doesn't always cause immediate results, but it does put you one step closer to getting your needs met.

Another thing you can and should do is research what the job pays in your geographic area for someone with your skills and experience. You can do this at www.salary.com or glassdoor.com. Here's how the scenario would sound with additional facts:

“Steve, I don't want you to think I'm not grateful for the opportunities you've given me to grow in my role, because I surely am. At the same time, I was told if I met my sales goals for the quarter, I would be given an 8 percent raise. I've done some research and with the 8 percent, my salary would be more in line with the range for what this job pays in our region. Do you see any reason why I shouldn't be given this raise in the next pay period?”

Now let's up the ante a little. Same situation, but this time you're going to be assertive using the model provided on the “Influence Styles” chart found in Tip 6.

You're going to give feedback, state expectations, and imply incentives. Here's how it would sound:

“Steve, about six months ago, I was promised an 8 percent raise contingent upon meeting my sales goals. Not only did I make those goals, but I also exceeded them, and yet I have not received the raise. Further, my research shows that people doing the same job in our region are more aligned with what my salary would be with the 8 percent raise. My expectation is if I keep up my end of the deal, then the company will keep up their end of the deal, and I'm wondering why this hasn't happened. I would like to continue excelling at my goals and making a significant contribution to the company. For that to happen, I need to be treated fairly. What will it take to see the 8 percent raise in my paycheck next month?”

You can see that this is a more direct approach, and it's one that's a little riskier. It would be most appropriate to revert to this method if you had already had one conversation and it didn't yield the desired result. It may also be used as a first conversation with the understanding that you may be

creating a more adversarial relationship, and that's okay with you. Because if the situation doesn't change, you're willing to walk away. In other words, it's the hill you're willing to die on.

Tip 16: Be Seen and Heard

Have you ever felt like you were invisible in a meeting or conversation? I know I have. I'll sometimes say something and no one acknowledges my comment, or I'll ask a question, only to have it ignored. Nothing makes you feel smaller and more inconsequential than that. And the tendency is to retreat and hide, thereby ensuring no one will notice you.

So here's what you're going to do next time. First, you're going to make sure you're sitting at the table. In an overcrowded conference room, that doesn't mean on the periphery. That means at the table, even if you have to squeeze your chair in among the others. And given the choice, sit next to or close to the most powerful person in the room. Their power exudes out to those immediately surrounding them.

Second, you're going to make a conscious effort to be among the first two or three people to speak. Early speakers are recognized as being more confident and, in turn, having more important things to say. Don't worry about giving your opinion every time you speak. Here are some other ways you can have your voice heard: "I'd like to support what Jay just said. I've had the same experience and believe his suggestion would address the problem." Now Jay is your new best friend. Or, "Lorna, can you explain further how you came to that conclusion? I'd like to be able to use your data to support my own sales efforts." Lorna knows you not only are listening, but you also want more, and another alliance is forged. And then there's, "Jameson, I'd like to know what you think about the proposal on the table. You have a lot of expertise in this arena that would add valuable insight to our decision." In this case, Jameson thinks to himself, *Someone who cares about what I have to say.*

Third, when you do share your ideas or opinions, you're going to tie those into remarks made by others. This not only lets people know you heard them but also gives you the leeway to disagree without being disagreeable.

Here's how it sounds: "Lorna and Jameson, I couldn't agree with you more about your diagnosis of the problem. Clients do have less time to spend with us as their schedules become increasingly hectic, and this

generation of workers has less patience for long explanations. As for solutions, I see it a little differently based on input I've received from my own clients, but I think we can tie all of our ideas together for an even more robust solution." Then proceed to explain how that would work. That's how you ensure you're in the room, literally and figuratively.

But how about when you say something, and there's silence or the subject has changed? Whatever you do, don't retreat. Instead, comment on the reality of what's actually happening in the room, or wait for an opportunity to bring the discussion back to your idea. Go to meetings prepared with phrases like, "I'm not sure how to read the silence. Can you give me some feedback as to why I should or shouldn't pursue this strategy?" Or "Before we get too far down the road, I'd like to get input on what I said about the client issue." Another way to bring it back is to add facts to your initial statement. Something like this: "If I may, I'd like to add two points to my previous comment that should help clarify why I believe it's a viable alternative."

In summary, first make certain that you aren't engaging in behaviors that preclude you from being heard. And second, don't be afraid to steer the conversation back to you.

Tip 17: Toot Your Own Horn without Blowing It

That's a great line, isn't it? I wish I could take credit for it, but the credit belongs to Peggy Klaus, who wrote a book entitled *Brag! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn without Blowing It*. She points out how important it is to call attention to your accomplishments. This is especially true because the research shows that men are more likely to have their achievements noticed and rewarded than are women, even when women were largely responsible for the achievement, and this has been happening for thousands of years. Men were assumed to have created the Paleolithic cave paintings—until 2013, when anthropologists discovered they were most likely made by women.

Then there's the double helix. Most people when asked about the discovery of DNA, if they still remember this from science class, would mention James Watson and Francis Crick. The name that is frequently glossed over in this story, or left out entirely, is Rosalind Franklin. Her work on DNA was stolen by another scientist and given to two of her competitors, Watson and Crick, without her permission. Franklin had captured an image of DNA, which was critical to their understanding of the double-helix structure. Watson and Crick buried Franklin's efforts in the footnotes of their Nobel Prize-winning article. Franklin ultimately died of cancer four years before Watson and Crick won the prize. And it took them forty years to publicly admit that Franklin's work had been critical to their ultimate success.

And on a lighter note, I'll bet you didn't know that the game of Monopoly was actually invented by a woman named Elizabeth Magie. She applied for a patent for the Landlord's Game. It was published in 1904, nearly thirty years before Charles Darrow came across it, made a few modifications, and sold it to Parker Brothers under the name Monopoly. Whereas Darrow became a millionaire off the game, Magie earned all of about \$500 from Parker Brothers' purchase of her patent.

The same thing happens all the time in the workplace. Women do the grunt work; men get the credit. This plays out in performance reviews. Research shows that women are 1.4 times more likely to receive critical

objective feedback in their reviews than men. And even more eye popping is the fact that a woman's success is often chalked up to luck or her willingness to put in more hours rather than her skills and abilities.

So what's a woman to do? I guess you're just going to have to start tooting your own horn. How do you do it and not be accused of being overly confident, self-centered, or narcissistic? Let me give you a few tips.

First, about six weeks before your performance review, send your boss an email that essentially says this: "With performance reviews coming up, I thought it might be helpful if I provided you with a list of my key accomplishments in the last review period. I know you're busy, and don't expect you to remember all of those." Then list five to seven major accomplishments, quantifying them with data wherever possible. What I mean by this is including a statement of facts, such as, "Increased employee engagement in Six Sigma programs by 17 percent, resulting in an average savings of \$750,000 at each location." Once again, facts are friendly.

Next, in meetings and on reports, take every opportunity to showcase your successes without taking total credit for them. You can say something like, "I'm pleased to report that my team and I brought the Warner Bros. project in on time and under budget." That's a good toot of the horn without blowing it. Another one is, "Implementation of the employee recognition program that I outlined eighteen months ago resulted in 12 percent less turnover among minority groups and 23 percent more promotions from those same groups. As such, we're on target for achieving our diversity and inclusion goals." Simple statements of facts that underscore how you best serve the organization and how to build your reputation, when others aren't paying particular attention to your successes.

Finally, when someone sends you a written compliment, make sure it finds its way to your boss. Accompany a copy of it with a short note that reads something like, "Thought you might like to see this—that certification program you sent me to really paid off." If the person gives you the compliment verbally, ask if they might be willing to put it in writing. And while you're at it, start an Atta Gal file. It's where you keep positive feedback, compliments, and pats on the back. It comes in handy on those days when it seems nothing is going right. I started one about thirty-five years ago, and I still put compliments and notes in it and go back to it on those days when I need a little pat on the back.

Tip 18: Own Your Success

This is actually a variation on the bragging theme. Tooting your own horn when others don't do it for you is essential to being rewarded and recognized in the workplace. That's how you advocate for yourself when it comes to ensuring people see your accomplishments. Owning your success is more about letting the world know who you are, whereas tooting your own horn is about what you've achieved. Let me give you an example.

I was at a cocktail party hosted by Grand Central Publishing, the publishers of *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office*, to celebrate its making the *New York Times* bestseller list. Mingling, I went up to one woman I didn't recognize and asked which group she worked in. She told me her first name and said that she worked in the publicity department. We chatted for a few minutes with me gushing about the creativity and hard work of the publicist assigned to my book. Then we both moved on.

Soon, my publicist came up to me and said, "I saw you talking to my boss. What did she say?" I said, "Who was your boss?" With that, she nodded in the direction of the woman who said she worked in publicity. She was the vice president of publicity for the business books group. Now, there was a woman who didn't own her success, and what a missed opportunity to receive lots of praise from me for her management of a very effective group of publicists.

I'll never forget another time when I started my business and was doing diversity training for a large metropolitan fire department. At that time, the name of my company was the Frankel and Fox Group. Before the start of one class, a firefighter—male, of course—came up to me and asked how I liked working for my husband's company. I looked at him a little puzzled. He nodded at my name tag and then said, "Frankel, isn't that your husband?"

This gives you one clue as to why diversity training was needed in this outfit, doesn't it? Well, once I recovered from my shock, I just had to set this guy straight. What I said was, "It's actually my company, and I run it with my partner, Frank Fox. We've worked very hard to become known in the community for high-quality and highly rated diversity programs. I'm

proud to be able to call your organization a client.”

People make assumptions about us all the time. Sometimes it's because we're women. Other times it's because of what we're wearing that day and we don't quite look the part. And still others, it's because of how we present ourselves. Every time you meet someone, it's an opportunity to market your brand. You can either head them off at the pass by using your full name and job title in appropriate situations, or you're going to have to correct their misconceptions, both through words and deeds, when they peg you for someone's assistant or wife.

Tip 19: Sequester Naysayers

It's true that opportunity can be found in resistance, but there comes a time in every woman's life when she just has to shout, "Enough is enough!" When pushback becomes too much to bear, sometimes the only thing you can do is banish the naysayers. This is a healthy way of advocating for yourself. Some of the most successful businesswomen around have done this. Mrs. Fields had to sequester the naysayers when they said she could never make a living out of selling cookies. Mary Kay Ash had to sequester the naysayers when they said she didn't know enough about the cosmetics industry to start a business with that focus. Even I had to sequester the naysayers who said I was crazy to quit a lucrative job to start my own consulting practice.

My mother's words ring in my ears to this day: "My stomach turns at the thought of you being unemployed."

"Unemployed?" I wanted to scream. "You have two sons both with their own businesses and you don't call them unemployed." But instead, I chose to keep my mother and the others who couldn't get behind my new enterprise at arm's length so that their negativity wouldn't feed my own natural fear around getting a business up and running.

Naysaying is a unique form of pushback that says more about the naysayer than it does about you. Generally, the naysayer isn't interested in engaging in creative problem-solving with you, isn't supportive of what you want, isn't one to take risks in his or her own life, lacks vision, and would rather complain than constructively address potential obstacles or pitfalls. My own experience with naysayers is that they play the game of life safely, within bounds, and are fearful of deviating from their norms.

The naysayer doesn't push back with constructive opinions or ideas. He or she simply puts a damper on other people's dreams, ideas, and enthusiasm by pointing out all of the negative ramifications or possibilities. These are the people who tell you your business will fail, your boyfriend isn't marriage material, the renovations you just planned won't make your home any more comfortable, and so on. If you walk away from a discussion feeling as if your light has been snuffed out, chances are you just met with a

naysayer.

You might not be able to exclude naysayers from your life entirely, but don't trust them with out-of-the-box ideas. They're not the people with whom you can daydream or vet new possibilities. Instead, present them only with final, well-thought-out strategies, and only when you feel confident enough to fend off their negative vibes. If Play-It-Safe Sally asks you how your plans are coming, respond with, "Thanks for your interest. They're coming along well. I'm not ready to share the details yet, but I'll let you know when I am."

Or if Doubtful Dan expresses skepticism over your ability to achieve one of your dreams, sequester him with this: "Dan, I know this isn't something you would do, but it's important to me. What I need right now isn't skepticism, but encouragement. If that's not possible for you, then we need to stay on more neutral territory."

And with Critical Carl, the one who finds fault with everything, you probably need to avoid him altogether. And if that's not possible, then shut him down by saying, "Carl, this kind of critique isn't helpful to me. I'm open to suggestions, but not criticism."

Conversely, surround yourself with yay-sayers. These are friends, family, and colleagues you can trust to tell you the truth, but not demolish you in the process. They may not agree with everything you want or need, but they're likely to help you achieve your goals without judgment.

Tip 20: Assume Equality

Nice girls cling to the lesson learned in childhood that we are to respect people who are older than us, who are better educated, who are in authority, and so on. While I agree that we should show respect for these people, as we should all people, it doesn't mean we aren't equal to them. Showing respect and assuming equality are two different things. I show respect by listening, not embarrassing anyone, being kind to people, and affirming, and sometimes showcasing their expertise. I act in ways that show I'm equal to them by disagreeing politely, sharing my own opinions and expertise, calling them by their first names, or asking if they prefer to be called by their first name or some other way, and asking that my needs be factored into the equation when decisions are made.

I usually take note, when I meet people, whether they call me Dr. Frankel or Lois, because it tells me something about the person. I know when they call me Lois, they consider themselves equal to me. And when they call me Dr. Frankel, they're deferring to my supposed expertise. Almost always, I ask that they call me Lois because I want them to know I consider myself equal to them. It may seem like a small thing, but assuming equality is a critical part of expressing yourself and getting your needs met. It can be a lot harder to say what's really on your mind if you put someone on a pedestal and yourself beneath them. Here are a few ways you can assume equality in a variety of situations.

First, get in the habit of calling people by their first names, even your doctors. Or minimally, ask if they prefer to be called by their first name or something else. Personally, when I first meet a doctor, I call them by their first name. It's telling how many are uncomfortable with it and how many just go with the flow. In either case, it puts us on an even playing field. For sure, they know things I don't and vice versa.

Second, don't hesitate to ask questions, regardless of the person's position or stature. People in authority who don't like anyone asking them questions are insecure as far as I'm concerned. Otherwise, they would want to help others understand their position, comments, or suggestions. So if you get resistance when you ask questions, know that it's about the other

person's shortcomings, not yours.

Third, always sit at the table. As I said earlier, when you leave the chairs at the table for the more important people, you do yourself a disservice. Because if you're not at the table, you're not in the room.

Fourth, look people directly in the eye. In some cultures, it's considered impolite to look people who are older or who have more authority than you in the eye. In those cases, you have to consider the risk versus the profit of diverging from cultural norms. In most cases, looking people directly in the eye is another way of leveling the playing field.

And finally, fifth, be the first one to extend your hand in greetings rather than waiting to see what the other person does. Not only does it give the other person the message that you're confident and consider yourself equal, but it's also a good reminder to yourself that you are both of those things. And don't forget to make that handshake firm. It has to announce, "I'm someone to be taken seriously."

Tip 21: Lobby in Advance

There's safety in numbers. Lobbying in advance is a technique women don't employ nearly enough. I think that may be because they feel it's manipulative or underhanded. Nothing could be further from the truth. Lobbying is simply educating others as to your position and asking them for their support. The trick is to lobby the right people.

Let me give you an example:

Althea had an idea that would help her company improve her safety statistics. There were three elements of the plan, the first being to have more frequent but shorter safety training meetings; this would keep safety in the forefront. The second element was to introduce an incentive program for both individuals and teams. For every quarter that an *employee* went without an accident, he or she would receive a small reward. Similarly, for every quarter where the *plant* had no accidents, the entire plant would receive an award. And the third element was to communicate safety messages more through signage, at staff meetings, in the company bulletin, and even in notes and employee paychecks.

When Althea went to her boss with the plan, he said he wasn't comfortable giving his blessing to something that others hadn't signed off on. And here's an example of what happens when you fail to speak the language of the other person. Althea should have factored in her knowledge that the boss relies heavily on the opinions of others when making decisions. She left the meeting feeling deflated, but she knew if she was going to get his approval, others would have to support her plan.

So she strategically lobbied her peers. Scheduling a one-on-one meeting with each person, she provided an overview of her plan, the anticipated cost, and the targeted outcomes. In other words, she educated them about her concept. During these individual meetings, she asked each person if they had any input for how to improve the plan. You'll notice she did not ask if they thought it was a good idea; that would be giving away her power. In this way, she got to hear any potential downsides before making her presentation.

Lastly, she asked if they would support the plan if the concerns

expressed were addressed. If they said yes, she thanked them. If they did not say yes, she asked them to give more thought to her plan and let her know if they had any questions. So now she knew who would theoretically support her. I say theoretically because there's another concept to consider, which I'll explain in one of the next tips, that determines who will in reality provide her with the support requested. She could then enlist them to speak up in a subsequent meeting as to why they thought it was a good idea. Remember, the four components of lobbying in advance form the acronym EAST: Educate, Ask for input, Secure support, Thank or ask for Thoughts.

Tip 22: Send Up a Trial Balloon

I've talked a lot about how to communicate with clarity. But what happens when you just aren't sure if an idea or solution that you want to propose is really going to work? A very useful but little-used communication skill is sending up trial balloons. A trial balloon is a small piece of information you use to gauge the reaction of an audience. It can be thought of as a way to test the water about a solution or idea before diving in. It's especially helpful if your idea is open to discussion or your proposal isn't necessarily the hill you want to die on. Using a trial balloon has the advantage of creating a distance between the proposal and the person proposing it, which makes it easier to back away from it if the response is negative.

Think about the difference in the following statements; "I have an idea," as opposed to, "One idea is to..." The first statement clearly links the speaker to the idea. Whereas in the second statement, the speaker is merely giving voice to the idea without necessarily supporting it. There are two advantages to this. One is that the listener doesn't have to be convinced that the idea is the solution. And the other is that the person can disagree with the idea without disagreeing with the speaker.

Let's say that you have an idea for how to increase brand visibility for a new product or a company that's just debuting. If you are the expert in the field, you might choose to use assertion or persuasion, as we discussed in Tip 6, vary your influence style. In that case, you would be wedded to your idea and want to convince others that it's the best path to take. On the other hand, if you aren't an expert, you might still have a good idea that would benefit the company and that, if implemented, could help your career.

In this case, it would sound something like this: "I'd like to throw out an idea for discussion that might work well. I've seen it used with our competitors' products, and apparently successfully. It uses social media influencers to talk about the product and drive people to our website for a discount coupon."

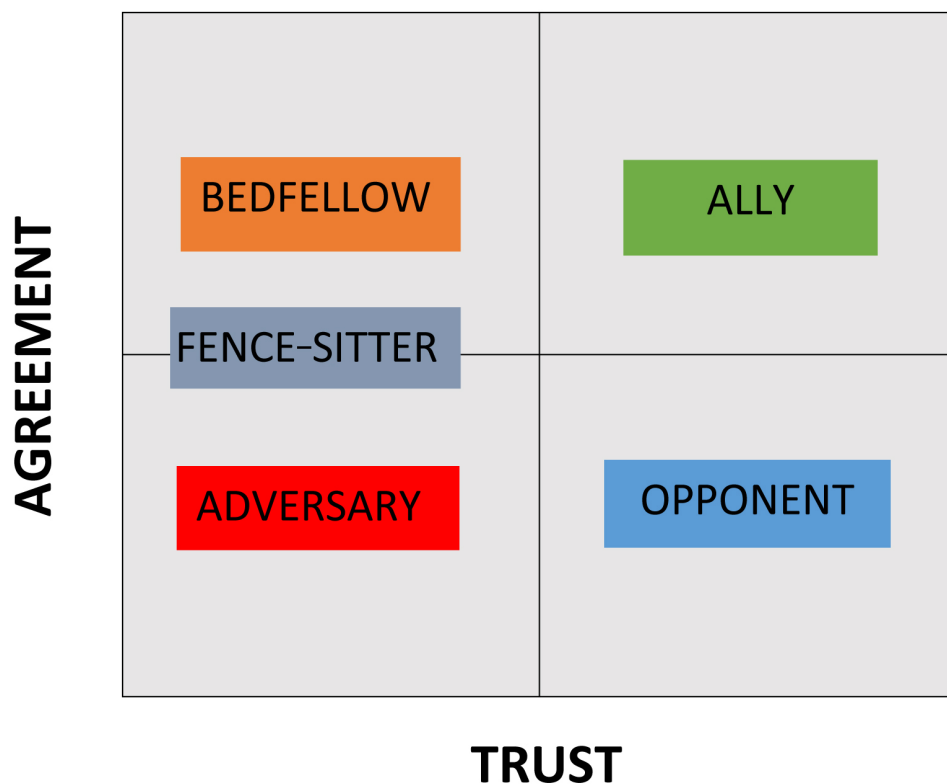
Similarly, you can preface your trial balloons with phrases like, "One thing we might do..." Or "What if we were to..." And another one is, "I've heard about another way people have approached something like this."

When you float a trial balloon to gauge someone's receptiveness to an idea, be sure your tone and body language are as neutral as the message itself. Remember, don't use a trial balloon for issues on which there is no discussion. If you will ultimately make the decision about the direction of an idea or project and the input of others will not be considered, then a trial balloon will come back to bite you. Others won't believe that you genuinely care about their opinions, and eventually they'll stop giving their opinions to you. And if the trial balloon falls flat, don't take it personally. After all, that's why you sent it up in the first place.

Tip 23: Identify Allies, Adversaries, and Everyone in Between

Now that you've done the lobbying, you have to determine who will really follow through on their pledge to you, who may try to sabotage you, and who is a big question mark. There's a wonderful model that I learned many years ago that helps here.

WORKING WITH ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES



Here is a two-by-two chart with the word *trust* along the bottom horizontal axis and the word *agreement* on the left vertical axis. We are going to consider the combination of trust and agreement in identifying allies and adversaries.

Let's work clockwise around the chart, beginning with the bottom right-hand box. This is someone with whom you have high trust but low agreement. Is this your adversary? Absolutely not. The fact that I trust this

person means they're someone who will be honest with me, even if they don't agree with me, so that I know exactly where they stand. I trust that they won't sabotage me. If they have ideas different or counter to mine, they'll overtly let me know so that I can defend my own case. This person is what we call an opponent: high trust, but low agreement on a particular issue.

Now look at the upper right-hand box, high trust and high agreement. Obviously, this is an ally. It's someone you trust to share your own doubts with, to brainstorm with, and to do exactly what they say they will. They have demonstrated these behaviors in the past, and you trust that they will do the exact same thing in the present and in the future. Someone who is an ally may not always be an ally, just as someone who's an opponent may not be an opponent on every issue. But again, because there's trust, you know you won't be sabotaged by either of them.

Now I want you to look at the box on the upper left-hand corner of the chart. And here we have high agreement, but low trust. Why wouldn't I trust someone who agrees with me? Because in the past, they've agreed with me to only disagree later in a more public setting. Maybe they changed their mind, or maybe they just didn't have the courage to tell me to my face that they wouldn't support me. On the other hand, they could be a passive-aggressive personality who says yes to your face, only to stab you in the back later. We call these people bedfellows. They get into bed with everyone. They say yes, but you really don't know what they're going to do in the long run. In any case, I'm not going to bank on what this person says.

In the lower left-hand box, you have your adversary, a person with whom you have low agreement and low trust. What makes them different than an opponent? Well, you trust an opponent will be honest with you, even if they don't agree with you. You know the adversary doesn't agree with you and past experience tells you that they may lie, withhold information, or try to sabotage you. They play a game of I win, you lose.

Now, somewhere in between the bedfellow and the adversary, you have what's known as the fence-sitter. We really don't know if we can trust them, because we really are unsure about the degree to which they agree or disagree with us. It could be they need more information to make a decision, that they would like to see what everyone else is going to do before committing, or that they don't care enough to go in one direction or

another. They are usually benign, unless they use their fence-sitting to camouflage an adversarial tendency.

Okay, now that you know the five types of people we have to deal with in any situation where you're advocating for yourself or with others, what do you do with this knowledge? You use it to prepare your lobbying communication so that you can have a better sense of where they stand and who you can count on for support. Using the example of Althea in the last tip, let's say she knows that Elizabeth, Jorge, Chad, and Courtney have all been allies in the past. They usually see eye to eye with her on most things. They've always been honest with her, and they stand to benefit from her plan to increase safety in the company. When she lobbies them, she's going to use them as sounding boards to help her tease out any inconsistencies in the plan and get their input for how to improve it before it's presented.

She is also going to ask them directly for their support. Perhaps Courtney says that she can't support the plan, because she doesn't agree that safety should be a financial priority at this time, given some other large expenditures that are anticipated. Now she gets moved to the opponent box. Althea knows she won't have her support, but she also knows what she has to do to address Courtney's resistance. Althea can go into the meeting better prepared to make a case for prioritizing safety vis-à-vis other expenditures.

Next, Althea goes to Hank. Hank, in the past, has been a bedfellow: the person who agrees with her to her face but doesn't always follow through when it counts. Her best strategy with Hank is to lay out her plan, ask for input, ask for support, and, using the DESC script described in Tip 4, express her concerns about getting support to her face, only to have it disappear when it's most needed. In other words, she lets him know that she noticed his previous reversals and tries to secure his commitment so that it won't happen again. Although it's not a guarantee that he'll move into the ally box, it's her best shot at not being blindsided.

Then she approaches Martina, who tends to be a fence-sitter. Althea considers how she has seen her make decisions in the past and lays out her case, speaking to Martina's type, like we discussed in Tip 9. Knowing that Martina tends to be data-oriented, she focuses on the cost and the people hours required, and quantifies outcomes in terms of potential savings from fewer on-the-job injuries. Althea knows that this is her best shot at getting Martina's commitment.

What should Althea do with people who have proven to be adversaries in the past? Nothing. She's not going to lobby anyone who falls into this category; it will only give them ammunition to shoot her down and won't change the outcomes. Until more trust is built, it's best to do an end run around adversaries, but be prepared to make a strong case that will encounter any possible objections, which you know already from your discussions with the other types.

To summarize, use allies as your sounding board. Ask opponents to reconsider. Use the DESC script to express your concerns to the bedfellow. Give the fence-sitter more information using their preferred style of communication, and do nothing but prepare a strong case that will counter the likely resistance of the adversary.

Tip 24: Put Politics into Practice

If you think politics is four-letter word, think again. Politics is how things get done in the workplace, in government, in professional organizations. If you're not involved in office politics, you're not playing the game. And if you're not playing the game, you can't possibly win. I want you to replace the word *politics* with the word *relationships*, because that's what politics is—it's the business of relationships. That's why my number one tip is building rapport. You can't build relationships if you don't have rapport with people. And if you can't build relationships, you're going to feel as if you are constantly swimming upstream. By the way, when you need a relationship, it's too late to build it. It's why you need to be building strong 360-degree relationships all the time.

The next thing to consider is that inherent to every relationship is a quid pro quo, or something in exchange for something else. A successful workplace relationship, whether with a boss or a coworker, is one in which you clearly define what you have to offer and what you need from the other person. It happens all the time, without putting a name on it. Consider your relationship with your best friend. You may need counsel from her or you may want company, a racquetball partner, or a variety of other things. If she gives you those, you're more likely to want to give her what she wants or needs. It may never be discussed, but the trade is implicit in the relationship.

Workplace politics is no different. Each time you go out of your way for someone, or give them what they want or need, you've earned a figurative chip that you can cash in later for something that you need. And sometimes what you need is to give that person a piece of your mind and not risk them being offended. You're more likely to be able to pull it off if you've already built a relationship with them, and have engaged in quid pro quo politics, whether you call it that or not. Here are a few tips for how you can put politics to work.

First, approach political situations as you would any negotiation. Take time to find out what the other person needs, what you have to offer, and how you can facilitate a win-win situation.

Second, remember the quid pro quo of politics is something in exchange for something else. Don't just give in; think about what you want in exchange. Don't be afraid to cash in your chips. My experience is that women have boatloads of chips in their accounts, but they're hesitant to cash them in.

Third, you can often win in the long run by giving up the smaller, less important points. When you do, you bank chips that you're going to use at a later time.

Fourth, don't avoid what you perceive to be a political problem; people will only go around you. Work through political situations in a way that allows others to see you as a problem-solver, not the problem.

Tip 25: Enlist Advocates

Enlisting advocates is different from lobbying, in that advocates are people who speak up for you on your behalf when you are not present. But it's a slippery slope, especially when asking a man to advocate for you. Janine Bosak, at Dublin City University, and three of her colleagues published a study suggesting that men who advocate for others may be seen as less competent. In contrast, there are stereotypes about women that emphasize the need for them to be concerned with other people's feelings above their own. Social scientists have shown that people who act contrary to these stereotypes tend to elicit backlash from both men and women. This backlash may take the form of being seen as less likable, less competent, and less suitable for certain jobs.

Yet we know that in reality, men advocate for each other far more than they advocate for women, and more than women advocate for other women. It's one of the reasons why there isn't more gender equity in the workplace. Advocates can be extremely helpful in paving the way for strong messages. Here's how.

Let's say you're frustrated with not being selected for a promotion the last three times one has become available. In each instance, the promotion has gone to a less qualified male. You want to give the hiring manager a piece of your mind, but you think better of it. He's a good old boy. It would only do more damage than good. So instead, you ask someone, a man or a woman, to advocate for you, so that the next time a promotional opportunity arises, you may be considered more seriously.

It would sound something like this:

"I'm not sure if you're aware of this, but I have the qualifications and experience to assume the role of payroll supervisor. I've been with the company for over eight years. I've worked in the payroll department for five of those years. I have a degree in accounting and my performance reviews are great. The last three times the position came open, I applied, but in each case, the department manager didn't even grant me an interview. I'd like to ask if you would put a

good word in for me with him so that he'll consider me a viable candidate next time. I know you work closely with him and have a good relationship. Is there anything I can do or information I can provide that would make you comfortable speaking with him on my behalf?"

Of course, asking someone to advocate for you doesn't mean they will. But it sure is better than waiting to be rejected again. Just remember that like all relationships, there is a quid pro quo. So consider what you can offer the person you've asked to be your advocate in exchange for their support. Depending on the situation, let them know how they can benefit from the advocacy. In the previous example, if you know the person relies heavily on the payroll supervisor for quick turnaround, you can always add, "I know payroll is important to you. And if I'm able to get this position, I guarantee you'll get top-notch service from me and my team."

Tip 26: Snuff Out Whisper Campaigns

I absolutely hate office gossip. It's destructive and can needlessly damage people's careers. It's also tenth-grade-ish, isn't it? So it goes without saying that you should never repeat gossip. But what do you do when the gossip is about you? You must address it directly and straightforwardly, without anger or shame. You might not know the source of the rumor or innuendo, but you can put people on notice that you're aware of it and want it to stop. This is a good place to use the DESC script, shown in Tip 4.

Let's assume, for illustration, that a friend of mine told me that she overheard two people talking about my relationship with my boss. The implication was that we were having an affair. And this was based on all the time we spent working late together. What people didn't know is that we were working on a confidential project that had not yet been announced to the rest of the company.

Look at how I use each step of the DESC script to approach each person individually:

Lois: Kristin, I'd like to speak with you about a rumor that has recently come to my attention. It's my understanding that you believe Joe and I are having an affair, because we've been working late almost every night for the past three months. Did I hear that correctly?

Kristin: Well, I'm not saying it's true, and I certainly didn't start the rumor. I think people are just talking, because they don't know what's really going on. Know what I mean?

Lois: Yes, I do know what you mean. Even if you didn't start the rumor, it's disturbing to me that you would repeat it without having any facts. I'd like to ask you for your help squelching the rumor, since it's 100 percent false. Joe and I have been working on a project we just don't seem to have time to work on during normal business hours. I'd like to ask that you let people know they're wrong, and that repeating rumors like this can do a lot of damage to not only people's

careers, but their families as well. Do I have your support on this?

Kristin: Sure.

Lois: Thanks. I really appreciate it. I promise that if I hear anything negative about you, I won't repeat it, and I'll let you know about it so that you can address it however you see fit.

As with any situation like this, having the conversation won't guarantee the other person will meet their commitment to you, but it sure increases the likelihood of getting the result you want.

Tip 27: Prepare and Use an Elevator Speech

People often ask me exactly what an elevator speech is and why it's called that. Let me answer the second part first. It's called an elevator speech because when you give it, it's about the same length as it takes to ride the entire height of a tall building. Maybe not the Empire State Building, but certainly one that's thirty to forty stories tall. The purpose of an elevator speech is to market your brand, given the opportunity, expected or otherwise. It's a little more robust than just owning your success. You're actually showcasing what makes you different than others in similar positions. Here's how it worked for one woman.

Helena was late arriving to a fund-raiser in her industry, which happened to be entertainment, and when she went to her assigned table, there were no open seats. Looking around, she found a table that was only half filled. Walking up to it, she asked if she could join those already seated. The people at the table welcomed her, and after introductions all around, they asked about what she did. Because she had practiced and prepared an elevator speech for just such an occasion, she smiled and said, "I'm the director of diversity for Warner Bros. In that role, I ensure that we not only recruit and hire the best and the brightest, regardless of race, ethnicity, and so on, but also that we provide ample opportunities for upward mobility. In fact, I'm proud that my team increased diversity hiring in the company by 13 percent in just the last eighteen months, and diversity in the management ranks by 8 percent during that same time period."

Now, does this sound like bragging? Hopefully you agree that it doesn't. It sounds like a competent and confident woman, explaining what she does, but the story doesn't end there. Helena received a call the very next morning from the vice president of human resources at Universal Studios, asking if she would be interested in interviewing for a position on his team that would be a promotion for her. She did interview, and as they say, the rest is history. Being prepared to advocate for yourself is half the battle. When opportunity knocks, you don't want to be behind a closed door. Take time to write your elevator speech and practice it until it just flows off the tip of your tongue.

Tip 28: Interrupt with Style

I don't know about you, but I get so frustrated in conversations with people who take up all the air in the room. You know these folks: In what should be a conversation, you do all the listening and they do all the talking. You just can't get a word in edgewise. You wait for them to take a breath, but it seems like they never do. So in a situation like this, you just have to interrupt. It's not impolite, especially if you do it the way I suggest. The trick is to interrupt with a request to summarize and check for understanding of what the other person has said thus far, and then launch into your ideas. If possible, or appropriate, bridge your thoughts with those of the other person. This works especially well.

Now, obviously, you have to be listening in order to do this, but you don't have to remember everything. Just some key points.

Read this exchange:

Lois: Hank, I was just wondering if you got the numbers from last quarter's sales? I'd like to make some suggestions for ensuring we exceed sales in this quarter.

Hank: Oh yeah, we got the numbers. In fact, we just got them in this morning. I've been going over them and it looks like we did pretty well. In the frozen food division, we did better than we anticipated by about 6 percent. You probably remember last year, we anticipated a decline in sales of frozen foods. But by streamlining some of those operations, we were actually able to save some money and stave off any losses. That streamlining was the best thing we did in a long time, and in that division people were getting pretty discouraged by the forecast and productivity was even going down. This should really shore up the team and give them a boost of confidence. If anyone can use it, it's the frozen food division. Then there's the confection division, whose sales were actually down by 2 percent. Now, we anticipated that but hoped that the holiday season would counterbalance the

projection. It just didn't work out that way. As you know, the dietary preferences of Americans are changing, and sugar has become the enemy, so confections are something they avoid. I know in my own family, they are replacing sweet treats with things like flavored rice cakes and other substitutes. So if there's any indication of the buying public, it's no surprise that those numbers are pretty bleak. We'd really have to do something extraordinary to turn around the next quarter. And then there's the—

Lois: Hank, let me interrupt you for a minute here. I want to make sure I understand what you're saying. The bottom line is that frozen foods is up 6 percent and confections are down 2 percent. Is that correct?

Hank: Right.

Lois: And the third division, soft drinks. What's that number?

Hank: Let me see. It looks like it's 5 percent.

Lois: So overall, when we put the numbers together, we're up 9 percent. Right?

Hank: Right.

Lois: That's a good start. They're expecting the next quarter to be sluggish, so we really need to focus on some strategies to overcome those projections. I've got some ideas for how to do that.

Now from here, I'm going to shift to headline communication using the chart from Tip 3. That's going to enable me to present my ideas in a clear, concise manner. In my experience, when you interrupt someone like Hank, they don't even realize they were interrupted. That's because they're often just spouting a stream of consciousness and haven't really planned out what they want to say. In this case, if Hank took back the floor after your summary, you could do the exact same thing again, and that's how you interrupt with style.

Tip 29: Reroute Interruptions

Now you know how to interrupt others when the situation calls for it, but what do you do when you are the one being interrupted? Assuming you're not being interrupted because you're taking up all the air in the room, but rather because someone thinks what they have to say is more important, you can bring the conversation back to you in a couple of ways. Here are a few phrases to add to your repertoire when you are interrupted. "Excuse me, Jorge, I wasn't quite finished with my thought. Let me finish and I'll turn it back to you." Or "Hang on. Before I move on, let me finish what I was saying." If you can't quite interrupt the interruption, here's something to try after the person has completed their comments. "Thanks for sharing your thoughts, Jorge. Let me continue what I was saying."

Now, let's see how it sounds in real time:

Lois: I'd like to propose that we reschedule our quarterly off-site until as late in the quarter as possible. The reason—

Tom: I don't agree. We always hold them—

Lois: Excuse me, Tom, I wasn't quite finished. The reason why I'm suggesting this is because we have some major plant renovations coming up, and it should be all hands on deck until they're completed. When we do have our off-site, we can then do an informed debrief.

It doesn't really matter what Tom says next. You've gotten your entire point on the table.

Here's how the same scenario would sound when you're interrupted, but it's just not right to interrupt back:

Lois: I'd like to propose that we schedule our quarterly off-site until as late in the quarter as possible. The reason—

Tom: I don't agree. We always hold them the week after July 4 so that people can tie them into their travel vacation if they want.

Lois: Thanks for the reminder, Tom. I wasn't quite finished with my rationale. The reason why I'm suggesting this is because we have some major plant renovations coming up, and it should be all hands on deck until they're completed. We can then do our off-site with an informed debrief.

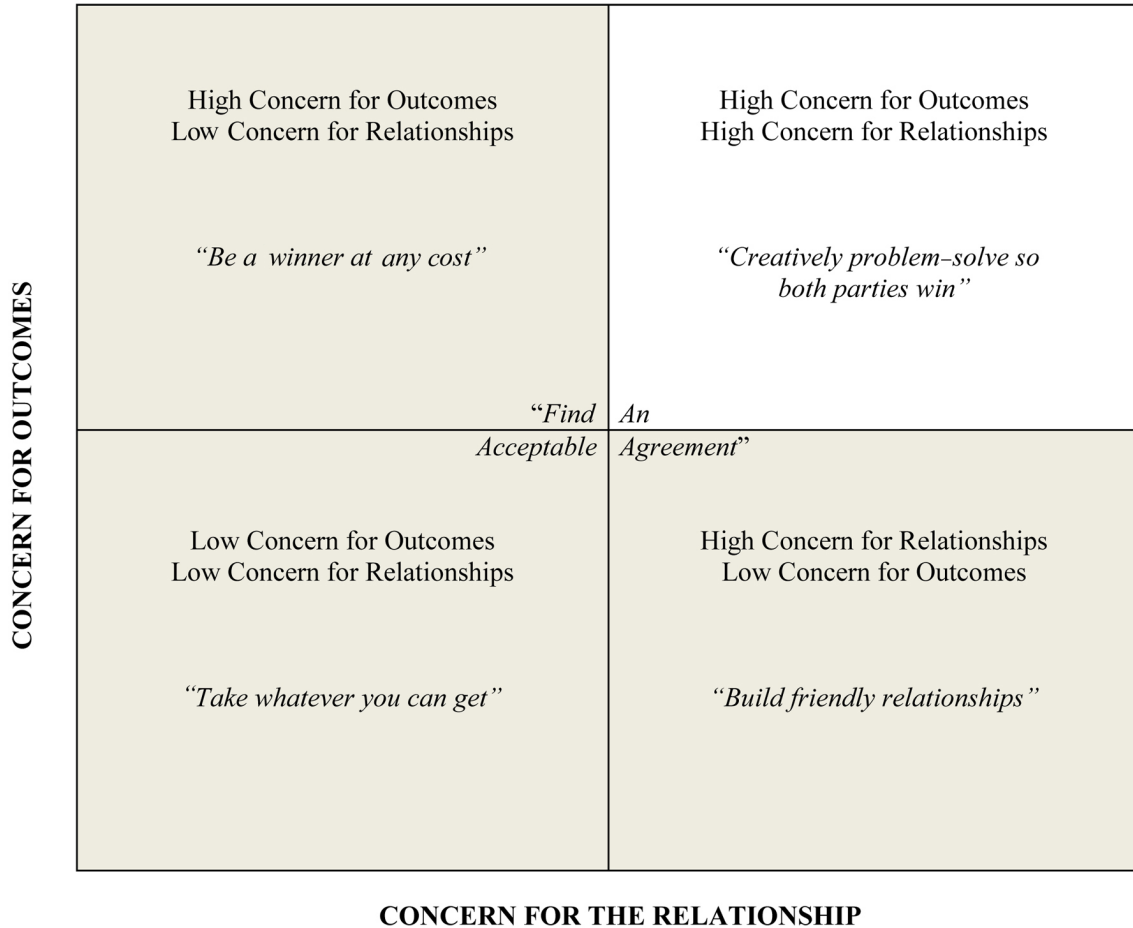
Don't let anyone curtail your complete thought. You can take the floor back without being seen as nasty or small.

Tip 30: Repeat After Me, It's Negotiation, Not Confrontation

My dear friend and co-author of the book *Nice Girls Just Don't Get It*, Carol Frohlinger, is one of the best negotiators I know. I've seen her do it with book editors, in hotels, and with clients. She says that many women equate negotiation with confrontation, but it doesn't have to be that way. Carol's belief is that striving for win-win negotiations is not only a more comfortable approach for most women, but is also the only approach that makes sense when the negotiations are taking place with colleagues and clients. Why? Because everything we do before, during, and after the negotiations should enhance the relationship. This is especially true for women.

For years, we've known intuitively that if women negotiate like men, we're seen as greedy, unprofessional, or both. Now the research supports this. The good news is that our natural inclination to listen to others and find common ground and collaborate works well with win-win negotiations. Here is a model for creating win-win negotiations that's predicated on the belief that good negotiations with family and colleagues focus on two things—the outcome and the relationship.

WIN-WIN NEGOTIATIONS MODEL



I say with family and colleagues because there's actually two different kinds of negotiations. One is transactional, where you have more leeway to focus only on the outcome. Transactional negotiations are often with people you're not in a personal or professional relationship with. Take the person selling scarves on the street corner of New York. When he tells me that a scarf I want is \$25, I'm not going to focus on the relationship as much as I am on the outcome by offering him \$12 and then negotiating until we reach a price that's acceptable for us both. It's never okay to treat a person disrespectfully. But you can take more risks and be a little more aggressive with what you want in a transactional negotiation.

On the other hand, when you're negotiating with someone with whom you have a relationship, personal or professional, you must focus on the

relationship as well, because you're going to interact with them in the future, and you don't want to burn any bridges. Focusing on the outcomes in the relationship means I go into every negotiation knowing what I want, knowing as much as possible about what the other person wants or needs, and with a game plan for how to ensure both of our needs are met.

Let me tell you a little story here that demonstrates this. You may have heard it before, but bear with me. Two sisters are baking a cake for Christmas. It's Christmas Eve, the stores are closed, and both of their recipes call for an orange. There's only one orange in the house. The younger sister says she should get that orange because she always bakes a cake that people love. And she wants to make sure they have it again this Christmas.

The older sister says she should get the orange, because she's been recently married and her in-laws are coming for dinner and she wants to impress them. So who should get the orange? If you focus only on what's been said, you miss an opportunity to understand what's truly needed. Remember, listening is a critical part of successful negotiations.

Here's how the ideal negotiation for that orange would play out:

Lois: You mentioned that you need that orange for the cake that you're baking.

Sister: Yes, the recipe calls for one orange.

Lois: Hmm. My recipe does, too.

Sister: Well, I think I should get it, because people love my cake and I wouldn't want to disappoint them.

Lois: Oh, I don't want anybody to be disappointed either. Tell me about your cake and what the recipe calls for.

Sister: Well, we have enough flour, sugar, and other ingredients for two cakes. In addition, my recipe calls for the juice of an orange.

Lois: Ah, this is going to work. My recipe calls for the zest of one orange. So why don't I zest it, then turn it over to you for juicing?

Sister: Perfect.

If only it were that easy, right? But you get the point here. Only by asking questions and listening to the answers can you really determine what another person's needs are. Sometimes in this scenario, people will suggest that they cut the orange in half. The problem with this solution is that each person only gets half of what they need, instead of all of what they need. In a true negotiation, people should get most of what they need or want.

Now let's try a trickier situation. This is one that someone asked me for help with not too long ago. She was offered a job that she really wanted, but the salary was much lower than she anticipated. As eager as she was to join this new company, she didn't want to make what would be a financially lateral move. She knew she had to negotiate if she had any chance of getting something closer to what she would like to earn.

Read the role-play we practiced until she felt confident saying it without hesitation. Now remember, this is not a transactional negotiation. This is a personal one.

Victoria: First, let me say how delighted I am that you've offered me a job. I'm excited to join your team and anxious to make a contribution. Before I formally accept, I'd like to better understand how the figures in the compensation package were arrived at.

Lois: And we are looking forward to the skills that you're going to bring to the table. In terms of the package, the salary is based on bringing you in at the midpoint of the range. The vacation is the standard two weeks for new employees. And the health care and profit-sharing plans are what we provide to all employees in our management ranks.

Victoria: I see. Salary's midpoint, vacation standard, and the rest is the same for all management employees?

Lois: Right.

Victoria: I wouldn't want you to think that money is the most important thing to me, because it's not. At the same time, I would hope you understand that I wouldn't want to make a

move for a net decrease in my overall compensation. If I did that, I don't think you would respect me, and I certainly wouldn't respect myself.

Lois: Well, what did you have in mind?

Victoria: I'd like to see if we could reach agreement on three things. First, my education, experience, and the skills I bring to the job suggest that the salary should be above the midpoint of the range. Eighty percent of the range would be more consistent with what I'm bringing to the table. Second, as you know, my commute is going to double and public transportation just isn't an option from where I live. I'm hoping you might have a stipend for parking and perhaps even mileage. Finally, I'm currently getting five weeks of vacation. I wouldn't expect you to match that, because it wouldn't be fair to the other employees. I'm wondering if it could be increased to three weeks after my first year of service.

Lois: We actually don't have any travel stipends. What we might be able to do is add that into the base salary.

Victoria: That would be great.

Lois: The other two items, I have to check with HR. Let me do that and get back to you.

Victoria: I would really appreciate it.

As you can see, Victoria was well prepared before she entered into the negotiation. She was honest about her desire to work for the company, and at the same time was clear about what she needed to make a move. As it turned out, the person who was to become her new boss came back and offered an additional 22 percent over the original salary offer. This put her close to 90 percent of the salary range for her job. She said she could not provide the third week of vacation, because it wasn't consistent with company practice. However, she was willing to sign off on five days of paid time off as requested.

All in all, Victoria was satisfied with the outcome, pleased with her

negotiation, and accepted the job. Negotiation takes practice, and there are specific skills you can use to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes. I encourage you to take a negotiation skills class for women. We really do have to negotiate differently than men, and you want to be on top of your game when it comes to advocating for yourself.

Tip 31: The Salami

The salami is actually one technique of negotiation that works particularly well and that I'd like you to keep in mind. Just as most of us wouldn't sit down and eat an entire salami at once, sometimes you can't ask for everything you want at once. At the same time, it could undermine your ability to get any part of what you want. The salami technique suggests that you cut your request into pieces, prioritizing the most important ones and asking for those first.

Say, for example, that you're preparing for your annual performance review. You know you've had some big wins over the course of the past review period and that you've got some capital in your goodwill account that you want to cash in. Not only do you want a 10 percent raise, but you also want to ask for tuition assistance so that you can go back to school and get your MBA. You'd like to be able to telecommute one or two days a week, and you want to move your office from a cubicle to one with a door. Isn't that what we all aspire to, a door that actually closes?

You're not going to say, "I know I've made a big contribution this year, and so I want a 10 percent salary increase, tuition assistance, the opportunity to telecommute, and to move to that vacant office down the hall." What's that line from the Pointer Sisters song? "You sure want a lot for your dime." That's what the boss is going to think with that request.

Cutting up the salami in the performance evaluation meeting, you're going to ask for just two things—the things that are most important to you. In this case, let's say it's tuition assistance and the office, which doesn't cost the company anything. You figure you're going to get close to 10 percent anyway. And if not, you could always apply for a promotion that would actually exceed that. And you really want the telecommuting opportunity to make it easier to go to school.

So first things first. In your first meeting with the boss, you're going to advocate for yourself by asking for two pieces of the salami like this: "I'm glad that I was able to make a contribution to our bottom line this year, and I think that I could make an even bigger one, if you would support my application for tuition assistance. Getting my MBA will allow me to bring

new ideas and best practices back to the department. One other thing that would make a difference for me—and it wouldn't cost the company anything—would be the chance to move to the vacant office down the hall. It would provide me with the privacy I need to discuss confidential issues with our clients. Do I have your blessing in both of these areas?"

In the best-case scenario, you hear yes. In the event you'll hear no, to one or both requests, don't despair. Find out why the request is being denied and use this to prepare a future case. Do your research and counter resistance with facts, past precedent, and projected positive outcomes.

Tip 32: Correct Ms. Representation

The best example of a Ms. Representation—that is, misrepresenting the position of a woman—happened in the president’s Oval Office when the Democrats took over the House of Representatives in 2018. It was during early discussions with Democrats and Republicans in funding for the border wall. I watched in amazement as Nancy Pelosi corrected Donald Trump in a way that left him speechless. Here is how it played out.

Donald Trump said, “I also know that Nancy’s in a situation where it’s not easy for her to talk right now and I fully understand that. We’re going to have a good discussion and we’ll see what happens, but we have to have border security.” Nancy Pelosi replied, “Mr. President, please don’t characterize the strength I bring to this meeting as the leader of the House Democrats. We just won a big victory.” Bravo, Speaker Pelosi, you demonstrated how to advocate for yourself with arguably the most powerful person in the world. And if she can do that, you certainly can.

When something you’ve said has been misrepresented, you not only should, but you also must interrupt to immediately correct it before it becomes a truth in the minds of others. Had Nancy Pelosi not spoken up as she did, she would appear as weak in everyone else’s eyes and lose some of her hard-earned clout.

The next time you feel as if your intentions have been misunderstood, misstated, or mischaracterized, say something like this: “Excuse me. Before we go any further, I’d like to clarify what I actually said,” or, “Hang on for a moment. It seems as if I may not have made myself clear. Here’s what I want the key takeaway to be.” Or you can even say, “Let me interrupt for a moment. What’s been said is not what I intended. Let me say it again so that we’re all on the same page.” In short, do not let others speak for you in any way, shape, or form.

Tip 33: Stand Up to Bullies

Nearly everyone has at some time in their lives been bullied. Bullying takes many forms, including ridicule, undue pressure, taunting, teasing, harassment, insensitive comments, and so many more. Despite the public focus on anti-bullying, the problem appears to be getting worse. Now that people can do it at arm's length, through a tweet or a text, and even do it anonymously, it seems bullies are coming out of the woodwork. Unfortunately, bullies are often rewarded for their behavior. That is, they get what they want and could be highly regarded by their peers as cool. For these reasons and others, it's hard to get people to stop bullying.

That doesn't mean you can't put a bully on notice that you don't want to be the recipient of his or her antics. Bullying can take a toll on you, both physical and psychological. That's why letting it go on for too long isn't a good idea. As with any other communication, you have to plan your message and deliver it with maximum impact, which usually means practicing what you're going to say in advance. Go back to the DESC script from Tip 4 to start preparing what you really want to say to a bully in your life. I told you the DESC script would come in handy in a lot of ways, didn't I?

Look at how I apply it in this conversation, along with the broken record that I discussed in Tip 8:

Lois: Barbara, I'd like to talk to you about how I'm being treated by you.

Barbara: What do you mean?

Lois: In meetings and at group outings, you openly deride my suggestions with comments such as, "Now that's a flight of fancy," or, "What did you have to drink at lunch?" These feel like an intentional attempt to embarrass me and put me down in front of management and peers. They aren't productive, and they're often unkind. How do you see the situation?

Barbara: I think you just have thin skin. I don't mean anything by them. People even laugh.

Lois: Be that as it may, I don't like having these comments addressed to me and I would appreciate it if you'd cut them out. I don't mind constructive feedback, but these remarks aren't helpful or funny to me.

Barbara: Come on, have a sense of humor.

Lois: As I said, I'd like the comments to stop. I expect to be treated with the same respect I show to you.

Barbara: Whatever.

Lois: I'm open to discussion, just not ridicule. Our working relationship will only be enhanced by mutual respect and constructive dialogue that benefits the company.

Now, Barbara may not agree with me, and she may not stop her bullying entirely, but she certainly will think twice before she speaks to me in the future. More importantly, I took back my power. I have no control over what others do, but I do have control over my reaction to them.

Chapter Two Key Takeaways

A very specific kind of communication is one where you speak up for yourself, also known as *self-advocation*. Women often find it easier to advocate for someone else, so the tips in this chapter should be helpful when it comes to getting your own needs and wants met.

- **Establish boundaries.** When asked to do something that is unreasonable, unfair, or even unappealing, be prepared to graciously draw the line with a simple phrase such as, “I’d be happy to do that. Let me tell you what realistically can be accomplished within those limitations.” Then go on to present two or three options from which the person can choose.
- **Ask for that raise, promotion, or perk.** If you were promised something but it wasn’t delivered, contrasting, as we discussed in Chapter One, works well as a follow-up to forgotten promises. When presenting a new request, use data, facts, and figures as the basis for your request or provide tangible statistics that underscore the value that you’ve added to the company.
- **Be seen and heard.** The three tips provided here were to always sit at the table, even if you have to wedge a chair in from the periphery; be among the first two or three people to speak; and when you do speak, tie your comments to the remarks made by others.
- **Toot your own horn without blowing it.** About six weeks before your performance review, send your boss an email summarizing your key accomplishments during the last review period. In meetings and on reports, take every opportunity to showcase your successes with subtle reminders of how you, and others if they were involved, met key benchmarks. And when someone sends you a written compliment, make sure it finds its way to the boss.

- **Own your success.** This is actually a variation on the bragging thing, but more about letting the world know who you are and what you've achieved. Introduce yourself using your full name and job title, in appropriate situations. Every time you meet someone, it's an opportunity to market your brand.
- **Sequester naysayers.** When the negativity of others becomes too much to bear, banish the naysayers. It's a healthy way to advocate for yourself. Conversely, surround yourself with yay-sayers, who you can trust to tell you the truth but not demolish you in the process.
- **Assume equality.** Get in the habit of calling people by their first names, even your doctors, or minimally, asking if they prefer to be called by their first name or something else. Don't hesitate to ask questions, regardless of the person's position or stature. Look people directly in the eye and be the first to extend your hand in greeting, rather than waiting to see what the other person does. And don't forget to make that handshake firm so that it announces, "I'm someone to be taken seriously."
- **Lobby in advance.** Lobbying is simply educating others as to your position and asking for their support.
- **Send up a trial balloon.** A trial balloon is a small piece of information you use to gauge the reaction of an audience. It can be thought of as a way to test the water about a solution or an idea before diving in. It also has the advantage of creating a bit of distance between the proposal and the person proposing it, which makes it easier to back away from if the response is negative.
- **Identify allies, adversaries, and everyone in between.** Allies and adversaries are identified by a combination of trust and agreement. Review the "Working with Allies and Adversaries" chart in Tip 23 to learn how to best interact with each type.
- **Put politics into practice.** Plain and simple, politics is the business

of relationships. It's how things get done in the workplace, in government, in professional organizations. If you're not involved in office politics, you're not playing the game. And if you're not playing the game, you can't possibly win.

- **Enlist advocates.** Enlisting advocates is different from lobbying, in that advocates are people who speak up for you on your behalf when you are not present. They may talk about your qualifications, your achievements, or why you should be considered for a job.
- **Snuff out whisper campaigns.** You must address gossip directly and straightforwardly, without anger or shame. You might not know the source of the rumor or innuendo, but you can put people on notice that you are aware of it and you want it to stop. Use the DESC script in Tip 4 to prepare your comments.
- **Prepare and use an elevator speech.** The purpose of an elevator speech is to market your brand. It's more robust than just owning your success. You're actually showcasing what makes you different from others in similar positions.
- **Interrupt with style.** It's not impolite to interrupt when the other person is taking up all the air in the room. The trick to doing it effectively is to interrupt with a request to summarize and check for understanding. After you've done this, you can then launch into your ideas.
- **Reroute interruptions when you are the one being interrupted.** Assuming it's not because you're taking up all the air in the room, you can bring the conversation back to you by either interjecting that you weren't quite finished or by waiting until the person is finished, and then indicating you would like to continue with your thought.
- **Repeat after me: It's negotiation, not confrontation.** Creating win-win negotiations is not only a more comfortable approach for most women, but also the only approach that makes sense when the

negotiations are taking place with colleagues and clients. The “Win-Win Negotiations Model” chart in Tip 30 provides a model for creating win-win negotiations that’s predicated on the belief that good negotiations with family and colleagues focus on two things—outcomes and relationships.

- **The salami.** Just as you wouldn’t sit down and eat a salami all at once, but rather cut it into pieces and eat it a bit at a time, you might need to do the same if what you’re asking for consists of multiple elements. It involves prioritizing what’s most important to you and asking for that first, followed by additional requests later.
- **Correct Ms. Representation.** This refers to misrepresenting the intentions or position of a woman, either intentionally or otherwise. When it happens to you, you must interrupt to immediately correct it, before it becomes a truth in the minds of others. A statement such as, “Excuse me, before we go any further, I’d like to clarify what I actually said,” will do the trick.
- **Stand up to bullies.** Bullying can take a toll on you, both physical and psychological. That’s why letting it go on for too long isn’t a good idea. As with any other communication, you have to plan your message and deliver it with maximum impact, which usually means practicing what you’re going to say in advance.

Chapter Three

Sticky Situations

Every workplace is fraught with land mines, dilemmas, and potentially sticky situations, from having to answer what you perceive to be a loaded question to having to initiate a difficult conversation. Many women feel fearful or uncomfortable confronting these head-on. Once you know how to do it, you'll find it gets easier each time you do. Long-term success is contingent upon being able to handle these in a tactful and politically correct way. In this chapter, you're going to learn how to do just that.

Tip 34: Differentiate Can from Must Interventions

My mother thought that just because she had an observation or opinion about what someone was doing, she was responsible for telling them. It was her obligation to make sure everyone could benefit from her insights and wisdom. As she was the supervisor of nursing at a large regional hospital, I suppose it served her well. As the mother of three children who didn't always want or need her opinion, not so much.

I wish my mother had known the difference between a can and a must intervention. They're exactly what they sound like. A can intervention is one where I have information that may be helpful to the other person, but it's not necessarily my job or my responsibility to give it to them. An example might be if I overhear the boss saying something less than flattering about the work product of a colleague. Would it be helpful for the person to know this? Sure. Is it my responsibility to tell them? Not really.

Three critical elements of a can conversation include: having a strong relationship with the other person; being in possession of information that may be helpful to that person; and actually caring about the welfare of the other person. Even when all three factors are present, there are times when you might consider whether or not the conversation will actually be productive. For example, when other people have already provided the information or when the person is deluged with feedback, just because you can doesn't mean you should.

A must conversation, on the other hand, is one where you feel as if you must say something for one or both of two reasons. First, someone's behavior is concretely impacting you in some way, or second, it's part of your job to change the behavior. Examples here might be speaking with a neighbor about how loud his music is or with your housekeeper about areas that haven't been cleaned in what appears to be several months. In the first, the behavior is impacting you. In the second, the behavior is impacting you and it's your job to change the behavior if you want to keep the housekeeper in your employ.

How you initiate a can communication is different from how you initiate a must conversation. Once again, preparation is the key to comfort and

confidence. Let's look first at the can communication. You'll also find these guidelines in the following box.

CAN vs. MUST COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES FOR A *MUST* CONVERSATION

A must communication is one where you feel as if you must do something for one or both of two reasons: (1) Someone's behavior is concretely impacting you, or (2) it is part of your job to change the behavior.

1. Initiate the communication.

You are responsible for changing the situation. Invite the other person to share in when and where the intervention will take place.

2. State your concern.

Using the DESC script, describe why you are having this discussion.

3. Involve the individual in the solution.

Involving the person will increase the likelihood that he or she will actually implement the solution, and you may learn a new solution.

4. Ensure that you are satisfied with the solution.

If you know at the beginning the minimal result that you expect, you will more likely be able to ensure your satisfaction.

5. If you feel resistance, shift to active listening.

Active listening involves not only showing the person that you heard what was said, but also that you understand the feelings associated with the message.

GUIDELINES FOR A *CAN* CONVERSATION

A can conversation is one where you feel that you can accomplish your goal because (1) you have a strong relationship with the other person, (2) you have information that may be helpful to the other person, and (3) you care about the other

person.

1. Ensure that you have built a relationship with the person.
2. State the nature of your concern and ask the person's permission to share it.
3. Wait until the person gives you permission before you move on.
4. Share your personal concern.
5. Be specific.
6. If you encounter resistance, shift to active listening.
7. Be brief and state your concern only once.
8. Allow the other person to decide how or if he or she wants to act on your concern.

First, make sure you have a strong relationship with the person. Can conversations don't go over so well with adversaries who view them as one more way you're trying to put them down. Second, state the nature of your concern and ask the person's permission to share it. Third, wait until the person gives you permission before you move on. Fourth, if they do give you permission, go ahead. Share your personal concern, being as specific as possible and using as much data or firsthand knowledge as you have. If you encounter resistance, shift to active listening. Fifth, state your concern only once. Allow the other person to decide how or if he or she wants to act on the information you provided.

Here's how it would sound:

“Ashley, I have some information I think would be valuable to your career development, and I'm wondering if you'd like to hear it.”

Assuming Ashley says yes, I would continue.

“When I was at lunch yesterday, I overheard Dan and Margo talking about the PowerPoint you submitted for presentation at the next stakeholder meeting. They were saying that it was filled with typos and that it wasn't visually appealing. They were reluctant to

use it at the meeting. I know you worked really hard on it, and I thought you might want to take a second look and see if their opinions have any merit. If so, I'm happy to help you redo it, and you can let them know you want to provide another shot at it. It's really up to you."

At this point, you simply listen and offer your support. Remember, it's not your responsibility to ensure action is taken on your input in a can conversation.

Now, if this were a must conversation, it would be totally different because the situation directly impacts me or it's my job to address it. In this case, the steps I take are different. Loosely following the DESC script, here's how the conversation would sound if I were Ashley's supervisor:

Lois: Ashley, I'd like to talk to you about the PowerPoint presentation that you submitted for the stakeholder meeting at the end of the month. In reviewing it, I noticed that it contained numerous typos. The charts were so small they couldn't be read from the back of the room, and there were too many words on each page, so it wasn't visually appealing. I really can't use it at our meeting. Can you understand what I'm saying?

Ashley: It's actually only the second PowerPoint that I've ever done. I thought I did a pretty good job on it.

Lois: Well, I'd certainly give you an A for effort. I didn't realize you hadn't done more of them. PowerPoints are more of an art than a science. How could I help you to learn the art of PowerPoint presentations?

Ashley: Well, maybe you could start by showing me one that's done the way you like. I could learn from that.

Lois: Oh, I'm happy to do that. Anything else?

Ashley: Are there any books or classes I can learn from?

Lois: I don't know about books, but I do know the company offers

workshops on PowerPoint presentations. I'm going to sponsor you for one of those.

Ashley: That would be great.

Lois: In the meantime, I'm going to need this to be redone by the end of the week. How about if you work on it with Tony? I'll share one of his with you and let him know that I'd like him to give you a hand. I don't want him to do it for you. I just want him to help you do it yourself. I think having a coach on this would be helpful.

Ashley: Sounds good to me.

Lois: Just so we're both on the same page, you're going to meet with Tony and get this one back to me by noon on Friday, and you're going to enroll in the next PowerPoint workshop. I'm going to send you a few samples and let Tony know I'd like him to show you the basics of creating an appealing presentation. Agreed?

Ashley: Agreed.

That is the difference between a can and a must conversation.

Tip 35: Answering Loaded Questions

I'd say the most frequently asked loaded question is, "Does this dress make me look fat?" How in the world are you supposed to answer that? The fact is, if someone asks the question, then the answer is usually yes, but you're not going to say that, are you? No matter how good a relationship you have with the person, the question screams for tact. A loaded question is one where there's really no good answer because honesty might damage your relationship or because the person doesn't really want to hear your answer. According to the Urban Dictionary, a loaded question is a question with a false or questionable presupposition. The question, "Have you stopped beating your wife?" is a loaded question that presupposes that you have beaten your wife prior to its being asked as well as that you have a wife.

Any question that begins with, "Don't you think that _____" (fill in the blank about anything) is loaded. The person asking the question has a presupposition. "Don't you think that" is never really a question. It's almost always an entrée into someone wanting to give their opinion to you and not really caring what you think.

It happens to me all the time when I'm onstage giving a keynote. Someone in the audience will raise their hand and say, "Don't you think that women are each other's worst enemies?" It just so happens that I don't think that, but the person asking the question does. I don't answer "don't you think that" questions because they're a trap at worst, and the response will make no difference at best. The best answer to a loaded question is a deflection back to the person asking it. Here's how some deflections would sound:

"Don't you think that women are each other's worst enemies?"

"I actually don't think that, but it seems like you do. Why don't you tell me why you think so?"

Or another one:

“Don’t you agree that we need to spend more money on defense and less on social service projects?”

My answer would be:

“It seems like you have a strong opinion about that. Why don’t you tell me more?”

How about the question:

“Aren’t you in favor of capital punishment?”

An answer to this that’s a deflection might be:

“It’s a complex question. What do you think of capital punishment?”

You’d be surprised at how infrequently the person asking the question realizes what you’ve just done. Typically, they just respond to you. After you’ve acknowledged what they’ve said, you’re free to move on. Very rarely does the person come back with, “Hey, wait a minute. I didn’t hear your answer.” That’s because they didn’t care about it to begin with. An opinion was disguised as a question.

Be on the lookout for loaded questions and don’t go for the bait. You usually wind up in a spitting match. The same does not hold true for legitimate questions posed to you in search of information, expertise, or clarification. There’s another whole set of rules for those, and I’ll get to them in the next chapter on executive presence.

Tip 36: Clarify Misunderstandings Gracefully

I'll be the first to admit that there are times when I just want to tell someone to go to hell, and I don't really care whether they look forward to the trip or not. It's usually when someone has gotten under my skin by lying to me. I'm patient with a lot of things. Lying isn't one of them. This particular tip is one that I have to remind myself is important in the bigger scheme of things, kind of like karma. If I can be gracious when I'm miffed, then certainly graciousness will be returned to me by the universe. Then again, sometimes karma is overrated. Right? My rule of thumb is to give people the benefit of the doubt even when it's clear they don't deserve it. It does me no good to focus on the worst. It only makes my blood pressure go up and my sense of well-being go down.

When I am at my most gracious about misunderstandings, I remain on an even keel, maintain some semblance of a relationship that I may need, and allow others to save face. It costs me nothing and gives me peace of mind. Let me give you a personal example.

A few years back, I was the president of the board of directors of a nonprofit organization. With the state of traffic in Los Angeles, we rely on video conferences and email to conduct business. One of the board members volunteered to take charge of corporate sponsorship for our annual fund-raiser. Having had the same role the year before, I offered to provide assistance in the form of sponsorship kits, lists of potential sponsors, and so on. He told me he didn't need any of those because he already had it covered. Via email, I asked if he would mind sending me what he came up with for sponsors, and he said he would.

After two weeks, I had not received it, so I wrote again requesting it. No response. I called him on his cell phone and left several messages. Still no response. He missed the next monthly board meeting, so there was no opportunity to follow up there. If you know anything about nonprofit fund-raising, you know corporate sponsorships are a big part of the success of any event, so I was getting concerned. I sent a few more emails and left a few more voice mails, and then he wrote asking if I would share my sponsorship kit with him. By now, seven weeks had gone by, precious time

lost on our time line. I emailed him my kit, asking why I hadn't heard from him sooner, and he said he'd been busy with work.

When I specifically asked about my calls and emails, he said he never got them. Emails, maybe. Phone calls, not likely. At the next board meeting, he was asked to report on how he was coming with corporate sponsorship, and he said great. He expected to raise about \$50,000 in the coming three months. Sounded good to me, so I backed off. He missed the next board meeting and the one after that. When I sent him an email asking how the sponsorship was coming, he said it was coming along. Well, you can see where this is going. After nearly three months, we had heard how great it was all going, but we had seen nothing tangible. He didn't respond to requests from other board members and always had some excuse for why he didn't make the meetings.

Needless to say, I was frustrated, but I was also angry. His commitment to raise \$50,000 was something we all counted on. I was getting increasingly concerned that it wasn't going to happen. What I really wanted to do was write him an email and give him a piece of my mind. He was letting down not only the board but also the people in the community who we serve as well. Instead, I asked to schedule a phone call with him. After a few missed calls, we finally connected.

Here's how I handled what he perceived to be a misunderstanding with what I hope you will agree was graciousness:

Lois: John, I'd like to talk to you about your commitment to this board and your responsibilities.

John: I've told you I'm working on the sponsorship.

Lois: I'm not just talking about the sponsorships. I'm also talking about attending meetings, returning calls, and responding to emails.

John: I've responded to calls and emails. You say you sent them, but I never got them. I can't respond to something I never received. Can I? As for the meetings, my company calls these last-minute conferences, and I have to go to them.

Lois: It sounds to me like you're pretty busy. I'm thinking that this

might not be the best time for you to serve on a board that's as time-consuming as ours. While we appreciate your efforts heretofore, I'd like to suggest that you take a leave of absence from the board for three months and reassess your availability.

John: I have time for the board.

Lois: Given the missed meetings and failure to report on your progress toward sponsorship, it doesn't seem like it, John.

John: Well, if you want, I'll just quit.

Lois: As I said, a leave of absence is one way to go, but if you would prefer to quit, I understand.

John: I think I'll just quit.

Lois: That's your choice. I would hope, however, that you at least continue to seek sponsorship for the fund-raiser from your considerable network of potential donors.

John: No, that's not going to happen. If you don't appreciate what I've done, I'm finished.

Lois: I'm sorry to hear that. We were really depending on you. If that's your decision, then I'll let the board know that you've resigned.

John: You go ahead and do that.

I hope you can see in this scenario that I wasn't blaming or shaming, simply clarifying the expectations and trying to provide a way for John to save face. If John wasn't John, he would have gotten it and been gracious in response. Instead, he slammed the door behind him and damaged relationships that could have been useful to him in the future. When clarifying misunderstandings or speaking with people who don't meet their obligations to you, it doesn't hurt to provide them with a face-saving out. The end result is what you care about, and getting there in the most gracious way possible enables you to take the high road.

Tip 37: Disagree without Being Disagreeable

Whether at home or in the workplace, differences of opinion are inevitable and they aren't even such a bad thing. Differences of opinion often stem from having distinctly different views of the world that are neither right nor wrong, good nor bad.

These differences, when managed effectively, can actually add to better decision making and outcomes provided all parties involved are open to listening to a different or opposing viewpoint. It's important that you be willing to speak up and disagree when you have knowledge, experience, or insights that would provide an alternative view of a situation. When you don't, you are contributing to potentially faulty outcomes.

I remember a manager who once sent a man to me for coaching because he felt the man wasn't adding value. When I probed into what he really meant, he said the man was really smart but would never disagree with him. "It's what I pay him for," said the boss with frustration. In this man's case, he wouldn't disagree because he grew up in an Asian culture where it was impolite to disagree with your elders. He had to learn when in Rome, do as the Romans.

The same holds true for many women. We hesitate or are reluctant to speak up even when we can see someone is going down the wrong path because we're afraid of a few things. We're afraid we might be wrong. We're afraid to be seen as too pushy. Sometimes we fear the older, louder, more experienced voices in the room. Remember what I said earlier. If you don't speak up, you aren't in the room.

When it comes to disagreeing without being disagreeable, first you need to decide if you should speak up. To determine this, ask yourself, "Is there room for negotiation in this discussion?" If the boss is adamant about wanting to go in a certain direction, it's a risk to point out why it may not be the best idea. I'm not saying you shouldn't do it. I'm just saying this is a situation that calls for data to support your position, not just a hunch or intuition. If you have data, the risk may be worth the profit.

Next, ask yourself, "Is the other person collaborative?" If so, it's low risk to disagree. Done properly, you won't damage the relationship. In this

case, the person may be an opponent but certainly not an adversary.

Another question to ask is, “Do I have a particular expertise that lends credence to my point?” If yes, then it’s your responsibility to provide it before decisions are made. This is when you want to apply the persuasive style of influence we talked about in Tip 6.

Another question to ask yourself is, “Would I gain more by not disagreeing?” In other words, how consequential would it be to remain silent and go along with what’s decided? If it’s of little consequence, it’s probably worth it to simply support the outcomes.

Finally, ask yourself, “Is this the hill I want to die on?” There are some disagreements that are worth a fight. These usually have to do with issues that you view as unethical, unfair, illegal, immoral, or counter to your values. In such circumstances, you are willing to pay a price to ensure your position is clear even when it’s counter to what others believe.

Now for the how. Once you’ve decided that, yes, I want to add my viewpoint to the mix, you can use a combination of previously described techniques. Look at how I’m going to draw on much of what we’ve already covered. You can use contrasting: “I don’t want you to think I don’t respect your opinion and expertise because I do. At the same time, the data I’ve collected suggests we need to factor in a few more variables to reach the best solution. Let me share those with you.”

Or you can use bridging: “If I understand you correctly, you believe we should take immediate action to address customer concerns around quality. Although I certainly agree that action is required, I believe we need to do a little more research to ascertain the real sources of the problem to ensure our solutions are on target.”

Or you could use a headline communication: “Given my background in quality control, I propose that we do more research before taking action. I say this for three reasons. First, the problem doesn’t seem to present itself across divisions, so we need to pinpoint those where it does. Second, the issues vary even within divisions. It would help to know the source of the specific issues. Finally, taking time to involve customers in the research process will convey the message that we take their concerns seriously. You can see that I feel strongly about this, but I’d also like to know what others think so that we can proceed strategically.”

You’ll notice what these examples have in common is that they use more

words rather than fewer to make the messages more palatable but not so many words as to dilute the message.

Tip 38: Clear the Air

One of the ways in which I'm still a nice girl is my avoidance of conflict. I just hate it. I don't like to be in it, I don't like to be around it, and I don't like to help others resolve it. As a consultant, conflict resolution was my least favorite client request. Yet, like most people, there are times when I just can't avoid it. Not only can I not avoid it, but I also shouldn't and neither should you. Sweeping conflict under the rug only makes things worse because it festers and grows in the dark. On top of that, it can be uncomfortable to encounter the other person in business or social situations. Clearing the air is something that you do when you're in the midst of an unresolved conflict or misunderstanding. In these situations, people often have the tendency to retreat to their corners and wait for the other person to make the first move.

In the worst-case scenario, the relationship is irreparably damaged and clearing the air isn't even possible. If a relationship is valuable to you or if you need it to serve a purpose in your life, clearing the air is the way to go. As in other situations, my preference is to give the other person the benefit of the doubt. It costs me nothing, and it's a cheap olive branch, provided of course I can do it with authenticity and not hold a grudge. For example, let's use a falling-out with a friend you've known since childhood. Obviously, the relationship is important to you because you've maintained it all these years. You both also know how to push each other's buttons. Sometimes, that's taken a step too far.

In this case, you had asked your friend if she would be willing to watch your six-year-old for the weekend so that you and your partner could get away for a few days. In the past, you've both provided this kind of babysitting for each other and it hasn't been an issue, so you didn't think it would be this time either. Instead of getting the anticipated response from her—"Sure, that's no problem"—she hemmed and hawed. First, she said she had to check her calendar and get back to you. Then, when you followed up with her, she said it wasn't a good weekend for her to take your son. It left you feeling miffed and hurt. Something had changed, but you had no idea what it could be.

You wound up taking your son to your sister's house, so that wasn't a problem, but her rejection of your request was. You didn't call her as you normally might after returning from a trip, and she didn't call you either. The days turned into weeks with no communication between the two of you. It weighs on you to the point where you're going to avoid places you think you might see her and be forced to interact. If ever there was a case for needing to clear the air, this is it.

Going back to the handy-dandy, ever-useful DESC script from Tip 4 (and that you'll also find in the "DESC Script" box in Tip 4), look at how you can courageously address the situation in a phone call:

Lois: Frieda, I'd like to talk to you about what's going on between us. Would now be a good time?

Frieda: Sure.

Lois: It seems like things have been tense with us since I asked you to watch my son a few weeks back. To be honest, your reaction to the request surprised me. I guess you could say it hurt me, too. I thought we had an understanding around that kind of thing, and I couldn't figure out what was going on. It's not like you to be so vague. That's what bothered me most, not that you said no, but it seemed like you were hiding something from me. How did you experience the situation?

Frieda: Look, Lois. I don't mind watching your son when you want to get away, but what irks me is that you're always asking me at the last minute, as if I don't have a life of my own. You asked me on Wednesday, and you were leaving on Friday. I would have appreciated a little more notice.

Lois: Oh, I had no idea you felt that way. I'm so glad you told me. I wouldn't want you to feel taken advantage of in any way. Would it work better for you if I gave you a week's notice in the future? Is that enough?

Frieda: That's more than enough. Three or four days is fine too, and I'll make sure I do the same for you.

Lois: That sounds great. I hope next time something like this happens you'll let me know what you're feeling. I value our friendship and wouldn't want to do anything to damage it. We've made it this far together, and I'd like to think we're both in it for the long haul.

Can you see how I didn't get into a spitting match with Frieda? I could have said, "Well, you've done it on short notice, too," or, "Well, why didn't you say anything?" but that wouldn't have cleared the air. It would have added fuel to the fire. Besides, that wasn't the point of the conversation. By listening to her concerns and acknowledging them without necessarily agreeing with them, I was able to let Frieda speak her mind so that we could get our relationship back on track.

Tip 39: Challenge Assumptions

Everyone makes assumptions—you, me, strangers who meet us. We can't help it. Why do we do it? It's because we want to create order in a world that too easily spirals out of control. We base our assumptions on our own worldview, past experience, and sometimes instinct. Assumptions aren't always a bad thing. When I'm walking down a dark deserted street at night and I see a man begin to follow me and continue to do so after I've made several turns to avoid him, the assumption of danger causes me to get the Mace out of my purse and be prepared for what could happen. Not a bad thing. Right? Most of the time, our assumptions are not about things quite so dangerous. More importantly, they're usually wrong.

When it comes to others making assumptions about us, our thoughts, our intentions, it's fairly well documented that they do so literally within seconds. It's why so much is written about how to make a good first impression, but that's not what this tip is about. It's about something harder: how to challenge assumptions people make about you. I say it's harder because research shows that even when provided with solid information that proves them wrong, people tend to hang on to their assumptions. They're not easily moved from an initial position to a new, more accurate one.

Like it or not, every day at work, people are making assumptions about you. Fail at one presentation and suddenly you're seen as someone who isn't a good public speaker. Misspeak about one fact and now the veracity of everything you say is questioned. Have a little too much to drink at the holiday party and, well, you can fill in the blank on this one.

It's why you need to challenge assumptions as soon as possible once you think people have made them. The longer the assumption lingers, the more truth it gathers, kind of like a snowball rolling downhill. When you think someone has made assumptions about you, there are three things you can do.

First, you can go directly to the person or the group and explain why the assumption isn't true. You're not going to say, "You know that assumption you made about me just isn't true." Instead, you're going to say what is true

and reframe what they see. For example:

“The presentation I made at this morning’s meeting certainly isn’t indicative of what I’m capable of. I put a lot of time into preparing for it, but obviously I could have done more. I won’t make that mistake twice. Just wait and see.”

You’ve owned the mistake now, and you’ve set it up so that people will be observing future presentations to see whether or not there’s change. Of course, it’s incumbent upon you to ensure your next presentation is flawless, so you might have to get a presentation coach, join Toastmasters, or take other action to brush up on your skills.

The second thing you can do is ask for help. Human beings tend to be forgiving, especially when people own their mistakes and ask for their help in improving things. I know when I share ideas for how someone can improve in a certain area, I look for behavioral changes and tend to forget about my initial assumptions. It sometimes sounds like this:

“Jason, when I realized that I provided the wrong data in the safety report I submitted to you, I was mortified. I check and recheck my numbers before submitting these reports, and somehow that one figure got by me. I’m wondering if you would be willing to take a quick look at the first draft of future reports and see if anything jumps out at you. I’m not asking you to fact-check the entire report, just review it for glaring errors.”

Now, Jason could always say no, but in that case, he at least knows I’m going to try harder in the future, and he’ll likely cut me a little slack.

The third way to counter assumptions is to enlist the help of an advocate. That is someone who will speak on your behalf in support of you. It has to be someone you trust and with whom you have a good relationship. Here’s how that conversation might go:

“Eleanor, I was in an HR team meeting this morning, and I felt like

I came across a little too strident and overly confident. Quite frankly, I read the room wrong. I thought they would respond well to that kind of confidence, but instead I could feel people bristling. Now I need to tone it down a little bit with this group in the future.

“For now, I could use your help in countering any negative assumptions people may make about me. Can I ask you to speak with the team leader and put in a good word for me, let her know that I’m not really that bad? I just got carried away with my enthusiasm for the project and was anxious for people to buy in. I certainly learned a good lesson.”

If none of these tactics work or are possible, then you’re going to have to bowl people over with behaviors that lead them to make a new and better assumption. Don’t be afraid to use humor to turn things around. A simple tongue-in-cheek statement such as, “Let’s see if I can top the underwhelming presentation I gave last time. It shouldn’t be too hard,” followed by a smile just might do the trick.

Tip 40: Breaking Up Is Hard to Do but Not Impossible

Just the other night, I had a friend over and we got to talking about this book. She had watched the video snippets on my YouTube channel of me telling how people can handle a variety of situations and found them helpful, but they didn't address her problem. "Tell me, Lois," she said, "how do I disengage from a relationship that has outlived its purpose?" In other words, she wanted to unfriend someone. She had already stopped following her on Facebook, and she said that helped a little, but the woman kept calling her and using her as a therapist. The relationship felt one-sided at this point. I asked if it was a relationship she wanted to maintain but in a different way. She said no. She was done with it.

Many of us have found ourselves in similar situations from time to time. It does represent a challenge, especially for women. You don't want to hurt anyone's feelings unnecessarily. If you're like me, you also don't like conflict. What's a nice girl to do? One thing that helped me a while back was coming across this quote: "Friends are like closets. Every once in a while, you have to clean them out." I can't seem to find who said it, but it rang true. We change. Our needs change, and the same holds true for our friends.

If it's someone you genuinely care about and don't want to completely cut out of your life, then you can redefine the relationship in terms of what works for both of you in the present. I have a friend like this. We've been friends for over thirty years. During that time, we worked together, made referrals to one another, as well as spent time with one another's families as they grew and then shrank. We would talk on the phone a few times a week and get together once or twice a month, usually for a meal.

Then, things changed. When I cut way back on my consulting, we no longer had the work piece in common. As I traveled more, I no longer had the time—or inclination, frankly—to talk on the phone as much. When I suggested that we get out and do more physical things like biking or hiking rather than spend time at a restaurant, she didn't pick up on the overture. She continued to suggest getting together for dinner, so slowly we grew apart. The relationship became redefined by our choices. Now we see one

another maybe three or four times a year, usually to celebrate a birthday, by going to a play, or someplace else we both would enjoy. We use email more frequently to communicate important messages or even just things of interest, but neither is as prominent in the other's life as before. Circumstances changed, and each of our needs changed.

You see, it doesn't always have to be a profound breakup. With that said, there are people who either you inexplicably find yourself in a relationship with (I call these the people who insinuate themselves into my life) or, to borrow a phrase from *Desiderata*, are vexations to my spirit. In other words, people who take energy from my life, not add to it. These are the people you most often want to break up with permanently. I'll give you the same suggestions I gave to my friend the other night.

First, decide if this is a complete breakup or a redefined relationship. In my friend's case, she said she wouldn't mind having dinner together when the woman was in town, but the angst-filled phone calls had to stop. The best course of action, if this is the case, is to respond to one of those calls by an email, not by phone, and only after a few days.

If the person doesn't have an email, you can always jot them a note to this effect:

"Sorry it's taken me so long to get back to you. I'm afraid that between work, health, and family, my life has sadly become very hectic. Although I'm not able to call, please let me know next time you're in town so we can get together."

Is it a little bit chicken shit to take the easy way out? Sure, but I'm going to share a great piece of advice that I got many years ago that has served me well, and I hope that you'll keep it in mind: "Lois, you don't always have to take the high road."

Similarly, there are people I don't want to totally abandon because I know they count on me for one thing or another, and I genuinely want to be there for them despite the fact that I don't get a lot out of it in return.

In this case, I would establish new boundaries by not reaching out as often out of guilt or duty, shortening the length of calls, and managing the expectations about what I realistically can provide and can't provide given

what's happening in my own life. I may want to be of service, but I don't want to be a doormat. Now let's say that it's a relatively new relationship that you may have been trying on for size. We don't always know right away if we want to keep someone in our life, do we? You win some, you lose some, but you suit up for them all. You never know which relationship might be transformational. After a time, though, you figure out whether you enjoy spending time with the person or not.

I had this happen not too long ago with someone I'd known for about a year. Originally, I thought she just wanted me in her network for referrals, which was fine, but she wanted more of a friendship than I wanted, so when she would email and ask to get together, I would let her know I didn't have the time but would get back to her when I did. Now, if you're emotionally intelligent, you would read between the lines, but unfortunately, she wasn't. She kept writing and texting, "Let's get together." I ignored them, figuring she'd certainly get the message sooner or later, but no. The hits just kept on coming and reinforced that I was making the right decision to break up with her.

I did what you should do in a situation like this. I sent a clearly written although hopefully kind email that went like this: "I'm afraid I may have given you the wrong impression over the past year. My life is so full of people I've known for a long time and who I don't get to see as often as I would like because of my work and volunteer commitments that I just don't have the time to get together. I wish it were different, but it's how my life is. I've enjoyed getting to know you, and I wish you well." It must have stunned her because I heard nothing for about six weeks, and then I received an email that said she'd never been unfriended before and didn't know what to say. She asked that I continue to think of her when appropriate referrals arose in her area of expertise, and that was that.

Finally, you have the easiest if not most emotionally difficult of all breakups, and that's when someone does something to you that's so egregious or counter to your values that you just can't remain in the relationship. These are irreparable relationships with people you can't trust, don't like, or in other ways are toxic to you. I'm sure there are people who'd suggest that you simply ignore these people, ignore their calls, cross the street when you see them, avoid places you know they frequent, but most cases that feels like bad karma to me. If I feel so strongly about what

they've done, I should have the courage to say so.

I remember quite a few years ago—and this was pre-email so that tells you how long it's been—I had a very good friend who told me he had cancer. Of course, I was distraught. I kept asking what I could do for him, and he told me he just wanted to deal with it by himself. Wanting to be respectful of that, I gave him plenty of room. Then, during a phone conversation, he told me he was going to the hospital for surgery on a particular date. Again, wanting to be supportive, I called the hospital after the supposed surgery only to find out he wasn't there. *I must have gotten the wrong hospital*, I thought, so I called the only other one that would do that kind of surgery. He wasn't there either. I drove over to his house and found him very well and not recuperating from surgery. I confronted him about the lie, and he told me another lie that made no sense.

I said I had to seriously reconsider our friendship in light of these lies and would appreciate it if he wouldn't call me. Checking around with other friends, it turned out he did the exact same thing to them. Only later did we learn he did it to keep his lover from breaking up with him. For me, that kind of deceit is simply unacceptable. As much as I loved him like a brother, I knew I could not be friends with someone who would lie to me like that. In this case, I simply didn't return his calls, and the relationship ended. Interestingly, once social media came onto the scene, he reconnected with me, which was fine. I know the difference between social media relationships and friendship, and you should, too.

Tip 41: Provide the Ammunition and Let Others Shoot the Holes

I once coached the director of a department full of brilliant and successful scientists at a pharmaceutical company. She was having difficulty getting them on board with her ideas for the direction in which she wanted to take the company. It seemed any idea she put on the table was met with resistance. Individually and collectively, they would point out all the reasons why each idea wouldn't work. She was discouraged that she couldn't seem to move her team forward because of its reluctance to embrace even the smallest proposed changes. As I told her, you don't hire smart people, especially in the scientific world, because you want them to follow your marching orders. You hire them because they're analytical and they'll slice and dice everything before accepting new ideas.

What I suggested in her case was that instead of presenting each new idea as a fait accompli, she present it as a work in progress and ask the team members to shoot holes in it, then come up with solutions to those potential pitfalls. Now she became the skeptical one. Wouldn't this approach only lead to further stalemates? Wouldn't she lose all semblance of control over her department? At my urging and running out of alternatives, she finally agreed to try it once. Lo and behold, it worked. By providing the ammunition to the team, she allowed them to determine their own direction within her parameters. That's the trick to making this tactic work. You have to circumscribe desired outcomes and allow others to create the path for achieving them. In business, this is called delegating the process, not the product.

Giving people a say in how they will achieve their goals increases commitment because now they own the process and have an investment in the product. The same holds true with other significant people in your life. No one likes to be told what to do, how to do it, when to do it.

Let's say you want your child to help with housework. Rather than assign tasks to him or her about what needs to be done, ask what would get in the way of him picking up one or more of the chores and discuss how to handle these interruptions. For example, maybe he says he needs his after

school time for homework. Let him come up with ideas for how he can work a fifteen-minute dishwashing break in between assignments.

Resistance often results when other people feel like they have no options. With an eye on the desired outcomes, providing people the ammunition to point out all the reasons why something won't work, then allowing them the latitude to find solutions to the obstacles, can be an effective and disarming tool. One of the caveats here is to provide plenty of time for discussion. Often our impatience to check a task off the list or put closure on a project prevents us from allowing others to have a say in the process.

Certainly there are times when the matter is so urgent that you need others to follow your direction, but by allowing discussion on the less urgent ones, you're more likely to get cooperation later when it's just not possible to take time to talk. Here's how it would sound if you provided the ammunition to people in your department:

"I'd like your help in designing a matrix that would allow cross-functional teams to work on critical projects simultaneously. The way we're set up now is in silos, and we aren't getting the benefit or the synergy across teams. I'd like you to pull apart this idea, identify the potential flaws, and then put it back together in a way that overcomes those flaws."

Hopefully you see what I'm doing is outlining what I want the final product to be and allowing the team to design it from the ground up. It may be counterintuitive to suggest that you give up control to get more control, but it works.

Tip 42: You Don't Have to Put a Stamp on with a Steamroller

I'm a big believer in using the least muscle necessary in any situation. Now, that's not to say that some situations don't require the muscle of a bodybuilder, just that those occasions should be few and far between. You see, sometimes it's better to be a steel magnolia. It's not about being loud, pushy, or aggressive. It's about expressing yourself with such clarity that it leaves no room for misinterpretation. Sometimes that's hard to do in the moment. Rather than capitulate or go in the opposite direction of blowing up, don't be afraid to say, "Let me think about this and get back to you." Don't commit to or agree with anything you don't want to just because you can't think quickly on your feet.

Lots of women have that same challenge. Like any other muscle, the thinking-on-your-feet muscle gets stronger with use. Just the other day, my hairdresser told me a story that I knew I had to share with you. I'm sure many of you have been in similar situations. Her brother-in-law, who's also a hairdresser, decided to close his shop on the opposite side of town and asked if he could work out of her shop. Her stomach sank as she thought of everything that could potentially go wrong with this scenario. It's hard enough being in business with friends, but family—that can be a recipe for disaster. Her mind was shouting, *Hell, no way*, but her lips said, "Sure." She went from wanting to put a stamp on with a steamroller to rolling over and playing dead in a matter of seconds. Even she said it was because she was trying to be nice.

Remember, saying no is not the opposite of being nice. We've already talked about ways in which you can decline an offer or proposition without being a bitch about it. If ever there was a time to call for a time-out, this was it. She should have said, "That's an interesting possibility. Let me think about it, talk to my business partners, and get back to you." In other words, she should have bought time. Just because someone is pushing you doesn't mean you have to make a decision on their schedule.

What's that saying? Your failure to plan is not my emergency. Had he pushed her about it, she could have used the broken record technique to once again say in different words, "You know, it's a big decision. I want to

make sure it's the right one for all of us. Let me give it thought and make sure everyone's on board."

Instead, because she said yes without buying time, it turned out to be a disaster. He came in like a bull in a china shop. Not only did he come to work there, but he also brought three of his hairstylists with him, along with the receptionist. He expected her to make room for everyone and accommodate his needs. Needless to say, this didn't last long. The business partners were unhappy with this situation. In less than two months, they had to ask him to leave. At this point, the family relationship was stressed, her husband was blaming her for everything that went wrong, and family members were no longer speaking to one another.

Think about this. Sometimes the easiest way out of a sticky situation is to not get into it in the first place.

Tip 43: Free People Up for New Opportunities

Despite your best efforts as a coach, if you're a business owner, a supervisor, or a manager, sometimes you have to let go of an employee who isn't meeting the expectations of his or her role. You probably have even had to do this with housekeepers, nannies, or gardeners who've worked for you. Most people don't look forward to firing others, which is why I like to think of it more as freeing people up to find new opportunities. The fact is, if you're not happy with someone's performance, they're probably unhappy, too. If you've done your job of giving the person specific and objective feedback that changes are needed, then the actual act of severing them from your employ should come as no surprise to them and should be easier for you.

No matter how frustrated you are with an employee or how many times they've ignored your request for change, there's never the need to embarrass or demean them. It should go without saying that it also shouldn't be done by email, tweet, or even phone if it can be avoided. Here are the ten commandments of termination.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF TERMINATION

I'm tired of hearing managers and supervisors complain that their HR department will never let them fire anyone. Having spent over three decades working in the employment field, ten of those inside a Fortune 10 corporation, I know that's simply not true. What is true is that HR wants you to show that you've taken the appropriate steps to coach and provide corrective action before you fire anyone. In other words, they're rightfully concerned with limiting unwarranted liability resultant from a termination. Follow these ten commandments of termination to fairly and lawfully release underperformers from your employ:

1. **Thou shalt coach before firing.** Except where there has been an egregious infraction of company policy (theft, firearms in the workplace, or threat to the safety of others), when termination is immediate, you should spend time helping the employee to understand where his or her performance is lacking and what steps can be taken to bring it up to company expectations. This ensures the

employee won't be surprised if a termination ultimately ensues.

2. **Thou shalt document everything.** Performance reviews, emails related to coaching sessions or agreed-upon goals, written warnings, and even your own notes may be needed to support the decision to terminate. Should a lawsuit result, documentation will also help to protect you and the company. Just remember, even if the notes are not in the employee's personnel file, they are still discoverable in court, so keep them factual and objective.
3. **Thou shalt not "lay off" poor performers.** In some situations, if you lay off an employee, there is the reasonable expectation that he or she is eligible for rehire. When terminating for cause, call it what it is. If you've done due diligence around coaching and progressive discipline, it shouldn't come as a surprise.
4. **Thou shalt follow company precedent and termination policies.** Companies have been found liable for wrongful termination where they failed to follow their own policies around discipline and discharge. To protect yourself and your company from unwarranted liability, be sure you are treating this person the same as you have treated others who were similarly situated. If you're not sure, consult with your corporate or outside labor counsel.
5. **Thou shalt not fire in anger.** It's better to send the employee home with pay and let him or her know you will be investigating the situation than to fire on the spot. This gives you time to review past policy, precedent, and gather facts.
6. **Thou shalt not fire on Friday.** When an employee is fired on a Friday, this leaves the entire weekend for him or her to stew over the situation and plan revenge—legally or with more aggression. Firing on a weekday enables you to direct his or her energies toward beginning an immediate job search.
7. **Thou shalt allow the employee to leave with dignity.** Terminations should be done in private, in a neutral location (not your office or the employee's office), and be witnessed by one other member of the management team. Arrange for the employee to clear out his or her desk before or after hours with a member of management present. If it is financially feasible, the employee should be provided with a separation compensation package that takes into account his or her years of service with the company.
8. **Thou shalt provide the employee with resources.** The sooner the terminated employee finds a job, the better it is for the company. If possible, provide outplacement services, a career counselor, or help with résumé preparation and job search.
9. **Thou shalt not provide a written letter of reference.** These often become smoking guns in lawsuits ("If I was so bad, why did he say these nice things about me?"). Instead, assure the terminated employee that you will provide a neutral reference that includes his or her job title and dates of service. Make this a company policy so that everyone who leaves the company—on any terms—is given the exact same kind of neutral reference.

10. **Announce thy decision.** Rather than let the rumor mill run rampant, let the people impacted by the termination know that Joe or Jane is no longer with the company. Tell them you are not at liberty to discuss the facts, but that this person was treated fairly, his or her departure was not a surprise, and that anyone who leaves the company will also be treated fairly and with respect. This puts the rumors to rest without bad-mouthing the terminated employee.

I can tell you from experience it goes much better if you prepare in advance. Even if you only write down some talking points, it will keep you on track, which is important in situations like this. Too often our hearts get the better of us and we wind up saying things that can later be used against us.

I remember terminating someone because they came to work late three out of five days every week. This was in her first few weeks of employment. Despite conversations with her about the importance of coming in on time every day, nothing changed. By the time we got to the three-month mark, I knew it wasn't going to work. Although I felt she had some promise, being late is a deal breaker for me. When I terminated her, I said, "Among other things, I have appreciated the things you've done to get the office organized, but they weren't the only measure of long-term success." Wouldn't you know, she applied for unemployment. When I contested it because she was terminated for cause, she brought up the comment about doing things that organized the office. That's all the unemployment judge had to hear. She was awarded the unemployment.

What might it sound like to terminate someone in a way that protects you and your company from unwarranted liability and shows respect for the employee? How about this:

Lois: Mackenzie, you and I have had numerous conversations in the past about your performance. We've talked about complaints I've gotten from other staff members about your unwillingness to help them with their projects, about the grammatical and typing errors on the reports that you submit, and about coming late to work. On each occasion, you've said you understand that and you'll change, but after three months, nothing is different. This doesn't seem to be

the best placement for you and your skills. I'm going to give you two weeks' severance pay and suggest that you seek employment that can take advantage of your creativity and social media marketing skills. Unfortunately, we don't have a position that would capitalize on those, but I think you would actually excel in those areas. You have the choice of packing up your desk now and I'll walk you out, or if you prefer, I'll meet you at 5:30 so that you can pack up your desk with no one watching. Which would you like to do?

Mackenzie: I'm just speechless. I thought I was doing better. I was only late to one meeting last week, and there were fewer mistakes on my reports. Can't you give me a little longer to prove myself?

Lois: Unfortunately, no. We've had these discussions for months, and significant progress has not been made. I'd like to see you find a position that would play to your strengths. I really do think you would be much happier in a more creative environment rather than an accounting firm. Here you're trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. You have valuable skills, just not ones that we can use. Attention to detail doesn't seem to be your forte, and that's what this role requires. Would you like to leave later or shall I walk you to your desk now?

With this, you stand up. If Mackenzie continues to push back, you would remain standing and use the broken record technique to stick to your points.

Tip 44: Handling Emotions, Yours

Have you ever noticed that when you want to tell someone how you really feel, you sometimes wind up getting tearful instead? That's because it's more socially acceptable for a woman to cry than to express anger. The former is expected. The latter is criticized as overly sensitive, too emotional, and so on. This was the subject of my very first book, *Women, Anger, and Depression: Strategies for Self-Empowerment*. I'm not going to tell you not to cry at work. What's important is that you not diminish your position by blubbering away in front of others.

There are three things you should do when emotions get high.

1. Excuse yourself. Say something like, "As you can see, I have strong feelings about this. Let me excuse myself and come back in a moment." Leaving the room gives you time to get yourself together. Go someplace private, like the ladies' room or a conference room, or take a walk around the block.

While you're pulling it together, ask yourself this important question: "What am I really angry about?" Put words to it. Think about what set you off and focus on the problem, not the feelings. For example, it could be that you presented an idea that you had put a lot of work into, and it was summarily dismissed. That's enough to make anyone angry, but you most likely turned that anger into hurt. Get back on an even keel by mentally preparing what you want to say.

2. In this case, when you go back into the room, you might say, "Thank you for your patience. I realize that I had strong feelings about having spent hours on this proposal only to have it dismissed within minutes without a full exploration. What would be helpful to me is if we could have a discussion of what pieces would work and which ones wouldn't and why. In this way, we won't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Let me summarize the key points, and let's go on from there." Getting in touch with your anger allows you to put

words to your feelings. Tap into what precipitated the emotion and go from there.

3. While collecting yourself away from the situation, consider if anyone involved in the current scenario reminds you of anyone from your past. We often project onto others feelings and emotions that are related to earlier experiences, even when they have no direct correlation.

I once had a client who was the director of a very large nonprofit organization. Her staff all loved her, and she had no problem managing down, but when it came to her board of directors, it was an entirely different story. She couldn't speak up to them and became tongue-tied when they asked her questions. It made no sense because it was so incongruent with the woman she presented herself as in the world. I asked her to tell me about her early experiences with men in authority. It turned out that she had a much older brother who would tease her mercilessly as a child. He called her stupid, said she'd never amount to anything, that she could never do anything right, and other choice comments like these. Whenever she was around men who were older than she was, she froze. She felt as if she had no credibility with them. If you're going to step into your power and find your voice, it's critical that you exorcise old demons through therapy, self-help books, or a good coach.

To summarize, handling your emotions involves first extricating yourself from the situation until you can identify the true dynamic that's contributing to them. Second, translate that dynamic into words that you can express. Third, determine if anyone involved in the situation reminds you of someone from your past—if so, deal with *that* relationship and don't let it seep into the current one.

There's one other dynamic that we should discuss in this section. That's when women are accused of being too emotional when they express their opinions with any degree of strength. I'm sure you've heard comments like, "Why are you getting so emotional?" or, "You're really overreacting." I remember when Hillary Clinton ran for president against Barack Obama in 2008. After a campaign stop in Vermont, the headlines described her as

having a breakdown. I just had to find a video to see what they were talking about. As it turned out, at a campaign stop, she got just a little bit emotional talking about what keeps her going through a difficult campaign. This was blown totally out of proportion. Keep in mind that accusing you of being overly emotional is a good tactic used to get you to back down or back off. It catches you off guard and makes you question yourself and how you come across.

When someone does this to you, the most important thing is to not go for the bait. Tell yourself, “This is a tactic that I won’t fall for,” then refocus the conversation on the content by saying something like, “Stan, this is not about me overreacting. This is about a workload problem we need to solve. I’ve made several suggestions for how to address it and have gotten no feedback. Would you like me to summarize those for you?”

Tip 45: Handling the Emotions of Others

While most women know how to handle it when others become tearful or sad, these women often have a more difficult time when someone blows up at them or when there's intense anger in the room. Let's face it, men's voices are deeper and louder than ours, and they're bigger than we are.

Anger can be a scary thing, especially if you experienced it regularly in childhood from a parent or someone else in authority. It makes sense that your natural inclination may be to shrink from it if that was the case, but starting today, starting now, you no longer have to avoid it because I'm going to give you some techniques for how to maintain your personal boundaries and your voice in the face of anger.

First, and this is going to seem a little bit crazy, but it works: Picture a Plexiglas shield surrounding you so that you can see out and you can be heard, but negative emotions bounce off of it. Feel the safety of being inside this protective shield so that no harm will come to you. Next, listen beyond the emotion to the content. If you stripped away the anger from the message, what would the person be saying? Respond to that and that only.

Avoid the tendency to apologize when you think others are angry with you, especially if you did nothing wrong. Finally, if you think it's necessary to address the anger surrounding the message, do that at a later time. If you do it in the moment, it most likely will not be well received and it could add fuel to the fire. Have you ever noticed when someone's asked to calm down it only makes them more infuriated? "Calm down? Would you be calm in this situation?" That's a typical reply. No, save that discussion for later once emotions have died down. Then use the DESC script to have a discussion about how the anger impacted you and what you would like to see happen in the future.

Let's see how all this works in real time:

Alan: What the hell is this? You call this a quarterly report? It's a sad excuse for something that I can actually submit to the operating committee. This thing has to be redone, and now it's going to be too late. What the hell were you thinking coming in and giving me this piece of crap?

Lois: Alan, I can make whatever changes you would like, and I can do it fairly quickly. What I provided is consistent with what's been submitted in the past. In fact, I used last quarter's report as a template. Why don't you tell me what you would like changed, and I'll get right on it.

You can see I gave no apologies, no assumption of blame, just a focus on turning the situation around. As for circling back to Alan after the crisis is over, that conversation would go like this. Look at how I let him know I don't want to be treated this way in the future:

Lois: Alan, I'd like to speak with you about what happened in your office last week when we were going over the quarterly report.

Alan: What's there to discuss? It's been taken care of.

Lois: Yes, the report has been taken care of. What I want to discuss is the manner in which it was brought to my attention that you weren't happy with it. I had put quite a bit of work into it. While I agree that some things could have been different, I don't think it warranted demeaning me and my work. I felt like I was being treated like a six-year-old. Can you see how I might feel that way?

Alan: Maybe I did come down a little hard on you, but I needed to get your attention. I wanted to make sure you knew I wasn't happy.

Lois: Trust me, Alan. You can get my attention better and solve the problem faster by simply telling me you're not happy with my work and focusing on what needs to be done differently. I'd like to ask that in the future you provide me with a critique of the work, not of me. When this happens, you'll find I want to do an even better job for you.

Now, at this point, it doesn't really matter what Alan says. You've made your point. He's heard it, and anything else he might say will most likely be in his own defense. All you have to do is listen and acknowledge that you heard it, not that you necessarily agree with it, just that you heard it. For

example:

Alan: Well, if you give me a better-quality report the first time, I wouldn't have to be so heavy-handed.

Lois: I understand what you're saying, Alan. Thanks for your time.

Remember, you can't control someone else's behavior toward you, but you can sure control your response to it. I love the Eleanor Roosevelt line, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." To that I add, don't give it.

Tip 46: Say Bye-Bye to Bores

Don't ask me how it happens, but inevitably, when I'm at a party, somehow I'm a magnet for people who only want an audience, not a conversation. You know these people. You ask them what time it is, and they tell you how to make a clock. It happened to me just the other day, but in this case, someone told me how to build a rocket. Yes, a rocket. It started when I saw my friend speaking with a man I didn't know, and I stepped in to join them.

My first clue that this was not going to go well should have been when my friend saw me. She used it as an opportunity to excuse herself, so I turned to the man and asked what he did. He said he worked at the jet propulsion laboratory, so I knew that he was somehow related to the field of rocket science. Yes, literally rocket science. Naturally, I asked, "What do you do there?"

Now, I wish I could provide you with a summary of what he said, but it was totally Greek to me. I nodded my head and asked for clarification here and there, but pretty soon I was like a deer caught in the headlights. Eventually, I wasn't listening at all. Instead, I was trying to figure out how to extricate myself from the situation. I didn't want to be rude, but I also didn't want to be held hostage by this guy who would have fit very well into the cast of *The Big Bang Theory*.

As I said many times before, I'm a recovering nice girl, so I spent most of my life politely listening to people who had absolutely no interest in conversing, only in talking. At this stage of my life, however, I have a rule of thumb, and it might help you, too. If I'm speaking with someone for more than, say, fifteen to twenty minutes and they ask nothing about me, they are not someone I want to get to know better or spend time with.

Of course, sometimes it's impossible to enforce that totally when your best friend is dating a real self-centered narcissist and she invites you over for dinner. I haven't quite figured out how to totally avoid that situation, but I do limit how often I'm willing to spend time with them as a couple and pray that she figures it out soon. In most cases though, like on a plane, at a party, in a networking setting, or at a company function, you can say bye-bye without demolishing yacking Jack.

Here's how it would go:

Lois: Hi. I'm Lois Frankel.

Jack: I'm Jack Spencer.

Lois: Well, it's good to meet you, Jack. What brings you to this talk this evening?

Jack: I'm new to the area, and I wanted to meet others who share my interest in travel. When I saw it was Rick Steves talking about his latest book, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. I figure anyone who's here must love to travel, too. I've been following Rick Steves for years. I remember his very first book that he published in 1980, *Europe through the Backdoor*. That book is updated every year. It's a classic. Have you read it?

Lois: No, I haven't.

Jack: You have to get it. It's like the quintessential book on travel basics like planning your itinerary, packing, finding reasonably priced hotels, and ways to travel throughout Europe on public transportation. It has paid for itself over and over in terms of saving me money on lodging and not having to take a cab everywhere. It even has a section on how to identify travel scams. You know those weren't that common when the book was first written, but now with the internet, it's easy to be fooled. I actually did have that happen to me once. There was an ad in the travel section of the paper for what seemed like a deal too good to be true. In the end, it was too good to be true, but I was young and naïve back then. It offered a travel package to Costa Rica for a week for less than \$1,000. That included airfare from California, seven nights' lodging, two meals a day, and a group bus tour throughout the country. I figured I couldn't lose with it. Boy, was I wrong. I paid the money up front, and when I got to the airport with my ticket, it turned out the tickets were phony. When I tried to contact the travel agency

that I bought the package from, they were long gone. I didn't make that mistake twice.

Lois: Sounds like a painful experience.

Jack: Expensive is more likely. Back then, I didn't have \$1,000 to lose. Heck, I don't have \$1,000 to lose now. At this point, I actually do quite a bit of my own planning. I act as my own travel agent. It's so easy now with the internet and online forums. I can communicate with people who live right in the country I want to visit and get ideas for how to visit the country and really see how the locals live. In fact, I've been emailing back and forth with this guy in Thailand who tells me how inexpensive it is to visit there if you just know where to stay. Right now, I'm—

Lois: Excuse me, Jack. I hate to interrupt you, but I see someone I haven't spoken with in quite a while, and I'd like to connect with them before I leave. Thank you so much for sharing your travel experiences.

With this, I move along. I was always worried about hurting someone's feelings until I realized two things. People like Jack don't see themselves as a bore. They see themselves as sparkling conversationalists, so my desire to move on couldn't possibly have anything to do with them. If they're truly narcissistic and not just oblivious, their feelings will be hurt, and there's nothing I can do about it. In either case, it's not my responsibility to be the person who fills that empty hole inside of them that craves attention and admiration. You know what? It's not yours either.

Tip 47: You're Allowed to Change Your Mind

The last sticky situation I want to cover is one that was provided to me by Joan Ryan from Palm Springs, California. She wrote and asked what she should do in a situation where she committed to do something, but once she got into it, she realized she didn't want to do it after all. I could certainly relate to that. I'm sure you can, too. You start off with good intentions only to realize as you get into the thick of it that it's not quite what you anticipated or wanted. Joan's situation was that she volunteered to work on the committee for an art show at her condo community. As an artist, she thought this was the perfect place to apply her skills and interests.

"At our first meeting with the five women on the committee, we sat around a table in our community clubhouse," Joan wrote. "The chairperson, a small-framed, pinched-faced woman in her mid-70s from the Midwest, opened the meeting speaking very slowly and hesitantly. She kept repeating herself and kept jumping from one subject to another, which was interspersed with the other members continuously jumping in with their opinions. I kept saying, 'Let's keep it simple,' but the response was, 'We're going to do it the same way we've always done it.'" From there, everything went downhill for Joan in her participation on this committee. What should have been fun and uplifting turned into a nightmare with too many cooks in the kitchen and not enough organization.

Women often wind up staying on a project or sometimes even with a person because they made a commitment and don't want to let others down or appear to be a flake. If this sounds like you, then you have to remember that we make decisions for the best of all possible reasons in the moment. It is impossible to know, except in retrospect, whether a decision was good or not. Why should you punish yourself because you received new information or data that causes you to change your mind? In Joan's case, she had never served on that particular committee before, didn't know what the people were like, and had no clue as to the dynamics of the group. She made a good-faith decision to volunteer, but once she had additional information and insights, it was clear this wasn't the kind of group in which she would feel comfortable participating.

The question is this: Should Joan stay and be miserable because she made a commitment? Should she tell the women the truth about feeling uncomfortable with the disorganization and lack of focus? Or should she simply resign by saying she realized that she wasn't a good match for the group? Let's think about each option.

If she brought unique skills to the group that they were depending on to achieve their mission, then she might want to stay just long enough to help them out. If this was her choice, then she could circumscribe how she was going to make that contribution. For example, perhaps she didn't have to go to meetings. She could just take on a task and deliver that.

On the other hand, if this were a group in which she had some investment and had been participating for a while, and then things went south, she might want to be honest about what stopped working for her to see if it would be possible to turn things around.

In this case, Joan had just joined the group, and they didn't seem to want to take advantage of her background in the arts. Her best choice would be to simply resign. In any case, you have the right to change your mind, and the degree to which you owe the other parties anything depends on your relationship with them and exactly what you promised. You don't want to leave people in the lurch, but you also don't want to be taken advantage of or feel as if your needs aren't being met as well.

Chapter Three Key Takeaways

Every workplace is fraught with land mines, dilemmas, and potentially sticky situations. Long-term success is contingent upon being able to handle these in a tactful and politically correct way. This chapter focused on how to do just that.

- **Differentiate can from must conversations.** A can conversation is one where I have information that may be helpful to another person, but it's not necessarily my job or my responsibility to give it to them. A must conversation is one where you feel as if you must say something for one or both of two reasons. First, someone's behavior is concretely impacting you in some way, or, two, it is part of your job to change the behavior.
- **Answering loaded questions.** A loaded question is one where there's really no good answer, either because honesty might damage your relationship or because the person doesn't really want to hear your answer. The best response to a loaded question is usually to ask the person what they think. You'll be surprised at how infrequently the person realizes that you've just deflected it back to them.
- **Clarify misunderstandings gracefully.** The rule of thumb is to give people the benefit of the doubt, assume the best rather than the worst. Allowing others to save face costs you nothing and gives you peace of mind.
- **Disagree without being disagreeable.** Differences of opinion are inevitable, and they aren't such a bad thing. They typically stem from having distinctly different views of the world that are neither right nor wrong, good nor bad. These differences, when managed effectively, can actually add to better decision making and outcomes provided all parties involved are open to listening to a different or opposing

viewpoint.

- **Clear the air.** Clearing the air is something that you do when you're in the midst of an unresolved conflict or misunderstanding. If a relationship is valuable to you or if you need it to serve a purpose in your life, give the other person the benefit of the doubt, provided that you do it with authenticity and not hold a grudge.
- **Challenge assumptions.** Assumptions are usually based on our own worldview, past experience, and sometimes instinct. When you think an assumption has been made about you, challenge that assumption by explaining why the assumption isn't true and reframe the other's perspective using facts based in reality.
- **Breaking up is hard to do but not impossible.** Consider whether you want to redefine the relationship or completely sever it. The former requires a heart-to-heart discussion about your current needs and wants, whereas the latter entails a more direct statement about why you no longer want to be in the relationship. Many of the tips from Chapter One, "The Basics," will help you here.
- **Provide the ammunition and let others shoot the holes.** Resistance often results when others feel like they have no options. With an eye on the desired outcomes, providing people the ammunition to point out all the reasons why something won't work, then allowing them the latitude to find solutions to those obstacles can be an effective and disarming tool.
- **You don't have to put a stamp on with a steamroller.** Making your point is not about being loud, pushy, or aggressive. It's about expressing yourself with clarity in a way that leaves no room for misinterpretation.
- **Free people up for new opportunities.** When terminating an employee, there's never the need to embarrass or demean them. The fact is, if you've provided feedback and coaching, it shouldn't come

as a surprise to them. Advanced preparation is essential for doing it effectively, even if you only write down a few talking points. That will keep you on track, which is important in situations like these.

- **Handling emotions, yours.** Becoming emotional at work doesn't have to be the kiss of career death. Do these three things when emotions get high. First, excuse yourself from the situation. Second, while you're pulling it together, ask yourself the important question, "What am I really angry about?" and put words to it. Then, mentally prepare what you want to say and go back and say it on an even keel.
- **Handling the emotions of others.** Begin by picturing a Plexiglas shield surrounding you so that you can see out and you can be heard, but negative emotions bounce off it. Envision the safety of being inside the protective shield so that no harm will come to you. Next, listen beyond the emotion to the content. Finally, if you think it's necessary to address the anger surrounding the message, do it at a later time.
- **Say bye-bye to bores.** In most cases, like on a plane, at a party, in a networking setting, or at a company function, you can say bye-bye without demolishing yacking Jack. Start by saying you've enjoyed learning about them followed up with a reason why you need to disengage at the moment.
- **You're allowed to change your mind.** It is impossible to know, except in retrospect, whether a decision is in your best interest or not. Don't punish yourself because you received new information or data that causes you to change your mind. The degree to which you owe the other party or parties anything depends on your relationship with them and exactly what you promised. You don't want to leave people in the lurch, but you also don't want to be taken advantage of or feel as if your needs aren't being met.

Chapter Four

Communicating Executive Presence

There's a Chinese curse that loosely translates into "May you have a wonderful idea and not be able to convince anyone of it." You don't have to be an executive to want to exude executive presence. It's an umbrella term for the ways in which you telegraph that you are someone to be taken seriously. Very seriously.

Executive presence is one of those things that you recognize when you see it, but you can't always put your finger on exactly what the other person is doing to communicate it. When you finish reading this chapter, you'll know exactly how to ensure people perceive you as someone to be taken seriously.

We are about midway through this book now, and it seems like the perfect time for a self-inventory.

EXECUTIVE PRESENCE SELF-INVENTORY

Answer True or False to each of the following questions:

1. I would define myself as cool as a cucumber in difficult conversations and situations.
2. Others recognize my decisiveness and willingness to take a stand on one side of a position.
3. I have no problem "telling it like it is" and standing by my beliefs even if it might make me unpopular.
4. My body language and facial responses appropriately match the message I'm conveying and the messages being conveyed to me.

5. I would rate myself highly when it comes to the ability to read between the lines, read a room, and read emotions.
6. The word on the street about me reflects positively on my reputation. (If you don't know what the word on the street is about you, answer False.)
7. The feedback I've gotten is that I'm a great public speaker.
8. When I speak in a meeting, people really listen.
9. I have a good sense of humor, especially when it comes to laughing at myself.
10. I consciously work on creating an appearance that is designed to complement my capabilities.

Scoring

- 8–10 True: High Executive Presence. You're doing great. Just focus on building skills in those areas related to the questions to which you answered False.
- 5–7 True: Moderate Executive Presence. This chapter will help you to fill in your gaps with new and more effective behaviors for making your voice heard.
- 1–4 True: Low Executive Presence. In addition to memorizing this book, you might consider getting a business coach.

Now, in the best of all worlds, you would have answered each question True. If you scored an 8, 9, or 10, I bet you're already pretty good at making your voice heard, your point known, and your presence felt. In this case, my suggestion is that you go back and read the questions to which you answered False and focus on improving in those areas.

If you answered True to between five and seven questions, you possess moderately high executive presence. You'll find many of the tips in this chapter helpful to you as you develop an even stronger voice and presence. And if you answered True to less than five questions, well, I'd say you better memorize this entire book. And it might not hurt to get a business coach while you're at it.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett, a recognized expert in the area of executive presence, says that there are three pillars that contribute to it. Those being gravitas, appearance, and communication. She's written a great book about it entitled, oddly enough, *Executive Presence*, and it's included in the

resources section at the end of this book. What she suggests is that gravitas is the core characteristic of executive presence.

Six behaviors define gravitas. First, exuding confidence and grace under fire. Second, acting decisively and showing teeth. Third, showing integrity and speaking truth to power. Fourth, demonstrating emotional intelligence. Fifth, burnishing your reputation. And sixth, projecting vision.

Many of the tips already covered will help you with these. In fact, if you follow these tips as well as the ones I'm going to be providing you with shortly, you can check off the emotional intelligence box. And burnishing reputation is something that you do over time by acting consistently and with integrity. So the next three tips in this section focus on just the first three: exuding confidence and grace under fire, acting decisively and showing teeth, and showing integrity and speaking truth to power. Keep in mind that women don't emerge from the womb with gravitas. It's something that they have learned, and you can, too.

Tip 48: Exude Confidence

I grew up with a mother who was the epitome of confidence. If she ever doubted herself or her capabilities, she certainly never let anyone see it. It served her well as she rose in the ranks of hospital management, starting as a delivery room nurse and ending her career as the director of nursing for a large regional hospital. And then there's me.

As hard as it might be to imagine, I was a shy little girl who wanted nothing more than to stay in her room and read. So if I ever expressed fearfulness about something, my mother would sing the song "I Whistle a Happy Tune" from *The King and I*. The first few lines are "Whenever I feel afraid, I hold my head erect and whistle a happy tune so no one will suspect I'm afraid. While shivering in my shoes, I strike a careless pose and whistle a happy tune. And no one ever knows I'm afraid."

There's something to be said for putting on a public face of confidence, even though we sometimes aren't sure how things will turn out. This is something guys do much better than women do, don't they? I love telling the story about a friend and I going to play golf, and being placed in a foursome with two men we didn't know. At about the third hole, one of the guys tees off and the ball goes into the woods. Me just being who I am, said to him empathetically, "Oh that's too bad." And with this he turns to me and says, "That wasn't a bad shot. It just didn't go where I wanted it to." Hello? If that's not the definition of a bad shot, I don't know what is.

And I guess we women could borrow some of that self-confidence. "Exhibiting confidence," says Hewlett, "is more about poise than perfection." If you're worried about being perfect, it's pretty tough to remain poised. And as I've always said, striving for perfection is an exercise in futility. You can never attain it. So the first step in exuding confidence is to let go of the need for perfection.

Part of exhibiting confidence is the willingness to take risks. And by definition, a risk is one where you can't be 100 percent assured of the outcome. As I said earlier, you can only know in retrospect if any decision, a risky one or not, was the right one. The worst thing that can happen if you've made a mistake is that you learn from it and make an even better

decision next time. So many of the tools and techniques already provided to you will lend to your confidence, especially if you keep using them over time. But let me give you a few more tips for exuding confidence.

First, you've heard this time and again. And it's true. Prepare, prepare, prepare. Whether you are going to a meeting with one person or making a presentation in front of a hundred people, confidence and executive presence when it's perceived by others is a product of preparation. Do the research, have the data, know your audience, write it down, and don't think you can wing it. I can't tell you how many hundreds of keynote presentations I've given, and I prepare for every single one of them. Even the ones on topics I've presented dozens of times before. Before every presentation, you'll find me reviewing my notes or my PowerPoint slides. And not memorizing them, but instead reminding myself of the flow, of what I want to say, and envisioning myself delivering a speech that I will be proud of and that others will enjoy. If you want to exude confidence, prepare.

Second, own the space. Whether it's in the front of a room, seated at a meeting, or standing in the hallway, own that space. Take up as much room as needed to feel as if you aren't constricted in any way. I remember coaching a new supervisor once, and lack of confidence was a piece of something we were working on with her. I attended one of her staff meetings and she sat leaning back in her chair with her hands folded demurely in her lap, like she was a teenager on a first date. Just the act of sitting up, leaning in, hands on the table, telegraphed a more confident supervisor.

Next, speak loudly. As women, we often have a tendency to speak quietly so that we don't appear unladylike. Speaking loudly not only gets people's attention, but also naturally increases body language. I'm from New York, and I can remember growing up watching and listening to people from all cultures speaking loudly and waving their hands around them to make their points. If any one of them lacked confidence, I certainly didn't know it. In fact, when I brought a friend home once for a big family dinner, she leaned over to me at the table and whispered, "Everyone is shouting, but no one's mad." Yes. That's what confidence looks like in my family. One trick here is to speak loudly enough so that the person farthest from you would be able to hear you if they were a little bit hard of hearing.

Fourth, maintain good eye contact. If you have children, you know when you are chastising them for doing something wrong, they often look down. Looking down telegraphs submissiveness, and that's not what you want associated with your brand. I was speaking with a New York detective not long ago, and she said this is one of the things criminals look for when choosing a mark. Looking people in the eye without staring them down puts you on an equal footing with others.

And fifth, speak slowly. Women have a habit of speaking quickly because they're afraid they're taking up too much time. It's a short giveaway that you lack confidence. When I was interviewed the first time on the *Today* show by Ann Curry, I was thrilled. I don't know what got into me, but after the interview I asked if I could give her a coaching tip. She hesitated, but then she said, "Sure." My tip for her was to speak more slowly. Because speaking so rapidly made it seem like she was trying to take up less time. Without being defensive, she replied that the control booth is always whispering in her ear, "Speed it up." As I told her, "You don't hear Matt Lauer speeding it up," even though I'm sure they were telling him the same thing.

Was Ann ultimately replaced because she spoke too fast? Of course not. My own opinion, and it's just that, is that Ann's departure was a case of being on the wrong playing field for her skill set. The format and tenure of the *Today* show changed over the years, and Ann is better suited to journalism that requires more gravitas, not less.

To summarize, if you want to exude confidence, make certain that you're always prepared and own the space in which you're working. Speak loudly, look people in the eye, and avoid speaking too quickly.

Tip 49: Demonstrate Grace Under Fire

In an article that Sylvia Ann Hewlett wrote about executive presence, she gave the example of a woman CEO who made an announcement at a table of all-male executives that started an uproar. Rather than trying to shout over them or calm them down, she asserted what she described as her vertical leadership position. She remained seated ramrod straight with her feet planted firmly on the floor, hands on the table, leaning forward. I want you to picture that, because it's a powerful visual. She waited until the din died down before saying a word. And at that point, what she said wasn't as important as the fact that she rose above the fray and demonstrated what she was made of.

What she didn't do was go for the bait. When everyone else was running around like chickens with their heads cut off or when fingers started pointing, that was her cue to exhibit grace under fire. The key elements of grace under fire are defending, not attacking, listening for understanding, deescalating tense situations, and composure. Yes, it can be a tall order when you're the one in the hot seat, but you've already gotten some tips for this. Like surrounding yourself with a Plexiglas shield and not going for the bait.

A good example of someone exhibiting grace under fire was Supreme Court justice Elena Kagan during her Senate confirmation hearings. Despite some contentious questions from the panel, she exuded grace under fire. At one point, then Senator Jeff Sessions made an issue of the fact that she opposed the don't ask, don't tell policy of the military when she was dean at Harvard Law School. To which Kagan leaned in, looked him in the eye, and replied to Senator Sessions, "I have repeatedly said that I believe the don't ask, don't tell policy is unwise and unjust. I believed it then, and I believe it now. We were trying to do two things. We were trying to make sure military recruiters had full and complete access to our students. And we were also trying to protect our own anti-discrimination policy and to protect the people who this policy was intended to protect, which in this case was our gay and lesbian students." Now that's grace under fire.

Tip 50: Act Decisively and Show Teeth

Acting decisively looks the same for both men and women. It's about the ability to make decisions quickly and stick with them, which is typically achieved through having confidence in your decisions and your decision-making capabilities. However, there is a caveat here. Showing teeth looks different for men and women. Men can get away with growling. But when women do it, we're seen as overly aggressive. As Sylvia Ann Hewlett puts it, "Women must be able to show teeth without biting."

The master of doing this was Margaret Thatcher. Without a doubt, I would say she's the female leader of the twentieth century with the greatest executive presence. Go down the line of characteristics, and she exhibited them. She certainly showed teeth during her poll tax controversy speech. In the speech, Thatcher wanted to stand up to those opposing her liberalization of the economy. In eleven words, Thatcher made her position clear and never wavered: "You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning." This is just one of the phrases that contributed to her being known as the Iron Lady. It's also a great example of how short sounds confident.

I would venture to say all of the tips in this book are about enabling you to growl without biting. Let me give you a few examples of how putting them together will enable you to act decisively and show teeth. Let's say your company is experiencing a media crisis. Maybe one of your products has been publicly accused of contributing to childhood obesity. Something needs to be done to get between the media's portrayal of the product and the truth. In a meeting, you say:

"We all know the media has vilified our product with no facts. Our best course of action is to immediately put the facts in front of the public and dispute the rumors. I'll get our PR department on it as soon as this meeting is over."

This is an appropriate display of decisiveness and teeth. You can hear both urgency and a call for action. Now, not all situations require this level

of muscle. In fact, most situations don't. But when you have one that does, don't hesitate to put your muscle into it.

In another scenario, one of your coworkers has gone behind your back to your boss to complain that you aren't carrying your fair share of the weight of a project on which you're both working. You know that this is a ploy to camouflage the fact that he's been late on all of the agreed-upon deliverables, and now the project will miss its deadline. You've spoken to your coworker about your concerns, and he chose instead to do this end around. When your boss calls you in to talk about the situation, you say:

“If there was any truth to what he was saying, I would own it. The truth is, I have consistently delivered on every benchmark, and the project is hampered only by his inability to meet deadlines. Rather than put you in the middle, I suggest you call a meeting with both of us to review our work products so that you can make a determination as to why this project will be late.”

Don't let anyone throw you under the bus. You will be respected for your ability to stand up for yourself and your position in the strongest way possible when the situation calls for it.

Tip 51: Show Integrity and Speak Truth to Power

An example of a woman showing integrity and speaking truth to power, the third component of gravitas, is Elizabeth Warren. When Jeff Sessions was nominated by Donald Trump to become attorney general, Senator Warren said she had grave concerns about his fitness to be the chief law enforcement officer of the United States. To illustrate her point, she chose to read a letter written by Coretta Scott King about Sessions when he was working as attorney general in the state of Alabama from 1983 to 1993. King had written this letter in opposition to Sessions's nomination for federal judgeship in the southern district of Alabama—a judgeship that he was denied based on charges of racism. In that letter, King describes what she saw as civil rights violations, including Sessions's prosecution of civil rights workers for helping elderly black citizens to vote. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell insisted that Warren stop reading the letter. When she refused, McConnell censored her, saying, "She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted." That last part has become a rallying cry against men who try to silence women. I even bought a sweatshirt with the phrase *Nevertheless She Persisted*. It's one of the nicest things someone can say about you, if you want to become known as one who speaks truth to power.

I received an email from a client who is intent on speaking truth to power. She is a director in a company that recently placed two women on its board of directors, making the board 40 percent female. She was happy to see that but felt that the company was using it as a way to tout diversity when, in fact, only 13 percent of management positions are filled by women and only 27 percent of professional roles are held by women. In a quandary as to what to do, she asked me if she should say something or just keep quiet. Then she added, "I'm angry with myself for not having the courage to speak up." As I told her, you shouldn't be angry with yourself. Thinking twice before speaking up, particularly on an issue like this, is actually a wise thing to do.

What she ultimately wound up writing on the company electronic bulletin board was, "Congratulations to Jane Smith and Mary Brown for

being elected to the board of directors. I look forward to continued measurable progress as the company works to ensure diversity at all levels of the organization.” Is this an example of speaking truth to power? Of course it is. Her position as a director carries weight, and her remarks will be understood as a call for continued action.

Showing integrity and speaking truth to power isn’t always in a public forum. Frequently it happens just between you and one other person. Let me give you an example that just happens to also be about diversity. A client called, expressing her frustration over the company’s outward-facing policy of being a diverse workforce. We don’t walk the talk, she said. We have all these policies, but it never changes the fact that women aren’t promoted. There are no women on our board of directors, and women aren’t taken seriously.

Over the course of several conversations, she decided to build a case for establishing a chief diversity and inclusion officer at the company. She literally became the expert on the topic. And when she was ready, she presented a position paper to the company CEO. Although he has not yet taken action on it, it not only emboldened her, but also prepared her to leave the company if necessary so that she could work elsewhere. Preferably at a company that shared her values, if this company chose not to accept her proposal.

These are just two examples of how you can speak truth to power. One is subtle, the other bold. Neither is right or wrong. The degree to which you speak up will be contingent upon so many personal factors. As Elizabeth Warren said, she persisted because she wanted to be a model for the millions of women who are told to just sit down and shut up.

Tip 52: Lose the Little Girl Body Language

This obviously isn't something related to how you sound, but it is related to your ability to communicate with impact. In *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office*, I wrote about the ways in which women diminish their credibility through their body language. And that's why it's called *body language*. Your body speaks as loudly as, if not louder than, your words. Let me share with you some ways in which that happens and see if you aren't guilty of one or more of them.

I'm going to cover five things you should be aware of: smiling that doesn't match the message, taking up too little space, using too few gestures, tilting your head, and touching your hair. Let's start with the most common mistake women make, and that's inappropriate smiling.

A number of years ago, we reached the point in a leadership skills for women workshop where we were discussing how to get people to take you more seriously. A petite Asian woman, an engineer from the jet propulsion laboratory in Pasadena, California, raised her hand to ask why colleagues ignored her input. When she finished, a ripple of laughter went across the room. The reason was obvious to the rest of us. The entire time she spoke, she displayed a rather large and inappropriate smile.

Women are socialized to smile more than men. When men don't smile, they're taken seriously. When women don't smile, we're asked what's wrong. It's no wonder we aren't even aware when we smile at the wrong times. I'm not suggesting that you not smile at all. A smile enhances your likability. I'm asking you to pay more attention to when you're smiling. I constantly coach women to watch the smile.

Next, consciously match your facial expression to your message. Aim for congruence between your body language and your message. Another way to test whether this is a problem for you or not is before delivering serious messages, rehearse in front of a mirror. This will give you a better idea of when you're smiling inappropriately.

Turning now to the use of space, it's one way we make a statement about our confidence and our sense of entitlement. The more space you take up, the more confident you appear. The next time you're on an airplane,

take a look at the difference between how men and women sit. This one happens to be a personal pet peeve of mine. Whereas men sit down and do the manspreading thing with their knees and their elbows, women tend to keep their elbows tucked in close to their sides and their knees together, trying not to take up too much space. Another place to observe this is on an elevator. Most people, men and women alike, are conscious of making room for others as they enter. As the elevator gets crowded, however, it's more likely that you'll see a woman cower in the corner for fear of taking up too much space.

The same phenomenon occurs when a woman steps in front of a room to make a presentation. She stands in one place, moving only slightly within the space she occupies. When we are overly cautious about taking up physical space, the overwhelming impression conveyed is one of being demure, careful, unwilling to take risks, timid, or frightened. Some researchers suggest there is actually a biological reason why men like to take up as much space as possible. Like the space under the dining table or the entire bed. Splaying legs and arms is actually a territorial display of dominance. In other words, when we make our body take up more physical space, we are actually trying to claim it as our own and assert power. Men do this because they often feel the need to claim power in a room or assert dominance. Here are a few suggestions for how you can better make use of your body language in a way that will enhance your executive presence.

First, when giving a presentation, use the full amount of space available to you by slowly walking side to side, back and forth. Even if you're on a large stage, come out from behind the podium and take up about 75 percent of the space available. Walking also puts some energy into your presentation rather than you remaining stuck behind the podium.

Second, in meetings, choose a seat that will give freedom to move around. Don't sit where you'll be forced to keep your elbows glued to your sides. Keeping your elbows on the table and leaning in slightly conveys a message of being more alert to what's being said. The exception is if you have to pull a chair up to squeeze into the table so that you're not on the periphery.

Third, make sure your gestures are consistent with your message. The use of gestures is an outgrowth of taking up space. Like all parts of your self-presentation, gestures should be integrated with your energy. If you're

working to make your presence larger, working on your gesturing is an easy way to begin. The problem is most women have never learned the art of gesturing. It's little wonder why. We've been taught to sit demurely with our hands folded in our laps. When we have used gestures, we've been given the message that we're too emotional. For fear of being called unladylike or too emotional, we've let the pendulum swing the other way. No gestures.

Consultant Vanessa Van Edwards studied famous TED Talks and found that the ones that went viral and became wildly popular featured the speakers who used their hands the most. The least watched TED Talks had an average of 124,000 views and used an average of 272 hand gestures. The top-ranked ones, meanwhile, had an average of 7.4 million views and 465 hand gestures during the same length of time. When really charismatic speakers use hand gestures, "The brain is super happy," said Van Edwards. Because it's getting two explanations in one, and the brain loves that.

Gestures should complement, not detract from, your message. Allow your gestures to flow naturally from your spoken message and your energy. Some specific things to watch for: Be aware of when you wring your hands because you're anxious and stop. Match your gestures to the size of your group. The larger the group, the larger the gesture. Emphasize your points by enumerating them with your fingers. One, two, three.

Communication consultant Tom Henschel advises clients to use gestures that break the silhouette. When you stand with your hands at your sides or in front of you, your silhouette shows no gestures. When you work on taking up more space, your gestures should move outside the line of that silhouette. You can do this whether you're sitting at a conference table or standing in a doorway having a chat.

The fourth body language mistake women make is tilting their heads when they talk. This is a small mistake with a big impact. The tilt of the head in conversation has the impact of softening a message. It almost always is used to either imply a question, signal that you're listening, or encourage the other person to talk. Women tilt their heads significantly more than men in conversation. And in this regard, a head tilt can be a good thing. When trying to convey a direct message, however, it can be interpreted as uncertainty or lack of commitment to what you're saying, even when you're dead sure of it. It's another one of those ways women

have learned to communicate difficult messages in a socially acceptable but less assertive way.

The best place to observe this is on television where people are interviewed. On Sunday morning programs such as *Face the Nation*, *This Week*, or *Meet the Press*, you don't see too many head tilts by either the host or the guest. The topics are often of national and international importance. And therefore, participants in these discussions typically want to convey a sense of seriousness. But if you watch skilled interviewers such as Norah O'Donnell, Margaret Brennan, or even a man like John Dickerson conduct interviews in which they really want guests to open up, they effectively use tilting of the head. They can ask the most personal questions and get away with it, in part because the tilt of the head makes the guest feel as if the host is really interested in what they're saying.

Conversely, notice how these same people lose the head tilt when they want to be taken seriously. The message here is not to stop tilting your head entirely, but do be aware of when you might do it at difficult moments as a means of softening the message that shouldn't be softened.

And to wrap up this section, I'll turn to something women do all the time that men just don't do. Touch their hair. Tom Henschel suggests that each time a woman touches her hair, she subtracts a year from her maturity and credibility. Do it often enough, and no one will take you seriously. Sometimes women touch their hair out of habit, and other times because they're moving their hair out of their eyes. If it's the former, ask a friend to give you a subtle sign when she sees you doing it, so that you can become more aware of the habit. If it's the latter, it's an even easier fix. Do something with your hair so that it doesn't fall on your face.

Tip 53: Read and Respond to Body Language

In addition to using your own body language to your advantage, it's equally important that you be able to read the body language of others. After all, body language is nonverbal communication. So you have to be prepared to respond to it in the same way you would respond to verbal messages. Research shows women might be better at reading body language, because more of their brain is active when they evaluate others' behavior. In an MRI, women have fourteen to sixteen active brain areas when evaluating others, whereas men have only four to six active brain areas. But that doesn't mean we're good at using it to our advantage. Too often, we're hesitant to comment on what we see because we're afraid we might be wrong or it might be intrusive.

There are plenty of books to help you learn to read body language, and I won't even try to compete with those. Three of my favorites are *Spy the Lie*, *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, and *What Every BODY Is Saying*. You'll find these included in the resources section. For the purpose of this book, I want to help you trust your instincts about what you're observing and take more risks around commenting on it.

My first tip for you goes back to that pesky perfection thing. We often don't trust our observation because we're afraid it's just plain wrong. I can tell you that the value I've added to my clients has risen exponentially since I've let go of the feeling that I have to be 100 percent on target before I share an observation.

Let's face it, our observations are a by-product of our experiences and education. At this point in my career, I can observe people in a work situation, and identify their strengths and areas for development in short order. Not because I'm better than other consultants at reading behavior, but because I've been doing it for such a long time, and I've been open to learning from observations that may have been wrong.

Let me give you an example. A client was referred to me by her HR department because she was "not adding any value." When I met her for the first time, I extended my hand. And she only grabbed the tips of my fingers and gave them a perfunctory shake. When we sat down at a conference

table, she motioned for me to sit at the head of the table, and she took a seat on the side. Then she folded her hands in her lap and leaned back in her chair, waiting for me to take the lead. As we spoke, she nodded her head and answered my questions in a very quiet, emotionless voice.

Although she's very respectful, I didn't feel as if I was really seeing her. You might assume that her body language suggests that she's passive and demure. I'm not so sure. So after thirty minutes I said to her, "Let me take a risk here. I feel as if there's one of two things going on. Either you've been taught to be deferential to authority, or you don't really want to participate in this coaching engagement. I'm not sure which it is." Then she proceeded to tell me that she was skeptical about the coaching process, because she saw other people who were coached ultimately get fired. She was afraid this might happen to her, and she was a single mom who really needed her job.

If I had played it safe and not commented on my observations, I might have gone down the wrong road with this client, and really done her a disservice. As it was, I now had greater insight into what appeared to be resistance. And we were able to talk about how I could help her to keep her job. Yes, she did have to start being more assertive, starting with me. And she had to learn to trust that I had her best interests at heart if she was to make the behavioral changes I suggested would meet her employer's expectations.

Second, use phrases like "I could be wrong, but it seems as if..." Or, "From where I'm sitting, it looks like..." This not only shows that you own the observation, but it also gives the other person the opportunity to reframe it or disagree with you. You saw me do it just a moment ago with the phrase, "Let me take a risk here." It tells the person that you're not 100 percent sure, but you want to make an observation nonetheless.

Third, invite discussion. If you really want to understand the other person, then toss the ball to them for a response. It doesn't matter if your observation is right or wrong, as long as it leads where you want it to go. Simply the act of verbalizing the observation gives people the idea that you want to understand them better and that you aren't making assumptions that may or may not be true.

So let's put this all together in an example:

Lois: Karen, I noticed in today's meeting you avoided my eye

contact and fiddled with your cell phone through my entire presentation. You even got up at one point and left the room while I was speaking. If I didn't know better, I would think you had no interest in what I was saying.

Karen: No, that wasn't it at all, Lois. My son's school sent me a text that he was in the nurse's office, and I was trying to get ahold of my husband to see if he could go pick him up. When he didn't text me back, I left the room so that I could call his office.

Lois: Oh, that makes more sense. I'm so glad I asked. Is your son okay?

Karen: He's fine. Turns out he fell on the playground and was more scared than hurt.

Lois: I'm sure you're relieved.

Karen: You bet I am.

As human beings, absent information to the contrary, we will ascribe negative intent to behaviors that don't make sense to us. It's why it's so important to read and respond to body language, so that you're not making up stories in your head that just aren't true.

Tip 54: Answer Questions with Confidence

The rule of thumb when it comes to answering questions is to answer the question you're asked. Sounds logical. Right? Well, I can't tell you how many people go off on tangents and provide either too much information or too little information. Just like in school, there are only four kinds of questions that you will be asked. True/false or yes/no; either/or; essay; and fill in the blank. Look for the type of question and answer in kind. See how they differ.

Don't you think it's a good idea to take the advice of the consultant and start the process of downsizing now? That's a true/false question. An appropriate response would be yes, I do think it's a good idea. If it's a true/false question, then your response should be true or false. In a moment, I'll give you a suggestion for how to do that if you're not sure.

In this case, if the person wants more from you, she might follow up with, "Tell me why you think it's a good idea to take the advice of the consultant and start the process of downsizing now." That's an essay question. Use the headline model discussed in Tip 3 to answer essay questions succinctly. In this case, my response would be, "Starting the downsizing process now is the right decision for three reasons. First, the projected financials for the next quarter are pretty bleak. We need to cut our overhead. Second, the market is strong right now. And we would be enabling our staff to find new jobs more quickly. And third, we pay the consultant for her expertise. We should heed the advice in her report. Those are my thoughts. What are yours?"

You can see that I used the headline communication model in providing my headline, two or three pieces of supporting information, and then a tagline.

Here's an example of an either/or question: "Do you think the better strategy for getting our product to market before year end is to hire salespeople in the field to take pre-orders, or to put that money into creating a faster distribution system?" In this case, you're going to choose one, if you do agree that one strategy is better than the other. However, if you think neither is a good idea, you're going to answer directly and succinctly:

neither. “There’s a third option we haven’t discussed. Would you like to hear it?” There’s no sense going into details about the third option if the person asking the question is hell bent on one of his own ideas. On the other hand, if he’s open to hearing your idea, you would then shift to a headline answer.

And finally, there’s the fill-in-the-blank question. It usually starts with who, what, where, when. Don’t assume it’s an essay question unless you’re asked for additional information. If someone asks where you delivered the baby, don’t tell them about your fourteen hours of labor. For example, who’s the best candidate for the job? What is the name of the company we’ve used in the past to handle our big shipping jobs? Where should we focus our efforts? What’s the best time to start marketing for Valentine’s Day?

I make it sound easy, right? But what happens when you feel like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming car when asked a question you didn’t expect? You feel your heart start to pound. Your mind starts racing to locate a few points that would make you sound halfway intelligent and informed. The seconds ticking by feel like hours. And when you finally do, you start talking in an attempt to fill the silence and hope something will eventually come to you.

You’re not going to do that anymore. You just wind up squandering an opportunity to influence. And it might cause the person asking the question to not ask for your opinion again.

Consider this exchange between a senior vice president and one of her reports:

Senior vice president: Do you think we should tell our shareholders about the anticipated loss for the fourth quarter, or wait until we’re sure how much the loss is going to be?

Lois: Well, we could tell them now in preparation for the fourth quarter financials. On the other hand, if we wait, we’ll sound more credible in terms of actual numbers. If we tell them now, we’ll have to deal with lots of questions we can’t answer. And if we wait, it may appear we’re trying to hide something. There’s pros and cons either way.

Guess what, the vice president already knows there are pros and cons. She could probably articulate them just as well as you, if not better. What she wants is an answer. My Indonesian clients who, regardless of gender, communicate in a stereotypically feminine way, call this basa-basi or wishy-washy. Women often make the mistake of thinking they have the luxury of thinking out loud in response to tough questions. They believe putting all the options on the table is the most helpful and fair thing to do. The obvious problem is that it leaves the questioner without an answer. If you ask me, it's just another way women hedge their bets and play it safe. One colleague calls this hiding in plain sight. If there ever is a time to make a declarative statement, it's in response to a direct question.

But what about when you don't know the answer, or you're not 100 percent sure it's the right answer? The inability to answer a question directly and succinctly can stem from the desire to have the perfect or right answer. I often hear people answer a yes or no question with, "But I can't give you a yes or a no." Oh yes, you can. You do it by taking a risk and putting yourself on the line. It's better to err on the side of starting a debate than it is to sound wishy-washy.

If you're really stuck, there are two things you can do that are better than not answering the question. The first is to let the person know that you're going to think out loud. This happens to me sometimes when I'm onstage and someone asks me a question that I just hadn't thought of before, or if it's the first time it was asked of me. You'll often see me say something like, "Great question. I haven't been asked that before, but if you'll bear with me while I think out loud for a moment, I'll attempt to answer." Now people know it's not going to be the perfect answer. They know you're mentally processing your answer while you're speaking. As long as you let them know that, there's nothing wrong with it.

The second thing you can do is just admit that you don't have an answer at the moment, but you will as soon as you look into it and get back to them. For example, "That's an important one that I don't want to answer off the top of my head. Let me do a little research and get back to you this afternoon." Again, that's better than stumbling, isn't it?

Tip 55: Use the Tactics of a Comeback Queen

Answering questions on the spot is one thing. Responding to negative or inappropriate comments is another. Remember when you were young and it was as simple as saying, “I’m rubber. You’re glue. Anything you say to me bounces off and sticks to you.” I wish I had a dollar for every time I said that to one of my brothers. One of the things women often say to me is that they wish they had the right comeback or answer in the moment. Instead, they think of something after the moment passed. There’s nothing wrong with going back and later responding if that’s what it takes for you to stand up for yourself. Just because you can’t do it instantaneously doesn’t mean you shouldn’t do it at all. But if you want to get better at thinking on your feet, here are a few things you can do.

First, stay in touch with your feelings. When someone says something that catches us off guard, we often go into protection mode. We shut down our feelings in an effort to ward off the evil spirits. It’s what makes it impossible to think of a comeback. Instead, when you feel that initial blow, ask yourself, “What am I feeling right now?” The more you do that, the less likely you’ll be to swallow or hide those feelings over time. Then put words to your feelings. Here’s some examples:

Sarah: I can’t believe you’re wearing that dress. It looks like something you’ve had in the closet for years.

Michelle: Ouch. That hurt. I actually thought it was appropriate for the evening.

Or how about this one?

Sarah: I’m really surprised you got that promotion. I thought for sure it was going to Henry.

Michelle: And I’m surprised you would even think that, given all the work I’ve put into the last two major projects.

Second, practice. The more you take chances with speaking on your feet, the more naturally it will come to you. And most importantly, you’ll

see that nothing catastrophic will come of it.

One good way to get that practice is to join Toastmasters. It's a group that meets regularly to practice public speaking, thinking on your feet, and answering questions. You can find one at their website, toastmasters.org. Another is to enroll in an improv class or do stand-up comedy. Most major cities have them. And once you get over your self-consciousness, you'll find it really is helpful in breaking down some of the barriers that preclude you from thinking on your feet.

Now, you know sooner or later that you're going to be in one of the following situations. So you might want to practice these responses and keep them in your arsenal. If you're asked where the coffee is when you're walking into a meeting, a great reply is, "I don't know. But when you find it, I like mine light no sugar." Or when someone makes an inappropriate comment to you, try saying, "Excuse me, can you please repeat that? I must have just tuned out for a minute." Rarely do they say it twice. A great response if someone calls you emotional would be, "Actually, it's passion. And it's passion that I'm using to make my point."

And this next one is one that you just have to try. I've used it many times myself, and I'm amazed at how well it works. In this case, let's use this example. Someone says, "Women just aren't as good as men as Wall Street traders." You're going to pretend you don't get it, and ask for clarification. "Can you explain that to me? I don't understand what it means."

Third, stall. That's right. Stall for time. One great way to do this is to ask the person to repeat what they just said. This gives you just a few seconds to collect yourself, and tap into what you're feeling.

It might go like this:

Sarah: You don't really feed your kids that kind of stuff, do you?

Michelle: Excuse me. What did you say?

Sarah: I said that stuff you're feeding your kids, it's junk.

Michelle: I don't appreciate being told what I should and shouldn't feed my children. They're healthy and happy, and that's all that matters to me.

Now, it doesn't really matter what the person says after you've made your comeback. Because you're not going to engage in debate. Inappropriate comments and the people who make them don't deserve any more of your time than one comeback.

Tip 56: Avoid V8 Moments

Have you ever seen the commercials for the vegetable juice V8 where the woman clunks herself on the head after an argument because she thought of the perfect comeback five seconds too late? In the last tip, we talked about how you can be a comeback queen. But how about those times when you know you're going into a difficult conversation and anticipate that you'll be getting pushback? The answer here is to anticipate objections and be prepared to offer alternatives.

There are two benefits to this approach. The first is that you won't have to resort to simply denying what's been said or disagreeing with the person. If you've ever argued with a five-year-old, you know that "nuh-uh" is not persuasive. Straight denials only escalate an already combustible situation and make you look defensive. A well-prepared, previously developed alternative gives the other person pause. And a second benefit is that you avoid being blindsided with little or nothing to say in the moment, only to think of the perfect response after the conversation has ended.

Let's turn to an example. What if you have a colleague who is shirking his responsibility and taking credit for your work? To prepare for the conversation, you think about what his comebacks might be. These include, "Well, I've been working just as hard as you have on the project. You're just being paranoid." Or, "There you go again, making everything about you." Now you can decide how you want to respond to each one.

If he says, "I've been working just as hard as you on the project," instead of reflexively saying, "Oh no you haven't," which makes you sound like a thirteen-year-old, you might be prepared to say, "Tell me more about why you think that." This gives you more data that can lead to a rational discussion.

Or if his response is, "You're just being paranoid," rather than saying, "No, I'm not," you can respond, "Be that as it may, that really isn't the issue. We still need to agree on a way we'll work together to get this done and share credit for it." Without disagreeing, you move the discussion into a problem-solving mode.

And you'll notice that throughout these last chapters, I've used the

phrase *be that as it may* a number of times. You want to add that phrase to your repertoire, because it's really helpful in defusing potentially explosive situations.

Going back to the example, if his retort was, "There you go again making everything about you," rather than saying, "You must be kidding," you might be prepared to respond, "My intent is to make everything about work, so let's figure that out." A nice girl might simply back down only to have the V8 moment later.

Anticipating resistance in advance and preparing for it allows you to hold your own. It helps you to avoid a countermove like "No, I'm not," which lets the other person stay in control of the conversation and leaves you in a one-down position. Instead, make a list of the things you might hear and how you could reply to the shift of direction of that conversation in your favor.

Now, if you do all of this and you're still at a loss for words, don't feel as if you have to rush your retort. Pause to think before you speak, or even delay a response until a later time. It's far better to say something like, "I hadn't considered that. Let me give it some thought and get back to you" than to acquiesce and beat yourself over the head about it later.

Tip 57: Prepare Powerful PowerPoints

PowerPoints can be your best friend or your worst enemy when it comes to projecting executive presence. A PowerPoint is not supposed to reiterate everything you speak about during a presentation. If that were the case, you could just email the PowerPoint, and ask people to read it and come to the meeting prepared to discuss it. No. A PowerPoint is supposed to provide you with a memory jogger, so that you can stay on track and illustrate key points. It complements the spoken word. It doesn't take the place of it.

Although I have colleagues who don't like to use them at all, there are people who are more visual than auditory. And this provides them with an anchor of sorts. The biggest mistakes I see people make when using PowerPoints are putting too many words on one page, having too many pages in the deck, using fonts that are too small, not making effective use of graphics and color, and reading the PowerPoint page.

Think of your PowerPoint as an accessory. You wouldn't leave the house with an accessory that didn't complement your outfit, would you? Then don't leave your office with a PowerPoint that doesn't complement your executive presence. Here are seven tips to beef up your PowerPoints:

1. If you're not good at doing them, have someone else do them for you. Whether you barter with a friend, enlist your neighbor's daughter, or pay someone, until you get the hang of what makes for a powerful PowerPoint, get help. They're a reflection on your professional brand. If you use them for sales presentations, then it's even more important that you have them professionally done so that people don't associate a poor PowerPoint with a poor product.
2. Use one template for the entire presentation. Changing templates and designs within a PowerPoint presentation disrupts the flow of smoothly providing your message. If you are self-employed and frequently use PowerPoints in your business, consider having one design that's consistent with your brand.

3. Use powerful words and short phrases. For example, change “With the help of everyone pitching in, we can’t lose this opportunity,” to “Together we win.” Again, short is memorable and impactful. You can speak to what it means without ever having to read it.
4. Use a graphic on about every third slide. It keeps the audience focused and engaged. Nowadays you can just Google almost any word and find a graphic to match it. Sometimes there are fees required for using the graphic, but many are free.
5. Tell a story with your PowerPoint. Rather than throwing a bunch of charts and statistics, use your slides to engage the audience in the purpose of the presentation. This is especially true when you’re making a presentation that includes a lot of data, facts, and figures. Most people reach a saturation point with these relatively quickly. So rather than digging in the weeds, move up to the ten-thousand-foot level. What do the numbers tell us? Why are they important? How can we use them to inform future decisions?
6. Follow the seven-by-seven rule. Use only about seven lines per slide, and about seven words per line, with a font of twenty-four points or larger. People have a tendency to read every word you flash in front of them. So don’t give them a reason to take their attention away from you for too long.
7. Rather than use charts filled with numbers, try using pie charts or bar graphs to compare variables. They’re usually easier for the audience to read and can effectively support your story line.

The bottom line here is to remember that you’re using the PowerPoint to enhance your executive presence. So make sure it’s not eclipsing you instead.

Tip 58: Make Sure You're Heard

Although it could be argued that every tip in this book is about being heard in one way or another, this tip is for those times when you feel as if you're being ignored or your input is being overlooked. It's interesting to note first that some people never feel ignored. It's like the old commercial used to say: "When EF Hutton talks, people listen." And why is that? Well, these people have a few things in common. First, they carefully choose their times to speak. They wait until others stop talking. They make certain their comments fit the context of the discussion. And when they know their audience can't take in any more information, they wait for a more opportune time to provide their input.

Next, they prepare their messages in advance for maximum impact. This is where headline communications come in. Even if you prepare your comments in your head, that's still preparation. Something else they do is speak loudly, slowly, and clearly, using words that convey the gravity of their messages. And the fourth thing they do is use nonverbal communication to command attention, whether through gestures, eye contact, or taking up space. They make certain when they speak, they are the center of attention. If you're not doing these things, then it's more likely your message will be overlooked.

On the other hand, sometimes you do all the right things and you're in a group where you feel as if you're still not heard. I've had it happen plenty of times, and I'm no shrinking violet. There are those occasions when the people I'm with are more intent on making certain their voices don't get lost that they drown out everyone else's voice.

Those times call for assertive action on your part. Don't assume because no one said anything it means your idea didn't have value. Great ideas get overlooked all the time, because people are so focused on making their points. And they fail to hear those of others. Next time this happens to you, wait for a break in the conversation. Don't wait till everyone has said their piece. And then say something like, "I didn't hear anyone comment on my thought, so let me make sure my key points weren't lost." Then summarize two to three of the main points of your message, and ask for feedback.

Here's how it might sound:

Lois: I propose that we use surveillance cameras to cut down on crime and better be able to identify vandals who do damage. This has been done in at least three surrounding communities, and crime has been reduced in each one.

Tom: I think we need to arm our security teams. Right now they're operating with only Mace and a baton. What kind of security is that? Times have changed. People are more aggressive. We have to meet aggression with aggression.

Lois: Before we go too far down that road, I'd like to make sure the surveillance camera idea doesn't get lost. It's proven to be effective in reducing crime and apprehending criminals. Tom, would you agree?

Of course, nothing guarantees your idea will be the one selected. But if you don't make certain it's heard, for sure it won't be chosen for implementation.

Tip 59: Executive Presence That Gets the Job

Interviewing requires a special kind of executive presence. It's a fine line between confidence and arrogance when you're answering questions posed by a potential employer. You want the person to know that you're confident, but not so confident that you wouldn't make a good team player or that you'd be difficult to manage. Don't interpret this to mean you should show less confidence, because that's not going to work.

Instead, exude confidence and do these three things: Be humble, be curious, be vulnerable. Humility is when you know you've done something well, but you don't have to brag about it. Just putting it out in a factual way and letting others judge it for themselves is enough for the humble person. Curiosity is exhibited when you ask others for their input. How did they do something, or what do they think of what you just said? Vulnerability is the willingness to admit you're not perfect. The confident person can be vulnerable, because they know they have the capacity to continually improve.

Let's see how the exact same interview question can be answered in two different ways. Decide for yourself which person you would rather have working for you. In this case, I've just been asked a question about my greatest accomplishment in my current position. If you prepared for the interview, you're pretty sure this question in some shape or form is going to be asked. So you should have an answer at the ready. Here goes:

“My greatest achievement was turning around the performance of a division of my company that was losing money. I came in and realized people were not engaged in the work, so productivity was low. That included sales, service, and manufacturing. I met with each of the unit directors and reviewed their progress toward goals for the last two quarters. It was clear that the numbers weren't good, so I set new goals for them, met regularly with each director to help him or her improve the performance of the people in the unit, provided regular achievement reports, and, at the end of the year, reinforced success through appropriate raises or redirection as needed. Within

two years, the performance of each of the divisions had improved. And the gross profits were compatible with the company's overall vision. I'm proud of how I turned it around."

At the surface, that sounds pretty good, right? But not so fast. Read this response and see what you think:

"My greatest achievement was working with the management team of a division of my company to help turn around its performance. When I was given the assignment, the financials were pretty dismal, and I realized early on that people weren't engaged in the work. So productivity was low. That included sales, service, and manufacturing. I began by meeting with each of the directors and asking them what they thought the problems were in their units. This was pretty informative because I learned that these directors were frustrated with not having input into their annual goals and feeling as if they didn't have the support of the headquarters executive team.

"So together we developed a work plan that would help them and their direct reports ensure everyone's voice was heard from the bottom up and that good ideas could bubble to the top, right to the top of the organization. Working together in this way, the performance of each of the divisions improved within eighteen months, and the gross profits were compatible with the company's overall vision. It was a team effort that really paid off. I'm curious if this approach sounds like one that your company could use or one that you've even thought of."

See what I mean? If I'm interviewing for fit, not just experience, I'd much prefer to work with the person who gave the second answer. Confident but not arrogant.

Tip 60: Lighten Up

Have you ever noticed that people who have executive presence aren't always serious, and they don't act like they're carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders? Even in tough situations, they can put everyone at ease with a quip or clever remark. I'll never forget, one day I was giving a keynote address to about five hundred women. It had been a long week, one that took me to several cities. As I started off, I said something like, "It's a pleasure to be with you here in Florida." With that, there was a ripple of laughter in the audience. I hesitated as I tried to figure out what was so funny. And someone from the audience yelled out, "You're in Texas, not Florida." With this I said, "No, I'm in the state of confusion. That's where I am." And again, the audience laughed.

I made a mistake. There would have been a time in my career when I would have been mortified. I would have made excuses for the mistake, and this would have only made things worse. Instead, I made light of it, and I moved on. You can only do this if you remember that you're not perfect and you'll never be perfect. It gives you permission to be imperfect, and that frees you up in so many ways. If you haven't already read it, I suggest you read Brené Brown's book *Gifts of Imperfection*. I've included this in the resources section.

Look at how German chancellor Angela Merkel lightened things up when she met with leaders from the European Union to explore the idea of Brexit before it was voted on by the British. "I've been told many times during the past few days that there are very special expectations of my speech here today. Supposedly, some expect my speech to pave the way for European reform of the architecture that will satisfy all kinds of alleged British wishes. I'm afraid they're in for a disappointment. I've also heard that others are expecting the exact opposite, and are hoping I will deliver the clear and simple message that Europe is prepared to pay almost any price to keep Britain in the European Union. I'm afraid those hopes will be dashed too."

In less than one minute, Merkel lightened up a tense situation. Everyone wanted something from her that she simply could not deliver. And rather

than defend her position, she clearly laid out what not to expect from her. You've got to love Angela Merkel. She's a wonderful role model for the powerful and confident voice of a woman leader.

There's a line that I frequently use to manage expectations from the get-go, and that is: The mind is an amazing thing—it starts working the day you're born and never stops until you stand up to speak. Now, if I misspeak or make an unintentional error of fact, I've set it up so that people aren't expecting perfection from me.

Another one is from Mark Twain: "There are two types of speakers. Those who get nervous, and those who are liars. Hopefully, I'll be neither of those today."

And then there are those times when you lose your train of thought and you start to panic. You know those times. Your heart starts beating faster. You might start to perspire. And if you're really unlucky, your hands start to shake. These should all be cues for you to take a deep breath and make a quip about what's going on with you. When it happens to me, I simply own it by smiling and saying something like, "Yikes, I just lost my train of thought. Let's move on, and we'll come back to that later." You'd be surprised how forgiving people are when you're vulnerable with them. Most people can either sympathize or empathize with you, because it's happened to them, too.

Another scenario is when you're talking about a lot of facts that are unique to your area of expertise. You can see people's eyes glaze over, or maybe even close if it's after lunch. And you don't know what to do. Again, honesty and a little levity is the best policy. Don't be afraid to say, "You all look like deer caught in the headlights. Have I dazzled you with my brilliant command of these obscure facts and figures? Let me stop now and see if there are any questions." Use that brief pause, whether there are questions or not, to come up with a segue into something more engaging, or even suggest a break if it's appropriate. This will give you time to regroup and return with the new game plan that might better convey your message.

And one last line that's helped me out time and again is simple. It starts with the phrase, "If I had one wish, it would be..." And it usually ends with, "That I could take that back because it's not what I meant." But you can use the phrase in a variety of situations, such as, "If I had one wish, it would be that you never heard me say that. Because what I really wanted to

say was..." Or, "If I had one wish, it would be that this was golf and I'd get a mulligan. So let me start again." I hope you see that I'm not talking about being a stand-up comic here. I'm just saying the ability to laugh at yourself and your foibles goes a long way in enhancing your likability.

Chapter Four Key Takeaways

Chapter Four begins with a short self-assessment to determine areas that might be developmental challenges for you when it comes to communicating with executive presence. Keep in mind that you don't have to be an executive to communicate like one. It simply means speaking in ways that telegraph you are someone to be taken seriously. This chapter provides you with tips that will increase that likelihood.

- **Exude confidence.** Many of the tools and techniques already provided in this book will lend to your confidence, especially if you keep using them time after time. A few others are to make certain that you're always prepared, and you own the space in which you're working, speak loudly, look people in the eye, and avoid speaking too quickly.
- **Demonstrate grace under fire.** The key elements of grace under fire are defending, not attacking, listening for understanding, deescalating tense situations, and composure.
- **Act decisively and show teeth.** Acting decisively looks the same for both men and women. It's about the ability to make decisions quickly and stick with them, which is typically achieved through having confidence in your decision-making capabilities. Showing teeth looks different for men and women. Men can get away with growling. But when women do it, we're seen as overly aggressive. All of the tips in this book are about enabling you to growl without biting.
- **Show integrity and speak truth to power.** Having the courage to say things about issues that impact your values, morals, or ethics is what showing integrity and speaking truth to power is all about. It can be done in a public forum or between just you and one other person. The degree to which you speak up will be contingent upon many personal factors.

- **Lose the little girl body language.** Your body language speaks as loudly as, if not louder than, your words. Smiling that doesn't match the message, taking up too little space, using too few gestures, tilting your head, and touching your hair are a few stereotypical behaviors to watch out for.
- **Read and respond to body language.** Body language is nonverbal communication, so you have to be prepared to respond to it in the same way you would respond to verbal messages. Trust your observations. Use phrases like, "I could be wrong, but it seems as if..." Or, "From where I'm sitting, it looks like..." to check out observations and invite discussion.
- **Answer questions with confidence.** Look for the type of question being asked, such as yes/no, essay, fill in the blank, and answer it directly using the headline communication model previously discussed. If you don't know the answer, say so with a promise to follow up with a firm response.
- **Use the tactics of a comeback queen.** There's nothing wrong with going back later to respond, if that's what it takes for you to stand up for yourself. Just because you can't do it instantaneously doesn't mean you shouldn't do it at all. But if you want to get better at thinking on your feet, stay in touch with your feelings and express them. Practice thinking on your feet by joining Toastmasters or taking an improv class. Ask the person to repeat themselves so that you can buy yourself a few more seconds to prepare a response.
- **Avoid V8 moments.** When making a presentation or suggesting a new approach, anticipate objections and be prepared to offer alternatives. A well-prepared previously developed alternative gives the other person pause and causes you to avoid being blindsided with little or nothing to say in the moment, only to think of the perfect response after the conversation has ended.
- **Prepare powerful PowerPoints.** A PowerPoint is not supposed to

reiterate everything you speak about during a presentation. It's supposed to provide you with a memory jogger, so that you can stay on track and illustrate key points. It complements the spoken word. It doesn't take the place of it.

- **Make sure you're heard.** Although every tip in this book is about being heard in one way or another, this particular tip is for those times when you feel as if you're being ignored or your input is being overlooked. Carefully choose the right time to speak. Mentally prepare your verbal messages in advance. Speak loudly and clearly, and use nonverbal communication to command attention.
- **Executive presence that gets the job.** Interviewing requires a special kind of executive presence, because it's a fine line between confidence and arrogance when answering questions posed by a potential employer. Communicate using the same techniques we've already covered, and be certain to exhibit humility, curiosity, and vulnerability.
- **Lighten up.** Executive presence isn't always about being serious and acting like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. A quip or clever remark can put everyone at ease, even in tough situations. Keep a few standard ones on hand for when you need them.

Chapter Five

Communicating with Men

Not too long ago, I did a podcast with Dave Stachowiak, who's a very popular podcaster in the human resources community. In it, we discussed the usual mistakes I see women make and some ideas for how to overcome them. The podcast received unusually positive comments, but there was one that bothered both Dave and me. A woman wrote in asking why it was that it's always women who have to change, not men, and why didn't I address that? As I told Dave, I don't discuss that because I have no control over what men do. I only have control over what I do. And if I want men to take me seriously, it's in my best interest to speak their language just as I would speak the language of a country I was visiting. With that said, I do think it's the responsibility of both men and women to learn how to communicate effectively with the opposite sex.

In fact, my colleague Tom Henschel and I developed a keynote presentation on just that topic. We call it "Why Men Are Heard and Women Are Liked." It's used as an opportunity to invite men and women to come together to learn how there are advantages to both stereotypically feminine styles of communication and stereotypically masculine styles. Our goal is to have each sex capitalize on the best practices of the other.

For example, a man's brain is wired to be more linear than a woman's and a woman's brain is wired to juggle multiple ideas simultaneously. So if I want a man to follow my thoughts on a topic, it would be in my best interest to present them in a clear, organized fashion, which is why I encourage you to use the headline model of communication. Similarly, I tell men if they want women to use fewer words and get to the point more

quickly, they should provide more nonverbal and verbal cues that the woman has been heard.

Women often keep talking beyond making their points because they get no clue from guys that they've actually been heard. In an article for *Forbes* magazine, Carol Kinsey Goman does a great job of delineating the communication strengths and weaknesses of women and men.

WOMEN AND MEN COMMUNICATION STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES*

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
WOMEN	1. Ability to read body language and pick up nonverbal cues. 2. Good listening skills. 3. Effective display of empathy.	1. Overly emotional. 2. Meandering—won't get to the point. 3. Not authoritative.
MEN	1. Commanding physical presence. 2. Direct and to-the-point interactions. 3. Effective displays of power.	1. Overly blunt and direct. 2. Insensitive to audience reactions. 3. Confident of their opinions.

From "Is Your Communication Style Dictated by Your Gender?" Carol Kinsey Goman, *Forbes*, March 31, 2016.

In many cases, they are the polar opposite of each other, which explains why men and women so often wind up misunderstanding one another. Kinsey Goman asserts that the top three communication strengths for women are the ability to read body language and pick up on nonverbal cues, good listening skills, and an effective display of empathy. The top three communication weaknesses for women are being overly emotional, meandering or not getting to the point, and not being authoritative. Well, by the time you finish this book, I have no doubt you'll have turned those weaknesses around.

She goes on to say that the top three communication strengths for men are commanding physical presence, direct and to-the-point interactions, and effective displays of power. The top three communication weaknesses for men are that they are overly blunt and direct, are insensitive to audience reactions, and are overly confident of their opinions. From Deborah Tannen's seminal book on the topic, *You Just Don't Understand*, to John Gray's *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, there is no shortage of books and articles about how men and women can communicate better with one another. I've added a few of these to the resources section. For the purpose of this book, I'm focusing on what you can do to communicate in ways that increase the likelihood of men hearing your message and responding positively.

Tip 61: Handling Sexism

Let's get this one right on the table. Sexism, sexual innuendo, and sexual harassment are never appropriate in the workplace. Although the #MeToo movement has brought attention to the issue, the fact is it's been going on for a very long time. In recent years, as it's become politically incorrect to make jokes or in other ways insult women, sexism went underground. It didn't mean it wasn't happening, only that people were smart enough to hide it. I received this letter from Katie Newman in Washington State who asks how she should handle it when men behave inappropriately toward her, especially if they are clients or important stakeholders.

It talks about two kinds of sexism:

Dr. Frankel,

I work in a male-dominated sales industry. I can count on one hand the number of women who choose to sell in this world. Each year, a local industry association holds a banquet dinner and we are inundated with requests to meet our clients. A big segment of these visitors are coming in from London and New York. London is a bit behind us in the women-have-value struggle where there is a cultural difference that women are not expected to have a voice or a role except in support of the executive men. My bosses are generally very respectful of my role and try to include me in relevant meetings. One such meeting this last week was with a group of clients from London. This was more of a small-talk meeting rather than actual business being done. But as you noted in your book, nice girls don't get the corner office. Building that rapport can be more advantageous anyway.

I held my own and even commented on the football game that happened the night before. There was zero eye contact from the London clients. The conversation moved to a recent trip to London that one of my bosses had taken, and he was talking about the fact that there was a channel that played nothing but surgeries. He said his wife had called as he was watching some poor woman getting a

mastectomy. And she said, “You should turn it off.” And he said, “I can’t look away.” At which point, the London underwriters said, “Yeah, look at those headlights, dear.”

The conversation moved on, but it made me start to wonder if there might be something I could have done to respond. Fast forward to a lunch meeting with another client, this time based in New York. We were choosing seating at the restaurant, and I seated myself next to the client, trying to put myself in a position of being an essential part of the conversation.

Boy, do I regret that move. The client kept putting his hand on my arm or shoulder after speaking, making me super uncomfortable. My bosses were there but didn’t notice anything wrong. Maybe it was just him, and I was overreacting. My question for you is if you are in a situation where someone that you do business with is being inappropriate either in commentary or action, what is the best course of action? What kinds of things could I have said to help the situation without making myself out to be overreacting or too sensitive in this case?

Does this sound familiar? How many times have you found yourself in one of those situations? Working in a male-dominated environment is difficult because you want to be included and not treated differently. But at the same time, you want to be treated respectfully. As I said a moment ago, this behavior is never acceptable. Yet you have to make a decision about how you want to handle it. Although I know some of you reading this will disagree with me, I’ve got to call them as I see them. And in the end, I’m a pragmatist.

In both of these situations, the men were inappropriate, but I wouldn’t necessarily make either of them the hill I want to die on. They could each be handled gracefully without making it even more difficult in the long run. And that’s what you really want to keep an eye on: the long game. If the behaviors are so egregious as to cause her to think about reporting them to HR, filing a complaint, or even leaving the company, that would be one thing. But from the way this woman described them, they were more ignorant than malicious. As I told her, you can either work to change the

system for all women by being the conscience and standing up against every ignorant comment or behavior, or you can manage your career. I think it's hard to do both.

In the end, only you can make that choice. So how do you handle situations like these? In the first scenario, this woman was the only woman in a group of men being, well, men, especially the man from London, who's accustomed to getting away with more than we allow men in the United States to get away with when it comes to inappropriate remarks. In this case, I would have used humor to let them know I found it offensive. A comment like, "You guys, TMI for this woman," may have made the point just fine. Or after lunch, she could have spoken with one of the men who was there and with whom she has a good relationship and trusts to ask him if in the future he would come to her rescue when these kinds of comments arise. Sometimes it's about enlisting an advocate.

I put the Londoner's comment in the category of sophomoric humor and ignorant, but not necessarily one that I want to lose my career over. In the second scenario, I don't know if the man is just generally touchy-feely or if his intention was far more than that. In either case, if something makes you uncomfortable, you have to respond. Given the fact that in this case it was a luncheon with other people present, I don't think it would have served the woman well to respond publicly. The best course of action would be to wait till after the lunch to talk to her bosses about whether or not they noticed the underwriter touching her frequently, and if this is just a part of what he does. Asking the question does two things: It lets them know it was of concern to her and it puts them on alert to be on the lookout for it in the future.

Then, depending on the answer, she might or might not want to have a private conversation with the underwriter that goes something like this: "You know, Pete, I don't think you did it with any intent, but when we were at lunch and you emphasized your comments with a touch on my arm or my shoulder, it made me uncomfortable. I felt like my personal space was invaded. I want us to continue to have a good relationship, and I don't want to make a big deal about it. I just want to let you know how I felt," and then let him respond. No matter what he says, all you have to do is listen and thank him for his willingness to hear you out.

And how about those times that every woman has experienced when

you're asked to take notes or get coffee because you're the only woman in the room. Again, ask yourself if this is the hill you want to die on. If so, you'll want to give the person asking a lesson in twenty-first-century political correctness. But more likely, lightening up will yield a better result. Kelly Buick, who worked in human resources at Nestlé for many years, recalls arriving at a meeting and being asked, "Are we having coffee?" To which she replied, "We are if you're getting it." Now, that may be hard to do if you report to the person asking. But if you're a peer, it's a great comeback. But how about if the person is senior to you? The line to have in your pocket in this case is, "I've had the joy of getting the coffee the last two meetings. I'd say it's someone else's turn to have that pleasure." Or if you're asked to take notes, you can say something like, "I took notes the last two times. And I'd say we rotate getting experience in this important task moving forward."

Tip 62: Dealing with the Deer in the Headlights

This is how I describe the look that men have on their faces when women are talking to them. You can see the lights are on, but you're not quite sure if anyone is home. I'm forever telling men, if you want clearer, more succinct communication from women, you've got to work with us. A head nod here and a "hmm" there would go a long way to getting us to cut down on the number of words we use. But since we can't control whether they do that or not, it's incumbent upon us to not only sharpen our messages but also engage men in dialogue. Ladies, we're good at knowing when someone is listening to us so much better than men, in fact, who keep talking no matter how clear it is that people aren't listening.

I remember being on a bus once with some friends and our spouses. This one guy was a real Chatty Cathy. (You'll note we have no gender-appropriate phrase for a man who talks too much.) It had been a long day of touring historic sites in Europe, and everyone wanted a little peace and quiet. Not this guy. One by one, people moved farther away from him until he realized he was sitting by himself. And when he did, he said, "Well, I guess if no one wants to talk, I'll just talk to myself," and he continued talking. Although no scientific studies have proven why women are better than men at reading body language, I personally think it's because our survival and that of the species depends on it. Men are bigger and stronger than women and children. Miscues could lead to harm. And given that historically it's women who have raised offspring, women have had to use their observational powers to protect their young.

So now that we've settled this, what do you do with those superpowers? You're going to use them to your advantage, of course. First, ask yourself if you are the reason why the other person has tuned out. You keep seeing me harp on this headline communication model, and that's because it works. If you want to communicate crisply and concisely, which you should want to do if you want to be taken seriously, then practice it until you have it down pat. Use it at home with friends and in casual conversations so that it becomes like second nature to you. Take the "Headline Communication" chart from Tip 3 and make twenty copies of it. Use it as a guide in

preparing presentations, and remember every time you open your mouth it's a presentation. Keep a copy with you in meetings so that you can mentally fill in the boxes with what you want to say before you say it. I guarantee, you won't be a deer in the headlights when you communicate your message in headlines. It's designed to help keep others engaged and keep you on track.

Second, trust your instincts. When you think someone isn't listening to you, stop talking and do a reality check. It sounds like this: "Armand, let me pause here for a moment. The look on your face tells me you're either still not with me or that you have something you'd like to say. I'm not sure which." Then let Armand answer you. If he does have something to say, he stopped listening anyway so you have nothing to lose. In this case, shift to active listening. And if he responds that he got the point and he's ready for you to move on, then I suggest that you summarize your key points because you really have no idea if Armand got the point or not.

So you would say something like, "Great, then let me summarize the three things I want you to keep in mind," and make sure you do this in short order. If you haven't finished what you want to say or need to say, then you need to shift to the executive summary version of your message. In this case, you might say, "So glad you're still with me. Let me make this last part brief."

And third, consider if you are speaking the language of the other person. We talked about that in Tip 9. That deer-in-the-headlights look can happen when you're overloading a person who speaks the language of action with details. They tune them out. Or when you're being a little too touchy-feely with a person who prefers just the facts. Learn to assess people based on the factors described in the "Speak to the Types" chart in Tip 9, and gear your message accordingly.

Be careful and be prepared to shift your style if you see it's not going over as you thought it might. I remember once being on a sales call with a man who, based on my observations of his office, his dress, and his speech, I could swear was a detail-oriented kind of guy. So I slowed down my presentation and pulled out agendas and other accompanying information to show him what could be accomplished with the team-building program he was interested in. He wasn't saying anything, and he wasn't asking any questions. Pretty soon, I saw his foot start to tap under the desk. With that, I

knew I had to shift or lose the sale. So I said, “I wanted you to see that the outcomes of team buildings are well documented, but I won’t bore you with any more details. Instead, let me ask you how soon you’re looking to do this, how many people you want to include, and what you want the outcome to be?”

Now I was speaking his language. He wasn’t a detail guy at all; he was an action-oriented fellow. By shifting to his language, using shorter sentences and avoiding unnecessary explanations, he became reengaged. And before I left, he asked me to send him a contract.

People don’t always tune us out because of our style of presentation or their preferred way of processing information. Sometimes they just have something else on their minds and they’re preoccupied, in which case you’re pouring water into an already full cup. If you’re doing everything right and you still see the person isn’t with you, then ask, “It seems like you’re preoccupied or this information isn’t helpful to you right now. Would you like to reschedule our discussion?” Do this and one of two things is going to happen: The person will see you as one of the most perceptive people he or she knows and be relieved that you noticed, or they’ll snap back into it, perhaps embarrassed that they’d been caught, and reengage you. In either case, no more deer in the headlights.

Tip 63: Slow Down

There's a phenomenon I've observed with women when they speak to men, and that's speeding up their speech. Even women who speak at a deliberate pace can get caught in the trap of talking too fast when they're in conversations with men, particularly men who are senior to them. Interestingly, I haven't observed them doing the same thing with other women. Many of us have been given the message that we talk too much and are fearful of taking up too much floor time. We speed up our communication so that we can get our entire message out before being interrupted or given a sign that we've talked too much. We wind up sounding like the man in the old FedEx commercial who could talk at the speed of light.

Much like physical space, taking the appropriate amount of time to verbally express ourselves is a sign of entitlement. That is, I'm entitled to be seen and heard, because so much of your credibility is dependent on how you sound regardless of the actual content. It's important to convey confidence, accuracy, and depth of thought. Speaking too quickly does just the opposite. It can be interpreted by others as implying that you don't deserve the time you're taking from them or that your message isn't important enough for them to spend time on. Rushing through your message can be construed as not being thorough or thoughtful in your approach. These interpretations can in turn cause the listener to question the accuracy of what you're reporting.

I remember being in a fast-food restaurant once and the woman at the counter asked, very quickly, "Doyouwantfrieswiththatshake?" I had to ask her three times to repeat what she was saying, and someone from a foreign country listening to her message would never have gotten that she was saying, "Do you want fries with that shake?" When you speak too quickly, you run the risk of other people not being able to understand your complete message and having them fill in the parts they missed with their own interpretation of your message. To slow yourself down, try these tips:

- Practice speaking at a moderate pace. Practicing a presentation to a

slower piece of music can be helpful, provided it's not a dirge or a Sousa march.

- Second, this is another place where Toastmasters can be of help.
- Third, ask a friend or colleague to discreetly give you a sign when your speech speeds up.
- And fourth, tell yourself you're entitled to take all the time you need to convey your message.

Tip 64: Replace Complaints with Solutions

If there's one thing guys hate, it's complaints. Women hate them, too, but we're more tolerant of listening to people moaning and whining about this and that. I used to have a rule in my office, and we had all women. I said, "You're not allowed to complain without proposing a solution or requesting help with finding a solution." In reality, it does absolutely no good to complain, so why bother? The fact is if you have a complaint, then there's something you want to change. And if you have a complaint and there isn't something you want to change, then why the heck are you even bringing it up? Unless of course you're just venting with a close friend or your partner, then you can get away with it, but a little goes a long way. So what you're going to do with your complaints is position them as problems to be resolved.

Look at the differences in the following scenarios. Change this: "I've tried, but there's just no way I can do this in the time you've allotted," to this: "I've been diligently working on the assignment and it's become clear to me that it's more complex and it's going to take more time than I originally anticipated. I propose we do one of three things: extend the due date by three days to ensure it's done in a manner that not only meets but also exceeds expectations, reduce the deliverables so that the quality can be completed within the time frame, or assign two more people to the project and keep the time frame and deliverables the same. Which would you prefer?"

Here's another one that actually might hit closer to home (pun intended): "I'm tired of cleaning up after your messes. I've got my own big job and coming home to another one isn't very pleasant." Even if it's true, who wants to hear that? Listen to how this would work a whole lot better: "I need some help in keeping this house neat and clean. We both have big jobs, and neither of us wants to come home to another one. I propose we do a few things. First, let's hire a housekeeper to come once a week to do the major part of the cleaning. This would leave the smaller tasks like making the bed and putting things away after we use them up to us. So the second part would be to agree to either pick up after ourselves or spend ten to

fifteen minutes picking up together before dinner. Are you on board with the solution?” Your partner may buy it immediately or may give you pushback. In either case, the proposed solution is a place to start negotiations and come to an agreement you can both live with.

There will also be cases when you have absolutely no idea how to solve the problem. That’s when you accompany your concerns with the requests for help with coming up with a solution. An example here would be, “I’ve tried my darnedest to meet the deadline we agreed upon, and it turns out the project is just more complex than either of us anticipated. I’d like to brainstorm ideas for how we should handle this now that we have a more realistic understanding of the project’s scope.” Or “The air-conditioning in my office has been off for three weeks now. I’ve called maintenance and they keep saying they’re going to fix it, but no one ever shows up. I’ve even called the people who usually come out to repair our system and they said I need a work order from maintenance. Do you have any ideas I may not have thought of that might help me to get it fixed sooner than later?” Most men like to solve problems, but complaints, not so much.

Tip 65: Be Clear Going in What You Want Coming Out

This next tip is a twist on not complaining but rather finding solutions. There's a story about a woman who went shopping to buy a skirt and she happened to have her husband with her. He would take a skirt off the rack and show it to her and say, "How about this one?" When she shook her head no, he would go off searching for another skirt, bring it to her, and say, "How about this one?" After this happened a few times, she finally looked at him and said, "Don't kill the skirt, Harry." You've probably heard that early men were the hunters and women were the gatherers. The men would leave in the morning in search of prey that they could kill and bring back to their families to eat. Like the early hunters, the woman's husband was on the search for a skirt to kill and bring home, hence her remark "Don't kill the skirt."

According to certified listening professional Corine Jansen, director of the Global Listening Centre in the Netherlands, men are conditioned to listen in an effort to take action. When a woman initiates a conversation, he assumes she's seeking advice or assistance. He engages with the woman, filtering everything she's saying through the lens of what can we do about this? Learning to listen patiently doesn't come easily to him. On the other hand, Jansen claims women see conversation as a productive end in and of itself. If she feels sufficiently heard, she may not need to take further action to resolve a problem or to make things better. The fact that she's been listened to assuages her anxieties and dulls the pangs of negative feelings. Have you ever seen the short YouTube video "It's Not About the Nail"? If not, you have to watch it.

In the video, there's a woman with a nail sticking out of her forehead, speaking with a man about the terrible pressure and ache she feels in her head. When he points out there's a nail that could be causing it, she accuses him of always wanting to fix things, but not really listening to her, which is all she really wants. And therein lies the rub, isn't it? A guy wants to fix and a woman wants catharsis. So what's a woman to do? First, before you start a conversation with a man, decide what you want out of it. Do you want help fixing something? Do you just want a sympathetic ear? Do you want to

brainstorm something together? Are you just informing him of something? If you know going in what you want coming out, you're more likely to get it.

Here are some examples of how it could work:

“Ari, I’m going to speak with the contractor about the shoddy job he did installing the kitchen cupboards, and I need your support.”

Clearly this is a request for active assistance. Now, how about this one:

“Ari, I don’t want you to do anything about this. I just want you to listen while I vent about the shoddy job the contractor did installing the kitchen cupboards.”

This might increase the likelihood that Ari will just listen, but his testosterone might trip him up and he’ll go for the bait, in which case you’ll need to redirect him:

“As I said, I don’t need you to fix it. I just want to be heard out.”

In this third scenario, you want to work together on finding a solution:

“Ari, can you brainstorm with me to come up with the best way to approach the contractor about the shoddy job he did installing the kitchen cupboards?”

And finally, there’s the FYI:

“Ari, I don’t need you to do anything about this. I’m just letting you know that I’ll be speaking with the contractor tomorrow about the shoddy job he did with installing the kitchen cupboards, in case he says anything to you.”

Knowing that men are going to be listening for what you want them to do or for their opinions about what you think, you need to be sure to couch your statements in a way that will assure you get the response you want.

Tip 66: Tell, Don't Ask

This is one of the most common mistakes I hear women make, asking a question as a safe way of expressing an idea without being perceived as too direct or pushy. Such questions typically take the form of “What would you think if...” or “Have you considered...” By asking a question rather than making a statement, we relinquish the ownership and outcomes of our ideas. Men are all too happy to tell you what you should be doing, and they’re also happy to shut down ideas they don’t like when they’re couched as questions.

Consider this exchange:

Lois: Do you think we should budget more money for development this year so that we can meet unexpected but emerging needs?

Rob: No, I think we should put more money into marketing. We first need to create buzz and then worry about filling the need.

Lois: That’s true, but we have to be prepared to fill the need upon demand, and that requires development funds.

Rob: So why did you ask me?

It’s always a risk to ask a question rather than clearly state what you want. A senior woman I coached was having little success shaking the perception that she was intimidating. As a tall and imposing figure, and one who worked in the defense industry, it was easy to see how her direct reports might be afraid to stand up to or disagree with her. When I first met her, we role-played a typical scenario where she wanted input from her team but wasn’t getting it. She started by asking a question about what I thought of a particular process. When I responded that I didn’t like the process, she answered with a yes-but question: “Yes, but don’t you think...?” This went on for several iterations, and I completely understood what was getting in her way.

The woman’s questions weren’t intended to engage discussion; they

were intended consciously or not to get others to do what she wanted them to do. On the surface, it appeared she was interested in the opinions of others, but her staff knew what they said wasn't going to make a difference, so they stopped telling her what they really thought. I later learned another coach had told her she should ask more questions to dispel the notion that she didn't care what her staff thought. I'm sure that coach hadn't quite envisioned how the suggestion would be applied. The result of posing your statements as questions is that others won't hear you as owning your ideas. Rather, they'll see you as manipulative or they'll assume there's room to pick apart your proposal or ignore it entirely. If you ask a question to camouflage a statement, it's a little like trying to teach a pig to sing. It frustrates you and annoys the pig.

If you're worried about sounding too strident or pushy, consider adding language to the message that would make it more palatable. But at all costs, avoid turning it into a question if it isn't truly a request for information. Save your questions for those times when you legitimately need information or are interested in someone's opinion.

Now, with that said, I know that women can feel like a clearly stated point can be interpreted as pushy or out of line. That's where those taglines come in that I discussed in Tip 3. Adding a tagline such as, "I'm interested in your thoughts" or "You can hear I feel strongly about this, and at the same time, I'd like to hear what others think" after a proposal or statement can make you more comfortable with being direct without making you appear uncertain. Let's look at this comparison between asking a question and making a statement:

"What do you think about going to a four-day workweek? Our competitors are doing it, and it's been working to attract more millennial hires."

Now, compare that with this:

"I propose we go to a four-day workweek. Our competitors are doing it, and it's been working to attract more millennial hires. I'm curious to know what you think so we can best implement this in our

culture.”

The first option leaves the proposal open to the other person’s opinion of the idea. The second proposal makes the assumption it’s a good idea and asks only for input into how to make it work, thereby increasing the likelihood that the idea will have legs. In short, the next time you want to give your opinion, stop to think if you’re using a question to unnecessarily soften your message.

Tip 67: Use Silence to Your Advantage

When talking to men, women often say way too much in an attempt to fill the silence. Silence can be a powerful tool in making your point. Leonardo da Vinci said nothing strengthens authority so much as silence. Could it be that's why we don't use it enough? We don't want to come across as too authoritative. Men sure don't have that problem, and neither should you.

There are a few ways you can use silence to your advantage. The first is to frame a response. You may have the answer on the tip of your tongue, and you want to blurt it out because you've got this one. But sometimes more credence is given to the response that appears to be better thought out. Look at how it works:

Andrew: What do you think we should do to stem the attrition we're experiencing?

Lois: I'd say we can do one or all of three things—better train managers so that people actually want to work for them, do a better job of hiring to ensure fit, and conduct exit interviews to determine why people are leaving.

Now, let's try that again. Look at how this goes:

Andrew: What do you think we should do to stem the attrition we're experiencing?

[Three-second pause.]

Lois: We can do one or all of three of these things: better train managers so that people actually want to work for them, do a better job of hiring to ensure fit, and conduct exit interviews to determine why people are leaving.

Now, which one appears to have more gravitas to you? Even just a short pause can shape someone's opinion of you as being thoughtful and deliberate. A second use of silence is to allow others time to ponder what you've just said. Not everyone thinks like you or perhaps as quickly as you. Particularly when talking to introverts, it's important to give them time to

think about how they want to respond. Avoid the tendency to fill in the silence. And while you're at it, avoid the tendency to ascribe anything negative to the silence. Remember what I said earlier: Absent information to the contrary, women are inclined to ascribe negative intent to silence.

Silence is also a powerful tool in negotiations. Your silence may cause the other person to want to fill it in and say more than planned. It also allows you time to think about what you want to say. Using silence can put you in a more powerful position and suggest that you don't need the deal as much as the other side needs it. And finally, silence can be used to emphasize a point, particularly when you're speaking to a group. This is sometimes called a pregnant pause. It builds suspense for a greater dramatic effect. Here are some examples of how a pause can be very effective.

“We are at a turning point where human beings either come together to solve the world's problems or we face extinction through war, poverty, and climate change.”

[Look at the group and pause 3 seconds.]

“The choice is yours.”

Or even speaking to one person, it's a valuable tool to get someone's attention, kind of like this:

“I'm hesitant to say this...”

[Pause 3 seconds.]

“... but I'm just not willing to take that kind of financial risk.”

So if you take just one thing away from this tip, let it be this—it's not your responsibility to fill in silence.

Tip 68: Push Back on Mansplaining

Now, there's a word that wasn't in the lexicon a decade ago. Maybe that means we've actually made some progress. Women are willing to put a label on that annoying practice some men have of thinking you're stupid and them needing to explain things to you. By definition, mansplaining is a pejorative term, meaning to comment on or explain something to a woman in a condescending, overconfident, and often inaccurate or oversimplified manner. And who hasn't had that happen to her?

How do you know if someone is mansplaining to you? Well, first, if you ask a man to explain something to you, then it's not mansplaining. If he asks you if you would like something to be explained to you and you say yes, then that's probably not mansplaining either. But if you have just as much or more experience in an area as a man does or if it should be assumed that a woman in your position would not need anything in this area explained to her, then it's definitely mansplaining.

No matter how powerful the woman, she can't avoid having someone mansplain to her. Jamie Dimon mansplained economic issues to Senator Elizabeth Warren. Donald Trump mansplained just about everything to Hillary Clinton. And when Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn condescendingly explained a few things to British prime minister Theresa May, she used humor to defuse it by saying, "First of all, thank you for telling me it's International Women's Day tomorrow. I think that's called mansplaining." To which the British Parliament erupted in laughter.

Yes, levity does go a long way in making your point. I think you need to add that one to your list of comebacks. "Thank you for explaining this to me," said tongue in cheek, can be very effective.

Kristi Hedges, a leadership coach and the author of *The Inspiration Code* and *The Power of Presence* (both included in the resources section), wrote a really terrific piece for *Forbes* entitled "5 Ways to Shut Down Mansplaining." I liked it so much that I contacted her and asked for an interview, which she graciously granted to me. My first question to her was, Why do men mansplain, and why don't women push back more often? "I don't think there's ill intent," she replied, "and for the most part, they're not

even conscious of doing it. They believe they're being helpful. Women tolerate it because it's part of the culture, and they're used to making do in order to succeed." And isn't that the truth?

We tolerate all kinds of frustrating, demeaning, and inappropriate behavior because we see it as the price of success. But Kristi believes you can shut down mansplaining without shutting down your career. Here are a few of her suggestions for what to do when it happens to you. And if it hasn't happened yet, it probably will.

The first tip Hedges provides is something that I'd never heard of, and it's called the *hip check*. Kristi said she first noticed this move when she was watching her daughter play basketball. It's when a player gives an opponent a slight but often powerful shove with his or her hip to claim their space. It sends the message to someone who is about to encroach on your territory to back off.

Hedges suggests that you need a few hip checks in your back pocket that you can pull out and deliver in a friendly way. A few that she encourages you to add to your repertoire of comebacks include, "John, I appreciate the comment but I've got this," or, "Pete, why don't you let me continue. And if there's still a question when I'm finished, we can address it then." And here's a hip check that can be very effective when someone assumes you are less skilled or educated: "Jared, your comment makes me wonder if it might be helpful to let you know my background."

A hip check that I often use onstage when I'm interrupted by someone who feels the need to mansplain what I've just said is engaging the audience as allies.

I will say something like, "I thought I had made that point clear earlier, did I not?" And I look around for input from the group. Inevitably, people, usually women, nod their heads and agree, so they do the work for me. Not only will you make your point clear, but you'll also model the way for other women for how they can do the same.

The second comeback to mansplaining that Kristi suggests is the quip. That's what Theresa May did when speaking to Parliament. If you watch the clip of her responding to Corbyn on YouTube, you'll see her delivery includes a slight grin that lets the audience know she was being sarcastic but not in a caustic way. "Humor is a formidable thing for professional women," says Hedges. "As a group, we don't use it in the workplace as

much as we do in other areas of our lives. By lightening up your responses and using humor, your message will come across as less confrontational.”

Some other quips you could use are, “Now, John, you know when I’m passionate about something I’m like a dog with a bone, so you’re just going to have to wait till I’m finished.” Or one that I like to use: “Is there no sound coming out of my mouth? I thought I just said that.” And a third suggestion provided by Hedges is the callout. Sometimes you can try everything and the mansplaining continues. If you are continually confronted by someone who feels the need to mansplain, you might consider having a private conversation with the person, letting him know how the behavior is impacting you. Use the DESC script that we already talked about in Tip 4.

How would it sound? Like this:

Lois: Javier, I’d like to talk to you about something that happened at the off-site yesterday. After I would make a suggestion, you would chime in and add an explanation of what I was saying. It made it appear that I wasn’t clear to begin with and shifted the conversation away from me.

Javier: Hey, I was just trying to help you out. I didn’t mean anything by it. Don’t you think you’re being a little too sensitive here?

Lois: I actually don’t think I’m being overly sensitive, and I realize you probably weren’t aware of how these parenthetical explanations might impact me. If you’d really like to help me out, I’d appreciate it if you would support the ideas that you agree with rather than explain them. A thumbs-up from you would go a long way, and I’ll do the same for you.

The most important thing about handling mansplaining is not to let it diminish your confidence one iota. It really has nothing to do with you and everything to do with the man’s need to prove himself superior, his desire to be center stage, or, if I were to be more charitable, ignorance.

Tip 69: Call Out Bropropriation

Here's another term that's relatively new to the scene—bropropriating. This is when a woman puts an idea on the table, no one says anything, and soon after a man claims it as his own with full accolades from others. In other words, a man appropriates the idea of a woman.

I'm sure you've had it happen to you, and the women in the Obama White House certainly had it happen to them. In fact, they came up with a solution that is now widely accepted as a great way to handle bropropriations, and it's called *amplification*. Now, for this to work, you have to enlist other women on your team who are typically in meetings with you. Together, you agree ahead of time that when a woman makes a comment or suggests an idea, another woman will repeat it, acknowledge where it came from, and support it.

For example:

Lois: My suggestion would be that we identify our top two hundred donors and build stronger relationships with them. We know they support our cause and have the wherewithal to make financial contributions.

Bethany: I agree with Lois. It's always easier to cultivate an existing relationship than build a new one. And given our short lead time, it's a good place to start.

Now it's impossible for anyone else to appropriate the idea as their own and not look foolish. Amplification assumes, of course, that you work in an environment where there are other women in meetings with you.

How about when there aren't? Well, I just happen to have a few suggestions for how to handle those situations, too. In the first one, you reclaim your idea with a tongue-in-cheek nod to the other person for liking it and add to it so it doesn't look like you're only out for the credit.

Here's how it would sound:

Lois: I propose that we enlist change advocates throughout the organization who'll help explain what's going to change in

the next twelve to eighteen months.

Keith: I've heard a couple of companies who train a group of employees to go out and talk about the change process to the people in their units.

Lois: I'm so glad you like my idea, Keith. Thanks for circling back to it. Let me add that this was done in our Asian plant, and they had fantastic results.

Now, this is also a place where humor can go a long way. Something that I've said in situations like this is, "Hello, am I invisible? I just said that. Let me explain further." You shouldn't sit and stew when someone steals or appropriates your idea, and you shouldn't think, *Oh, it doesn't matter who gets the credit*, because it does. Promotions, raises, and perks go to those who add value to the company and proposing solutions to organizational challenges is one more way of showing you add value.

Tip 70: Intervening with Manterruptions

Our third and final addition to the corporate lexicon is *manterrupting*. And this of course is when a man interrupts you before you're finished speaking. It happens much more frequently than you think and in places that may surprise you. A Northwestern University study on oral arguments showed scientific proof that female Supreme Court justices are interrupted more than male justices. The researchers wrote, "We find that judicial interactions at oral arguments are highly gendered, with women being interrupted at disproportionate rates by their male colleagues as well as by male advocates." When Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and other female justices used polite language like, *sorry*, *may I ask*, and *excuse me*, they were interrupted much more frequently. Additional research shows that men speak up to 75 percent more in meetings than women, that they're more likely to interrupt, and that they are almost three times as likely to interrupt women as they are to interrupt other men.

In just one presidential debate of the 2016 election, Donald Trump interrupted Hillary Clinton fifty-one times, whereas Clinton interrupted Trump only seventeen times. And as we know, nice girls get neither the corner office nor the Oval Office. The problem is so prevalent that now there's even an app women invented that tracks manterruptions. It uses your smartphone to track how many times men interrupt women in meetings by analyzing voice frequencies to determine how many times men's voices overlapped with women's voices. Check it out. It could lead to an interesting discussion in your company or department.

So what's a girl to do? The better question might be, what's a girl not to do? And that's let herself be interrupted. Start by doing a reality check related to some of the things we've already covered. Are you speaking in headlines or are you using long-winded explanations? If it's the latter, you're setting yourself up to be interrupted.

Similarly, are you speaking loudly enough to command attention, and do you generate body language that complements your message? If you're seated at a conference table, are you leaning in and maintaining eye contact with everyone? All these things will serve to diminish, although not

eliminate, the number of times you're interrupted. And what if you're doing all those things right and you're still interrupted? Let me give you three suggestions for how to handle yourself in these situations. First, interrupt the interrupter with a simple, "Excuse me, I wasn't quite finished."

Here's how this works:

Lois: I've done the research, and it's clear that our competitors are coming out with more new products each year than we are because—

Tom: Look, the real problem here is that—

Lois: Excuse me, Tom, I hadn't quite finished. They come out with more new products because they invest more in development than we do.

Unless Tom's a real bozo, he's going to let you finish your thought, and the *excuse me* trick might make him think twice about doing it again next time. Interruptions in meetings is another place where women can and should help one another out.

Look at how it works:

Lois: The plan is to invest thirty million in research over—

Tom: I'm thinking we should take a look at—

Rachel: Hang on, Tom, Lois wasn't quite finished. Lois, would you finish that thought?

Make a pact with the other women in your office to support each other with shutting down bropropriations and manterruptions. The third way to handle a serial manterrupter is to have a candid conversation with the person similar to how you might with someone who mansplains. This happened to me early in my career when I was facilitating a leadership class with a male co-trainer who was far more seasoned than I was. When I would start to say something that I thought was brilliant, he would actually put his hand out toward me in a gesture that communicated "Hold on," and take the floor from me. It was humiliating. Of course, I didn't say anything in front of the group, but I did use the DESC script to have a conversation with him about how I felt when he interrupted me in this way.

Although he owned none of it, saying that he wasn't going to change and I needed to be more assertive, I did notice he did it a lot less in future training sessions. I call this *putting someone on notice*. Just the act of having the conversation sometimes changes the dynamic, despite what the other person may say.

Chapter Five Key Takeaways

This chapter focuses on some of the ways that women and men communicate differently and the expectations they have for communication and its outcomes. Just like visiting another country that requires you to sometimes speak a different language, so does communicating with the opposite sex. It's not about changing who you are, but rather about making sure your point is heard.

- **Handling sexism with aplomb.** Although sexism, sexual innuendo, and sexual harassment are never appropriate in the workplace, it doesn't mean it doesn't happen. Less egregious acts, ones that are ignorant but not malicious, can be handled in private with a conversation using the DESC script or even humor. More egregious ones might require filing a complaint with HR or even leaving the company. In the end, only you can make that choice.
- **Dealing with the deer in the headlights.** This is the look that men sometimes have on their faces when women are talking to them. Be sure you are not the problem with long-winded communications that cause the other person to tune out. When you think someone isn't listening to you, stop talking and do a reality check. Make sure you're speaking the language of the other person, as discussed in Tip 9.
- **Slow down.** Speaking too quickly can have the opposite effect of communicating with executive presence. Practice speaking at a moderate pace. Ask a friend to give you a sign when you speed up and use your phone to tape yourself when in a meeting so that you can review your behavior.
- **Replace complaints with solutions.** Position complaints and concerns as problems to be resolved. Present the concern and couple it with either a proposed solution or a request for help with finding a solution.

- **Be clear going in what you want coming out.** Before you start a conversation with a man, decide what you want out of it. Do you want help fixing something? Do you just want a sympathetic ear? Do you want to brainstorm something together? Are you just informing him about something? If you know going in what you want coming out, you're more likely to get it.
- **Tell, don't ask.** Avoid asking a question as a safe way of expressing an idea without being perceived as too direct or pushy. Instead, make a statement and invite discussion or a comment, but not permission.
- **Use silence to your advantage.** Use it before responding to give the impression of providing a thoughtful response. Use silence to allow others time to ponder what you've said. And use silence in the middle of a communication, especially to a group to emphasize a point. That's what's known as a pregnant pause.
- **Push back on mansplaining.** *Mansplaining* is a pejorative term, meaning to comment on or explain something to a woman in a condescending, overconfident, and often inaccurate or oversimplified manner. You can use a quip to call attention to it, or a hip check to let the man know. You can explain it yourself or provide direct feedback about how your qualifications lend to your depth of understanding of the subject.
- **Call out bropropriations.** This is when a woman puts an idea on the table, no one says anything, and soon after a man claims it as his own with full accolades from others. Enlisting others to regularly amplify ideas presented by women is one way to call out bropropriations. And bringing the conversation back to you to reclaim the idea is a second.
- **Intervening with manterruptions.** This is when a man interrupts you before you're finished speaking. To counter it, you can interrupt the interrupter with a simple statement that you weren't finished yet or by making a pact with other women to call out interrupters on behalf of women, or have a candid conversation in private with serial

maninterrupters.

Chapter Six

Giving and Receiving Feedback

There's an old joke about a married couple where the wife complains, "You never tell me you love me anymore." And the husband responds, "I told you on the day we got married. If anything changes, I'll let you know." It also happens to be the philosophy of way too many bosses. Whether you must give feedback because it's part of your job or because the actions of others are impacting you, knowing how to do it effectively can make the difference between building or busting relationships.

I've heard people talk about the ways in which they were taught to give feedback and I'm appalled. Some supposed experts tell you to use the sandwich approach. That's when you sandwich a piece of critical feedback between two pieces of positive, like that won't have others waiting for the other shoe to drop every time you give them a compliment.

Then there's what management guru and author Tom Peters calls the *leave alone zap*. People get no feedback and think they're doing just fine and they may even ask you for feedback to which you respond, "You're doing fine," only to find that come performance review time, they get zapped. On the other end of the continuum, you have people who are so careful to couch their feedback inoffensively that the message is diluted or lost entirely.

Similarly, receiving feedback is a gift that can potentially help to smooth the career path in front of you. Although most of us wince when the feedback is less than positive, it's the only way we can identify our blind spots and overcome them. Giving and receiving feedback is an art, and when you're finished reading this chapter, you are going to be an artist.

Tip 71: Use I-Messages

No, those aren't messages you give with just your eyes, but rather messages that start with the word *I*. Women especially gauge whether or not they use the word *I* too often. Having been taught to be modest and avoid any semblance of being self-centered, we fail to use the word often enough to our advantage. I'm not suggesting that you become a narcissist, I'm suggesting that you get more comfortable with starting your sentences with *I*, and more importantly as related to this tip, avoid giving feedback that starts with *you*. I-messages as opposed to you-messages tend to be less confrontational and therefore can lead to more open discussion and faster problem resolution.

See the difference: "You're always interrupting me" versus "I would appreciate it if I could complete my sentence before I'm interrupted." Or, "You can't do that to me" versus "I'd like to ask that we be able to discuss the impact those actions will have on me before any action is taken." Here are a few more examples for how I-messages can strengthen giving and receiving feedback.

Instead of saying, "You've gone and done it again. Your comments at the team meetings inflamed the situation more than it already was. Not only that, you put cross-team cooperation in jeopardy. You need to find a way to fix this and fast." Try this: "I notice that your comments at the team meetings seemed to inflame an already tense situation. As a result, the cross-team cooperation we worked so hard to achieve is in jeopardy. I'd like to talk to you about how we can do some damage control or turn this around."

Here's another one: "You can't be serious. You've known for six months that you won't be able to deliver on time and you didn't say anything? You've put me in a horrible situation. What were you thinking?" Try this: "I'm concerned that for six months it's been known that the prototype can't be delivered on time and this is the first I've heard of it. It puts me in a very difficult situation with the customer. What got in the way of discussing this with me earlier so that we could brainstorm a solution?"

In every example, the I-message focuses less on blaming someone and

more on solving a problem. And in the end, isn't that what you really want to do? Whether it's giving or receiving feedback, you want it to lead to behavioral change that's good for you, good for others, or both. Blaming and shaming plays no role in feedback.

Tip 72: Give Feedback Mindfully

I had dinner the other night with a young man who manages paralegals in a law firm. He told me that his boss suggested he learn more of the soft skills. Now, that's a phrase that always grates on me because it's masculine code for skills women are good at. As I probed to figure out what the boss was actually saying, he admitted that he's not always good at giving people feedback in the moment. He just wants them to do the job and do it the way it's supposed to be done. As I said to him, that may have worked in the 1950s when the boss said, "Jump," and you said, "How high?" But it doesn't work in the twenty-first century. It doesn't work with today's employees, it doesn't work with kids, and it certainly doesn't work with spouses.

There is something called the 7:1 rule of feedback that will serve you well. The rule suggests that for every piece of developmental feedback you give to someone, you must have given seven pieces of positive for them not to feel overly criticized. I can't tell you how many managers have argued with me on this one over the years. Yet, it's true. Positive feedback actually does more to shape desirable behavior than negative.

Whereas people will aspire to engage more in the positive behaviors you reinforce, they will disengage from the negative but not necessarily reengage with more appropriate behavior. That's why the 7:1 rule is so important. So the presupposition for any feedback is that you've built a relationship that will grease the skids for delivering it. There are a few basic rules for giving feedback that I encourage you to follow.

First, it must be given in the spirit of helping the other person to grow or learn, even if it's to learn something about you. Absent that, it's just criticism. Second, it must be behavioral and not couched in characteristics. For example, there's a difference between "You're just not a team player" and "I've noticed when others on the team ask you for help, you've been reluctant to spend the time needed to assist them."

One way to make sure your feedback is behavioral is to use what I call the video camera technique. If I had a video camera trained on the person to whom I want to give feedback, could the camera see or hear that feedback?

The camera can't see rude, lazy, good, or bad. Those are characterizations. The camera can't see rude, but it can hear someone using harsh words to tell a coworker they don't like what he's done. The camera can't see a good report, but if trained on the document, it can see that it's free from errors. It's a lot easier to help someone change their behaviors than it is to help them change characteristics.

Third, feedback must be timely for it to be effective. Waiting days or weeks after you observe the unproductive or inappropriate behavior before you give someone feedback doesn't do any good. I've often heard employees say, "I don't mind the feedback, but why did he have to wait till my performance review to tell me?" The other problem with holding on to feedback, particularly negative feedback, is that you wind up stewing and by the time you give the feedback to the person, you put a stamp on with a steamroller.

Fourth, when appropriate, let the other person know how the behavior impacted you personally. This may not always be the case, as when you're responsible for giving feedback to someone based on the input of others, but it usually is. How you feel about something that impacted you is undeniable. It can't be argued with. Others might defend their positions, but they're unlikely to tell you that your feelings are wrong. And if they do, then that's the time to use the neutralizing statement, "Be that as it may."

For example, if someone tells you that you're being overly sensitive, your response might be, "Be that as it may, I still would appreciate it if you would honor my request to be more careful in how you respond to my ideas in meetings."

Fifth, feedback should be direct and to the point. Don't beat around the bush. Forget the sandwich and don't use so many words that the feedback becomes unrecognizable. If you prepare it in advance, your delivery should be spot-on. These five rules of giving feedback, along with the five rules of receiving feedback that I'll talk about shortly, are in the "Giving and Receiving Feedback" box in Tip 78.

So now let's take a look at a few examples of the wrong and right way to give feedback that will actually be of use to people. I don't have to tell you which of the examples is right and wrong—you'll know.

“Cooper, I’m really pissed off with the number you pulled on the Xerox account. What came back to me was that you were too cocky in the meeting with their purchasing people. They’re actually considering pulling the account from us and going to one of our competitors. And if that happens, we’ll all be up the creek without a paddle.”

As compared with:

“Cooper, I got some feedback about the meeting you had with the Xerox purchasing team. Apparently they felt that you didn’t listen to their needs, that you cut them off when they were trying to explain things to you, and that your presentation was poorly prepared with typos and graphics that didn’t match the reality. As a result, they’re considering moving their account to one of our competitors. If this happens, it’ll have a negative impact on our bottom line.”

As you can see, the second delivery provides concrete and specific examples of how Cooper’s behavior was perceived. These are things that can be worked on and improved. From here, the conversation might turn into a coaching session or perhaps even a disciplinary one if this isn’t the first time Cooper has been given this feedback.

Now let’s try one more of a personal nature:

“Gretchen, I’m sick and tired of telling you to clean your room. Nothing ever changes with you. It’s a pigsty. You need to get this place in shape before your grandmother comes to visit tomorrow.”

If you’ve never given this feedback, then you’ve probably been on the receiving end of it. Consider how a slight change in delivery might just shift the dynamic:

“Gretchen, as you know, your grandmother’s coming to visit tomorrow. It’s important to me that the house looks spick-and-span.

I'd like to ask that you pick up your clothes and put them on hangers in the closet. Also, I'd appreciate it if you'd put the books and magazines on the bookshelf. Do these two things and we'll be good to go."

Now, there's no guarantee that Gretchen will respond to the feedback as you would like, but it increases the odds that she will.

Tip 73: Coach, Don't Criticize

There's a Japanese saying that I just love: "Be tough on problems, gentle on people." Coaching is a great way to gently handle a situation where someone isn't delivering as promised or expected. Most often these are people who report to you but can also be a family member or a friend you care about and who you want to see succeed. Successful coaching is predicated on strong relationships. Without those, your attempts to change behavior or performance will be seen as self-serving.

With strong relationships, you have the latitude to say things and minimize the likelihood of them being heard as overly critical. Look, I know how tempting it is to say with exasperation, "How many times are we going to talk about this? Either get it right or get out." But that doesn't work in the long run. Creating fear or shame only leads to what's known as subversive compliance, doing exactly what's asked, even when it's clear it's not the right or the best thing to do.

One way to build cooperative relationships is to focus on the 7:1 rule of feedback that we've already discussed. For every one piece of constructive feedback you give, you have to have already given seven pieces of positive. That's what enables sports coaches to give difficult feedback in the moment and have the players respond to it positively. It's because the coach doesn't always give negative feedback. In fact, he or she is always looking for times and ways to reinforce the appropriate behavior on the field or the court.

Did you know that the earliest definition of a coach is a vehicle or vessel that transports goods or people from one place to another? And that's what you want to do with your coaching: help people get to places they would not or could not go alone. When you shift from criticizing to coaching, all things are possible because resistance diminishes. So assuming you've got the relationship in place, the person knows you care about them and genuinely want them to succeed, rather than just trying to get them to do what you want.

Follow the 7:1 rule and you're ready to coach. There are essentially three parts of the coaching conversation. First, what are the behaviors that aren't working? Second, why would changing the behaviors be beneficial to

the person? And third, how could those behaviors be achieved?

Here's how it might go with someone who's a bit resistant:

Lois: I'd like to talk to you about some concerns I have with your relationships with your clients and coworkers, James. I've noticed some behaviors that I think are impeding your ability to serve our clients to the maximum of your potential. They're the kinds of things that can derail someone in your position and seriously limit career growth. I don't want to see that happen to you. You're too valuable and too good at what you do for that.

James: You've got to be kidding. I'm the best systems guide that you've got out there.

Lois: Technically, yes. I'm a big admirer of your ability to size up problems and implement solutions, but when it comes to building the kinds of relationships with people that enhance the ability to do the job over the long haul, there are a few areas that require your attention.

James: I'm not here to win a popularity contest. I want to do the job and do it well, which I know I can do. If anyone has any complaints, it's because they can't understand the logic behind the system and they're blaming me. I can't help it if they're just too dumb to understand.

Lois: To tell you the truth, right now with me, you're acting consistently with how I've seen you act with your clients. I'm trying to tell you something to help you and you're not listening to me because you're so busy defending yourself and putting others down. I feel as if I'm not being heard. If I feel that way and we have a good relationship, can you imagine how others might feel?

James: I'm listening.

Lois: Good, because I really want to focus on ways to complement your already terrific technical skills with the other skills that will make you a real asset to our company. First, I'd like to

know how you feel about these comments. Is there any truth to them or is something going on around here that I don't know?

James: It's just frustrating to work with people who don't understand what I'm doing. They ask a lot of stupid questions and only get in the way of getting the job done.

Lois: I know what you're saying. Sometimes I even feel the same way. I guess I had to learn the hard way about finding ways to interface on more than just a technical level with these people. As a matter of fact, I was the one sent to charm school to learn interpersonal skills.

James: You wouldn't do that to me, would you?

Lois: No, not if you don't want to, but I did find it really helpful, not only at work but at home, too.

James: How so?

Lois: My husband often complained that I didn't take time to listen to him. I was so wrapped up in solving technical problems at work that when I got home I handled him and his concerns in the same way. He didn't feel as if I was really listening to him and his needs.

James: Now you sound like my wife.

Lois: Occupational hazard, I guess.

James: These touchy-feely things are really a turnoff for me.

Lois: Let's not worry about that for now. I've identified three or four things that I've observed you do that get in your way of your being able to service our clients fully. As a matter of fact, some of these things are the same actions that get in your way of being a good team player here, too. Believe me, being a team player is vital for your success in a corporate environment like ours.

James: So, what are they?

Lois: Well, first, I've noticed when others are talking to you, you're so busy analyzing the problem that at some point you cut them off mentally and they feel like they haven't been completely heard.

James: Can I help it? What if I get things quickly and they go on and on long after I've gotten the point?

Lois: Yes. It's true that you do get things quickly. But if the client doesn't feel heard, you're only doing part of your job. The client has to trust us in order to keep calling us for our services. Part of trust comes from knowing that the other person hears and respects you. When you cut them off like that, they feel unheard and disrespected. As I said earlier, I myself felt cut off by you just a minute ago. I felt you didn't hear or respect me.

James: I respect you.

Lois: Then show me by hearing me out before jumping to conclusions.

James: Okay, I can do that.

Lois: Oh, I know you can. I appreciate your willingness to take this information in. Next, I've noticed that you use a lot of technical jargon when explaining things to clients. This is really difficult for them. They have a lot of expertise in their own fields and if they use jargon on us, we'd be lost. It isn't that they're stupid, just that their expertise lies elsewhere. James, are you still with me?

James: I'm just listening.

Lois: Then we're on track already. Maybe you could just nod to let me know that you heard me. This is the last thing and it's going to be a little bit more abstract. I'll bet you never thought you'd hear me say it, but you're working too hard.

James: You have got to be joking.

Lois: I told you you'd be surprised. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying I want you to work any less. Just that I want you to factor this idea of building relationships into your everyday activities. Take a few minutes every day to get to know people. Listen to them, let them talk about their families or let them talk about a personal problem. Let them get to know you, too. I happen to know you're interested in aviation. The fact that you just got your pilot's license would be of interest to a lot of people. You're an interesting guy. Let them get to know who you are.

James: I didn't want to take up work time with small talk.

Lois: I'm not saying you should spend eight hours a day engaged in small talk, but a little goes a long way. You don't have to share or ask about deep dark secrets, just enough so that people know you're human and that you're not a walking systems encyclopedia. In the long run, this is going to help you to build relationships that work for you instead of against you. What do you think of all of this, James?

James: I think it's going to be hard for me.

Lois: Well, that's honest. Remember, I'm here to help you all the way. As a matter of fact, let's start now by identifying some specific things you can do today. I'm not saying I'm an expert at all of this, so I'd like to hear what you think you might do that would help with the things I've mentioned.

James: Well, I guess it wouldn't be that hard to keep my mouth shut more often and listen.

Lois: Listening isn't as easy as it sounds. I even took a course once in active listening. Would you be interested?

James: Well, sure.

Lois: Okay. Why don't you check with the HR and see when the next one's being offered. Another thing that can really help is to ask people if they feel listened to by you. Pick people

you trust. The proof will not be in how you feel, but in how others feel. How about the business of being too jargony?

James: Oh, that's a little harder. I'm not sure how to correct that.

Lois: Can I offer some suggestions?

James: Shoot.

Lois: It may sound silly, but I had someone tell me once to explain things like I would to my ten-year-old. Try to put things in the simplest terms possible. If someone indicates they get it, use a little more sophistication. If you combine this approach with the listening, you'll know when people are and aren't tracking.

James: Won't they think I'm talking down to them?

Lois: I think using even the simplest language, you'll still be in the right ballpark. The stuff you explain is so complex for most of our clients that they'll appreciate you're being careful with them. Try using examples that would be more familiar to people who don't know computers.

James: It's worth a try.

Lois: That's all I'm asking. Now about this business of working on relationships, what do you think?

James: I guess I could lift my nose up from the grindstone a bit more. My wife always complains about this, too, that I get so involved in studying aviation or working on the computer at home that I don't have time for her. I just don't engage in small talk most of the time.

Lois: Just being aware of the need to do it can sometimes make it happen. How often do you go to lunch with a coworker?

James: I usually just work through lunch.

Lois: I appreciate your dedication, James, but here's one way to get to know people. Same thing with your coworkers. Some of them could really use your help on projects, but they're

afraid to ask because you always look like you're so busy or you don't seem interested. Carve out a few minutes each day to get to know each one of them on more than a business basis. For example, ask Doreen what kind of season her softball team is having, or let Joe know how good he looks since he started his diet.

James: I didn't even notice he lost weight.

Lois: See, that's what I mean. You're so busy working, you don't really see people.

James: Now you really sound like my wife.

Lois: I don't mean to, but as I said, some of the things I'm asking you to work on here will also help at home. The idea is to build networks of people who help you get the job done over time. I think if you just work on the three things we've discussed—active listening, explaining things in simple terms, and spending time developing more relationships—you'll really have made headway. Don't forget that I'm here to help in any way that I can and I'll let you know how I see you doing. I care enough about you to want to see you succeed. Do I have your commitment that you're going to go ahead and give it a shot?

James: Okay.

Lois: Great. Why don't we sit down together in about two weeks to see how it's going.

James: How about over lunch? If you buy, of course.

Lois: You've got a deal.

The coach in this example has actually modeled the behavior she expects from the person. She listened to him, showed concern for him as a person, and broke her message down to simple behavioral components. She even used the behavior in the room as a teaching opportunity. For example, "As a matter of fact, I just felt cut off by you a minute ago." She must now continue to observe James as he tries to implement the behaviors outlined.

James will most likely not go out and become Mr. Personality since that's just not who he is. But as the leader sees the follower approximate the desired changes, she must occasionally reinforce the attempts with a verbal or written praise. If they're in a meeting together or James lapses into using too much jargon or isn't listening, the leader has the perfect opportunity to sit down with James afterward and provide more coaching examples.

Preparing in advance for the coaching session is often a step that is entirely overlooked, but it's one that makes a significant impact on how the talk will go. Without preparation, you're more likely to be sidetracked by James's comments or by your own feelings of insecurity when the time comes to deliver the message. There's a certain confidence that comes with preparation. If necessary, role-play the scenario with a friend or spouse. Get feedback on how you can come across more effectively. Above all else, let your genuine concern for people come through in your delivery when coaching them.

Tip 74: Don't Fire Someone When You Can Free Them Up to Find a New Opportunity

From time to time in most of our lives, we find ourselves in a position to have to firmly but kindly say goodbye to someone in our employ or with whom we work. The most obvious situation is one if you're the manager and poor performance requires you to sever someone reporting to you. But it also might be a housekeeper, a gardener, or even a volunteer with a nonprofit organization where you are the chairperson.

Sometimes these latter relationships are even more difficult because you have a personal connection with the individual. What I can tell you is that in over three decades in the field of human resources, I found that when I'm frustrated and at my wit's end with an employee, they usually feel the same way. They just don't know what to do about it. This is where coaching extends beyond performance development to career guidance that allows the person to leave with dignity. Once again, it's difficult to do if you haven't already built a trusting relationship with the person.

If you suddenly show concern and take a personal interest in someone's welfare when you never did before, they'll see right through it and you'll come across as insincere, which will only make a difficult situation worse. Coaching someone out of a job can be done with the utmost respect and compassion, but ultimately it's up to the other person to find the solution. When the truth is spoken, there's often a sense of relief on the part of both of you. If you've been a conscientious coach, it should also come as no surprise to the person because you've had ongoing conversations about what has to change to meet the requirements of the position.

Personally, I believe that people fail to meet expectations not because they're stupid or incapable, but because they're not doing what they love or their own values aren't aligned with yours or the organization. That's why it's important that the conversation, when you coach a person out of a job, not be focused on fault-finding but rather on helping them to find a more suitable situation that would use their unique talents and interests.

Finding fault does no one any good. It won't change the behavior and it unnecessarily damages the person's self-esteem. Instead, you need to do

what the British call freeing people up to find new opportunities.

Here's how such a conversation might go:

Lois: Chris, I want to talk to you about your performance. For the past year, you and I have worked together to achieve some specific goals. I'm frustrated because you're just not doing the things we agreed upon and I don't know what more I can do to help you. How do you see the situation?

Chris: I've tried. I really have, but it just doesn't come naturally to me to do the things we've discussed. I feel as if I'm being asked to be someone I'm not.

Lois: I can understand how you might feel that way. You certainly have many strengths that I value, but they're not enough to be successful in this organization. You really have to be more versatile to succeed here. I think that will be true in most situations, but if you don't want to change, then you're going to have to find a position that allows you to stay in your comfort zone.

Chris: Are you firing me?

Lois: I'm saying you're not meeting the goals we established together to which you committed and that we worked on for over a year. Now it's time for us to discuss how you're going to transition to your next job. I know you're just as frustrated as I am and what I want is to help you find a position that will allow you to be more of who you are.

Chris: So, what does that mean?

Lois: It means I want us to come up with a separation date for you and to talk about how I can help you in finding new employment.

Chris: I didn't realize it was so serious.

Lois: I'm not sure how you could have missed the clues. I've been direct and straightforward every step of the way. We even have coaching plans and two performance reviews that show

your performance wasn't up to standard. What I'd like you to do is take the rest of the day off—you'll be paid for it—and then come in tomorrow prepared to discuss what you'd like to do. If you have a résumé, bring it in and I'll help you clean it up and make suggestions for how you can put it together to find another job. I'll also give you time off with pay to interview. I really want to help you find something that you'll be happier with. I know the market is tight right now, so I'm willing to keep you on the payroll for two months or until you find a job, whichever comes first. If you prefer, I can arrange to give you two months' severance and Friday would be your last day, but I'll leave that choice up to you. If you choose to stay, though, you're going to have to meet certain goals and maintain your professionalism.

Well, you get the idea. Allowing people to save face and finding win-win solutions to this tough situation is critical for not only the employee but for you and the organization as well. If you treat people fairly and with dignity and respect, you'll reduce the likelihood of unwarranted legal challenges related to the separation. Let me give you another example here. One that hits closer to home, literally and figuratively.

I had a housekeeper for over twenty years. I liked her and I trusted her and the last thing I wanted to do was let her go. She's a single mom and her situation made it hard for her to find other housekeeping opportunities.

Here's how this conversation went:

Lois: Maria, I know the past few months have been difficult for you. The surgery on your back put you out of commission and in many ways changed your life. I was so happy that I could afford to give you sick pay. And now it's clear that your health won't allow you to clean houses any longer. I've decided to keep the woman I had working for us over the past three months while you were gone.

Maria: But I don't know what else to do. It's what I've always done. I can try. I'll do my best. My son will also come to help me.

Lois: I don't think that's the answer for you, Maria, and your son belongs in school, not cleaning houses. He's a smart kid and he needs an education. You've told me this many times.

Maria: But what am I going to do?

Lois: Let's talk about the options that are open to you. First, there's the disability pay that you should be getting soon. What happened with the application?

Maria: It was approved, but it doesn't come for four more weeks.

Lois: Okay. At least it's on the way. I also remember that you always wanted to work with children. Have you thought about how you might be able to do that?

Maria: I need to be able to write in English to work in a school.

Lois: Even as an aide?

Maria: I'm not sure.

Lois: Well, why don't you check that out. In the meantime, you might go to the unemployment office and see what classes they offer in English or maybe even in something that might interest you. They're free.

Maria: I guess I could do that.

Lois: What else would you like to do, Maria? Have you given it any thought?

Maria: Oh yes. I think about it all the time.

Lois: And what have you come up with?

Maria: I like to help people who are old, give them their medicine, cook for them, take them to the doctor.

Lois: That sounds like a possibility.

Maria: I don't know where to find those people.

Lois: If I were you, I'd start with the people you've worked with for all these years. Let them know what you want to do and ask

them if they know of people who could use someone like you.

Maria: I could do that.

Lois: You might also ask around your church. You have a lot of friends there. Maybe they know people who need someone to help them. Maria, I know it's hard to change at this stage of your life. At the same time, I know you're a hard worker and you could earn a living at something other than housecleaning. I'm willing to help you however I can; you just need to ask. For now, though, you've got some thinking to do and some things to check out. Why don't you call me in a week or so and let me know what you find out and what you've decided.

Without a doubt, this was a very difficult situation. As it turns out, Maria's son got a part-time job while going to college and is helping out at home. Another son moved back home to help pay the rent. Together as a family, they're weathering the storm, and just a few extra minutes of my time made the transition a little smoother for Maria. You can do the same. When you find yourself in a position like this, speaking the truth and getting your needs met doesn't mean you turn your back on others. We are here to help each other.

Tip 75: Take the High Road When You're Freed Up to Find a New Opportunity

I talked before about taking the high road even when you don't want to or can't see the immediate benefit. This is especially true when you are the one who has been freed up to find a new opportunity. This happened just the other day to a client of mine. She called and asked for advice about how to handle a number of aspects of her separation from a company at which she worked for over twenty years.

She was in shock. She knew that there were going to be layoffs, but there was no indicator that her position was in jeopardy. As I explained to her, the loss of a job, especially one where you've worked for many years and have many close friends and colleagues, follows the same pattern of emotions as the loss of a loved one: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. I reminded her that she had many skills that would be valuable elsewhere, but focusing on the job right now might not be quite as important as dealing with her feelings and giving herself time to grieve.

With a hefty separation package, she had a financial cushion to help her get through it. Then came the second call, a few hours later. She'd been talking to others who were also laid off. Collectively, they'd worked themselves into quite an angry state. I chided her that she'd reached the second phase of loss a lot quicker than I thought she would. Others were saying there was no reason to go back to work for their last day since they were terminated today and they should let the employer fend for themselves.

She asked what I thought she should do. I told her my advice would be to take the high road and use it as an opportunity to gain insight into a few things. For example, how the decision was made to let certain people go and not others, whether there was the opportunity to return in the future, if it would be possible to do work as a subcontractor once she was off the payroll, if she could still have access to an office and computer with her email address, and what kinds of references she might receive.

She was somewhat resistant. Suggesting this would make her look like a pushover, she thought. As I told her, when you tell someone who has just

terminated you to go to hell, you slam the door shut, not only on that company but most likely on the relationships you have within it because you can assume they'll find out what you said, and you also slam the door on potential relationships with others in your industry.

She wound up being one of the few people who did go into the office the next day and she was glad she did. Her HR rep told her how much he appreciated her professionalism and he would make sure her name was put on the list for approved contractors. He also told her there was really nothing she could have done differently, as management decided to eliminate her role entirely and outsource it. When she asked if she could keep her email just a little longer because it's easier to find a job when it looks like you have a job, he agreed.

It was a great example of how taking the high road, when you really want to say "forget about you," can pay off. If you find yourself in a position of being terminated, unexpectedly or not, make certain that you find a way to express your feelings such that you won't have burned a bridge behind you. I'm not saying you aren't entitled to your feelings, only asking that you consider whether or not you should be expressing them to your employer.

I suggest saying something such as, "Like anyone else, I feel awful about this and I need time to process it. If it's okay with you, I'd like to sit with it for a while and give you a call to discuss any further questions I may have." If you're asked to sign something before you leave, politely but firmly defer it by saying, "It's not that I'm not going to sign it; it's just that I need a little more time to read and digest it as well as have someone else who's more neutral take a look at it."

And if you just can't resist giving your employer a piece of your mind, then I encourage you to write it down first and read it over several times before delivering it verbally or in writing. How you feel at the point of impact may not be how you feel a day or even several hours later. Put your concerns in a context of what you think the company should consider in the future so that others don't have the same experience as you, rather than couching it as a complaint about how you were mistreated.

Tip 76: Deliver Upward Feedback Carefully

I recently received an email from a woman who asked, “How do I tell my boss to go to hell in a way that she looks forward to the trip?” The obvious answer here is very carefully. Upward feedback is often necessary and often risky. The main thing to remember is that the boss is under no obligation to change, so any feedback you provide should be more of a request than a demand.

Author Amy Gallo wrote an article for *Harvard Business Review* online titled “How to Give Your Boss Feedback.” She provides these suggestions to lessen the likelihood that feedback given to your boss will come back to bite you. First, like any form of feedback, how the boss will react depends on the relationship you have with him or her. Without trust, the feedback may not be received in the manner in which you intended it.

“Before giving feedback,” writes Gallo, “you need to gauge whether your boss will be open to what you have to say. If you know that your boss is unreceptive to feedback or is likely to react negatively or if you have a rocky relationship, it’s better not to say anything. On the other hand, if your boss tends to be open-minded and there’s a solid relationship in place, not only can you, but you probably should provide the feedback.” Gallo also emphasizes what I said earlier, that feedback must be designed to be helpful to the person, not just an opportunity to vent complaints.

The second consideration is whether you should give unsolicited feedback or wait until you’re asked for it. Ideally, every boss would ask for feedback so they can ensure the leadership they provide is the leadership you need. In reality, however, it doesn’t always work that way. If your boss isn’t the type to ask, then you should ask if it would be okay for you to give him or her feedback, much the same as we discussed in Tip 34, with can versus must conversations.

If your boss does not directly request feedback, it might sound like this: “I have some feedback about how our department is being perceived by others in our matrix and I’m wondering, would it be okay for me to share it with you?” Again, your intentions have to be pure and demonstrate your desire to help improve things, not to shame the boss into doing something

different or to be the conduit of gossip.

Next, focus your feedback on what you have seen or heard and avoid the tendency to give advice. That's not your job. An example here might be, "I'm not sure you realize that when you affirm great ideas, you do this primarily with the men on the team. I've noticed that the ideas of women are often overlooked." Once more, the I-message is more powerful and palatable than a you-message. "By sharing your perspective, you can help your boss to see how others are seeing him," suggests Gallo.

This can be invaluable to a leader who may be disconnected from people in the lower ranks. On the other hand, despite the boss asking for feedback, he or she could get defensive. If that happens, what are you going to do? When the timing seems right, disengage from the conversation by saying something like, "I hope I didn't overstep any boundaries here and that this has been helpful to you." And with that, take your exit.

And finally, when in doubt, hold your tongue. Gallo advises, "If you're not sure if your boss wants to hear feedback or if the subject of the feedback is sensitive, it's almost always better not to speak up. There is no reason to risk your working relationship or your job unless you feel your boss's behavior is putting the company or your unit in jeopardy." I'd like to add to that if your boss's behavior is so over the top that you're miserable coming to work every day, no amount of feedback or conversation will likely change that and that's when you have to make a really tough decision. Do you stay and wait out the bad boss, or do you look for an intra-company transfer if that's available, or do you need to look for a job outside the company?

Tip 77: Recognize and Respond to Resistance

When giving feedback, you always hope the other person will respond maturely. But in the real world, not everyone has read this book and knows the basic tenets for receiving feedback. This makes it incumbent upon you to recognize resistance for what it is and respond in kind, rather than let it throw you off your game. In this tip, I'm going to provide you with a list of some of the most common forms of resistance to feedback that you are going to encounter and suggestions for how to respond to each.

First, there's silence. Some people are silent because they don't know what to say. Others are silent because they're ashamed or embarrassed, and still others might just use the time to process. When it happens, you really don't know the reason why the other person is silent, so the best course of action is, that's right, silence. Don't feel compelled to fill it in or say something to make nice. That will only undermine you. Instead, sit with the silence for a while, and then if it goes on for more than a minute or two, you can always say, "I'm not sure how to interpret your silence." Whatever you do, don't be guilted into minimizing or taking your feedback back.

Another common form of resistance is aggression. This is the person who responds to you with comments like, "What are you talking about? I'm the glue that holds this place together," or "How can you say that? I've been carrying more than my weight around this place for years." Aggression is designed to make you back down. And if you do it, you've lost your leverage in the situation. Instead, use that Plexiglas shield to protect you from the emotions in the room and revert to listening.

Do not tell the person to calm down; that usually backfires. A simple statement such as, "Why don't you tell me how you see the situation so we can come up with a reasonable course of action," is enough to turn the aggression into problem-solving. And if it's not, use the disengaging part of influence to call a time-out and come back together when there can be a civil discussion.

A third form of resistance is one that I touched on in my last tip and that's complaints. You give someone feedback and they tell you everything that's wrong with you, the company, and everyone in it, or they rationalize

why they behaved as they did. People who can't or won't own their part in a problem turn it around to make it someone else's problem. Here is yet another place where that simple phrase *be that as it may* comes in really handy. For example, "Be that as it may, it doesn't change the fact that I need cooperation on your part for this project to be completed on time." Or combine it with the broken record: "Yes, I understand that you feel the process is inefficient. At the same time, we have a due date to honor and I need you to complete your portion of the project on time."

Although people often don't recognize it as such, a display of confusion is another form of resistance. Human beings are amazingly resistant, and confusion, whether real or feigned, helps to protect the ego. It may take the form of responses like, "I don't get what you're talking about," or "Are you really suggesting that I need to change this?" When it comes to responding to confusion, the best course of action is to confront the confusion and not fall into the trap of responding to the statement per se.

If someone claims not to understand what you're saying, you might say, "I was actually pretty clear. Tell me what you think you heard me say." Or if they're incredulous, you might say something like, "I'm not sure why you're surprised. Tell me more about what you're thinking."

And finally, there's compliance, which always scares me because there's a little something known as subversive compliance. That's when someone appears on the surface to agree with you and take the actions you suggest, but in reality will act in ways to undermine you. Sometimes this is also known as working to rule.

If you've given someone feedback that you want them to spend more time focused on a particular aspect of their work, they will focus only on that to the exclusion of the other aspects. If you call them on it, they'll say, "I'm only doing what you told me." That's why immediate compliance needs to be explored to determine whether it's genuine or not.

So if you hear, "Of course I'll do it," in response to feedback, you might want to say, "I'm glad to hear that. Now tell me why you think you should do it other than the fact that I've asked you to." This makes it harder for the person to walk away and stick the knife in your back later. When it comes to resistance, recognize it for what it is and be prepared to respond in a way that allows the other person to maintain his or her dignity and allows you to stay true to your goal.

Tip 78: Receive Feedback Graciously

Feedback is a gift. As Warren Buffett has said, “Honesty is a very expensive gift. Just don’t expect it from cheap people.” Feedback is the only way that you can truly see yourself as others see you. We all have blind spots. By definition, a blind spot is something other people know about you that you don’t know about yourself, and you can’t know unless someone tells you.

Just as there are rules for giving feedback, there are rules for receiving it.

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Giving Feedback

1. It must be given in the spirit of helping the other person to grow or learn—even if it’s to learn something about *you*. Absent that, it’s just criticism.
2. It must be behavioral and not couched in characteristics. It’s a lot easier to help someone change their behaviors than it is to help them change characteristics.
3. Feedback must be timely for it to be effective. Waiting days or weeks after you observed the unproductive or inappropriate behavior before you give someone feedback doesn’t do any good.
4. When appropriate, let the other person know how the behavior impacted you personally.
5. Be direct and to the point. Don’t beat around the bush, forget the sandwich, and don’t use so many words that the feedback becomes unrecognizable. If you prepare it in advance, your delivery should be spot-on.

Receiving Feedback

1. Be welcoming of feedback, regardless of where it comes from.
2. Listen openly to the feedback and seek to understand it rather than defend yourself. Seek clarification if needed.
3. Check for understanding by summarizing what you heard the person say. Sometimes our emotions get in the way of hearing the message and a paraphrase or summary can be helpful in ensuring you don’t go down the wrong path or off the deep end.

4. Thank the person for the feedback and let them know you'll take it to heart.
5. If three people say you're drunk, lie down. In other words, if you get the same feedback from different sources, you've got to take it seriously.

Let's go over them. First, be welcoming of the feedback regardless of where it comes from. In the best of all worlds, it comes from someone who cares about you. But other times, it comes from someone who just wants to get you to do what they want you to do and in the way they want you to do it.

Depending on who they are, you may have to capitulate. In any case, when you hear the words "I have some feedback for you," your response should always be "I'd love to hear it."

Second, listen openly to the feedback and seek to understand it rather than defend yourself. That doesn't mean you have to agree with it, just that it's good to take it in and think about it. If your inclination is to say, "Well, that's not really true," or "That was an anomaly," instead say, "Please tell me more so that I can better understand what you're telling me."

Third, check for understanding by summarizing what you heard the person say. Sometimes our emotions get in the way of hearing the message, and a paraphrasing summary can be helpful in ensuring you don't go down the wrong path or off the deep end.

Fourth, thank the person for the feedback and let them know that you'll take it to heart. This is one way to ensure your response doesn't damage the relationship.

And finally, we have a saying in coaching: "If three people say you're drunk, lie down." It means, if you get the same feedback from different sources, you've got to take it seriously.

Let's do a role-play here so you can see how it would go:

Eric: Lois, I'd like to give you some feedback.

Lois: I'm all ears.

Eric: I'm disappointed because for the past few weeks your work hasn't been up to your usual standards.

Lois: Really? I had no idea you felt that way. Please tell me more.

Eric: First, the weekly reports have been delivered late.

Lois: Yes, that's true.

Eric: And they've contained numerous errors of fact and grammar.

Lois: Now, that I wasn't aware of. Can you show me an example?

Eric: As a matter of fact, I can. Here's last week's report and you can see where I've circled some of my concerns.

Lois: Yeah, I see what you're talking about.

Eric: And my last concern is that the analysis isn't as robust as you typically provide.

Lois: I'm not sure what you mean. Can you help me to understand?

Eric: As an example, usually you provide side-by-side comparisons of the current month and the same month of the previous years. Here, there were no comparisons.

Lois: I can't argue with that.

Eric: Another example would be the projections for the following year. Those, too, were absent. It's like there's a reporting of the data but not an analysis.

Lois: Right. So if I'm hearing you correctly, you want three things from me: my reports on time, you want them free from errors, and an analysis of the data. Is that right?

Eric: Exactly.

Lois: Well, thank you so much for letting me know about this concern. You can be sure I'll focus on what you're asking for.

Now, what might really be going through my head is that the problem lies in the increased workload I've been given over the past few months. I can't possibly pay as close attention to the weekly reports as I used to given that I'm juggling so many balls. That may be true, but this isn't the time to bring it up. The fact is, the boss has legitimate concerns about the quality of my work. I need to own those and think about the best way to address the

problem before I say anything.

Tip 79: Handling Personal Attacks

I'll never forget, early in my career, I was co-facilitating an interpersonal awareness program for about thirty people. Many of those people in the program were sent to it by bosses who wanted them to round off some of their rough edges. This was certainly the case with Ron, someone with whom I had an earlier skirmish over another program he and I were working on together. I thought we had resolved the issue just fine, but apparently not, because when we reviewed the ground rules for the interpersonal awareness program, he let loose on me in front of the entire group.

He said he didn't trust me, that I don't listen, and that I always have to have things my own way. He wasn't sure how much he would get out of this program. You can imagine my surprise when his venom spewed forth in the first thirty minutes of a three-day program. I knew I had to do something fast or my credibility would be irreparably damaged. Thinking on my feet, or in this case in my seat, I called upon the Plexiglas shield: I-messages, active listening, and at least leveling the playing field if not taking control back from Ron.

Here's what I said: "Ron, I know we've had our disagreements in the past and I thought they were resolved. Maybe you can share with the group more of why you don't trust me so they can make their own assessment. I certainly want everyone to feel safe over the next three days." Then I let Ron spill his guts, and I simply listened. Twenty-nine other people listened, too. When he finished, I said I could understand how he might interpret our interaction in the way he did and I asked what it would take to move beyond his anger. He said he wasn't sure. He said he just wanted to get it on the table. I thanked him for his honesty and said I hoped he would get a lot out of the class and appreciated his willingness to give it a try.

The important thing here was that I didn't go for his bait, and that's exactly what he was doing, baiting me to lose my cool. When that didn't happen, his little tirade actually backfired because the group saw him as the aggressor and saw me as cool, calm, and collected. My heart may have been beating out of my chest, but no one knew that except me. In fact, people

came up to me at the break and asked if it was staged to be a demonstration for the proper way to respond to criticism. Although that was certainly not one of my favorite training programs, it did teach me a good lesson in how to respond to personal attacks and how to think on my feet.

Sooner or later, we all fall victim to personal and sometimes public attacks. They may not be quite as dramatic as the interaction I had with Ron, but they do have the capacity to startle and immobilize us. The major complaint I hear from women who have gone through these situations is that they wish they had a comeback at the ready. As I tell them, you don't have to have it immediately available. It's okay to think about it and go back later to address it with the person who attacked you.

Let me give you three suggestions for how to handle these most, shall we say, unpleasant moments. For those of you who like football, you've probably heard the phrase *drop back five and punt*. It means to step back and reassess the situation. In the case of being attacked, I changed that to my first suggestion, which is drop back five and listen. Don't feel as if you have to say anything other than, "I can see you have strong feelings about this. Tell me more." This does two things. It lets the other person empty their cup so there is no residual to be dumped on you and it gives you a moment to collect yourself.

Next, if it's done in public, decide whether this battle is better fought in private. If so, say, "I want to work with you on this, but I prefer to do it when just the two of us are present as I don't really think it involves anyone else." That's a good response. If the person persists, be a broken record and don't acquiesce to the demand.

Third, if you do have a response, give it neutrally using I-messages and focusing on the problem, not the person. Rather than say, "Susan, you're blaming me for going behind people's backs, but you're the one who never responded to my emails for input. You had the chance but didn't use it. That's not my fault," say this instead: "Susan, I did not go behind anyone's back. I sent everyone an email outlining the actions I was going to take and invited input. I heard from three people and took their advice into consideration before acting."

And if you don't have a response, your best bet is to not respond substantively in the moment, but rather let the person know you're going to think about it. "Susan, this is the first I'm hearing of this. Let me think

about what happened and get back to you.” That should do the trick.

Chapter Six Key Takeaways

Whether you must give feedback because it's part of your job or because the actions of others are impacting you, knowing how to do it effectively can make the difference between building or busting relationships. Giving and receiving feedback is an art and this chapter prepares you for being a great artist.

- **Use I-messages.** Get more comfortable with starting your sentences with *I*. And more importantly as related to this tip, avoid giving feedback that starts with *you*. I-messages as opposed to you-messages tend to be less confrontational and therefore can lead to more open discussion and faster problem resolution.
- **Give feedback mindfully.** Start by practicing the 7:1 rule of feedback so that people won't feel overly criticized. Make sure your feedback is given in the spirit of helping others to grow or learn. Always provide behavioral feedback. Make feedback timely. Let the other person know how his or her behavior impacts you and be direct and to the point.
- **Coach, don't criticize.** Successful coaching is predicated on strong relationships. Without those, your attempts to change behavior or performance will be seen as self-serving. There are essentially three parts of the coaching conversation: what the behaviors are that aren't working, why changing the behaviors would be beneficial to the person, and how those behaviors can be achieved.
- **Don't fire someone when you can free them up to find a new opportunity.** If you've been a conscientious coach, termination should come as no surprise to the person. Coaching a person out of a job is not focused on fault-finding, but rather on helping them to find a more suitable situation that would use their unique talents and interests.

- **Take the high road when you're freed up to find a new opportunity.** Find a way to express your feelings such that you won't have burned a bridge behind you. Rather than say something you'll regret later, ask for time to process what has just happened. If you're asked to sign something before you leave, politely but firmly indicate that you need time to read and digest it, as well as have someone else who's more neutral than you are take a look at it.
- **Deliver upward feedback carefully.** Gauge whether your boss will be open to what you have to say. Consider whether you should give unsolicited feedback or wait until you're asked for it. Determine if this is a can or a must conversation. Focus your feedback on what you have seen or heard and avoid the tendency to give advice. When in doubt, hold your tongue.
- **Recognize and respond to resistance.** Resistance comes in many forms, from silence to justification to anger. Regardless of its form, recognize it for what it is and be prepared to respond in a way that allows the other person to maintain his or her dignity and allows you to stay true to your goal.
- **Receive feedback graciously.** Feedback is a gift. Listen openly to feedback and seek to understand it rather than defend yourself. Check for understanding by summarizing what you heard the person say. Thank the person for the feedback and let them know you'll take it to heart. Then think about it and act on it as you think appropriate.
- **Handling personal attacks.** Personal attacks do have the capacity to startle and immobilize us. So it's okay to say you want time to think about what's been said. Think or go back later to address it with the person who attacked you. If you can have the presence of mind in the moment, focus on listening. If it's done in public, suggest the conversation continue in private. If you have an immediate response, give it neutrally using I-messages and focusing on the problem, not the person.

Chapter Seven

A Few More Thoughts

This chapter contains tips that don't quite fit so neatly into the previous chapters, yet I feel strongly should be included in a book of this nature. Although they are dissimilar, each is yet another piece of the communication puzzle.

Tip 80: Don't Hit That Button Yet

With the proliferation of tweets, instant messages, texts, and emails used to communicate messages people would not otherwise say to someone's face, a whole new realm for self-expression has opened up. Along with it comes myriad more possibilities for damaging relationships and careers, not just to the receiver, but the sender as well. Whereas we can receive immediate feedback on our verbal and even nonverbal communication, written communications that offend others can fester longer and be spread faster.

Whether or not you intend to offend someone isn't really the point. People do not know you by your intentions; people know you by your behaviors. When electronic communications don't clearly and explicitly say what you think it means, it leaves it up to the receiver to interpret it. As I've said before, absent information to the contrary, people will attribute negative intent to things they may not fully understand. In addition to misunderstandings and making it too easy to say things that you wouldn't say to someone's face, privacy and security should be of concern to you. It's not like the old days when someone sent you a memo through the interoffice mail, and typed in big letters at the bottom were the words *Burn this after reading*.

Yes, we actually did say things like that, to ensure the reader knew it was meant to be confidential. You might delete an email intended for your eyes only, but it doesn't destroy it. And then there's the problem of hacking. Just ask Sony about this. You may recall a few years ago, WikiLeaks hacked into the Sony database of emails and published private messages that no one thought would ever see the light of day. That was the beginning of the end for Sony's CEO, Amy Pascal. Now, I have to fess up. I'm not an early adopter; everyone I knew was using email way before I figured it out. It was finally a client overseas, to whom I'd been faxing documents, who told me to get with it. And if a client tells you you're behind the times, that's feedback you'd better take to heart.

Once I got the hang of it, I became a prolific emailer. And like most of us, I've made my fair share of email faux pas. One time I was copied on an email one of my employees sent to a potential client, thanking him for his

time. I wrote back, “I’m glad you got further with him than I did. I found them to be condescending, and not too interested in what I had to say.” I didn’t realize I had hit the Reply All button until the potential client wrote back. “I didn’t think I was that bad.” Now that’s a mistake I didn’t make twice.

And then there’s the time that someone forwarded me an email he received from a colleague urging people in our human resources field to vote against the Marriage Equality Act in California. I never even met the man, but I had an immediate visceral response, and I sent him a scathing letter that I copied several clients on because I felt they should know this was a man who should never be allowed to coach others given his narrow-minded views on this particular issue. Well, of course, there were clients who totally agreed with him. That managed to damage a few relationships due to the reaction to what I perceived to be his homophobia. My new motto after this fiasco became “Emails sent in haste are often in bad taste.”

If you’re anything like me, you know when it might be inappropriate to send an email or post a tweet. You must heed the tiny voice in your head that whispers, “Not sure this is a good idea.” Rhymer Rigby, writing for the *Telegraph*, says, “Email is a bit like being on reality TV, everyone knows it’s not private, but like *Big Brother* contestants, we soon forget our every keystroke could be observed.” Here are a few tips to help you determine whether or not the email or tweet you want to communicate is in your best interest.

First and foremost, would you say this to the person’s face? If the answer is no, then that’s a clear sign you’re using an electronic communication improperly.

Second, if you would say it to the person’s face but wouldn’t necessarily do so in front of a group of strangers, then leave off the CCs and the BCCs. Had I done that with the email to the man urging colleagues to vote no on marriage equality, it would have been an entirely different story. He and I might have had an animated exchange, but it wouldn’t have made either of us look bad.

Next, when in doubt, wait it out. I know the feeling of just having to get my thoughts and feelings written down. It doesn’t mean I should always send them. Save a draft of the message and sleep on it or send it to a friend and ask for input. This way, you can reread the message and decide if you

want to change how it's worded or even if you want to send it at all.

Fourth, determine if email is the best way to communicate even a nonconfrontational message. Sometimes the subject matter is complex and requires a call to fully explain what's on your mind.

The fifth rule of thumb I use is if two emails have gone back and forth and there's no resolution, or if there's still a lack of clarity, then pick up the phone. You can waste a lot of time emailing when a quick call will do the trick. What should you do when you realize you've made a mistake? A huge mistake. Apologies never go out of style and depending on how much damage your communication caused, you may have to go that route. Or you could do what one man did after he accidentally sent a porn link to a female coworker. He sent it to twenty more people and claimed it was a virus.

All kidding aside, you could avoid having to apologize or claim a virus to go over your computer if you just think twice—no, make that three times—before pressing Send.

Tip 81: What You Should Never Include in an Email or Tweet

Who hasn't heard of the trouble Anthony Weiner got into for sending sexually explicit emails? Or how emails contributed to the demise of energy giant Enron? God only knows we've heard enough about Hillary Clinton's emails. Wall Street traders have been hit with huge fines because their instant messages revealed culpability in insider trading, and people have been fired for mistakenly copying their bosses on job applications. Texting while drunk has led to the demise of many relationships. There are a few things you shouldn't even think about putting in electronic communications. Let's take a look at what they are.

The first is feedback that can be construed as critical. There is way too much opportunity for someone to totally misread your intent and your feelings about it, way too little opportunity for the person to clarify what it is you're saying. My own belief is that too often people give critical feedback via email because they don't want to have to do it directly to the person. Similarly, don't speak badly about your boss or management in an email, particularly if you're using a company computer; you have no reasonable right to privacy when using company equipment to send emails. You don't own that correspondence—the company does. As tempting as it may be, don't use electronic communication to share office gossip.

How about jokes and cartoons? Here again, it's a risky proposition. I know everyone does it, but it still presents potential liability. In the age of #MeToo, inappropriate correspondence of this nature can become a plaintiff's exhibit one. Just remember, although you may know who you're sending a message to, you don't know who they may forward it to, and who those people will forward it to, and so on. It's too easy for a message you only intend to have one person read go viral.

Tip 82: Keep Your Business Communications Professional

I don't know about you, but people have gotten so lax in how they write emails, texts, instant messages, and tweets that I find them sometimes indecipherable. Just as in verbal and nonverbal communications, written communications are a reflection on you, your brand, and the potential value you bring to any situation. To ensure it's the most positive reflection possible, follow these suggestions.

First, proofread each and every message before it goes out. People do notice misspelled words and grammatically incorrect sentences. When I'm reviewing emails in response to an advertisement for a position opening, I automatically eliminate anyone who sends an email cover letter with grammatical and spelling mistakes. If you don't pay close attention to detail when you're applying for a job, you certainly have less incentive to do so after being hired. If someone is trying to sell me something in an email, and it contains mistakes, I'm not impressed.

Second, keep it professional. You aren't writing to your college roommate, where "Hey, how goes it?" is acceptable. Any business communication that you send should err on the side of being too formal rather than too casual.

Third, don't use all caps, unless you really want to emphasize a point. And even then it should be done sparingly. All caps are the verbal equivalent of screaming at someone.

Fourth, check your message for tone. We're all busy and sometimes we write and respond quickly to electronic messages without thinking about how the tone or lack thereof will impact the receiver. How many times has someone asked a question in email and you replied, "No." When I've done that, I often get an email back asking if I was mad. That's because they had no cues for the tone in my voice.

As much as I dislike the use of too many words, sometimes an email requires just a few more to ensure the message is received in the manner you intended. For example, in response to the question, "Do you think we should cut our losses and move on?"—rather than simply saying yes, say, "Given how little return on investment we've gotten so far, that seems like

the best course of action.” This gives the receiver insight into your thought process and is less curt. Remember, more words soften a message, few words strengthen it. Sometimes just a few more words make a big difference in written communications.

Fifth, check for context. Unlike with verbal communications, written communications don’t allow the receiver to hear the inflections that might change the context of the message. Let’s just say in response to the question, “Can I ride with Joe to the warehouse tomorrow?” you respond, “He isn’t driving to the warehouse tomorrow.” Does this mean he isn’t driving to the warehouse tomorrow but someone else is, or he isn’t driving to the warehouse tomorrow but he may be going another day? Or it could mean he isn’t driving to the warehouse tomorrow but is getting there some other way. Organize your message so that it’s easy to read. Remember, just as in verbal communications, electronic ones should not be a stream of thought. Just as I’ve suggested that you speak in headlines, you can write in headlines, too.

The subject line of an email should clearly and briefly state the reason for the correspondence. The first few lines should give the reader an overview of the purpose of the message. The key points that follow should be bulleted or numbered. Don’t make the recipient read through mounds of text. The last few sentences should be a call to action or a conclusion. This is what a professionally written email would look like:

Subject: Board of Directors

Dear Barbara, I’m writing to let you know about the decisions made at this week’s board of directors meeting that will impact you and the work done in the development department.

1. We will no longer accept cash donations. This has created accounting difficulties and with the advent of so many ways to donate electronically, it shouldn’t present a problem.
2. For this fiscal year, we will focus on identifying granters who can support our financial literacy program. Financial literacy for low-income women is our number one priority.
3. The operating budgets for all departments have been

cut by 12 percent. This reflects the downturn in donations since the tax reform bill was passed. I know it will be a challenge to do more with less this year.

I appreciate all you and your team have done to continually create opportunities for fund-raising. Please let me know how I can be of help.

Tip 83: Don't Let Distractions Get You Off Track

Like it or not, we live in a world of constant distractions. From the ding of a new text message arriving to the sound of the Pachelbel's Canon ringtone alerting me to a phone call, and usually a robocall. It's hard to get someone's attention for more than a few minutes. Combine that with the popularity of open workspaces, something I considered to be the worst idea since undefined workplace casual, and it's a wonder anyone can focus on anything for more than a few minutes.

I recently was working with a woman who wanted to create a new role for herself and her company. She felt that her current position wasn't playing to her strengths and that the company, if it wanted to compete with the other players in its field, needed to focus more on diversity recruitment. She did a great job putting together a PowerPoint presentation outlining the issues of how the role would help increase the company's bottom line and what made her ideal for the role. She put quite a bit of work into it, and when she felt it was ready for prime time, she asked to meet with the company president.

She went through the proper protocol of making an appointment with him through his administrative assistant. She showed up on time and waited for him to finish up another meeting. When he emerged from his office, he motioned her to walk with him to his next meeting. "Sorry, I'm running late," he said. "Why don't we just walk and talk?" Needless to say, she was disappointed. Here, she had something that mattered a great deal to her and could have a positive impact on the company and she was relegated to having to walk and talk. Unfortunately, she did as he suggested and it threw off her entire presentation. He wasn't focused the least bit on what she had to say. She was distracted by the fact that she didn't have visual aids to help her make her point. All of that work and what she got out of it was, "That's interesting. Something to think about." She reported to me utterly dejected.

In a similar scenario, another woman was in her boss's office trying to discuss her concerns about suspicious stock trades. She would get just so far and his phone would ring. Apologizing for the interruption, he would urge her to continue. She would get just so far again, and then there'd be a knock

on the door. After a few such interruptions, it was clear his mind was elsewhere. And he was only half listening to what she was saying. He adjourned the meeting by saying he would take her concerns into advisement. By the time she left his office, she felt totally dismissed and frustrated over how to handle the potentially explosive problem.

For some reason, it seems that women tolerate these interruptions more than men. I'm not even sure a man would put another man through what these two bosses put their women staff members through. It's pretty simple. You cannot communicate effectively with interruptions. They dilute your message, diminish your gravitas, and increase the likelihood of miscommunication.

Here's how you're going to handle the situation when something like this happens to you. First, don't be so focused on your message that you overlook the interruptions. Sometimes we go into meetings and important discussions with blinders on. We're so intent on getting the message out that we fail to realize people aren't really hearing it. Be aware of what's happening in your surroundings, so that you can respond to distractions that take away from your message.

Second, if someone asks you to walk and talk, take a rain check. You deserve 100 percent attention from the person with whom you're communicating. Rather than go along to get along, say, "I can see you're busy and running late. I'll make another appointment to speak with you at a better time." It's better to postpone your meeting than to have a good idea or serious concern and not be fully heard and responded to. If the person insists and says, "No, come on, I can listen while we're walking," your response should be a lighthearted, "Unfortunately, I can't, and this is a matter very important to me. So I'll just reschedule."

Finally, if you're already meeting with someone, and they allow interruptions to distract them and you from taking your message as seriously as you would like, suggest that you come back at a better time, and perhaps in a different venue. In this case, you can say something like, "It seems like this isn't the best time to discuss a matter of this importance. Why don't we reconvene in two hours in the conference room?"

Tip 84: Managing Anxiety through Practice and Preparation

I had a seventh-grade science teacher who would constantly tell us something that I never forgot: “Chance favors the prepared mind.” What this means is if luck is going to favor you at all, it’s going to be because you spent time preparing for the moments that are most important to you. Much like an actor preparing for a role, your communications are more likely to go in the direction you want them to if you rehearse. We are, after all, actors on a corporate stage. I know it’s not always possible, like when someone catches you off guard, but most of the time, you can and should prepare your presentations in advance. Every time you open your mouth, it’s a presentation.

Preparation also helps to manage anxiety. Whether it’s a big presentation you’re giving to a group or meeting one-on-one with the boss to ask for a raise, anxiety is normal for all of us. People often ask me how I look so confident onstage. They may not see the anxiety I experience before every presentation, but it’s there. The preparation that I do right up until the moment I walk onto the stage helps me to present as cool, calm, and collected. Kevin Loria, writing for *Business Insider* online, says, “Fear is an imperfect mechanism, a throwback to a time when it would be triggered by real threats likely to kill us. Most of us don’t face those threats now, but the same part of our brain, the amygdala, lights up in response to a situation rightly or wrongly perceived as threatening. Something in our brains tells us to take flight, flee, or freeze.”

As I said earlier, the brain is a wonderful thing. It starts working the day you’re born and doesn’t stop until you step up to speak in front of a room. How do you prepare and practice for presentations big and small? Well, you can already check one thing off the list. Learn the techniques of great communicators. You’ve just read this book with loads of suggestions for how to prepare messages that are more likely to be heard than not. Take these concepts to heart and start putting them into practice one at a time. You can’t be expected to remember all of them after one reading. So what I’ve done is created a table of contents that will allow you to go to the section that might be helpful to you at any given time.

Something else you can do is write down what you want to say. It doesn't have to be verbatim. In fact, it shouldn't be verbatim, unless you have a photographic memory that allows you to remember in detail things you've seen just a few times. Verbatim isn't going to help you. Instead, write down bullet points that focus on your key points. These are what's known as *talking points*.

The process of writing it down and actually seeing the words is the first step toward committing it to memory. Before then, they're just ideas that float around in your head. Let's say you're going to ask your boss for a raise; you might start with bulleting the three most compelling reasons why you've earned it. Let's say these include implementing systems that saved the company a half million dollars in expenses, bringing in two new clients that resulted in nearly a million dollars in revenues, and executing a wide-scale layoff with no accompanying lawsuits. Now you have three things that you can practice saying.

What helps me is to prepare a PowerPoint for larger presentations. It doesn't contain every word I want to say. It has memory joggers—these can be pictures, cartoons, bullets, or charts—that guide me along the way and ensure I touch on each point I want to be certain that I make. Even if you don't actually show the PowerPoint, you can print it out and use it as a guide for your presentation.

Another powerful form of presentation is visualization. It's a form of practice. Whenever possible, I go in advance to the room where I'm going to be speaking and visualize myself on the stage, the words flowing smoothly, the room filled with friendly people smiling and nodding their heads. When that's not possible, I close my eyes and visualize the dynamic. The same holds true for you when you're going to speak, even to just one person. Envision yourself composed with your notes in front of you, confidently communicating your message to a willing and open listener.

Finally, there's good old-fashioned rehearsal. Not too long ago, I wanted to have a difficult conversation with a friend. I knew in my head what I wanted to say and I wanted it to come out smoothly and kindly as I didn't want to damage the relationship. So I mentally ordered my key points, and I started saying them out loud—in the shower, when I was walking the dog, when I took a bike ride, you name it. I said it out loud over and over until I was confident that I could say it without apology or hesitation:

“There’s something I want to talk to you about. I value our relationship and would like it to continue. At the same time, there have been some things that make me uncomfortable. I’m not sure you’re aware of it. But when we’re in groups, you often cut me off, assuming that you already know what I want to say. Sometimes you’re right, but more often, it’s not my intended message. Similarly, when we’re on the phone, I feel like an audience rather than being someone in conversation with you. It’s hard for me to get a word in before we hang up. I’d like our friendship to continue and even deepen. For that to happen, I need to feel as if I’m heard and listened to.”

Saying your message out loud grounds it in reality and allows you to own it. Then when you’re in a position to deliver it, it’s not new or unusual to you. In this case, the conversation went even better than I imagined. And both of us have worked to meet each other’s expectations. Regardless of the complexity or the simplicity of the message, or the size of your audience, practicing and preparing your communication in advance will give you the confidence to hit a home run delivering your message.

Tip 85: Respond to Insults with Integrity

At their most simple, insults are designed to make you feel bad about yourself and make the person delivering the insult feel better about him- or herself. Comments about dress, physical appearance, sexual orientation, intelligence, socioeconomic status, or religious beliefs are all pretty straightforward and easy to identify as insults. It can sometimes be more difficult to wrap your head around an insult when it's couched as a compliment—or at least you think it's a compliment.

For example, if someone says, “You did a much better job on that project than you did on the last three,” is that really a compliment? Do you really think I did that bad of a job on the other projects? Or I remember a professor once saying to me after a presentation, “You have the confidence that comes with repetition.” What? Did you think I didn't prepare and practice for that or that I had done this presentation before and phoned it in for this assignment?

Then there are the statements that seem to be an insult, but you're not quite sure. Like when a friend who went to Harvard remarks that you, who went to East Podunk State College, are a real credit to your school. Are they saying that they're surprised someone from this school has done so well? Or was it meant to be a compliment? And then just the other day, when I said to an African American friend of mine that I thought Cory Booker was so articulate, she looked kind of cross-eyed at me and said, “Are you saying most African Americans aren't articulate?” Now, that's not what I meant at all. But I could see how she might perceive it that way.

Unfortunately, in an age of social networking, insults have proliferated. It's become easier to put someone down without ramifications and sometimes without attributions. It's pretty cowardly if you ask me, but it does happen. At their worst, insults lead to bullying, shaming, and harassing. It's one reason why I think it's so important that all insults be addressed by putting a human face and feelings on the other end of them. Here are some ways you can respond with dignity to insult.

First, if you're not sure it's an insult, check it out. You can do this with the person who made the comment or with someone who was with you and

also heard it. Checking it out with the person who made the comment would sound like this: “The comment you made about my shoes—I’m not sure if you’re being serious, or if it was your way of saying you didn’t like them.” Or if you want to wait and ask a friend who heard the remark, you might say, “Did you think the comment about my shoes was a compliment or a sarcastic way to say she didn’t like them?”

In a situation like this, you don’t have to go any further unless it represents a pattern of behavior that you want to stop. In this case, you could always say, “It’s not the first time you’ve used that kind of humor to let me know when you didn’t like something. I really don’t need to hear those comments. I certainly don’t need to have them said in that way. If you have an opinion that you think is important for me to hear, I’d appreciate it if you just tell me directly.” And as I’ve said before, decide if it’s the hill you want to die on. Sometimes a molehill is just a molehill.

Next, let the person know how the comment made you feel. Show some vulnerability so the person knows you aren’t an automaton. You’re a human being. It might sound like this: “I put a lot of work into developing a team that rises to every challenge and to hear them characterized us underperforming makes me feel as if I haven’t done my job as a leader. I may not be the perfect leader, but we’ve made great strides.”

Third, provide the person with an idea of what you would like to hear instead. In other words, redirect them toward more appropriate behavior. A statement like, “What would be helpful is if you would specify the areas in which you would like the team to step up even more,” lets them know what you prefer.

Fourth, if this is a pattern of behavior, it requires more than a simple response. This is where you would use the DESC script to have a longer conversation about the behavior, how it impacts you, what needs to change, and the positive consequences of such change or the negative consequences if there is no change.

Tip 86: Replacing Equivocating Words and Phrases with Certitudes

Think about the word *equivocal*. Its root is *equ-*, which means “equal.” So to equivocate suggests that you’re giving two sides equal weight. If you answer a question equivocally, you fail to take a stand on one side or another. When you make an unequivocal statement, the strength of your belief in your position is unclear. When it comes to giving an opinion or making a statement related to their area of expertise, women are more likely than men to equivocate. One reason is because an equivocating statement uses more words. And as I’ve said before, more words soften a message. Not wanting to get called *strident* or *aggressive*, women use an equivocal preface to soften the strength of convictions.

Another reason why women equivocate is because they’re more open to hearing both sides of an issue before taking a firm stand. A third reason is actually a technique they use to negotiate, sometimes quite effectively. For example, when a woman goes out to buy a car and the salesperson asks what her budget is for the vehicle, she might say, “Well, I’m not sure. It depends on the vehicle and a number of other factors.” Unless you’re using equivocation as a tactic, I urge you to make certain that your statements and answers have the ring of certitude. Even if you’re open to changing your mind, exhibit the courage to at least put your ideas out with confidence.

Here are some things you can work on. Change “I’m not sure this is right, but from what I see so far...” to “My observations to date suggest that...” Although both statements tell the listener that there could be eventual variations, the first statement makes you sound unsure, whereas the second is simply a statement of fact.

Here’s another example: Consider changing “This might not be the right time to bring this up, but...” to “Let me bring this up now since we’re on the topic.” In the first statement you open it up for people to say, “You’re right, not now.” Whereas in the second you tell the listener why you’re bringing it up now, which makes it more difficult to argue with your reasoning.

Here’s one that’s my personal pet peeve: “On the one hand, we can

expect this, and on the other we can expect that.” When I hear statements like these, I just want to tear my hair out and scream, “Take a risk and give me your educated guess.” Look at how much better it would sound expressed in these words instead: “There are two potential outcomes; however, past experience suggests it’s more likely to be this way.” Said this way, you’ve let the listener know that it’s a coin toss, but you think it’s going to go in one direction. And if it doesn’t, then an appropriate response would be, “As I said, there were two possibilities and in this case, it went against the norm.”

To paraphrase a quote from the Bible, “for she who sounds an uncertain trumpet cannot expect people to take her seriously.”

Tip 87: How to Win an Argument

As I've already said, I'm not too keen on confrontation. I'd rather walk away from a difference of opinion than start an argument. But there are times when I just have to stand my ground. Although I'm not one to put a stamp on with a steamroller, if I believe in something or someone strongly enough, I will make certain my voice is heard loud and clear. I do this by using the following techniques. When it comes to arguments, you win some, you lose some, but you suit up for every game.

First, focus on the strength of your platform, not the weakness of others. This is, or should be, where your muscle lies. No one knows your platform better than you. If you try to dismantle someone else's position, they'll beat you for the same reason: They know it better than you. By focusing on your strengths, especially in a contest where you outweigh your opponent, not on the weakness of the other person, you come across as an expert.

Here's how it sounds:

Howard: You've got it all wrong. If we do what you suggest, we'll never be able to dig ourselves out of the hole.

Lois: I'm not saying you don't make good points, Howard. I'm saying that the following facts support my case. We've changed the methodology to better assess the situation, we have new people on the team who have expertise in this specific area, and we've seen our competitors do it successfully, so there's no reason why it wouldn't work.

Second, allow others to save face. Some people just don't get this or can't bring themselves to do it, because they see everything as a zero-sum game. For example, perhaps you and a colleague each have to make a case for why your individual departments need a bigger share of the budget in the coming year. If your colleague comes unprepared, whereas you're on top of your game, you don't have to use every gun in your arsenal. Trust your audience to figure it out on their own who the winner is. By embarrassing others, you wind up losing the war, even if you win the battle. A little humility goes a long way.

The discussion might go like this:

Bernadette: Given that I've got a bigger department and more customer interface, it would only make sense that I be given closer to 75 percent of the budget.

Lois: That's true, Bernadette. At the same time, I analyzed the budgets from the last three years and it appears that on average, your department has only used 81 percent of what was available each year, leaving nearly 20 percent that can go to my department. Additionally, the company has initiated a new wellness program and made it a priority as an employee benefit. So although you have more employees, the wellness program impacts all employees and the start-up costs fall into my budget. So while I appreciate what you're saying and even agree with it, it seems to me that these aren't the only factors to consider this fiscal year.

Similarly, when it's clear that you've won the battle, be gracious by not rubbing your opponent's nose in your victory.

Three, limit yourself to two or three main points. Most listeners can't take in more information than that. If you're trying to sell an idea or yourself, focus on just the few issues that will gain you the most leverage. That's what I did with Bernadette in the previous example. She only focused on two main points: the percentage of the budget used of the past three years and start-up costs for the wellness program. When considering the best points to bring up, consider using all those that will describe how your position will save money, make money, or provide other benefits.

Four, avoid trying to sound intelligent; it will only backfire on you. As you stumble over words or phrases that don't come naturally to you, it will also make you sound pompous and reduce your likability quotient. If you use facts, they'll speak for themselves. When you combine that with crafting your message in one of the ways we've already discussed, your message will come across clear, cogent, and confident, all of which lend themselves to winning an argument.

Finally, consider a short, repetitive refrain. These are memorable and powerful. One of the most powerful repetitive refrains in American history

came from an uneducated sharecropper, Sojourner Truth. The place was the 1851 women's rights convention held in Akron, Ohio. Read this excerpt and see if you don't agree that a repetitive refrain bolstered her argument that slaves are not treated like white people:

“That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches, and to have the best places everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman. Look at me! Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash well! And ain't I a woman? I have born thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?”

I never tire of hearing those words. It makes me sit up and take notice. Another great example comes from a speech of the late senator Margaret Chase, used when addressing Congress to speak against McCarthyism on June 1, 1950. In this first example, I took out the repetitive refrain from the speech, yet provide the same message:

“I speak as briefly as possible, because too much harm has already been done with irresponsible words of bitterness and selfish political opportunism. I also want to speak as simply as possible, because the issue is too great to be obscured by eloquence. I hope that my words will be taken to heart. I speak as a Republican, as a woman, as a United States senator, and as an American.”

Not bad, right? But look when I replace the repetitive refrain into the speech:

“I speak as briefly as possible, because too much harm has already

been done with irresponsible words of bitterness and selfish political opportunism. I speak as simply as possible, because the issue is too great to be obscured by eloquence. I speak as simply as possible and as briefly as possible, in the hope that my words will be taken to heart. I speak as a Republican. I speak as a woman. I speak as a United States senator. I speak as an American.”

Which is more powerful and memorable to you? Hopefully you agree it's the second, that the use of the two words *I speak*, over and over, cause you to tune in more specifically to those words.

Now let's apply this to a more common situation, one in which you might want to make a point that your contributions go beyond those that have been recognized in your performance review. Here's how that would look:

“From reading my review, it would appear that my contributions in the past two years were limited to one or two achievements. However, you may recall when I closed the Jackson account, that resulted in \$2.5 million in ad revenues. You may recall when I orchestrated reduction of force that resulted in zero lawsuits. Or you may recall when I converted the payroll system to online deposits that resulted in \$20,000 quarterly in savings. I'm disappointed that these achievements and resulting benefits weren't recalled for my performance for you.”

To summarize, to win an argument, focus on your strengths not the weaknesses of others. Allow others to save face. Limit yourself to two or three points. Use simple words and short sentences. And finally, consider a repetitive refrain.

Tip 88: Choose the Hill You're Willing to Die On

I've said this quite a few times over the course of this book. Alexandria left a great job in a large investment firm to work at a smaller bank. She was enticed away with a substantial increase in pay, signing bonus, and promise of more responsibility in upward mobility. During the first year on the job, she realized the company culture was quite different than the investment firm where she had worked for twelve years. There was less focus on employee morale and more emphasis placed on measuring productivity.

As a result, she inherited a demoralized team. She talked with her boss about her concerns, but each time the boss justified the company's position by pointing to the bottom-line return on shareholder investment. Alexandria wondered if she should take the issue to the next level of management. After all, one of the reasons why she was brought in was to increase productivity by improving employee morale. She talked with a few colleagues, and each one of them told her the same thing: Circumventing the chain of command would be a career kiss of death. Heeding their advice, she did her best to meet the needs of her employees while remaining vigilant about profits.

Going to senior management over her boss's head wasn't the hill she was willing to die on if she could achieve her goals in other ways. When she received her performance review at the end of the year, Alexandria was shocked to see she was only a two on a scale of one to five with five being the highest, even though she had been previously praised by peers and staff for turning around an underperforming business unit and hadn't received any feedback about her performance. When she talked to their boss about her many accomplishments, the boss simply pointed to two minor mistakes she'd made and completely ignored all her achievements, which far outweighed those two mistakes. The boss wasn't willing to budge an inch on Alexandria's performance rating.

Demoralized by a boss who didn't recognize her long hours of hard work and creative attempts to compensate for a lack of resources, Alexandria decided it was time to speak with her second-level supervisor, her boss's boss. Having never received such a poor performance review in

over twenty years of working in the finance industry, she felt strongly about restoring her reputation. This was the hill she was willing to die on. If her boss didn't like the end run and she ultimately had to leave the company, then so be it.

As it turned out, she did leave the company, not because she angered her boss by going over his head, but because she couldn't reconcile her own values with those of her employer. When nice girls start practicing the tactics provided in this book or any other skills newly acquired through books or workshops, they often overshoot their targets. Newly empowered, suddenly everything has equal importance or weight and they rush headfirst into battles that really don't need to be taken on.

Yes, you should expect resistance when trying to have your needs met. But it doesn't mean you have to have a fight every time. Winning the war is more important than winning each battle, and sometimes you have to give up a few battles to achieve your long-term goals. Be sure that you don't make mountains out of molehills. Life involves making sacrifices; consciously decide which ones you're willing to make. Which desires, needs, and ideas are you willing to let go of in the short term in exchange for longer-term satisfaction or gain? Perhaps you'd like to go on a cruise for vacation this year, but it's your husband's thirty-fifth birthday and he wants to do a beach vacation. You'll put off the cruise for another year so he can enjoy both his birthday and the vacation. It's not the hill you're willing to die on.

Conversely, fight the good fight on the critical issues. In Alexandria's case, it was her reputation. She would do almost anything to preserve it. For you, it might be your integrity, family safety, freedom, or any other number of things that you value dearly. These become the battles you're willing to fight and the hills you're willing to die on.

Finally, if you're not sure if it's a molehill or a battle worth fighting, trust your gut. There are no right answers, only answers that are right for you. Elevating every disagreement to the level of a battle won't serve you well. Conversely, giving in on issues that are really important to you will cause you to become resentful. Before getting into a spitting match or acquiescing, think about into which category you would put the issue.

Tip 89: Don't Settle for Poor Customer Service

Now, this is one I'm sure you've experienced. The days of great customer service are simply a thing of the past. If you do get it, it's a fluke, and when you don't, it's enough to drive you crazy. Or as my mother would say when I was being a pain in the neck, "You're driving me to drink." She didn't even drink that much. It just happened to me the other day on the line with AT&T. When a friend asked how my day was going, I totally vented about being given the runaround and still not having my problem solved. She remarked that as exhausted as I sounded over this, she hoped I didn't have a gun because she was afraid I might point it at my head and shoot. Fortunately for me, I did not have a gun.

But we've all had it happen. Your internet goes out and you call the provider. First you go through a series of voice prompts where you must provide your account number, password, name, address, and then the name of your firstborn child. Okay, maybe not the firstborn's name, but you know the drill. You provide all of that and you're put into a queue to wait. Sometimes with awful music and other times with the voice that comes on every sixty seconds and says, "Your call is important to us. Thanks for waiting."

Right. If my call was that important, I wouldn't be waiting this long. Then you hear a click and your hopes rise that it's finally your turn. But the click was just the system disconnecting you. You go back, go through the same drill, waiting once again for what seems like an eternity, but it's probably really ten to fifteen minutes on a good day. Finally, a human being picks up. Again, you're asked for your account number, password name, address. And again, you provide it, this time begrudgingly. But you're not going to say anything because you don't want to risk being disconnected again.

The person on the other end of the phone speaks with a heavy accent that makes it very difficult to understand; extra time is spent asking her to please repeat herself. You explain your problem, and she tells you to go and turn off the computer, turn off the router, and wait a few seconds before turning them back on. You tell her you already did all of that and it still

didn't work and that you'd like to be transferred to the technical support department. She insists that you do it again, which you do and, surprise, it still doesn't work. She tells you that it could be your computer or the electricity coming into your home.

By now you've had enough. She is clearly the first line of defense, not to be confused with the first line of service. Her job is to keep you from speaking with the higher-paid and fewer tech folks who can really help you. And you are moments from a meltdown, the size of which would make the Fukushima nuclear disaster look like an itty-bitty blip on a radar screen. What's a nice girl to do? Whether it's online customer service or the clerk at the hotel who tells you it's impossible to check in for at least five more hours after you've been traveling for three times that long. Or the department store salesperson who won't take back an item that has all of the tags still attached, because it's one day over the return date. You have the right as a customer to expect your needs will be met.

The next time any of these sorts of things happen to you, here's what you're going to do. First, take a deep breath, a really deep breath—and I'm serious. When you take a deep breath, it triggers neurons in your brain that tell the body to calm down. Why do you think breathing is such a big part of the practice of yoga? Go ahead, try it now. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Can you feel the difference before and after? When you find yourself about ready to tell someone where to go, first take a deep breath. I do it all the time and it works.

In fact, someone in my office overheard me on the phone trying to resolve a tech problem with someone who had no clue what I was talking about. She asked how I could remain so calm about it. The deep breath helped, but so did having a plan of attack in my mind. Which brings us to the second thing you're going to do. When you start a conversation with anyone in customer service, get their name. This does two things. It allows you to humanize the conversation by calling them by their name; and you may need it to report them for inappropriate behavior, if it comes to that. At which point, they are less likely to give you their name.

At any point in the customer service process when you feel as if you aren't being understood or that your needs aren't being taken into consideration, ask to speak with the person's supervisor. You don't have to do it in an angry way. I usually say something like, "I don't want to be

disrespectful, but it seems like you either don't have the authority or the expertise to resolve this for me. I'd like to speak with your supervisor." Now, you may have to be a broken record and say it several times in different ways, because they've been trained to keep you away from supervisors; they probably use the broken record on you. So turnaround is fair play.

If they refuse to allow you to speak with a supervisor, it's time to find the vice president of customer service. I did this not too long ago, when the local branch manager of my bank didn't return my calls. On the internet, I found the name of the most senior person in customer service and called the bank's headquarters to ask for her email. I then wrote asking if she could help me to identify someone other than the person I was dealing with at this branch who could help me resolve a problem.

In a factual way, I described how I tried to communicate with the branch manager, but my calls were not returned. Within twenty-four hours, the branch manager's supervisor called me and resolved the issue within hours, although in this case contacting someone at the VP level worked. If that didn't work, I would have kept moving right up the food chain in much the same manner. Finally, if none of this works, and it looks like you've reached a dead end, there's always Yelp, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Twitter, Angie's List, the Better Business Bureau, and other places where you can leave a review. With so many businesses counting on the reviews of consumers, companies have become far more sensitive to posted reviews.

A few years ago, I wasn't happy with the service I was getting at a nationally known spa and asked for a refund of my unused services. It was the kind of place where you paid in advance for a set number of services. The management at the spa told me that it was against company policy and I asked if there was anything that they could do for me. Nope. So I went onto Yelp and wrote a review that outlined my personal experience with the company and why I wouldn't recommend them. Within a few days, the owner of the spa called me and apologized for how I was treated. She said hers was a small business and a review like this could be potentially damaging. She asked if I would consider taking it down. I said I would, provided I was refunded for my unused services. She agreed and I took the review down.

Success in getting what you want or at least what you think is fair in

these situations is contingent upon first knowing what you want to walk away with and explaining your situation in factual and unemotional terms. This isn't to say you can't express your anger. I know I do. But I don't use it to demean another person. Saying, "I cannot tell you how angry I was when I came home and found the work that you had promised would be done wasn't even started. This is totally unacceptable and I want to know what will be done to get this project back on track so that it's completed on time." That isn't a personal attack. Knowing going into a conversation what you want coming out increases the likelihood of actually getting it.

Tip 90: Use Unconditional Positive Regard to Your Advantage

As you can tell by now, I believe that allowing people to save face costs you nothing, yet yields great rewards. Regardless of how poorly you are treated, responding in kind only brings you down to their level. Now, with that said, I know how hard it is to take the high road all the time. Sometimes you just want to get in the last FU for your own peace of mind. And don't think there haven't been times when I've stooped to it. I never claimed to be a saint. But each and every time I've taken the high road and given the person the benefit of the doubt for having a bad day or just being ill prepared to handle a conversation the way I might like, I've never regretted it. I can't say the same for situations where I let my temper get the best of me and I treated someone less than respectfully.

While writing an earlier book, *Nice Girls Just Don't Get It*, my coauthor, Carol Frohlinger, and I had only one disagreement in the entire process. That had to do with me wanting to include the concept of unconditional positive regard. I know Carol and I know she strongly believes there is never a need to treat anyone with disdain, disrespect, or derision. But she thought I was being a little Pollyannaish when it came to unconditional positive regard, and I guess I am.

It's the trained therapist in me coming out. The term was coined by psychologist Carl Rogers, and it refers to showing unfailing respect for other human beings, despite how hard they might make it for you or how they treat you. Another way to think of it is the maxim "Hate the sin but love the sinner." The importance of exhibiting unconditional positive regard in every relationship, no matter what, can't be overestimated. This doesn't mean to say you should accept inappropriate behavior or have to make everyone with whom you come into contact your best friend, even if they treat you badly. To the contrary, that's what nice girls would do. It means that you treat others with respect, no matter what they say or do, even and especially when you're going to confront them about their behavior.

I know from experience that showing unconditional positive regard can be challenging. So let me give you some examples of how I've used it to my advantage. The first is when giving feedback to employees. You may

have had this happen with someone who works for you in any capacity. You give what you think are clear-cut instructions for what you want done, and what they deliver isn't even a close approximation of it. In your head, you want to say, "What were you thinking?" Or maybe you're hoping the disgusted look on your face will say it for you. But blaming and shaming won't do anything to maintain a trusting relationship that you may need to depend on in a variety of ways. Instead, what I do to exhibit unconditional positive regard in situations like these is to assume responsibility for the miscommunication. It costs me nothing, yet buys a lot of goodwill.

I've often said, "I must not have made myself clear. It looks like you put a lot of work into this, but it's not what I had in mind." Another tool that I use in situations where I feel that there has been a miscommunication or even when I think someone is lying to me, or trying to mislead me, is to assume that there must be some confusion.

It had happened just the other day with a workman who was going to waterproof the foundation of my house. When we initially met, he said he had to wait for the rain to stop, because it wasn't good to do it when the soil was wet. Sounded logical to me. But when he called one day when it was still raining to say he was going to start the project the next day, I was a little miffed. I couldn't figure out if he lied to me the first time because he was too busy to do the installation or if he needed the money now and wanted to get it going, whether there was rain or not. Either way, it made me question whether the damp soil really would impact the final product.

So here's how my conversation with him went:

Lois: You're going to have to help me out here because I'm a little confused. I thought I heard you say it's not good to do this work when the soil is wet. Given how hard it's raining right now, I'm sure the soil will be still wet tomorrow.

Emilio: It's not that the soil can't be wet. It's that the soil can't be too wet or the plaster won't set.

Lois: I still don't understand. How will we know if the soil is too wet tomorrow? I want to make sure the job is done properly the first time.

Emilio: We don't want to do the job twice either. So we'll check

before we start.

Lois: Okay. Then, if I think the soil is too wet, when the guys arrive, I'll let them know not to start the job.

Emilio: Well, if you do that, then we might have to charge more for them to come back.

Lois: In that case, I suggest we postpone the job until we're all certain it's dry enough. I don't want to waste your time and I don't want to have to pay extra. So this seems like the logical thing to do.

Emilio: Why don't we see what happens with the rain and make the decision in the morning?

Lois: That's okay with me. As long as the guys don't just show up and start working. Why don't we touch base early in the morning?

If you read between the lines, it's clear that I'm skeptical about the information I'm receiving and am concerned that the job might not be done properly. I also asserted what I was and wasn't willing to do, which caused Emilio to negotiate a compromise with me. Some other phrases you can use to allow others to save face without relinquishing your position are "I can see how you might think that, but it's not what we agreed to," or "I don't think this was done intentionally, but I do think it needs to be corrected." Another one is "It's not that I don't believe you. It's that I need more data to satisfy my own need to understand." Finally, "I understand what you're saying and at the same time, I'd like to make sure that I'm understood as well." Demolishing someone else's self-esteem isn't necessary for you to be heard and understood. That only creates problems in the long run, and you know what they say about karma.

Tip 91: Know When to Hold Them and When to Fold Them

Have you ever tried to have a rational conversation with someone, only to be thwarted at every turn? Sometimes the person blows up at you. At other times, they pretend they have no idea what you're talking about. There's still other times that they smile in your face, only to stab you in the back later. If you're the quintessential nice girl, you think it's all your fault. You assume the blame for every miscommunication or discussion that goes south. What you rarely consider, but I hope you will, after reading to this book, is that the other person may have some personality quirks that caused them to be unable to engage in healthy communications.

I call them quirks, when in fact, they could be full-blown personality disorders. But I don't want you to become an armchair psychologist. I want you to be able to recognize when you are definitely not the problem. No matter how effectively you communicate, you're not a match for someone who uses drama and histrionics to keep you at bay.

Here's an example:

Lois: Sandy, I'd like to talk to you about what happened in the team meeting yesterday.

Sandy: Oh, and I'd like to talk to you about it, too. I thought it was horrible the way you turned your back on me and proceeded to ignore me despite my attempts to support what you had to say. You really acted unprofessionally, Lois.

You can see that Sandy has zero interest in hearing my perspective. Instead for her, a good offense is a good defense. I don't know whether she's narcissistic or has borderline personality, but it doesn't much matter. In either case, I'm not going to win this battle. And to take it much further would only create a spitting match, particularly if I've seen Sandy engage in this behavior before.

In this scenario, folding will benefit me more than holding. So my tactic is to let her empty her cup, like a radiator that builds up steam. If it doesn't have a release valve, I know she can blow up at any time. So it's better to let her get it all out when there isn't as much to lose in the moment.

Otherwise, she could blow up at a less opportune time. So the best response would be something like, “Oh, I had no idea you felt that way. Why don’t you tell me more?” Then all I’m going to do is listen. When it seems like she’s finished doing what we psychologists call *catharting*, I’m going to put closure on the discussion by saying, “Thank you for letting me know how you saw the situation. I’ll certainly think about what you said and try not to let it happen again.”

You can hear that I didn’t agree with Sandy. I only acknowledged that this was her impression. Sandy is the kind of person you want to avoid at all costs. And when that’s not possible, you just want to stay out of her line of fire by not saying or doing things that will trigger her drama response. Even that can be difficult, because sometimes you just don’t know what’s going to set these kinds of people off. Being vigilant and cautious is your best line of defense.

In another scenario, we have the person who smiles in your face and then says or does things behind your back to undermine you. Let’s say you ask a coworker if he would be willing to stay late to help you with the project that’s both of your responsibility and it’s taking much longer than you anticipated with the due date approaching quickly. He says he’d be happy to help. But when you go looking for him at five o’clock, the lights are out in his office and his briefcase is gone. He’s left you holding the bag.

When he comes into work the next day, the conversation goes like this:

Lois: Les, I thought you said you could stay late last night to help me with the Williamson project.

Les: Was that last night? I thought you said you wanted me to stay late Wednesday night.

Now, there was no way he could have possibly thought that it was Wednesday night, because the due date is Tuesday. It makes you wonder how you could have been more clear or what part you played in the misunderstanding. If this isn’t the first time these kinds of miscommunications have happened with Les, then you’re most likely dealing with a passive-aggressive personality. These are the most difficult types of people to deal with, because any attempt to address the problem will only be met with more passive-aggressive behavior.

Look at how that works if you decide to take him on:

Lois: Les, you know the deadline is Tuesday. So why would I ask you to work late Wednesday?

Les: It's Tuesday. I didn't realize that. I thought we still had a while to finish it.

Lois: But even if you didn't know the deadline was Tuesday, you knew we had to finish the project, and I feel as if I've been the one who's moving it forward.

Les: I'm so sorry, Lois, I guess I just wasn't thinking about it like that.

You can see what the problem is. By definition, passive-aggressive people won't be confrontational with you. In fact, they'll usually be quite charming. You can talk to them until you're blue in the face about how you see a situation, and you'll likely only get back more smiles and promises that don't mean much in reality. As much as I think we owe it to ourselves to courageously confront people who act inappropriately or don't keep their word, the fact is, there are certain kinds of people you will never get through to. You need to recognize their behavior for what it is and you need to protect yourself from them.

Chapter Seven Key Takeaways

This chapter contains tips that don't fit quite so neatly into the previous chapters, yet I feel strongly should be included in a book of this nature. Although they are dissimilar in nature, each is yet another piece of the communication puzzle.

- **Don't hit that button yet.** Before using electronic means of communication, ask yourself if you would say this to the person's face. Determine if electronically is the best way to communicate the message. Consider the complexity of the message and when in doubt, wait it out.
- **What you should never include in an email or tweet.** Feedback that can be construed as critical, anything negative about your boss or management, office gossip, jokes, and cartoons. Although you may know who you're sending a message to, you don't know who they may forward it to.
- **Keep your business communications professional.** Proofread each and every message before it goes out. Err on the side of being too formal, rather than too casual. Don't use all caps, unless you really want to emphasize a point, and even then, it should be done sparingly. Check your communications for tone. Check for context. Organize your message so that it's easy to read and remember.
- **Don't let distractions get you off track.** Don't be so focused on your message that you overlook interruptions. If someone asks you to walk and talk, take a rain check. If you're already meeting with someone, and they allow interruptions to distract them and you from taking your messages as seriously as you would like, suggest that you come back at a better time and perhaps in a better venue.
- **Manage anxiety through practice and preparation.** Take the

communication concepts we've already covered, and start putting them into practice one at a time. Write down what you want to say using a few bullets that focus on your key points. Envision yourself composed with your notes in front of you, confidently communicating your message to a willing and open listener. Rehearse out loud.

- **Respond to insults with integrity.** If you're not sure something is an insult, check it out. Let the person know how the comment made you feel. Show some vulnerability so that the person knows you aren't an automaton. You're a human being. Provide the person with an idea of what you would like to hear instead. Finally, if this is a pattern of behavior, it requires more than a simple response. This is where you should use the DESC script to have a longer conversation about behavior.
- **Replace equivocating words and phrases with certitudes.** Make certain that your statements and answers have the ring of certainty. Avoid saying things like, "This may not be the best time to bring this up," or "I'm not sure this is right but..." Say things in the affirmative. You can always go back and correct yourself, but you can't change the impression of being wishy-washy.
- **How to win an argument.** Focus on the strengths of your platform, not the weaknesses of others. Allow others to save face. Everything doesn't have to be a zero-sum game. Limit yourself to two or three main points. Avoid trying to sound intelligent. Consider using a short, repetitive refrain.
- **Choose the hill you're willing to die on.** Don't make mountains out of molehills. Fight the good fight on the critical issues. If you're not sure if it's a molehill or a battle worth fighting, trust your gut or look to your values. There are no right or wrong answers, only answers that are right for you.
- **Don't settle for poor customer service.** Start by taking a really deep breath to calm yourself down. Then when you start a conversation

with anyone in customer service, get their name and use it in the conversation. Next, if you feel as if you aren't being understood or that your needs aren't being taken into consideration, ask to speak with a supervisor. If they refuse to allow you to speak with a supervisor, it's time to find the vice president of customer service. Finally, if none of that works and it looks like you've reached a dead end, there's always Yelp, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Twitter, Angie's List, the Better Business Bureau, and other places where you can leave a review.

- **Use unconditional positive regard to your advantage regardless of how poorly you are treated.** Responding in kind only brings you down to their level. You can make your point known and treat others with respect.
- **Know when to hold them and when to fold them.** Recognize when you are dealing with the type of person who, no matter what you do, will not hear or understand you. Know that in this circumstance, you definitely are not the problem. Rather than trying to influence or persuade the person to see your point, simply thank them for their time, agree to disagree, and cut your losses.

Chapter Eight

Communication Quick Tips

I want to end with some one-liners for you to store in your toolbox. What these all have in common is that the response is couched as an I-message rather than a you-message. You-messages are frequently followed by the words *never* and *always*. For example, “You never listen to me,” or “You’re always late.” It may feel good to get that off your chest, but it rarely changes things, especially since you have no control over what someone else does; you only have control over what you choose to do in response to a situation or comment.

Similarly, when I respond to a tricky, sticky, or difficult situation, I’m not focused on who’s right, who’s wrong, who’s up, who’s down. I focus on what’s important to me and ensure that I don’t feel as if I’ve relinquished my power or self-respect in favor of doing what others want or expect. Your response may not change the situation or change someone’s mind, but you will ultimately feel good about advocating for yourself in a way that doesn’t put the other person down, and therefore, you’ll find yourself doing it even more over time.

The following are some common situations where you may wish you had just the right response on the tip of your tongue. Practice these and pretty soon you’ll be in the rhythm of responding with integrity while making your point abundantly clear.

Tip 92: When Someone Misinterprets or Misrepresents What You Said

“I know that’s what you think I said; however, it’s not quite on the mark. Let me clarify.”

Tip 93: When You’re in a Situation Where Your Needs Are Not Being Taken into Consideration

“I don’t want you to think I don’t care about your needs, because I do. At the same time, I also have needs that I want to make sure are met.”

Tip 94: When Someone Asks You to Redo Something into Which You’ve Put Considerable Effort

“If I hear you correctly, you’re saying you would like this done in a different way. Given that so much time and money have already been put into it, I suggest we leave this iteration as is and use the new method next time.”

Tip 95: When Your Spouse, Partner, or Friend Gives You Negative Feedback About Your Appearance After You’ve Left the House

“Although I appreciate your feedback, it would be more helpful if you would provide it about things I can actually do something about.”

Tip 96: When Someone Asks You to Do Something Inappropriate Just Because You’re a Woman

“I can understand why you think this is a woman’s job, and some women may be good at it, but I’m not one of them.”

Tip 97: When Someone Makes an Inappropriate Remark of a Sexual Nature to You

“You may have intended that as a compliment, but I didn’t take it as such.”

Tip 98: When Someone Says You’re Overreacting

“It may appear to you as if I’m overreacting, yet my feelings and concerns are grounded in reality. Let me give you the facts.”

Tip 99: When Someone Doubts Your Ability or Qualifications to Do Something

“I’m not certain what gives you the impression that I’m not capable of taking on that assignment, but I can assure you my experience and education make me uniquely qualified to succeed at it.”

Tip 100: When Someone Asks You to Deliver Something for an Amount of Money That’s Ridiculously Lower Than What’s Needed or What It’s Worth

“I would be happy to provide something for that fee. Now let me tell you realistically what can be delivered for that amount.”

Tip 101: When a Vendor or Telephone Solicitor Is Particularly Persistent

“I appreciate you thinking of me. However, I’m not in the market for it at this time,” and then you hang up.

Tip 102: When a Friend Constantly Changes Dates and Times on You

“I appreciate that you have a busy schedule. At the same time, mine doesn’t have the flexibility to accommodate last-minute changes.” In this situation,

if you want to be a little bit more direct, you could say, “I appreciate that you have a busy schedule. At the same time, I feel as if the plans we make together aren’t the same priority for you as they are for me.”

Tip 103: When You Want to Break Up with Someone You Haven’t Been Dating for That Long

“As much as I’ve enjoyed the time we spent together, I don’t feel that this is the right relationship for me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to get to know you.”

Tip 104: When You Want to Break Up with Someone You’ve Been Dating for a Long Time

“I don’t want to do anything that would hurt your feelings, because you’re important to me. At the same time, I’ve come to the realization that this isn’t the right relationship for me. I have so many positive memories of the times we spent together, and I wish it was different, but it’s not. I hope that after time we might be able to find a way to be in one another’s lives, and yet I realize it may not be possible. I’d like to leave it at that for now so that we can both think about it and discuss it further if that’s something you’d like to do.”

Tip 105: When You Want to Speak with a Supervisor Instead of the Person Who Isn’t Helping Resolve Your Problem

“I understand you don’t have the authority to solve my problem, so please connect me with your supervisor.” Again, make certain you got the person’s name before asking, in case she hangs up on you, and be prepared to be a broken record.

Tip 106: When a Good Friend You Enjoy Spending Time with

Doing a Variety of Things Drinks Too Much Alcohol at Lunch or Dinner

“I enjoy your company so much, for the most part. An exception to this is when you drink too much when we’re out to lunch or dinner, so I’m going to ask that we focus on spending time doing things that don’t involve alcohol.”

And lastly:

Tip 107: When Your Spouse or Partner Continues to Invite Friends Along on Date Night, Even After You’ve Asked Him or Her Not To

“As much as I like all of our friends, we have so little time to ourselves that including others on date nights really spoils the evening for me. It’s fine with me if you’d like to spend time with your friends. At the same time, I think I’ll pass on joining you for those evenings that were supposed to be just you and me but wind up being a group event.”

That’s the end of this book. I hope that you’ll be taking away tools and tips that will make you a more confident and courageous communicator. Remember what I said earlier: You can’t possibly be expected to put all of these tips into practice right away. Instead, I suggest that you go to the Contents and take a look at those areas, just maybe two or three of them, where you feel as if you could use the most help and work on those. When you get those under your belt, come back, choose another two or three, and work on those. Pretty soon you’ll be heard, understood, and noticed for all the right reasons.

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About the Author

Lois P. Frankel, PhD, is a *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author, executive coach, and an internationally sought-after keynote speaker in the fields of career and leadership development for women. Her “nice girls” books have been translated into over twenty-five languages worldwide, with *Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office* widely recognized as the definitive business bible for women. Television appearances include *Today*, *Larry King Live*, the *Tavis Smiley* show, the Hallmark Channel, and *20/20*, and she has been featured in newspapers and magazines such as *People*, *USA Today*, *Time*, and *Cosmopolitan*. In addition to her professional and literary accomplishments, Lois founded two nonprofit organizations that serve women and girls: MOSTE (Motivating Our Students Through Experience) and Bloom Again Foundation. When not writing books, she can be found bicycling, photographing pets and their people, and digging in the dirt of her garden in Southern California.

Also by Dr. Lois Frankel

Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office

Nice Girls Don't Get Rich

Nice Girls Just Don't Get It

See Jane Lead

Stop Sabotaging Your Career

Women, Anger, and Depression

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“Whether you’re at entry-level or you already occupy the corner office, you need to know which ‘nice girl’ mistakes are affecting, or sabotaging, your career and your life. As you’re reading *Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office* you’ll instantly recognize some of your own errors, and Lois will give you common sense solutions on how to avoid them.”

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—*ShelfLife*

“Dr. Lois Frankel’s advice is critical for any woman who wants to keep her balance on the ‘thin pink line,’ the narrow band of acceptable behavior for women in the workplace.”

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“A game changer. *Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office* is a blueprint for career success, and more importantly, career introspection.”

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“This is the book every woman (diva or otherwise) needs on her desk.”

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“Vivid, no-nonsense... I love this book.”

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“Good counsel... user-friendly worksheets... invigorating. This is one of the most important contributions to the personal finance literature since Suze Orman. You go, girl!”

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“A fresh look at how women think about money... deals with the real reasons women have so much difficulty with their finances. I wish [I had] it before I made so many of the mistakes she discusses.”

—Barbara Stanny, author of *Prince Charming Isn't Coming: How Women Get Smart About Money* and *Secrets of Six-Figure Women*

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