CHAPTER 12

Restoring the Leadership Balance: WOMEN UNITE

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INTRODUCTION

Women have regularly been described as natural leaders. In the surreal time of the 2020 pandemic, a Harvard Business Review article published data on the fact that countries with women in leadership had six times fewer confirmed deaths from Covid-19 than countries with governments led by men (Chamorro-Premuzic & Wittenberg-Cox, 2020). Chamorro-Premuzic and Wittenberg-Cox claim that there has been an overwhelming number of reports highlighting that female-led countries managed the crisis better. The praise was geared to these female leaders’ individual strengths, such as the data-driven trustworthiness of Angela Merkel (Chancellor of Germany), the empathetic rationality of Jacinda Ardern (Prime Minister of New Zealand), and the quiet resilience of Tsai Ing-wen (President of Taiwan). The above trend is not a new one. Hernandez Bark, Escartín, Schuh and Dick (2016) confirmed that female leaders have been known to lead more effectively than male leaders.

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Hernandez Bark et al. postulate that female leaders generally use more effective leadership styles than men, are financially more valuable for organizations, and bring more philanthropic and corporate social responsibility efforts to organizations they are involved with. Given the current awareness that soft skills, such as empathy, communication, and listening are the most appropriate ones to lead others, it therefore remains amazing that women only hold 21% of C-suite positions (Lipkin, 2019).

A factor to consider in the imbalanced leadership reality is the fact that many companies will claim on their websites and on public forums that they champion diversity, equity, and inclusion, but the compositions of their leadership teams blatantly and categorically deny this claim. The reason, according to King (2020) is denial. All of the 72 male and female senior executives King interviewed stressed the meritocratic nature of their workplace and the equal treatment all employees received. The argument for women to be less successful in reaching the C-Suite was, according to these senior executives, that women made different individual choices or had deviating capabilities. The problem was, in their opinion, not the hostility of their work environments.

Still, whether we choose to perceive women through their physical constitution to procreate, their intuitive skill to yield when necessary, or their innate grit to persevere long after others have given up: women have been the backbone of every human society. “When women succeed, the world succeeds,” said House minority leader, Nancy Pelosi, at a 2017 rally on international women’s day, March 8th, aimed at stepping up the rights for women (Zavis et al., 2017).

A Disheartening Reality

The fact that women seem to have downplayed their leadership skills for centuries might be explained by several factors. For starters, women have been instructed for the longest time, starting with their upbringing, that it’s more suitable to be discreet and even downplay their qualities, compared to men who were encouraged from boyhood on to toot their own horn (Seale, 2019). Women who display any authority are labeled as bossy, whereas men exerting the same behavior are praised for being passionate. In addition, there is a mentorship gap when it comes to grooming women for leadership positions. This gap varies by ethnicity and is greater for black women than for white ones (Seale, 2019). These are all factors that add to the challenge of women making
the progress they could have been making if we observe the percentages of college graduates in recent decades. Since 1981–1982, women have outperformed men consistently in the percentages of college graduations with women accounting for 57% of bachelor’s degree earnings in 2016–2017 in the US (Matias, 2019). Yet, while women now represent half of the US-educated labor force, their rewards remain low compared to their male counterparts. The average male with a bachelor’s degree outearns an equally credentialed woman by about $26,000 per year (Matias, 2019). While the gender gap in pay has narrowed since 1980, it has remained fairly consistent over the past 15 or more years. In 2017, women earned 82% of what men earned (Allen, 2018). While some sources argue that this has to do with the differences in the professional areas women primarily select—indicating that those are usually the lower paid fields—it still turns out that men in similar professions get paid more than women with equal credentials.

**Considering the Origins**

There is a subtle component that may contribute to the lingering status quo of professional male dominance; one that is not often addressed because it lies deeply in the emotional realm, and that is the fact that women are the bearers of the sons they eagerly want to see prospering, being acutely aware of these upcoming men’s inherent limitations and deep-rooted vulnerabilities. Giancaterino (2010) describes the innate vulnerability of men as a paralyzing sense of loneliness and a lingering desire to obtain approval. According to Giancaterino, men have a greater need for belonging and connection, which may be originating from the irrefutable fact that, unlike women who come from women, men don’t come from men. This undeniable truth may create a deeper need for connection within males, yet, as they grow up and realize that emotions are considered a sign of weakness, they unplug to an extent that their sensitivity becomes deeply buried under an exterior of stoicism and emotional indifference. McRae, Ochsner, Mauss, Gabrieli and Gross (2008) explain the lesser extent to which men reveal their feelings as a greater level of emotional regulation, and affirm that this doesn’t mean that men have less emotional experiences, just that they withhold them more from showing. The above reasoning upholds that women, the bearers of men, are acutely aware of their sons’ concealed vulnerabilities, and therefore support and protect them even more than they do other
women. A survey by the website Netmums, polling 2,672 mothers led to the finding that more than one in five of the surveyed women (22%) agreed that they let their sons get away with more, turning a blind eye to behavior for which they would reprimand their daughters (*Mothers harder on daughters...,* 2010).

Considering the above issue from an opposite angle may partly address the arising counterargument that women are also the bearers of the daughters who are, till today, ruthlessly oppressed in multiple societies and the professional world, leading up to the question: if women are truly the societal backbone, why would they allow that to happen? The earlier mentioned article (*Mothers harder on daughters...,* 2010) revealed that mothers were twice as likely to be critical of their daughters than their sons (21% compared to 11.5%). The article subsequently alerts its readers that the parental disapproval girls receive growing up may be carried into their professional performance, leading up to self-deprecation, and subconscious preservation of the skewed power dynamics in workplaces.

**A Recurring Story of Harsh Treatment**

Another clarifying response may be that women are also acutely aware of the inner strength of their own kind, and therefore know that their “daughters,” on average, have greater stamina to cope with challenges than the opposite sex. An interesting consideration, which is rather fascinating and conspicuous, is the entrenched competitiveness among women. In a 2016 article, Strauss addresses this issue, and cites a range of sources that support the hypothesis that women are harsher to one another in the workplace. Strauss (2016) mentioned surveys conducted through the years, that yield women rating other women lower 57% of the time, compared to their ratings of male colleagues, and reports that revealed discouraging degrees of workplace bullying from women toward one another than from the opposite sex. Strauss (2016) also mentioned a 2011 report from the American Management Association, which declared that about 95% of women have reportedly been “tormented” by another woman during their careers. University of Arizona management professor Allison Gabriel also conducted a study based on three surveys regarding women’s attitudes toward one another in professional environments and found that “female-instigated incivility” (toward one another) is a very real trend. In other words: women are oftentimes meaner toward one another than men are toward them, and meaner than they are toward
men (Ang, 2018). The tendency to penalize occurs particularly toward women who try to defy stereotypes, and are thereby seen as violating gender expectations. A resounding example is the case of Hillary Clinton, who received much more support from other women when she was the first lady (the stereotypical role) than when she was running for president (defying the stereotype) (Ang, 2018).

The tendency of women to be harder toward other women may, according to Strauss (2016), originate from a defense mechanism, triggered by perceived competition. Whether or not that is the case, clinical psychologist Seth Meyers (2013) reflects on decades of his work with women across numerous demographic variables, and finds that there is consistency in the harshness of women toward each other, to a greater extent than toward men. He makes reference to the reflections of many women who have explained their encounters with “mean girls” (female bullies) in the workplace, all seeming to have a tendency to socially exclude those they perceive as a potential threat. Indeed, there are many women who will confirm that their harshest critics and least supportive counterparts are not men but other women.

Presenting the term *relational aggression*, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found that, in a study among 491 third- through sixth-grade children from public schools in the Midwest, this behavioral pattern was more characteristic of girls than of boys. The results of their study indicated that, as a group, girls were significantly more relationally aggressive than boys and, when relatively extreme groups of aggressive and nonaggressive children were identified, girls were more likely than boys to be represented in the relationally aggressive group (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). These findings were confirmed in a subsequent study (Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996). Meyers (2013), referring to Crick and Grotpeter’s studies, infers that women’s negative attitudes at work could be considered a manifestation of relational aggression. In support of the earlier presented argument of mothers being harsher toward their daughters than to their sons, Meyers also shares his experiences as a clinical psychologist in that regard, suggesting that women with greater degrees of relational aggression may have been raised by mothers who were excessively critical toward them, and potentially infused a negative mindset about women into them. Meyers finally calls for a deliberate effort from women to teach their daughters positive perspectives about other women, in order to groom
them for support rather than opposition of one another in professional settings, as he sees this as the critical way to correct the status quo of women earning less, and holding fewer leadership positions compared to men.

**Glass and Pink Ceilings**

“The glass ceiling is a metaphor referring to an artificial barrier that prevents women and minorities from being promoted to managerial- and executive-level positions within an organization. The phrase “glass ceiling” is used to describe the difficulties faced by women when trying to move to higher roles in a male-dominated hierarchy. The barriers are most often unwritten, meaning that women are more likely to be restricted from advancing through accepted norms and implicit biases rather than defined corporate policies”. (Kagan, 2019)

The glass ceiling was popularized in the 1980s and has been widely perceived as the most common thread for women and minority members to move upward in the corporate world. The term “pink ceiling” has not been addressed formally and expansively as the glass ceiling, but it also entails an informal and often undefined barrier for certain groups. It is based on a homophobic mindset, and forms a resistance to gay and lesbian workforce members in the ascent of their careers (Mitchell, 1999).

Even though there is abundant evidence of the increased quality that a diverse workforce represents for output and the bottom line, glass and pink ceilings are unfortunately still erected, invisible as they are. In addition, there is also a related term, the “glass cliff,” which represents the instatement or promotion of women and minorities to positions in times of crisis, when there is an elevated chance for failure (Brooke-Marciniak, 2018; Kagan, 2019).

When glass and pink ceilings are mentioned, there is often a subtle implication that these barriers are erected and maintained by the “good old boys club.” There is no doubt that much of these assumptions are correct, given the fact that this club is still very much in control of the C-suite. However, given the earlier mentioned tendencies of bullying, incivility, and relational aggression within the female cohort, the question that may arise is, who are the true designers of these barriers?
Allen (2018) posits that corporate culture and societal norms are definitely impeding factors in pay and positional gaps between men and women, but invites women to consider revisiting their approach in six areas that may contribute to their continued victimization.

1. Women should dare to negotiate harder and ask for extra perks. Allen (2018) states that, while women are superb negotiators, they often question their own value, and subsequently lack the courage to stand up for their own progress, not only in regards to the pay, but also when it comes to incentives.

2. Women should start valuing their talents more, and no longer avoid focusing on hard skills, which are also needed in professional settings. While soft skills are important in human interactions, it’s equally advantageous to learn about strategy, finance, budgets, analytics, and performance metrics—factors that come across as impressive at the higher echelons of any organization (Allen, 2018).

3. Women should not shy away from conflict at work. Many women in the workplace fear being seen as overly emotional or aggressive, and subsequently avoid conflict at any cost. Unfortunately, postulates Allen (2018), this profiles them as weaker than they are, and allows others, oftentimes their male counterparts, to demand the credits for bold advocacy.

4. Women should examine their work ethics and their need for more flexibility, which makes their performance less impressive. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that men work an average of 14 hours more per month than women (The Economics Daily, 2015). Allen (2018) alerts that, while women need more flexible hours for an oftentimes understandable variety of reasons, workplaces are not required to adhere to these needs, and may decide to prefer other takers for demanding jobs. Allen therefore recommends to every woman to deeply consider the demands of a job before taking it on.

5. Women should include appropriate pace in their goals. This means that priorities and sacrifices have to be made, in the understanding that one cannot be everything to everyone at all times (Allen, 2018).

6. Women should be less risk-averse. Allen (2018) observes that performance penalties are a major turn-off to many women, leading to risk aversion, which often means, being stagnant in their performance.
With the six critical areas of attention and necessary attitudinal change in mind, Allen (2018) reiterates that there are many factors keeping the metaphorical ceilings intact, but there is also some work to be done by women in order to shatter them for good. Living in an era of exceptional paradigm transformations, it would befit all stakeholders in professional settings to engage in deep reflection in order to address all issues on the table.

**Women Unite**

The next section of this chapter presents ten reflective insights, which are captured in the acronym “WOMEN UNITE.” The insights, formulated by the authors on basis of their diverse experiences, insights, and reflections as professional women, educators, supervisors, subordinates, and minorities, are intended as a support system for women who are eager to restore the leadership balance, and do so in a consciously and morally responsible way.

*Walk your talk:* This is an era where mutual support is promoted, and voices are raised for women to stand together. Welsh McNulty (2018) is a major advocate for women to unite and walk the mounting talk of mutual support, but she describes the experiences that led to her current actions and insights in an industry that is still solidly male-dominated at the top: the accounting field. She explains that the greatest downfall for women in many work environments is their lack of supportive action, and also clarifies why this seems to be perpetuated: it is because women who support younger women in workplaces usually get penalized by getting poorer ratings. As this has become widely known, women in higher position have become leery of supporting female protégés. Additionally, there is a space bias about the percentages of women that should be represented in leadership teams. Oftentimes, states Welsh McNulty (2018, companies consider their female top representation sufficient when there are two women in a leadership team of ten. These women at the top sometimes distance themselves from younger ones in order to be more accepted by the senior leadership in-group, thus securing their presence in the limited “space” they consider available for their gender. With a description of percentages for female representatives that steadily drop as we ascend levels in corporations, Welsh McNulty
(2018) also emphasizes the even greater absence of women of color in such circles. She therefore calls for more women support movements in workplaces, greater levels of socializing, and continuing to support younger female entrants until the tendency to be penalized for doing so gets defused. Welsh McNulty also emphasizes the importance of educating new female entrants that their tasks should not be the stereotypical ones—such as always taking care of the coffee—if they were not specifically hired to do so.

Open your heart: It’s not easy to climb the career ladder as a woman—not even in these revolutionary times, but once you have landed a leadership position, release grudges and spiteful mannerisms. Turn inward instead, and generously grant others the opportunities that you had to fight for. Carboni, Cross, Page and Parker (2019) provide four useful considerations to women in making the best of their networks, while maintaining relations that provide heartfelt support: (1) Boundary-spanning—whereby it’s not the size of a network that makes the positive difference, but the diversity of those one is connected with. Carboni et al. stress that remaining in one small interest world, even if it consists of many people, keeps perspectives and opportunities limited. Breadth in interest areas from a small group of connections is much more rewarding. (2) Efficiency—whereby a critical process of selecting through the many demands on one’s time should be implemented in order to reduce stress and a sense of being overexerted. Carboni et al. (2019) posit that being strategic and thoughtful of one’s time and well-being is of high importance, and this can only be done when one learns to say “no” more often. (3) Stickiness—whereby women have to understand the importance of maintaining valuable relationships—those that are constructive to their well-being and progress—and release connections that don’t contribute to their advancement. While it may seem calculated, and Carboni et al. even drop the term “Machiavellian,” the deeper and more sensible message here is that it is detrimental to hold on to obsolete relationships, since connections should be organic, and regularly examined on whether they still add value for all parties involved. (4) Trust, which is a critical aspect in any form of human connection. Carboni et al. (2019) distinguish between competence-based trust and benevolent trust. While competence-based trust is more attractive to men, benevolent trust seems to be far more preferred among women. This is the type of
trust that garners mutual advancement in an environment of respect, honesty, and reliability.

**Motivate others:** The progress made by one woman can be a great motivator to others. However, attitude is a major determinant here. Since almost every woman has encountered one or more Queen Bee’s in professional settings, and has suffered from relational aggression in more ways than one, there may be legitimate fear among younger women to approach more mature ones for guidance. But here is where some deep soul searching within the more seasoned women should emerge: we can either decide to exude a sense of arrogance by remaining distant, or we can embrace those who approach us for guidance, and help them believe in their ability to succeed.

Studies have revealed that women score lower in power motivation than men (Hernandez Bark et al., 2016). Power motivation describes interpersonal differences in the desire to influence others (McClelland, 1985). Fortunately, literature about transformational leadership has also established that women score higher in transformational leadership than men, which may be attributed to the feminine characteristics that lie at the foundation of this leadership style (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003; Hernandez Bark et al., 2016). It is the desire to transform in which we can find influence, mentorship, and a drive to help others excel. Given these innate qualities of women, there is no reason why there could not be a concerted effort made in positively transforming upcoming women in workplaces through motivational practices.

**Express your appreciation:** We often underestimate how intimidating we may come across onto others, so making some extra effort in showing our sympathetic and supportive side can only do us (and others) a lot of good. Cancialosi (2016) warns that too much complaining, especially at work, brings people down, hurts morale, negatively affects productivity, looks unprofessional, and limits possibilities. Cancialosi (2016) reminds us that we harvest what we focus on, and when we focus on positive energy such as joy, integrity, or trust, we pave the way for these vibes to surround us, and realize that there is much to be appreciated every day anew. Cancialosi recommends to consider a pattern of six daily steps to groom us for greater appreciation: (1) choosing our attitude—regardless of our circumstances, we have the power to do that; (2) paying attention
to the way we speak and the things we say—our language use can determine much of what we exude; (3) saying thank you—a simple gesture that can send a lot of positive triggers in the universe; (4) starting a gratitude journal to keep track of all our blessings; (5) asking for feedback to learn how to listen attentively and find out how we come across; and (6) shifting the narrative to positive rather than negative topics.

**Nurture constructive habits:** One of the main problems with successful people—men and women—is that they have become workaholics, unable to relax, because they have unlearned that part. Yet, what has been unlearned can be relearned. It’s not easy, but it’s rewarding. Webber (2014) describes the shift made by a software programmer, who was perceived as very successful, as he was making a great salary. Unfortunately, he felt desolate and depressed by his job. He ultimately decided to make the leap toward a more outdoors form of making a living, and found that, while he was making far less money, the quality of his life and his level of gratification was immensely higher. Webber (2014) emphasizes that there is no age barrier for a shift to constructive habits, and studies have revealed that even people over the age of 70 made changes in their lives that provided them a new burst of energy and fulfillment. Understanding your strengths, weaknesses, passions, and story can help you define what you really want in life, causing you to look at the world and match yourself up to opportunities (Webber, 2014).

**Understand differences:** One critical flaw in many leaders—male and female—is that they prefer team members with similar skills as they have, while they should actually be looking for complementary skills to form a harmonious and strong team. Inclusion of members of underrepresented groups has multiple advantages. It’s not only the right thing to do in regards to humaneness, fairness, equity, and opportunity (the social justice case), but it also adds to a competitive advantage, as diverse teams tap from a broader base of insights, can solve problems in more creative ways, and therefore deliver greater innovation and productivity (the innovation case) (Woo & McIntosh, 2016). It’s also important to note that diversity should not be limited to lower echelons of organizations, as this is exactly why so many women refrain from rising through the ranks. Surface-level diversity does not lead to creativity and innovation, but when diversity is thoroughly embedded and valued in an organization
(deep-level diversity), there will be a clear positive effect on the team’s creativity and innovation (Wang, Grand, Cheng, & Leung, 2019).

Navigate the path from here onward: If there’s one thing none of us can afford, it’s becoming stagnant and stale, especially in the case of women in supervisory positions. We should therefore never consider ourselves too old or too established to be expelled from our current position. Constant learning and evolving are keys to ongoing reinvention. Brenner (2018) offers five ways that can be constructive in regrouping, reprioritizing, renewing, and possibly even reinventing ourselves: (1) streamline your life, and a good way to start that is to declutter our direct surroundings, reorganize our priorities, and re-evaluate our commitments; (2) start something new—this can vary from taking a class, learning a new language volunteer somewhere, in short: doing something different that you consider fulfilling; (3) engage in a new practice—a constructive new, daily habit that can rejuvenate your degree of mindfulness—yoga, meditation, or exercise are some great and inexpensive options; (4) spend time in nature, as this confronts us with the cycle of life and can restore our appreciation for simple joys; (5) take a trip to a place—near or far—that you have not visited before. These outings oftentimes bring a sense of renewed energy and insights.

Instill values into actions: Being true to one’s beliefs and values will ensure optimal satisfaction when looking back at a finalized career. Life presents numerous enticements to deviate us from our principles. Yet, we have the space and capacity to consider the many opportunities we receive to demonstrate our commitment. Selig (2018) suggests several ways to determine our primary values, which are the principles that give our lives meaning and allow us to persevere through difficult times. Some of those are, (1) list a large number of values, and then choose our top six to eight; (2) think of a few people (about five) you consider dear or admirable, and ask yourself why they are so important to you: this can reveal a set of values you consider important; (3) observe yourself and ask what you can learn from the choices you made, and (4) consider the highs and lows in your life, as there is a lot of value discovery to be done when evaluating your peaks and valleys.

Tread gently: It can be a tremendous challenge to remain gentle, especially when we had to overcome numerous obstacles on our
way to where we currently are, but this doesn’t give us a free card to pound on the souls of others. Uzzi (2019) has found that there is a difference between the networks of successful male and female leaders: while men benefit most from the connection points (centrality), women also need an inner circle of close female contacts to guide them through the cultural and political hurdles in workplaces that men don’t have to worry about. This inner circle, a group of intimate contacts, should be small, and preferably not connected to similar clusters. Rather, the intimate contacts should derive from diverging circles, so that friction and the rise of potential relational aggression remains minimal. Being part of such an intimate circle of confidantes is an honor for life, and gives us a chance to build a legacy: it is a delicate and precious one, which we should cherish.  

Excel where it matters: Getting ahead is great; making much money is admired; achieving the highest rank is commendable, but helping other living beings find happiness is the spice of life. It’s therefore important to identify how to make a positive difference, and gear our energy in that direction. That’s never a waste of time. Zalis (2019) underscores the success rate that results from women networking with and supporting one another. Referring to the term “power of the pack”, she reveals the performance of some large women support groups, such as The FQ Lounge, which doesn’t exclude the presence of men, but emphasizes the purpose of supporting females. Unlike an earlier presented statement from Welsh McNulty (2018), Zalis (2019) claims that women who support other women are more successful. She also advises to take the word “work” out of networking, because many women shy away or stress about the requirement to connect with others in order to progress on the corporate ladder. However, when this is done in a meaningful way, it may result in lifelong bonds.

The ten insights above, representing the acronym WOMEN UNITE, are intended to encourage female (and male) leaders to reconnect with their empathetic side, and build a legacy that will progressively make them feel happier and fulfilled as they reach the stage of passing the baton.
**Chapter Takeaways**

- Women have regularly been described as natural leaders and have been confirmed to lead more effectively than male leaders, yet, they only hold 21% of C-suite positions.
  The fact that women seem to have downplayed their leadership skills for centuries could be explained by several factors, some of which are:
  - Women have been instructed for the longest time that it’s more suitable to be discreet and even downplay their qualities.
  - There is a mentorship gap when it comes to grooming women for leadership positions.
  - Women are the bearers of the sons they eagerly want to see prospering, being acutely aware of these upcoming men’s inherent limitations and deep-rooted vulnerabilities.

- A negative tendency among women is *female-instigated incivility*: 95% of women have reportedly been “tormented” by another woman during their careers. Women are oftentimes meaner toward one another than men are toward them, and meaner than they are toward men.

- Another tendency that women often display against one another is *relational aggression*: studies of school children showed that this behavioral pattern was more characteristic of girls than of boys.

- The phrase “glass ceiling” is used to describe the difficulties faced by women when trying to move to higher roles in a male-dominated hierarchy. Even though there is evidence of the increased quality that a diverse workforce represents for output and the bottom line, glass and pink ceilings are unfortunately still erected, invisible as they are.

- “WOMEN UNITE” is an acronym intended to serve as a support system for women who are eager to restore the leadership balance, and doing so in a consciously and morally responsible way.
  - *Walk your talk*: This is an era where mutual support is promoted, and voices are raised for women to stand together. The greatest downfall for women in many work environments is their lack of supportive action.
  - *Open your heart*: Turn inward and generously grant others the opportunities that you had to fight for.
- **Motivate others:** The progress made by one woman can be a great motivator to others. We can either decide to exude a sense of arrogance by remaining distant, or we can embrace those who approach us for guidance, and help them believe in their ability to succeed.

- **Express your appreciation:** Making some extra effort in showing our sympathetic and supportive side can only do us (and others) a lot of good.

- **Nurture constructive habits:** Understanding your strengths, weaknesses, passions, and story can help you define what you really want in life, causing you to look at the world and match yourself up to opportunities.

- **Understand differences:** Look for complementary skills to form a harmonious and strong team. Inclusion of members of underrepresented groups has multiple advantages. It’s not only the right thing to do, but it also adds to a competitive advantage.

- **Navigate the path from here onward:** If there’s one thing none of us can afford, it’s becoming stagnant and stale. Constant learning and evolving are keys to ongoing reinvention.

- **Instill values into actions:** Being true to one’s beliefs and values will ensure optimal satisfaction when looking back at a finalized career.

- **Tread gently:** It can be a tremendous challenge to remain gentle, especially when we had to overcome numerous obstacles on our way to where we currently are, but this doesn’t give us a free card to pound on the souls of others. Being part of an intimate circle of confidantes is an honor for life.

- **Excel where it matters:** Identify how to make a positive difference, and gear our energy in that direction. That’s never a waste of time.

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