

Thank you for downloading these self-coaching questions, inspired by my summary of:

[How Women Rise: Break the 12 Habits Holding You Back](#)

Any further questions, or if you'd like to explore coaching with me then get in touch:
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Habit 1. Reluctance to Claim Your Achievements

If you struggle to claim credit for your achievements, it may cost you throughout your career. But the costs will be highest when you're trying to move to the next level or seeking a new job. Speaking up about what you contribute and detailing why you're qualified does not make you self-centred or self-serving. It sends a signal that you're ready to rise.

- What is preventing you from claiming your achievements? What can you do to overcome these obstacles?
- What impact would claiming your achievements have on your confidence level?
- What impact would claiming your achievements have on your career?
- What impact is not claiming your achievements having on your career? On getting a promotion? When seeking a new job?
- Write down a list of memorable tasks or projects that you've worked on in the last 12 months. Thinking about each, to what extent did you claim credit for your work? Score them on a scale of 1 being not at all, to 10 being full and appropriate credit claimed.
- What scores did you give yourself? Do you notice any patterns?
- If you asked a trusted female colleague, who knows your work well, what scores would they give you? Where and how are they different?
- Are there any tasks or projects on your list that really stand out? Is it too late to claim credit for one of them? How might you **experiment** with doing that in a way that makes you feel comfortable and empowered?
- Picture yourself claiming your achievement on a particular piece of work you are most proud of. What are you saying specifically? In what context? To whom?
- Imagine yourself claiming your achievements in a way that feels most appropriate and empowering to you. What are you seeing? What are you telling yourself? What are you hearing? What are you feeling?
- If you've already tried it, how did it feel?
- What behaviours can you learn from other women who are skilful at owning their achievements?
- What have you seen your female team members achieve recently that they have not claimed credit for and how can you encourage them to be comfortable claiming credit?
- Are there other ways or initiatives that you can propose to your leadership peers, male and female, that would help promote the sharing of female-led work?
- Which women in your organisation do you consider skilful at owning their achievements? What would you ask them in terms of advice? When is a good time to reach out to them?

Habit 2. Expecting Others to Spontaneously Notice and Reward Your Hard Work

Expecting others to notice your contributions, or believing that they should, is not only a good way to keep yourself stuck, it can also diminish the satisfaction you feel in a job you would otherwise enjoy. Remember this: companies don't just make great products and assume that customers should want to buy them. They have a marketing function that is designed to effectively promote what they do. You, as a professional, need one too.

Otherwise, when the praise you hope for is not forthcoming, you might feel unappreciated and under acknowledged. You may start to resent not only the higher-ups who seem unaware of all the hard work you do but also colleagues who are skilled at getting noticed. You may then decide they are just showboats and congratulate yourself on being less self-centred, taking comfort in your own wonderfulness even as you stay in the shadows.

- What is your greatest aspiration for success in your current role?
- Where would you like your career, and life, to be in 5 years time and beyond?
- How might you articulate that to others in the form of an **Elevator Pitch**?
- Who in your organisation do you need to share this with in order to ensure that your contributions are seen and your aspirations met?
- What can you do to help those in your team develop their own aspirations and Elevator Pitch?
- What 3 achievements are you most proud of?
- Who do you think should be aware of them?
- How might you articulate those achievements to the relevant individuals, in a way that feels right to you?

Habit 3. Overvaluing Expertise

Trying to master every detail of your job in order to become an expert is a great strategy for keeping the job you have. But if your goal is to move to a higher level, your expertise is probably not going to get you there. In fact mastery of your current role often serves as a useful strategy for keeping yourself in your current role.

If you find this statement shocking, it may be because, like many women, you've assumed expertise is the surest route to success. And so you put enormous effort into learning every aspect of your job and assuring your work is letter perfect... Meanwhile, your male colleagues are taking a different route, trying to do the job well enough while focusing their time on building the relationships and visibility that will get them to the next level.

We know that skill and knowledge are required for success but if you want to rise in your field or your organization expertise will only take you so far. That's because the top jobs always require managing and leading people who have expertise, not providing expertise yourself.

- Can you think of a specific example(s) of where you recognise that you play an 'expert role'?
- What drives you to be an expert in your role?
- Is there a trusted colleague you can ask for an opinion?
- Thinking of a specific example, why do you play this expert role? What are the implications for you?
- What might you do differently to hand off your 'expert role' and responsibilities?
- Who in your team could lead on these responsibilities, in a way that helps them develop as a manager and leader?
- Again, how can you experiment with stepping back from some of your expert roles?
- What would it feel like to hand them off?
- What are examples of tasks you are currently not doing - but would be interested in taking on?
- What is keeping you from proactively taking on those new tasks you are interested in? What can you do to overcome these obstacles?
- If you had unlimited knowledge and confidence, what tasks would you love to start doing?
- Who could you talk to that could help you move into these new responsibilities?
- Picture yourself in the same role you are currently in, 5 years from now. How would this make you feel? What would you be telling yourself?
- What could you do to avoid this situation from happening?

Habit 4. Building Rather than Leveraging Relationships

While women are often stellar relationship builders, they tend to be less skilled at leveraging relationships. Or maybe not exactly less skilled, but rather noticeably reluctant to do so... we see talented, hard working women who rebel at the very thought of engaging others to help them meet either specific or long term career goals. They'll gladly spend time and energy getting to know people, offering them help, listening to their problems, giving advice, and drawing them close. But they shrink at the prospect of engaging them in a way that furthers their own ambitions.

- Who do you already have strong relationships with?
- How could you get more out of those relationships, in a way that you'd feel comfortable using the relationship to advance your career? Is there mutual benefit; can you help them?

e.g. a client of mine asked a senior male leader to support and advocate for her through her promotion process. In return she is mentoring him, to help him be more connected to and understand the perspectives of others in a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion context.

- Would you feel comfortable sharing your Elevator Pitch with them, and asking them how they think they could help you achieve your ambitions?
- Is there one person, a trusted colleague, whom you could try this with? Are there a couple more?

- If you don't feel comfortable leveraging certain relationships, why not? What comes up for you when you consider it?
- What does “leveraging relationships” mean to you? What terms would you like to use instead - that resonate with you?
- How can you shift your approach to “leveraging relationships” – in a way that would best serve you?
- Who would you like to build closer relationships with? These may be male colleagues, or anyone else who you think could help you progress in your career? How might you go about building a relationship with them?
- In what ways do you currently help others?
- What is preventing you from asking them to help you?
- What impact is not sharing your career ambitions having on your performance levels? On your work satisfaction? On your confidence?

Habit 5. Failing to Enlist Allies from Day One

Women who assume new positions resolve to keep their heads down until they've mastered the details and are confident they can perform to a certain standard. They want to feel fully prepared before they start reaching out. By contrast, men in new positions often start with the question: 'who should I connect with to make this job a success?' They view the path to success not as a matter of what or how, but of who. They see connections as the most important part of their job and want to start building them on day one.

Allies are peers, colleagues, higher-ups, sponsors, direct reports and internal and external fans who support your efforts to get where you want to go. Allies know what you're trying to achieve, believe it has value, sense they have a stake in it, and do what they can to move you along. They help you find the resources you need to do a tough job. And they get the word out about your contributions... Allies are the heart and soul of a successful career.

- Who are your key allies and how do you support one another?
- What can you do to strengthen your relationship with them?
- What new alliances do you need to form and what steps can you take to connect and build those relationships?
- What factors do you consider key to your success?
- What do you continually focus on to increase your chances of success?
- What has been the impact of this approach on your success so far?
- How satisfied are you, on a scale of 1-10, with your current level of success?
- What would you like to do more of? Less of?
- How would you define the term “allies” in the workplace?
- List 3 benefits of having allies in the workplace.
- List 3 allies you currently have. What could you tell them to make them aware of your career ambitions? And to gain further support from them?
- When is a good time to reach out to them?

Habit 6. Putting Your Job Before Your Career

Many women get very involved with nurturing their team and spend huge amounts of time with their people. This is great for their people, and it can provide intrinsic rewards for the women, but it does not necessarily serve them to be so internally focused.

While their male colleagues are building relationships that will help them in the future, the women are spending all their waking hours managing their teams. They appear to enjoy it, and it certainly pays off in terms of their team's performance, but it does not get the women where they want to go. Managing a team superbly ultimately proves you have great skills as a manager. But building strong outside networks is a promotional skill aimed at getting recognition for the larger organisation.

So while women are honing their management skills and sending the message that they're wonderful managers, their male colleagues are busy building promotional skills and sending the message that their terrific promoters.

- **Where are you putting loyalty above your own career ambitions? Name a specific example.**
- **Which members of your team could you encourage and support to take on greater responsibility, to develop them as managers, and free up your leadership bandwidth?**
- **How well do you communicate your ambitions to leadership?**
- **Consider moments where you promoted your company to external stakeholders. What impact did this have on your career? On your organisation?**
- **What are ways you can promote your company, and your Vision for it, externally that feel right to you?**
- **What do you feel is missing in the way you are tackling your role?**

Habit 7. The Perfection Trap

Women are especially vulnerable to the perfection trap, the belief that they will succeed if they do their job perfectly and never mess anything up. While women in general tend to be seen as better leaders than men, they are often undermined by their tendency to give themselves a hard time, a habit rooted in a desire to be perfect.

If you're trying to be perfect, every task or encounter feels high stakes. You're always on the lookout for something to go wrong since even the smallest glitch has the power to undermine your perfect image. Risk taking requires being open to failure. While risk must be thoughtfully assessed, the outcome is never assured or entirely within your control. The desire to be perfect, by contrast, keeps you focused on what you can control. This narrows your horizons and demonstrates insecurity instead of the confidence in the future that being an effective leader requires.

If you have perfectionist tendencies, you can best serve your long term interests by learning to delegate, prioritise, and get comfortable taking measured risks. This will create a less stressful environment – for you and for others – and demonstrate your readiness to move forward. The good news is that you will be the primary beneficiary if you lay your burden down. But only if you can accept not being perfect.

- What does perfectionism mean to you?
- In your life, where and how do any perfectionist tendencies manifest?
- In what situations are you exerting more control than you should?
- What are the implications of this behaviour for you?
- How might you effectively delegate to, and empower, your team/others?
- What drives you to do certain tasks “perfectly”? What do you feel could happen otherwise?
- Which factors lead to success, in your opinion?
- What does taking risks mean to you?
- When was the last time you took a risk? What happened?
- How do you view failure?
- How can you reframe your approach to failure, in a way that would best serve you?

Habit 8. The Disease to Please

If you're a chronic pleaser, chances are you know it. You may even talk about it, usually in an apologetic tone. And you are probably aware of how it holds you back.

The disease to please can undermine your ability to make clear decisions because you're always trying to split the difference among competing needs in hopes of creating consensus or avoiding giving offence. This can impair your judgement and leave you vulnerable to manipulation by people who know how to use guilt to get others to accommodate their needs. It can rob you of the capacity to act with authority for fear of disappointing others or making them even temporarily unhappy. It can make you an unreliable advocate or ally because you are so easily swayed. It can distract you from your purpose, squander your time and talents, and contribute to your general stuckness.

The disease to please is anything but pleasant and it can be positively poisonous for your career. But what makes you this way and how can you break the habit?

- Reflect on any situation you have been overly eager to people please?
- How did this behaviour manifest itself?
- What do you gain from ‘people pleasing’?
- In what ways does people pleasing limit your effectiveness as a manager/leader?
- What drives you to “people please”?
- What do you feel would happen if you didn’t “people please”?
- What impact does “people pleasing” have on your ability to make clear decisions?
- What do you feel would happen should you disappoint others or make them feel temporarily unhappy?
- Picture yourself acting in a way that is free from other people’s opinion: what would you be doing? Saying? Telling yourself? Feeling?
- What would be the benefits of acting with this state of mind?
- What is most important to you about acting free of other people’s reactions and opinions?
- What could you do, in the next 2 days, that would take you one step closer to this state of mind?

Habit 9. Minimising

The opposite of minimising is presence, perhaps the key component to effective leadership:

For decades [we] have been asked what women can do to convey a more powerful leadership presence. Questions tend to focus on the cosmetics: the right clothes, a firm handshake, a confident tone of voice, whether a woman should carry a purse, even whether plastic surgery can be helpful! Yet decades of exposure to a wide range of extraordinary leaders have shown both of us that the key component of leadership presence is the opposite of cosmetic: it lies in the capacity to be fully present for a task for a conversation, for the moment, for an opportunity. Present for your larger purpose in the world.

- **When and how do you exhibit minimising behaviour?**
- **When you do minimise, what do you ACE:**
 - **Do (Action)**
 - **Think (Cognition)**
 - **Feel (Emotion)**
- **What change in behaviour would increase your presence and make it felt by everyone around you?**
- **Think about a time when you felt confident and present: what were you saying? Feeling? What impact did it have?**
- **What could you do to be more present during conversations?**
- **Think about a female leader you admire, in your organisation. What aspects of her attitude inspires you the most? Which ones would you like to adopt?**
- **How would adopting a more “leader-like” posture benefit you?**

Habit 10. Too Much

We've seen women falter on both sides of the too much / not enough divide. But we've also watched women resolve the conflict to their advantage. Recognising that success in any endeavour requires discipline, they find a way to bring their immediate reactions to full awareness and then respond with passion tempered by experience and intention. As this way of responding becomes a habit, they take on an emotional gravitas that draws integrity from the intensity of the effort.

- **Reflect on a time when you believe you displayed more emotion, used too many words, or disclosed too much. Is your assessment valid?**
- **In your mind's eye, visualise how you want to behave differently in the future?**
- **How might you catch yourself, so that you can respond in a way that is more balanced and not ‘too much’?**
- **What would “being yourself” in a professional context look like to you?**
- **What benefits can you draw from “being yourself”?**
- **What do you think drives others to consider your attitude as sometimes “too much”?**
- **What could you do to free yourself from others' opinions, so you can act in a more spontaneous way?**

Habit 11. Ruminating

If you spend time ruminating, you may tell yourself that you're being reflective. You may imagine it will help you avoid mistakes in the future. Or you may subconsciously believe that you deserve to feel terrible because your behaviour fell short of an imagined ideal or sent a signal that you did not intend. But in fact, there's little protein to be extracted from the well chewed morsels of self contempt that you as a human ruminant keep coming up with. What you're actually doing is berating yourself, engaging in a kind of self talk that can border on abuse.

- What do you most commonly ruminate about?
- In what specific situations do you find yourself replaying old stories?
- If you were to identify one piece of learning from these stories, what would it be?
- What one thing could you do to interrupt the re-running of old stories?
- Can you do this on your own, with the help of a professional coach, or do you need support from a mental health professional?*
- Take a step back. What has been the impact of ruminating on your life so far?
- What drives you to ruminate? What benefits, if any, do you draw from this?
- Write down the 3 stories you ruminate most about. For each of them, write down a key lesson learnt that you can positively implement in your life going forward.
- Picture yourself on the last day of a week where you didn't spend any time ruminating. What would you be telling yourself? Feeling? Doing?
- What new habits could you introduce in your day that would reduce rumination?

Habit 12. Letting Your Radar Distract You

Organisations still privilege laser focus – “just get to the bottom line” – and view it as a leadership behaviour. This is not surprising given that, until a few decades ago, organisations were led almost entirely by men.

A well developed radar can make it difficult for you to filter out unhelpful distractions, scattering your attention and undermining your ability to be present. Radar can degrade your capacity to compartmentalise perceptions that might undermine your confidence and ability to perform.

Radar may also be in part responsible for women's tendency to give themselves a hard time. Being hyper aware of other people's reactions can feed the fires of self doubt and cause you to overthink your actions. Having an active radar may therefore be in part responsible if you have a tendency to ruminate. Especially if you put negative spin on whatever you notice.

- Identify the type of situation(s) in which your radar distracts you. What benefit do you get from allowing these distractions and what are the unintended consequences to you?
- How might you reframe the situation?
- If you were to make one commitment to yourself to reduce distraction, what would it be?
- What are the benefits of having this radar?
- In what situations do you tend to overthink? What are the consequences of this?
- What do you think are the benefits of a “just get to the bottom line” mindset?
- How might you adopt it, in a way that feels right to you?