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TIPS TO RELEASE YOURSELF FROM THE STICKY FLOOR

"If you don't like where you are, move on. You are not a tree."

Written by NIKKI WATKINS

ACCORDING TO THE author and change management expert Daryl Connor, women are naturally more resilient than men. He should know, having spent over 40 years advising major organisations on how to implement change and execute strategy more effectively. Yet in spite of this women feel compelled to exhaust themselves with multiple roles - worker, mother, carer, cleaner, wife, cook, accountant, coach, sounding board, the list is endless. We are torn between balancing the freedom that today's working environments offer us and the shackles of guilt, inherited from our parents that tie us to the past. I work with far too many female leaders who constantly feel guilt in all parts of their lives. Women need to learn that our rightful place in the world is to be both life-creator and life-liver. And we need to learn to be gentle on ourselves.

Women play a critical role in the world. Over one half of the human race, we are the only ones who can produce the next generation. When enabled, we play a key role in organisations and yet we are still paid 20% ▶





less than men for doing the same work. Women are as competent, as bright, and as capable as men, but we are also different and that's a good thing. We need to know that, but unfortunately, women also have an inner monologue that's different to that of men and usually far more self-critical. As a result, we can end up creating a sticky floor that holds us in place and holds us down, rather than letting us fly.

Actively build greater self-confidence. Obvious, but self-confidence is exactly that. It is a reflection of how you feel about, and talk to, yourself. No matter what the external influences are, or how much people can help to boost it, ultimately this is work you will need to do for yourself. Affirmations, Reframing Beliefs and Mindfulness are all tools being utilised by businesses and business schools to help people realise their full potential rather than being paralysed by doubt.

Normalise your feelings with people you trust.

I often hear leaders talk about their battles with imposter syndrome (fear of being found out). It is a human dynamic and seems to exist to ensure we don't get too big for our boots. When you disclose your self-doubts to others, you may be surprised and relieved to hear that others feel the same. This immediately calms the brain from its judgmental path and enables you to keep moving in the right direction.

Breathe and Believe. Many of us are doing work we have never done before. Learning is part of living; sometimes we just need to take a deep breath and leap. Surround yourself with people who reinforce the best in you. Remind yourself of your dreams, the legacy you want to leave, and the potential you have. Ask yourself: "What will I regret never having done?" and then take the first step to ensuring that you achieve that goal.

Acknowledge that perfectionism is impossible. Perfection exists in the eye of the beholder and



no matter how hard you try, it is likely to be an impossible stretch. How can you know another person's version of perfection versus your own? Rather than strive for an impossible goal of perfection, check expectations before you start completing work instead. I remember countless times where I asked my team for a draft, so they could collaborate and co-create with others, and yet they would bring me a finished (in their mind) near-perfect piece.

Understand that something always has to give. Whilst the vote gave us liberty and freedom, it also gave us the opportunity to say yes to being 'it all', and for the last 30-40 years that is what women have done. The reality is that something always suffers: your health, your marriage, your job, your family, your friends. Awareness of this is the first step to being more gentle on yourself. Learn to contract with those important to you during extra pressured times - it will pay off in the long run.

Remember – you are not a tree. The floor cannot hold you if you don't let it. By keeping this in mind, and using these tips, you can attach a (metaphorical) hot air balloon to yourself and free your feet from that sticky floor. ■

Author

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