

THE MOST COMMON FEARS WOMEN FACE IN THE CORPORATE WORLD TODAY



As a senior executive coach and former leader, I have had the privilege of working closely with many accomplished women in various industries. My background has provided me with unique insights into the fears and challenges that women leaders often face in the corporate world. Recognizing and addressing these fears represent some of the work women have to do for personal and professional growth. In this article, we will explore these fears through the lenses of Transactional Analysis (TA) and the Energy Leadership Index (ELI), which both reveal interesting angles for exploration and discovery of those fears.

First lets define both frameworks succinctly.



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What are Blockers and Drivers?

Transactional Analysis (TA) is a psychological framework that examines the interactions and behaviors of individuals. Psychological drivers, such as "Be Perfect," "Be Strong," "Hurry Up," "Please Others," and "Try Hard," are internalized commands that influence behavior and decision-making. Blockers are negative thought patterns and beliefs that hinder personal growth and development.

How Blockers and Drivers Influence Fear

These drivers create internal pressures that exacerbate fears by setting unrealistic standards and expectations. For example, the "Be Perfect" driver can make women excessively critical of their work, fearing any mistake will lead to failure. The "Hurry Up" driver can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed and rushed, making it difficult to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

In a corporate setting, a woman driven by the need to "Please Others" might avoid voicing her opinions during meetings, fearing rejection or disapproval. This self-silencing can limit her contributions and professional growth.

Understanding the Energy Leadership Index

The Energy Leadership Index (ELI) is a framework that identifies seven levels of energy, ranging from catabolic (draining)

to anabolic (regenerative) energies. These levels reflect an individual's mindset, perception, feelings and behavior in various situations. For each situation we can choose one of those seven lenses.

- Level 1: Victim mentality, feelings of helplessness.
- Level 2: Conflict and resistance to change, defensive behavior.
- Level 3: Rationalization and toleration, a sense of compromise.
- Level 4: Compassion and concern for others, focusing on relationships.
- Level 5: Reconciliation and acceptance, seeing opportunities in challenges.
- Level 6: Synthesis and wisdom, using intuition and insight.
- Level 7: Absolute passion and alignment, creating a vision and purpose.

To manage and overcome fear, women can shift from lower levels of energy (fear-based) to higher levels (opportunity-based). The main strategies include becoming self-aware, seeking and welcoming feedback with curiosity, and focusing on personal strengths to elevate energy levels.

A female leader feeling overwhelmed by her responsibilities starts practicing observation of herself. Exploring a situation at different levels provides interesting choices, provides new perspectives and boosts confidence,



helping her operate at higher energy levels.

Now we can explore some of those common fears practically and with more clarity.

Fear Of Failure.

The fear of failure can manifest in many ways, leading to self-doubt and hesitation in taking risks. This fear often stems from the pressure to succeed and the high standards women set for themselves. It can result in women avoiding new opportunities or not speaking up in meetings, fearing that a mistake could damage their credibility. I often experience female executives who hesitate to propose a new strategic initiative or apply for a new job fearing they might fail and even worse that it could reflect poorly on their abilities. This hesitation prevents them from taking bold steps that could lead to significant advancements for themselves and their organization.

In Transactional Analysis, the "Be Perfect" driver is a significant contributor to this fear. Women with this driver feel pressured to achieve perfection, which can cause anxiety and a fear of making mistakes. The need to be flawless often leads to over-preparation and reluctance to delegate tasks. Consequently this fear is feeding behaviors and a fixed mindset leading to overwhelm, stress, lack of self-care.

This fear corresponds to Level 2 of the Energy Leadership Index, where conflict and resistance to change are prevalent. At this level, individuals are defensive and avoid taking risks to protect themselves from potential failure. The core thought defines the world as hostile with a win/lose mindset. Learning to move to higher energy levels can help reframe failure as a learning opportunity rather than a threat.

Fear of Not Being Taken Seriously

Many women fear that their ideas and contributions can be undervalued or dismissed if challenged whether they evolve or not in a male-dominated environment. This fear can lead to frustration and decreased motivation, as well as overcompensation and a reluctance to show vulnerability. When a woman in a leadership meeting might find her suggestions consistently overlooked despite their merit. This recurring dismissal can erode her confidence and willingness to contribute, perpetuating a sense of being undervalued.

The "Be Strong" driver can lead women to overcompensate by trying to appear infallible. This need to constantly prove their competence can result in excessive stress and burnout, as they avoid showing any signs of vulnerability. They



often take everything personally by identifying a no to their ideas to a no to who they are.

This fear is related to Level 3 of the Energy Leadership Index, where rationalization and toleration can prevent true engagement and acknowledgment. Women at this level may feel the need to constantly defend their ideas, leading to a cycle of frustration and self-doubt. The work often lies in muscling skills such as assertiveness, communication and influence.

Fear of Losing Balance

Balancing professional and personal responsibilities is a significant concern for many women. I recently wrote an article on [Work-Life Integration: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/work-life-balance-vs-integration-belinda-mj-brown-mcc-gqml/](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/work-life-balance-vs-integration-belinda-mj-brown-mcc-gqml/).

The fear of not being able to effectively manage their lives and seasons can lead to stress and burnout, as women feel they struggle to meet the demands of their careers and personal lives. Women may feel constant pressure to excel at work because they worked and fought hard while also being the perfect mother and spouse. This pressure can lead to feelings of inadequacy and chronic stress, as it is impossible to give 100% in every area simultaneously.

The "Hurry Up" driver can create a sense

of constant rush and overwhelm, impacting a woman's ability to choose and prioritize her responsibilities. This driver promotes a sense of urgency that can make it difficult to prioritize and delegate tasks effectively. Everything is important and urgent, focusing on tasks checking with a low level of vision for self or their long term career.

This fear aligns with Level 2 of the Energy Leadership Index, where concerns about relationships and harmony can create stress and guilt, internal conflicts of values to meet their world demands. Women at this level struggle to maintain equilibrium between their work and personal lives, often feeling torn between the two and the level of guilt and shame often keep them stuck and self-sabotaging.

Fear of Conflict

Many of my clients have a deep-seated fear of conflict, which can lead to avoidance of difficult conversations and decision-making. This fear can stem from a desire to maintain harmony and avoid confrontation at all costs. Avoiding addressing a team member's poor performance because of fear the confrontation could damage their working relationship is common. This avoidance can lead to ongoing issues, frustration and decreased team effectiveness.



The "Please Others" driver in Transactional Analysis encourages women to seek approval and avoid conflict. This driver can cause women to suppress their own needs and opinions to keep the peace, leading to unresolved issues and resentment.

This fear is associated with Level 1 of the Energy Leadership Index, where individuals feel helpless and victimized by their circumstances. At this level, conflict is seen as a threat that must be avoided. Moving to higher levels, such as Level 4 or 5, can help women see conflict as an opportunity for growth and resolution.

Not Being Good enough

The fear of not being good enough is insidious because it is not usually explicitly stated by my clients. Though willing to face themselves and their deepest fears, a significant number of my clients acknowledge this deep rooted fear. This one usually can fuel the previous one and can lead to never ending inner thoughts about how more or less we should be. My clients describe themselves as too much or not enough or should do more or less. Whatever a woman does, she feels she must try harder.

The "Try Hard" driver pushes women to put in excessive effort, often beyond what is necessary based on set of undefined expectations or expectations that belong to the spirit of time such as sexism, racism,

societal expectations. This can lead to exhaustion and lack of fulfillment, as women try to meet unrealistic standards of hard work and dedication.

This fear is related to Level 2 of the Energy Leadership Index, where individuals are driven by inner conflict and a need to prove themselves. Moving to higher levels, such as Level 5, can help women focus on working smarter rather than harder, and finding balance and sustainability in their efforts.

Addressing and overcoming these fears is vital for personal and professional growth. By understanding the underlying drivers and utilizing tools like the Energy Leadership Index, women can navigate their leadership journeys with confidence and resilience. Embracing strengths and taking proactive steps to conquer fears will lead to a fulfilling, regret-free life.

I invite you to share your experiences and insights on overcoming fears in the corporate world. If you're ready to take the next step in your leadership journey, consider reaching out for a consultation. Together, we can unlock your potential and achieve extraordinary results.

Some Practical Tips for Women Leaders
Building confidence and resilience by



embracing vulnerability and seeking support from mentors and peers are essential for building confidence. Self-compassion and setting realistic expectations can significantly enhance resilience.

Enhancing communication and assertiveness by developing effective communication skills, such as active listening and assertive expression, is crucial. Clear, confident, and authentic interactions help in gaining respect and recognition in the workplace.

Prioritizing Work-Life Integration by achieving a sustainable and flexible design that involves energy management, setting boundaries, and self-care practices. By prioritizing these aspects, women can maintain harmony between their professional and personal lives.

