

Antigone Chief Alliance Reflection



I'm thrilled to share the first edition of the Antigone Chief Alliance Reflection – a space to share stories and strategies that empower women in leadership. Each edition will spotlight real experiences and practical insights to help us break barriers in business and beyond. This debut piece, co-authored with @Isabella Aris-Dumas, explores what happens when women stop asking for permission and start leading on their own terms – and why that shift can be one of the most powerful moves we make.

The Risk of the Modern Woman: Reclaiming Confidence and Breaking Boundaries

For generations, women have been conditioned to take up less space—quiet their voices, shrink their presence, and press themselves into shadows so others never feel the weight of their power. These quiet limitations seep into our self-image early, fueling uncertainty from childhood through adulthood. Yet something transformative happens when we stop internalizing the world's rejection and begin narrating our own story.

Confidence doesn't arrive all at once—it's built in quiet layers, shaped by persistence and the continual rhythm of showing up. It may come from the steady encouragement of a mentor, therapist, or a powerful support group of like-minded

women. It may develop with age, or be sparked by a moment of clarity or a painful turning point. More often, it emerges only after habitually facing rejection and making the decision to stop asking for permission and start acting with purpose.



Stephanie Byford, advocate for women in leadership

Turning 50 didn't just mark a new decade—it unlocked a fearless confidence rooted in my purpose: lifting up women around me. By letting go of the sting of old rejections, I claimed the leadership I used to only imagine. Now, empowerment fuels both my mission and my power. This chapter proves that no doubt, no history, no voice but our own can define us. We are the authors of our stories—and at any age, we can write a bold new chapter.

Confidence is especially vital to be successful in male-dominated industries like business, where women are often told to stay in the background. Sometimes, breaking

boundaries means speaking up for yourself in a room that hasn't given you a voice or permission. Other times, it means pivoting careers after years of self-doubt, or daring to dream bigger than what the world told you was achievable. Whatever the scenario, it all begins with one question: *What if saying no wasn't closing doors, but opening a gateway to new opportunities?*

Practicing confidence isn't a one-time event – it's a daily choice each woman shapes for herself. When women unapologetically commit to that growth together, the limitations that once held us back become stepping stones that help us rise. Our trajectory to gaining confidence isn't linear; it's exponential. Investing in ourselves manifests the deeper self-validation we need to amplify the talents that were there all along. And when we elevate our own voices, we make space for others to rise with us.

Too often, women are cast into roles that celebrate selflessness but silence self-worth—expected to lift everyone else while leaving themselves out of the story. What's framed as care becomes a quiet sacrifice, repeated so often it feels like a requirement, not a choice. While that care carries strength, when it constantly costs us our own aspirations, it's no longer noble—it's a weight that keeps us grounded when we're meant to rise.

As children, we naturally possess an unshakable self-confidence—fearless in the face of mistakes, rejection, or setbacks. Over time, that trust in ourselves is eroded not by lack of ability, but by society's relentless conditioning. In a world that is historically designed to help men succeed, it is far too easy for women to fall into that trap.

Reclaiming self-belief isn't easy, but it is absolutely possible. It begins by unlearning the limits we've been handed and choosing daily to show up for ourselves

with courage, clarity, and conviction. The true risk of the modern woman is not that she is too much—but that, once she realizes her power, she becomes unstoppable.

This chapter of my journey is only the surface. In my next reflection, I'll go back to where it all began — the years shaped by depression, endless childhood therapy, and the delicate dance of growing up with Type A parents while quietly fighting to be heard as an introvert who was constantly told she wasn't enough. It's a story of shadows, survival, and ultimately, self-discovery — and it's the foundation for everything I am today.

