



Lead Boldly



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Introduction: My Story of Leadership

I never set out to be a leader. Leadership seemed like something other people were called to, not me. Yet, time and time again, I found myself stepping into it naturally. When others noticed that in me, it was life-giving but also hard.

One of my earliest lessons in leadership came when a leader pulled me aside and said the words I never expected to hear: "People don't like you." I was shocked. Unbelievable, right? But it was true. I had been leading out of pride instead of humility. I was pushing people instead of championing them. That painful moment shaped me more than any success ever could. It taught me that leadership isn't about being liked or even being right, it's about serving people well.

I also discovered a gift for singing and leading worship. Standing in front of thousands of people, I quickly learned that leadership had nothing to do with talent and everything to do with how you treated people. Many eyes were on me, but it wasn't the stage that mattered; it was the way I connected off-stage. That's when I realized leadership is always about people, not position.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of serving and leading teams as small as 50 and as large as 250. It's impossible to lead 250 people alone. I had to learn to raise up leaders just as someone once raised me up.



I looked for the humble ones, the natural helpers, the people already making others better. When I put them into leadership, it created a ripple effect of servant leadership. Together, we built a culture that multiplied itself. That was one of my greatest joys.

But I also failed. There was a season when I micromanaged my leaders instead of trusting them. Morale sank. Retention dropped. It was a painful lesson: when you don't let others lead, you don't just lose momentum, you lose people.

As a woman, my leadership story has been full of contrasts. I've worked with insecure male leaders who saw me as a threat, and I've been championed by male leaders who gave me opportunities and made sure others knew my ideas mattered. I've sat in rooms where I was invisible, asking questions that were dismissed, only to hear my male colleague repeat the same question and be praised for it. And I've sat in rooms where I was fully visible, valued, and trusted to lead. Both experiences shaped me. Both stretched me.

The invisible weight women leaders carry is real. I felt it most when I failed my teams, or when male leaders held me to a high standard without offering the support that should have come with it. I had to learn to reframe those moments. It took months of reprogramming my mindset, shifting from “They don’t want me to challenge things” to “I bring value by challenging us to do better.” **I learned to command the room not by being the loudest, but by being strategic, clear, and bold.**

After 23 years in full-time ministry, I felt a new season stirring. The work that once gave me life was leaving me empty. I didn’t feel fulfilled anymore. I love the people, but there was something missing. I realized I was called to help leaders lead well and to see women step into the leadership they were equipped for. But I wrestled with doubt. What if I fail? What value do I bring? Will people find me approachable?

Through that season of fear and faith, God made it clear: my purpose hadn’t ended, it had expanded. Leadership for me wasn’t confined to ministry; it was a calling to build people, teams, and organizations wherever He placed me.

Looking back, I realize I’ve been both a leader who failed and a leader who succeeded. Both have taught me more about humility, resilience, and growth than I could have learned any other way. And my legacy? I don’t want to be remembered for titles or accomplishments. I want people to say, “She showed me that limits are often self-imposed and that I could overcome mine to lead as I was meant to.”

Over the years, I’ve mentored young women and watched them step into leadership with confidence. Those moments watching someone else find their voice, their rhythm, their calling have been some of my proudest. They remind me that leadership is never about tasks. It’s about lives changed, cultures shaped, and futures redefined.

That’s why I wrote this book. It’s not a theory. It’s a lived experience, both the missteps and the milestones. It’s the story of being invisible and visible, doubted and championed, humbled and entrusted.

Here's what I believe: **leading boldly doesn't mean leading without fear; it means leading without apology.** It means choosing humility over pride, people over position, and legacy over ego.

And my hope is that as you read, you'll see yourself in these pages not just in the struggles, but in the breakthroughs. May you find tools, courage, and clarity to lead boldly, right where you are.



Because the world doesn't just need more leaders. The world needs you.



Chapter 1: The Invisible Weight Women Carry

Early in my leadership journey, I learned what it felt like to carry the invisible weight women often bear. I had been entrusted with leading teams, but instead of being championed, I was often held to higher standards than my male peers without the support or resources to meet those expectations.

There were moments when I felt crushed by the contradiction. If I were strong, I was labeled “too much.” If I paused or questioned, I was “not enough.” I wrestled with voices around me and inside me. It took six months, to be exact, to reprogram my mindset. I had to shift from thinking, “They don’t want me to challenge or ask questions,” to “I challenge because I care. I bring valuable ideas. I belong in this room.”

That shift didn’t make the invisible weight disappear, but it gave me the strength to carry it differently. I learned how to command rooms without being the loudest voice, how to ask questions with confidence, and how to lead strategically instead of reactively.

Why the Invisible Weight Matters

The pressure women leaders face isn't just personal; it ripples outward into every relationship, team, and culture they influence. The weight of being "too much" or "not enough" doesn't stay hidden inside; it shows up in performance, engagement, and organizational health.

- **When women silence themselves to avoid labels, teams lose clarity, innovation, and perspective.** The very questions and insights that could save hours of rework or spark new ideas never get voiced. Silence may feel safe, but it starves the organization of wisdom.
- **When women overcompensate to "prove" themselves, they burn out faster.** They say yes to everything, over-prepare, and over-function until exhaustion sets in. This doesn't just cost the leader her well-being; it costs the organization in turnover, decreased morale, and the loss of high-potential talent.
- **When women embrace their place at the table, whole teams rise.** A confident, authentic leader creates an atmosphere where others also feel free to contribute. Leadership becomes less about image and more about impact, creating stronger collaboration, better decisions, and healthier cultures.
- **The invisible weight creates hidden inequities.** While women carry the burden of perception management, their male peers often lead without the same second-guessing. This imbalance means women expend energy managing impressions that could otherwise be spent driving results.
- **Culture shifts when women lead boldly.** When one woman refuses to shrink back, it gives permission for others to do the same. Teams become more inclusive, meetings become more honest, and organizations reap the benefits of diverse voices being heard.

The invisible weight isn't simply "your problem." It's an organizational issue with ripple effects that touch productivity, retention, and culture. When women leaders learn to carry it differently, or release it altogether, everyone wins.

Where We Get Stuck

- 01 **Overcompensating** Many women leaders feel the pressure to prove they belong at the table, so they work twice as hard, prepare twice as long, and carry twice the load. The unintended result? Exhaustion becomes the norm, and excellence gets replaced by survival mode. Overcompensating communicates effort, but it doesn't always communicate effectiveness. It drains the leader, confuses the team about priorities, and often leads to resentment when that extra effort goes unrecognized. Excellence, not exhaustion, is the true measure of leadership.
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- 02 **Shrinking Back** On the other side of the spectrum, some women respond to the invisible weight by pulling back. They avoid asking questions, soften their words to sound "safe," or stay silent in moments when their voice is most needed. This creates a cycle: the less you contribute, the less you're invited to contribute. Silence might protect you from criticism in the short term, but it robs your team of your perspective and reinforces the very invisibility you're trying to overcome.
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- 03 **Internalizing Labels** Perhaps the most damaging mistake is believing the labels that are placed on you. Being told you are "too much," "too emotional," or "not enough" can cut deep, but these labels often say more about the other person's comfort level than your actual leadership ability. When you internalize these words, they become ceilings you carry into every room. The tragedy is that you begin to lead from limitation instead of possibility. True freedom comes when you reframe those labels, recognizing that what others critique may actually be your greatest strength.
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Leading Beyond the Weight

Reframe the Label

The labels that sting the most, *"too direct," "too emotional," "too ambitious,"* often come from someone else's discomfort, not your inadequacy. Instead of internalizing them, flip them into strengths.

Examples:

"Too direct"



I provide clarity that helps people move forward.

"Too emotional"



I bring empathy that builds connection and trust.

"Too ambitious"



I'm driven by vision that inspires others.

Write down one label you've carried and create a reframed version. Practice speaking the reframe over yourself until it becomes your new default.

Mindset Reset Journal

Confidence grows when you train your mind to see evidence of your value. A Mindset Reset Journal is a daily practice to strengthen that muscle.

How to use it:

- For 30 days, write down one way you added value each day.
- Value could be leading a meeting with clarity, asking a great question, encouraging someone, or solving a problem.
- At the end of the 30 days, review your list. You'll see proof that you consistently contribute in meaningful ways.

Keep this journal in your bag or phone notes so it's always accessible. On days when self-doubt creeps in, review your wins as evidence against the lie that you're "not enough."

Strategic Presence

Walking into a room where you feel invisible or underestimated can create pressure to over perform or prove yourself. Strategic presence shifts the focus from approval to impact.

How to practice:

- Before walking into a meeting, pause and ask: *"How can I contribute clearly and strategically?"*
- Identify one key point or perspective you will share.
- Listen intentionally, then contribute with confidence without apologizing, over-explaining, or hedging.

You don't need to say the most; you need to say the *right* thing at the right time. That's what people remember.

Preparation Boundaries

Over-preparing is one of the ways women try to silence the “too much / not enough” weight. While preparation matters, limitless prep drains your energy and reinforces the lie that you’re never ready. Boundaries help you trust your expertise.

How to set them:

- Cap your prep time. Example: *“I’ll spend 90 minutes preparing for this meeting, then trust my experience.”*
- When the timer is up, stop. Step away. Remind yourself that your knowledge, not your notes, makes you credible.

Notice the extra time you free up when you stop over-prepping. Use that margin for renewal or connection, which strengthens your leadership in more sustainable ways.

Bold Action

This week, identify one moment where you normally hold back, whether it’s speaking in a meeting, asking a hard question, or saying no to an unrealistic demand. Instead of shrinking, choose to show up with clarity and strategy.

The invisible weight may not disappear overnight, but when you decide to carry it differently, you discover that your strength was never about meeting everyone else’s expectations; it was about leading boldly, as the leader you were made to be.

Reflection Prompts

01 Where do I feel the “invisible weight” pressing most right now?

02 Which label, “too much” or “not enough,” have I carried, and how can I reframe it?

03 What would change if I showed up with a strategy instead of seeking approval?

04 How long do I over-prepare, and where could I trust my expertise instead?

Chapter 2: Confidence Without Apology

I'll never forget sitting in a director meeting, surrounded by male peers. Leadership was rolling out new directives, and I raised my hand with what I believed was an important question. My words barely landed before they were dismissed and brushed aside.

A few minutes later, I quietly reworded the question and passed it to a male colleague, asking him to bring it up. He asked the same thing, and immediately the response was, "That's a great question."

That moment stung. Not because I doubted my question, but because I realized how easily women's voices can be ignored, even when we bring value. I could have shrunk back, let insecurity silence me, or carried bitterness. Instead, I learned to shift my approach. Confidence wasn't about being louder; it was about being clear, strategic, and unapologetic.

Why Confidence Matters

Confidence in leadership is often less about what you *know* and more about how you *show up*. For women leaders, this becomes even more critical because perception frequently shapes influence more than performance. You can deliver flawless results, but if your tone, body language, or word choice communicates uncertainty, people may overlook your authority. Meanwhile, men in the same room are rarely scrutinized to the same degree.

- **Perception and Bias** Research confirms that women's communication is dissected more closely, tone, expressions, and even posture are judged against a moving target of expectations. Speak too strongly, and you risk being labeled "abrasive." Speak too softly, and you risk being dismissed as "unprepared." Confidence helps cut through these biases by grounding your presence in clarity and consistency.
- **Language Matters** Studies show women are significantly more likely to use hedging language words like "*I think*," "*maybe*," or "*just*." While these words may be intended to soften or create collaboration, they unintentionally diminish authority. For example: "*I just wanted to add...*" sounds tentative, while "*I'd like to add...*" communicates conviction. Small shifts in language can change the way an entire room responds.
- **Presence Creates Space** Confidence without apology doesn't mean dominating the room; it means creating a presence that invites others to listen. People pay attention when you speak with clarity and then pause, allowing your words to land. This kind of presence gives weight to your voice even in the most challenging rooms.
- **Clarity Over Arrogance** True confidence isn't arrogance; it's clarity. Arrogance seeks to prove; clarity seeks to contribute. When women lead with clarity, communicating vision, ownership, and next steps, teams move with greater focus and strength. Clarity quiets confusion, accelerates decisions, and builds trust.

Confidence isn't just a personal advantage. It's a cultural advantage. A confident woman at the table models what leadership looks like for others and creates ripple effects of courage throughout the organization.

Where We Get Stuck

- 01 **Over-Apologizing** Many women default to “sorry” as a reflex. It slips into emails (“Sorry for the delay”), conversations (“Sorry, can I add something?”), and even casual interactions (“Sorry, I just need a minute”). The problem is, unnecessary apologies communicate insecurity instead of authority. They make it sound like you’re intruding rather than contributing. While apologies have their place when we’ve truly missed the mark, over-apologizing erodes credibility. Leaders gain trust not by constantly apologizing for their presence but by owning their space with clarity and respect.
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- 02 **Hedging Words** Language shapes perception. Phrases like “I think,” “maybe,” or “just” often creep in when women want to sound collaborative or soften their tone. But instead of making you approachable, hedging weakens strong ideas and signals uncertainty. Compare: “I think this could work” vs. “This approach will work because...” One invites doubt, the other conveys confidence. Hedging isn’t humility, it’s hesitation disguised as humility. And hesitation keeps others from fully trusting your leadership.
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- 03 **Waiting for Perfect** A common trap is holding back until your words, ideas, or plan feel airtight. While men often “think out loud” in meetings, women frequently polish their thoughts internally before speaking. The cost? Missed opportunities to shape the conversation in real time. By the time your idea is ready, the moment has passed, or worse, someone else may have already voiced it. Leadership influence is rarely about being flawless; it’s about being timely, strategic, and willing to speak up even if the idea isn’t wrapped in a bow.
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Building Confidence Without Apology

Language Swaps

Words carry weight, and the wrong words can undercut your authority without you realizing it. Hedging language _“sorry,” “just,” “I think”_ signals uncertainty and diminishes the power of your ideas. With intentional swaps, you can shift from tentative to confident without changing your personality.

These aren't about being aggressive, they're about being clear. A leader who communicates with clarity earns trust and keeps the conversation moving forward.

Sorry I just wanted to add...



I'd like to add...

I think this might work...



This will work because...

Does that make sense?



Here's what success looks like

The Power of Pause

Many women rush to fill the silence after they speak, as though their words aren't enough on their own. But silence isn't your enemy, it's your ally. Pausing after you speak signals confidence, authority, and composure. It gives others time to process and shows you're not desperate for validation.

Try this: In your next meeting, state your point, then pause for three seconds. Resist the urge to add filler words. Watch how the room leans in. The pause often makes your voice land louder than raising the volume ever could.

Confidence Journal

Confidence doesn't grow by accident; it's built through evidence. When doubt creeps in, your brain will often forget the wins and magnify the failures. A Confidence Journal re-trains your mind.

At the end of each week, write down three wins, big or small. Maybe it's presenting clearly in a meeting, handling a tough conversation with grace, or following through on a commitment. Over time, this creates an "evidence bank" that you can draw from when impostor syndrome strikes. The more proof you have, the easier it is to silence the inner critic.

Commanding the Room Exercise

Your body often speaks before your words do. People notice posture, eye contact, and presence within seconds. A simple grounding exercise can shift you from nervous to confident before you ever say a word.

Before entering a meeting, plant your feet firmly on the floor. Take three deep breaths to steady yourself. Lift your chin, roll your shoulders back, and silently affirm: *"I belong here. My perspective matters."*

This isn't about arrogance. It's about reminding yourself and signaling to others that you have every right to take up space. When you command the room with presence, your voice naturally carries more weight.



Replace One Apology with Clarity

At your next meeting, catch yourself before apologizing or hedging. Replace it with clear, direct language. Notice the difference in how people respond.

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Confidence without apology isn't about demanding attention. It's about walking into the room already knowing you belong there. - Amy K. Nunn

Reflection Prompts

01 Where in my leadership do I apologize unnecessarily?

02 What hedging words creep into my communication?

03 What recent win proves I have the authority to lead with clarity?

04 How does my body language, posture, tone, and eye contact reflect (or diminish) my confidence?

Chapter 3: Redefining Success

There came a point in my leadership journey when, on the outside, everything looked fine. I had the title, the influence, the recognition. But on the inside, I felt like I was slowly dying. What once energized me had become draining. My role no longer aligned with the leader I was called to be.

I realized I had been chasing a version of success defined by others' busyness, visibility, and constant achievement. And even though people saw me as "successful," I wasn't fulfilled. Deep down, I knew I was created for something more: to help leaders lead well and to see women rise into the leadership they were already equipped for.

That realization was both terrifying and freeing. Terrifying, because stepping away from what everyone else celebrated felt like failure. Freeing, because I finally began to understand that success isn't about climbing ladders, it's about alignment with calling.

Why Redefining Success Matters

For many women leaders, the definition of success they inherited wasn't crafted by them it was handed down by culture, workplaces, or even family expectations. Success has often been equated with bigger titles, longer hours, and the constant hustle of "doing more." The unspoken message? The busier you are, the more valuable you are.

But this definition is not only unsustainable, it's dangerous.

Society's Blueprint Isn't Yours

Success has long been pictured as climbing ladders, collecting titles, and never slowing down. But when women inherit that blueprint, they often find it doesn't align with their values, their family commitments, or their sense of calling.

Burnout is Gendered

Studies consistently show women leaders experience higher burnout rates than men. Why? Because they carry dual loads—workplace demands and home responsibilities. The "double shift" of leading at work and managing at home leaves little margin for rest, and it silently drains even the most gifted leaders.

Exhaustion ≠ Excellence

Success measured by exhaustion leaves leaders empty. It turns achievement into a treadmill, always running, never arriving. But success measured by impact and alignment creates longevity. When your work reflects your values and priorities, you find energy instead of depletion.

Redefinition Brings Freedom

Redefining success isn't lowering the bar, it's changing the target. It's giving yourself permission to stop comparing your journey to someone else's highlight reel and to focus instead on what truly matters: the legacy you're building, the relationships you're nurturing, and the alignment between your values and your leadership.

When women redefine success, they not only protect themselves from burnout, but they also model a healthier version of leadership for the next generation.

Where We Get Stuck

- 01 **Measuring Worth by Hours** Many women equate productivity with value. If the hours are long and the workload is heavy, it must mean they are important and effective. But this thinking leads to overwork, exhaustion, and a distorted sense of worth. True leadership isn't measured by how busy you are, it's measured by the outcomes you create and the people you impact.

 - 02 **Chasing Comparison** Social media and workplace culture often fuel the trap of looking sideways, measuring yourself against peers who appear more polished, more accomplished, or more ahead. The problem is, comparison is a thief. It robs you of joy and blinds you to your own unique calling. When your eyes are fixed on others, you lose sight of your own lane.

 - 03 **Neglecting Renewal** One of the greatest lies leaders believe is that rest is a luxury. In reality, rest and joy are not optional extras; they are essential leadership fuel. When renewal is neglected, creativity dries up, patience runs thin, and decisions suffer. Renewal doesn't take you out of leadership; it keeps you in it for the long haul.
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Practical Tools: Building a Healthier Definition of Success

Personal Success Statement

If you don't define success for yourself, culture will define it for you, and its version usually looks like endless hustle. A Personal Success Statement anchors your leadership in your own values, not in someone else's expectations.

How to create one:

- Ask yourself: *"What matters most to me in this season of life and leadership?"*
- Narrow it down to 2–3 priorities (e.g., faith, family, leadership impact, health).
- Write a statement that reflects those priorities.

Example: *"Success for me means leading with clarity, being present for my family, and creating impact that outlasts my position."*

Keep your success statement somewhere visible on your desk, planner, or phone background so it re-centers you when the pressure to compare creeps in.

Output Matrix

Busyness is not the same as effectiveness. The Impact > Output Matrix helps you filter activity through the lens of lasting value.

How to use it:

- At the end of each week, list the key things you accomplished.
- Circle the ones that created *impact* (moved people forward, advanced the mission, built relationships) versus those that were just *output* (checked boxes, responded to emails, stayed busy).
- Over time, shift your focus to create more impact and less busywork.

Share this practice with your team. It shifts culture from rewarding activity to celebrating meaningful outcomes.

Life Alignment Audit

Your calendar always tells the truth about your values. A Life Alignment Audit helps you see if your time reflects what you say matters most.

Steps:

1. Write down your top three to five values.
2. Compare them to how you actually spent your time last month.
Example: If family is a core value, but your evenings are filled with work calls, there's misalignment.
3. Identify one change you can make this month to bring your calendar closer to your values.

Small shifts add up. Even one intentional change, like reclaiming one evening a week for family or adding a weekly team-development block, moves you closer to alignment.

Sabbath Rhythm

Leadership longevity depends on renewal. Sabbath is not just about rest, it's about resistance. It's saying, *"My worth is not tied to my productivity."*

How to practice:

- Choose a consistent time each week to unplug from work.
- Fill it with renewal activities: worship, rest, joy, family time, or nature.
- Guard it as fiercely as a board meeting. Don't let work creep in.

If a full day feels impossible, start small. Even half a day of true rest can re-energize you in ways a constant hustle never will.

Write Your Success Statement

Set aside 15 minutes this week to write your personal definition of success. Post it somewhere you'll see daily. Let it become your filter for decisions, opportunities, and boundaries.

Because success isn't about what others applaud, it's about living aligned with your calling.

Reflection Prompts

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- 01 What definition of success have I been living by, and who gave me that definition?
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- 02 What part of my current leadership leaves me empty instead of fulfilled?
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- 03 What would success look like if it aligned with my values instead of others' expectations?
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- 04 Where do I need to trade hustle for health this season?
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Chapter 4: Building Influence That Lasts

One of the most affirming moments in my leadership journey came when a male leader didn't just ask for my input; he amplified it. He worked alongside me, invited my perspective, and then made sure others knew, "That idea was hers."

That small but powerful act showed me something vital: influence doesn't always come from titles, but from trust and credibility. When someone with positional authority champions your voice, it can shift a room. And when you consistently show up with integrity and clarity, your influence speaks even when you're not in the room.

Why Influence Matters More Than Position

Leadership isn't about the title on your business card; it's about the trust you build and the impact you leave behind. Titles are temporary; influence is enduring.

- **Titles Can Be Taken Away, but Influence Outlasts Roles** Positions change. Restructures happen. Titles shift. But the way you've treated people and the trust you've built remains. Long after your role ends, your influence echoes in the leaders and teams you've shaped.
- **Influence Multiplies** Influence is contagious. When you lead well, your people don't just follow instructions; they learn to lead well themselves. The culture you model trickles down. If you lead with integrity and service, others replicate it. If you lead with fear or control, that multiplies too. Influence sets the tone for generations of leadership.
- **Credibility Creates Longevity** Research shows leaders who invest in credibility and trust have a longer-lasting impact than those who rely solely on positional authority. Teams may obey someone because of a title, but they commit to someone because of character. Credibility, keeping promises, admitting mistakes, and delivering consistently create influence that survives beyond a role.
- **A Strategic Advantage for Women** For women leaders, especially, influence is powerful. Visibility may be limited in certain environments, but influence isn't dependent on the spotlight. By consistently creating value, delivering clarity, and building allies, women can expand their impact even in rooms where they aren't always heard or recognized. Influence becomes a quiet but unstoppable force.

Where We Get Stuck

- 01 **Relying on Position Alone** Too many leaders assume authority comes from their job title. They issue directives expecting loyalty, but titles don't earn hearts. At best, positional authority produces compliance. Real leadership produces commitment, and that only comes through influence built on trust.

 - 02 **Neglecting Relationships** A relentless focus on results without investment in people creates a fragile culture. Sure, tasks get done, but morale erodes. Compliance replaces creativity. When leaders neglect relationships, they forfeit the very foundation that sustains long-term results.

 - 03 **Confusing Control with Leadership** Some leaders mistake micromanagement for influence. They hold on tightly, believing control proves competence. In reality, it erodes trust, stifles ownership, and limits growth. Influence isn't about doing everything yourself; it's about creating shared ownership so others rise with you.
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Building Lasting Influence

Influence Map

Influence is intentional; it doesn't just happen because of proximity or position. The Influence Map helps you identify where your energy is going and where it should go next.

How to use it:

- List the five people you influence most right now. These may be direct reports, peers, or even family members who look to you for guidance.
- Then list three people you'd like to increase your influence with colleagues, decision-makers, or future leaders.
- For each person, write one intentional action you'll take this month (e.g., schedule a coffee, affirm their contribution, share an idea, ask for their input).

Review your Influence Map quarterly. Influence grows when you nurture it consistently, not just when you need something.

Credibility Check

Credibility is the bedrock of influence. Without it, people may comply with your position, but they won't commit to your leadership. Regular self-audits help maintain your credibility.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do I keep my promises, even the small ones?
- Do I follow through consistently on what I say I'll do?
- Do I admit mistakes openly and quickly?
- Do I give credit where credit is due?

Ask a trusted peer or team member for feedback on your credibility. Others often see blind spots we miss.

The Ripple Test

Your true influence isn't measured by what happens when you're present, it's measured by what happens when you're not. The Ripple Test asks the hard but honest question: *"If I left tomorrow, would my team still thrive?"*

- If the answer is yes → your influence has multiplied into others.
- If the answer is no → it's a signal that you're carrying too much yourself and need to invest more in equipping, delegating, and empowering others.

Influence is about multiplication. If your team only moves when you do, it's not influence, it's control.

- **Visibility with Value** Showing up matters, but how you show up matters more. Influence grows when your contributions consistently move the mission forward.

How to practice:

- In meetings, prepare at least one solution-oriented contribution. Don't just share observations, offer ideas, options, or next steps.
- When asked for input, connect your answer to the bigger vision or goal.
- Balance humility with clarity, speak with confidence, but also invite collaboration.

Keep a running note on your phone with ideas, insights, and questions you can bring into conversations. Prepared contributions demonstrate value and build credibility.

Reflection Prompts

01 Who currently trusts and follows my leadership, and why?

02 Where have I relied too much on position instead of influence?

03 What relationships need more intentional investment from me right now?

04 How will I measure my leadership impact beyond my title?

Next Step: Amplify Someone Else's Influence

This week, choose one person on your team to champion. Highlight their idea, give them credit in front of others, or open a door for their leadership.

Influence that lasts isn't about guarding your own spotlight; it's about sharing it. When you champion others, your influence doesn't shrink; it multiplies.



Chapter 5: The Power of Boundaries

There was a season when I had incredible people on my team, talented, passionate, ready to take ownership. But instead of trusting them, I hovered. I micromanaged their decisions, double-checked their work, and stepped in even when I didn't need to.

It didn't take long before the effects showed. Morale started slipping. Retention dropped. Some of my strongest leaders began to disengage. They didn't feel trusted, and in turn, they didn't lead with confidence.

That season taught me one of the hardest leadership lessons: boundaries aren't just about protecting my time and energy, they're about creating space for others to rise. When I failed to set boundaries for myself, I stole ownership from my leaders. When I learned to release control, they stepped up, and our culture shifted for the better.

Why Boundaries Are Essential

Boundaries are not barriers to leadership; they are the framework that allows leadership to flourish. Without them, leaders and teams both pay a heavy price.

- **Without boundaries, leaders burn out and teams break down.** Leaders who say yes to everything end up stretched thin. Exhaustion shows up in irritability, poor decision-making, and decreased clarity. Meanwhile, the team senses the leader's depletion, which breeds instability. Burnout at the top always trickles down.
- **Boundaries communicate respect for yourself and for others.** When you set healthy limits, you're not pushing people away; you're modeling respect. Respect for your own time and energy, yes, but also for your team's ownership of their responsibilities. Boundaries tell your team: "I trust you to carry this without me hovering."
- **Teams led by boundary-less leaders often become dependent, passive, or disengaged.** Without boundaries, leaders tend to micromanage. They jump in on every detail, unintentionally sending the message that their team can't be trusted. Over time, this creates dependency (waiting for the leader to decide), passivity (hesitation to act without permission), and disengagement (Why try if my leader will redo it anyway?).
- **Healthy boundaries multiply leadership capacity.** Far from limiting effectiveness, boundaries actually expand it. When leaders release control and protect space for themselves, they create room for others to lead. Delegation becomes development. Responsibility is shared. And the leader's influence grows because the team is empowered to carry the mission forward.

Boundaries aren't selfish; they're strategic. They protect the leader, strengthen the team, and build a culture where responsibility is distributed, not hoarded.

Where Leaders Get Stuck

- 01 **The Guilt-Driven Yes** Many leaders, especially women, struggle with saying no because they fear disappointing others or being seen as less committed. So they say yes to everything: extra projects, late-night calls, another volunteer role, “just one more thing.” The problem? Every yes costs something, a piece of energy, focus, or margin. Over time, the guilt-driven yes creates resentment and burnout. Instead of being admired for loyalty, leaders become ineffective because they’re spread too thin. True commitment isn’t about saying yes to everyone, it’s about saying yes to the right things.

 - 02 **Unclear Limits** Some leaders assume people will “just know” their boundaries. They expect staff, peers, or even family to sense when they’re overloaded or when something crosses a line. But unspoken limits don’t protect you; they set you up for disappointment. When boundaries are unclear, leaders end up frustrated, while teams remain confused about expectations. Clear communication is what turns boundaries into mutual respect. Without it, resentment festers on both sides.

 - 03 **Micromanaging Instead of Trusting** One of the most damaging mistakes is holding onto tasks that others could (and should) own. Micromanagement may feel like “helping,” but in reality, it communicates distrust. It says, “I don’t believe you can handle this without me.” Over time, micromanaged teams stop taking initiative. Morale sinks, growth stalls, and the leader becomes the bottleneck. Trust is the engine of team development, and micromanagement cuts the fuel line.
-

Setting Boundaries That Empower

Boundary Scripts

One of the hardest parts of setting boundaries is finding the words. Many leaders hesitate because they don't want to sound rude, dismissive, or unhelpful. The truth is, boundaries can be both respectful *and* firm. Scripts give you language that honors the request without sacrificing your well-being.

Examples:

- "I can't commit to that right now, but here's what I can do..."
- "My plate is full this week; can we revisit next month?"
- "I want to give this the attention it deserves, and I don't have the bandwidth at the moment."
- "That's not in my scope, but here's who might be able to help you."

Write two to three boundary scripts that fit your world (work, family, community) and practice saying them out loud until they feel natural.

The 24-Hour Pause

When asked to take on something new, the instinct is often to say yes immediately. But leadership decisions made in haste usually lead to regret. The 24-hour pause creates space to check alignment.

Steps:

- When asked, thank the person for the opportunity or request.
- Respond with: *"Let me look at my current commitments and get back to you tomorrow."*
- In those 24 hours, ask yourself: *Does this align with my priorities? Do I have capacity? If I say yes, what will I have to say no to?*

Even if you know the answer right away, use the pause. It models intentional decision-making and prevents guilt-driven yeses.

Delegation Reset

Many leaders fall into the trap of “It’s easier if I just do it myself.” But what feels easier in the moment keeps you overloaded and keeps your team underdeveloped. A Delegation Reset shifts that dynamic.

Steps:

1. List five to seven tasks you’re currently doing.
2. Circle three that someone else could own with a little training.
3. This week, delegate at least one of them. Provide clear expectations, give authority to act, and resist the urge to take it back.

Delegation is not dumping its development. Frame it as an opportunity for growth, not a burden you’re offloading.

Hard Stop Rules

Without clear limits, work will always expand to fill every available space. Hard stops define your non-negotiables and force balance back into the equation.

Examples:

- No work calls after 7:00 pm.
- Leaving the office by 5:30 pm at least three nights a week.
- One weekend day is completely free of work emails.

Treat these boundaries like board meetings: non-negotiable, protected, and respected. Communicate them clearly to your team so they understand and support them.

Healthy boundaries are not walls; they are doors. They create space for you to breathe, rest, and think strategically while giving others room to step into leadership.

Reflection Prompts

01 Where am I saying yes when I need to say no?

02 How has micromanaging (or lack of boundaries) limited my team's growth?

03 What guilt do I carry about setting boundaries, and is it mine to carry?

04 What boundary, if I set it today, would give me and my team the most freedom?

Release Control This Week

Choose one area where you've been micromanaging or overcommitting. Step back. Communicate your boundary clearly, and allow someone else to carry it forward.

Boundaries aren't walls to keep people out; they are gates that allow the right things to flow in. When you set boundaries, you don't just protect yourself; you create space for your team to lead with ownership and confidence.



Chapter 6: Leading with Emotional Intelligence

I'll never forget the day my leader pulled me aside and said, "People don't like you." The words hit like a punch in the gut. I was leading with passion, pushing for results, but I hadn't realized how my pride and intensity were landing on others.

In my drive to achieve, I had stopped championing people. I was unintentionally wounding those I was called to serve and lead. That moment forced me to take a hard look at my leadership. Did I want to be known as someone who pushed people into results or someone who lifted them into growth?

It wasn't easy. Pride dies slowly. But through self-reflection, feedback, and prayer, I began to lead differently. I learned that emotional intelligence isn't a weakness; it's wisdom. It's the ability to see beyond your own drive and connect with the hearts of the people you lead. That shift from pride to humility changed me, and it changed my leadership.

Why Emotional Intelligence Matters

Technical skills and strategy alone are no longer enough. The differentiator between average leaders and extraordinary ones often comes down to emotional intelligence (EQ), the ability to understand, manage, and connect with emotions (your own and others').

- **High EQ Drives Performance** Research consistently shows that leaders with high EQ have more engaged, higher-performing teams. Employees are more likely to stay, contribute, and innovate when they feel seen and understood. Engagement isn't fueled by constant pep talks; it's fueled by leaders who tune into people's needs and motivations.
- **EQ Defuses Conflict and Builds Trust** Every leader will face conflict. Leaders with low EQ often escalate situations, reacting defensively, ignoring emotions, or bulldozing toward resolution. Leaders with high EQ pause, listen, and respond with calm clarity. This approach doesn't avoid conflict; it resolves it in a way that strengthens trust rather than eroding it. Trust, once built, becomes the foundation for faster decisions and healthier collaboration.
- **EQ Isn't Soft, It's Strategic** Emotional intelligence is sometimes dismissed as "soft skills," but nothing could be further from the truth. EQ is a hard-edged leadership competency that determines whether your strategy succeeds or stalls. A brilliant plan will collapse if the team feels unheard or undervalued. EQ turns human connection into a leadership strategy, making you more effective, not less decisive.
- **A Distinct Advantage for Women Leaders** For women leaders, empathy and relational awareness are often natural strengths. These aren't weaknesses to suppress, they're assets to leverage. When paired with clarity and boundaries, empathy becomes a leadership superpower. It allows women to read the room, anticipate needs, and build influence through authentic connection. What some dismiss as "soft" often becomes the very edge that sets women leaders apart.

Emotional intelligence doesn't replace competence; it amplifies it. Leaders with EQ create teams that don't just meet expectations but exceed them, because people are more willing to bring their best when they feel truly valued.

Where Leaders Get Stuck

- 01 Reacting Emotionally** Every leader feels pressure, but when emotions go unchecked, they can hijack decision-making. Snapping at a colleague, sending a harsh email, or shutting down in frustration may feel justified in the moment, but it leaves lasting damage. People begin to walk on eggshells, fearing your reaction more than valuing your direction. Reactivity shifts the focus from the issue to the leader's volatility. High-EQ leaders learn to pause, breathe, and respond with intention, turning tense moments into opportunities for trust-building.
-
- 02 Avoiding Hard Conversations** Many leaders mistake conflict avoidance for kindness. They dodge hard conversations to "keep the peace," but what they actually create is quiet resentment and deeper dysfunction. Small issues become big ones, and silence communicates acceptance of poor behavior. Teams without accountability lose respect for their leader and for each other. Emotional intelligence doesn't mean avoiding discomfort; it means stepping into it with honesty and compassion, knowing that healthy conflict is the doorway to growth.
-
- 03 Dismissing Emotions as Irrelevant** Some leaders pride themselves on being "all business," treating emotions as distractions that don't belong at work. But emotions are data. They signal where trust is strong, where burnout is brewing, or where vision isn't clear. Ignoring them doesn't make them disappear; it just drives them underground, where they eventually resurface as disengagement, turnover, or conflict. Leaders who dismiss emotions miss critical information about their team's health. High-EQ leaders pay attention to those cues and use them as a compass for better decisions.
-

Strengthening Emotional Intelligence

- **The Pause Practice** When tension rises, pause before responding. Ask yourself: "What's really driving this reaction mine or theirs?"
- **Name It to Tame It** Label emotions in the room. Example: "I sense frustration here. Let's talk about it." Naming emotions reduces their power.
- **The Listening Checklist** In your next conversation, practice:
 - Eye contact
 - Zero interruptions
 - Clarifying questions
 - Summarizing what you heard before responding
- **Humility Reset** At the end of each week, ask: "Did I lead with pride or humility? Did I champion people or push them aside?"



Reflection Prompts

01 When was the last time I reacted instead of pausing?

02 What emotions do I tend to dismiss in myself or in others?

03 How do I want people to feel after they interact with me?

04 Where do I need to replace pride with humility in my leadership?

Practice the Pause

This week, choose one tense or emotional moment to intentionally pause before responding. Listen fully, reflect, then respond with clarity and humility.

Emotional intelligence doesn't make you less of a leader, it makes you the kind of leader people actually want to follow.

Chapter 7:

Building High-Trust Teams

When I was entrusted with leading 250 people, it was overwhelming at first. The reality was clear: I couldn't possibly lead that many individuals on my own. If I tried to carry it all myself, I'd burn out, and the team would suffer.

So I turned to what had worked for me: raising up leaders. I looked for the humble ones, the people who weren't chasing a title but were naturally serving and lifting others up. I empowered them, gave them opportunities, and trusted them with real responsibility.

As those leaders began to lead, something powerful happened. The culture shifted. It trickled down through every level of the team. People trusted each other more, owned their roles, and served with joy. It became less about me and more about us. That season taught me that the secret to leading large teams isn't control, it's trust.

Why Trust Is the Foundation of Great Teams

Patrick Lencioni identifies the absence of trust as the core dysfunction of teams. Without trust, everything else in communication, accountability, and performance begins to break down. Trust is not just a “nice to have” in leadership; it’s the foundation on which every other part of teamwork is built.

- **Trust Accelerates Collaboration and Decision-Making** In low-trust environments, every suggestion is second-guessed, and decisions are delayed by endless clarification and defensiveness. But in high-trust teams, energy isn’t wasted on protecting turf or managing politics. Instead, collaboration flows naturally. People speak more freely, share more openly, and move faster toward solutions.
- **High-Trust Teams Innovate More** Fear shuts down creativity. When people worry about ridicule or backlash, they hold back their best ideas. But trust creates psychological safety, an environment where people feel free to experiment, make mistakes, and share bold thoughts. Innovation flourishes not because people suddenly become more creative, but because the fear barrier is removed.
- **Trust Transforms Accountability** In low-trust cultures, accountability feels like punishment. People brace for blame or criticism. In high-trust cultures, accountability feels like commitment to the team, to the mission, and to shared success. People hold themselves and each other responsible, not out of fear but out of respect and shared ownership.
- **A Strategic Advantage for Women Leaders** For women leaders especially, modeling trust can be transformative. When women lead with empathy, transparency, and consistency, it creates cultures where people feel safe and valued. This doesn’t mean lowering standards; it means creating an environment where people want to rise to meet them. Trust turns accountability into an act of partnership rather than a weapon of control.

Trust is the hidden multiplier of leadership. It speeds up decisions, strengthens culture, and expands influence. Without it, leaders spend more time managing dysfunction than moving forward. With it, teams accomplish more with less friction, less politics, and more unity.

Where We Get Stuck

- 01 **Leading with Control** Many leaders fall into the trap of believing control equals effectiveness. They micromanage every decision, double-check every task, and hover over their team's work. While it may feel like protecting quality, it erodes trust and sends a clear message: "I don't believe you can handle this without me." Over time, people stop bringing initiative because they know their leader will override them anyway. What starts as control quickly becomes a bottleneck that limits growth for both the leader and the team.
-
- 02 **Unclear Expectations** Trust thrives in clarity. When roles, responsibilities, and goals are ambiguous, people fill the gaps with assumptions. This breeds frustration, misalignment, and missed deadlines. Leaders who fail to set clear expectations unintentionally create distrust because the team never knows if they're truly meeting the standard. When clarity is missing, accountability feels unfair and success feels impossible.
-
- 03 **Ignoring Feedback** One of the fastest ways to kill trust is to ask for input and then do nothing with it. When leaders request feedback but never acknowledge it, or worse, never act on it, people learn that their voices don't matter. Over time, they stop speaking up altogether. This doesn't just stifle engagement; it starves the organization of valuable insight from the people closest to the work. Trust isn't built by having all the answers; it's built by listening, validating, and responding.
-

Building High-Trust Teams

Clarity Questions

Confusion is one of the biggest enemies of trust. When expectations are unclear, people second-guess themselves and waste energy worrying if they're on track. Simple, consistent questions can eliminate that.

Ask regularly in meetings or one-on-ones:

- ***"What does success look like here?"*** → **Defines the finish line so everyone knows when the job is truly done.**
- ***"Who owns this?"*** → **Assigns responsibility and prevents the "I thought someone else had it" trap.**

Write these two questions on a sticky note and keep them visible. The more often you ask them, the more natural clarity becomes in your culture.

Accountability Chart

Trust is built when responsibilities are clear and shared. An accountability chart isn't complicated; it's simply a visual of _who owns what. It reduces finger-pointing and makes ownership visible.

Steps:

- ✓ List key functions or projects.
- ✓ Assign a single name to each (teams can support, but one person owns it).
- ✓ Review the chart as a team to confirm agreement.
- ✓ Revisit monthly to adjust as responsibilities shift.

Post the chart where everyone can see it. Clarity creates accountability, and accountability strengthens trust.

Trust Deposits

Think of trust like a bank account; you're either making deposits or withdrawals in every interaction. The balance determines how much grace and credibility you carry when things get tough.

Deposits include:

- Keeping promises (big and small).
- Giving public credit when credit is due.
- Owning your mistakes.
- Listening without interruption.

Withdrawals include:

- Broken commitments.
- Blame-shifting.
- Ignoring input.
- Taking credit for others' work.

Ask yourself at the end of the week: *"Did I make more deposits than withdrawals?"* If the account is low, rebuild it before you need to draw on it.

More Vulnerability

Trust deepens when leaders are real. Pretending you have it all together creates distance; admitting mistakes creates connection. Vulnerability signals safety.

Examples:

- "I should have handled that conversation differently."
- "I don't know the answer yet, but I'll find out."
- "This was a miss on my part. Here's what I'll do differently next time."

When leaders model this behavior, teams follow. People feel safer to take risks, share ideas, and admit when they need help. Vulnerability is not weakness; it's a leadership strength that accelerates trust.

Reflection Prompts

01 On a scale of 1–10, how much trust exists on my team right now?

02 Where have I tried to lead with control instead of trust?

03 How often do I clarify expectations, and where do I need to do it more?

04 What's one "trust deposit" I can make this week?



Choose One Trust Deposit

This week, make one intentional trust deposit with your team, whether it's keeping a small promise, admitting a mistake, or giving public recognition.

Trust is the soil where accountability, collaboration, and growth take root. Without it, teams fracture. With it, even 250 people can move together as one.

Chapter 8: Networking & Mentorship for Women

Early in my leadership journey, I had a mentor, and she looked me in the eye and said words I'll never forget: "You are a strong leader. Don't shrink back."

That moment mattered because I didn't always feel strong. I often wrestled with insecurity, invisibility, and wondering if I really belonged in leadership spaces. But Claudia's words carried weight. She didn't just give me advice, she gave me courage. She saw something in me and called it out when I couldn't see it for myself.

Her mentorship didn't just help me grow; it lit a fire in me to do the same for others. I knew that one day I wanted to be the kind of leader who tells another woman, "Don't shrink back. You belong here."



Why Networking & Mentorship Matter

Networking and mentorship are not extras for leaders; they are essentials. Yet, research consistently shows that women are less likely to have the advocates they need to accelerate their leadership journey.

- **The Sponsorship Gap** *Studies show men are 46% more likely to have sponsors who don't just advise but actively advocate for them than women.* That gap matters because sponsorship often opens doors that hard work alone cannot. A sponsor's voice in the room can be the difference between being overlooked and being chosen for a high-visibility role. For women, intentionally seeking and cultivating sponsorship relationships is a strategic career advantage.
- **Mentorship vs. Sponsorship: Two Different Roles** Mentorship and sponsorship are often confused, but they're not the same.
 - **Mentorship** provides wisdom, perspective, and accountability. A mentor helps you grow personally and professionally by sharing insights from their own journey.
 - **Sponsorship** provides visibility and opportunity. A sponsor uses their influence to recommend you, highlight your work, and open doors in rooms where you might not yet have a seat.

Both are essential. Mentorship develops you; sponsorship propels you.

- **Networking Is About Relationships, Not Rolodexes** Too often, networking gets a bad reputation as transactional or shallow. But real networking isn't about collecting business cards or LinkedIn connections, it's about building genuine, mutually beneficial relationships. At its best, networking expands your influence by creating connections that lead to shared opportunities, collaborations, and mutual growth.
- **The Leadership Advantage** Women who intentionally invest in mentorship, sponsorship, and networking are more likely to rise into senior leadership and to stay there. These relationships provide a foundation of support, visibility, and opportunity that counterbalances systemic barriers women often face. Networking and mentorship don't just accelerate careers; they sustain them.

The message is clear: hard work matters, but relationships multiply impact. The right mentor or sponsor can shift the trajectory of your leadership, and your investment in others can do the same for them.

Where We Get Stuck

- 01 **Trying to Lead Alone** Many women grow up hearing the message that “hard work speaks for itself.” While effort and excellence are important, they’re not enough to secure influence or opportunity. Access often comes through relationships with someone who sees your work, values your perspective, and advocates for your next step. Leading alone may feel noble, but it isolates you. Without relational investment, your talent may remain hidden while others with strong networks move forward. Hard work is essential, but without connection, it can go unnoticed.
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- 02 **Confusing Mentors with Sponsors** Mentors and sponsors both play critical roles, but they are not interchangeable. A mentor is someone who guides, advises, and challenges you to grow. They pour into you and provide wisdom from their own experience. A sponsor, however, puts their reputation on the line to advocate for you. They mention your name in rooms you’re not in, connect you to opportunities, and actively create visibility for your work. Too many women stop at mentorship and never pursue sponsorship, limiting their access to higher-level opportunities. The mistake isn’t in having mentors; it’s in assuming that’s enough.
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- 03 **Neglecting Peer Support** Many women focus only on building relationships with mentors above them, while overlooking the power of allies beside them. Peer relationships are often the most underutilized source of strength in leadership. Peers understand your current challenges in real time, can provide practical support, and can open doors laterally within organizations or industries. Neglecting these connections leaves leaders isolated, when in reality, peer allies can become collaborators, partners, and advocates who walk the journey with you.
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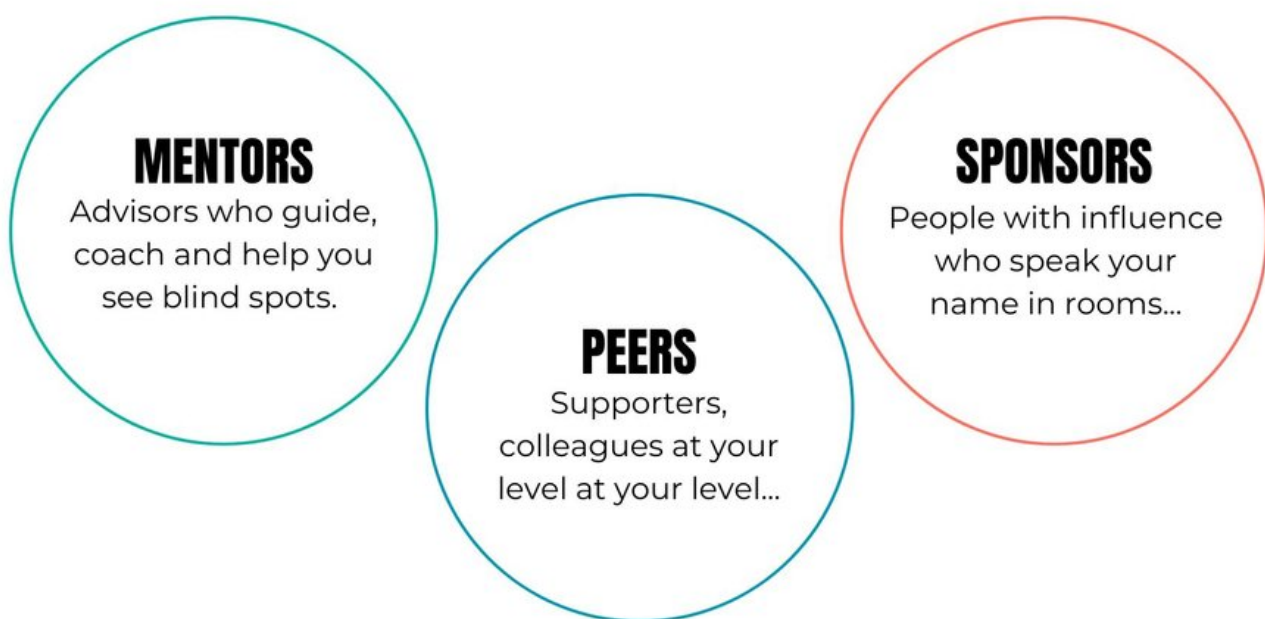
Building Your Leadership Circle

Mentor-Sponsor-Peer Map

Your leadership circle should never be one-dimensional. Each type of relationship plays a unique role in your growth.

- Draw three circles labeled **Mentors, Sponsors, and Peers**.
- **Mentors** are advisors who guide, coach, and help you see blind spots.
- **Sponsors** are people with influence who speak your name in rooms you're not in and connect you to opportunities.
- **Peers** are supporters, colleagues at your level who provide encouragement, collaboration, and accountability.
- Write down names in each circle. Notice where you're strong and where you have gaps.

If one circle is empty, make it a priority to intentionally seek those relationships.



Write down names in each circle. Notice where you're strong and where you have gaps.

Networking Plan

Networking doesn't need to be overwhelming or transactional. The most effective networks are built slowly and intentionally.

Steps to start:

1. Set a realistic goal: one intentional connection each month.
2. Rotate between coffee, lunch, or a short virtual chat.
3. Show up with curiosity, not self-promotion. Ask about their story, their challenges, and their goals.
4. Take notes afterward on what they care about, what resources might help them, and what follow-up could keep the connection alive?

Consistency beats intensity. A simple rhythm of one new connection a month builds a powerful network over time.

The "Give First" Principle

One of the most common networking mistakes is approaching it as *"what can I get?"* Instead, flip the script. Lasting relationships are built on generosity.

When you meet someone new, ask: *"What's one way I can support you right now?"*

Support could look like:

- Sharing a resource or introduction.
- Offering encouragement or feedback.
- Promoting their work or event.

When you give first, people remember you as a connector and supporter. The opportunities will come back to you naturally.

Peer Advisory Circle

Leadership can feel lonely, but it doesn't have to be. A Peer Advisory Circle provides support, perspective, and encouragement from women who understand your challenges.

How to form one:

1. Gather three to five women at a similar stage of leadership.
2. Commit to meeting monthly (virtually or in person).

Structure your time:

- Share one challenge you're facing.
- Celebrate one win.
- Offer advice, resources, or encouragement to one another.
- Keep it confidential and consistent to build deep trust.

Your circle doesn't need to be big. Depth beats breadth. A small group of trusted peers can fuel your growth far more than a large but shallow network.

Mastermind Group

A mastermind is a structured community of leaders who meet regularly to sharpen each other through accountability, idea-sharing, and problem-solving. Unlike a peer circle, a mastermind is more formalized with clear goals and structured sessions.

How to build or join one:

- Gather 6–10 leaders with diverse backgrounds but shared commitment to growth.
- Meet monthly or bi-weekly for 60–90 minutes.
- Structure the time: teaching or hot-seat coaching, followed by group feedback and accountability check-ins.
- Rotate the "spotlight" so each member gets focused input over time.

Benefits:

- Collective wisdom: multiple perspectives on your challenges.
- Accountability: others track your commitments.
- Momentum: hearing wins and ideas from others fuels your own progress.

If you can't find a mastermind group, start one. Invite women who are serious about growth and willing to commit. The synergy of a mastermind often accelerates leadership growth faster than individual effort.



Reflection Prompts

01 Who has been a mentor who called out something in me I couldn't see?

02 Do I have both mentors and sponsors, or just one?

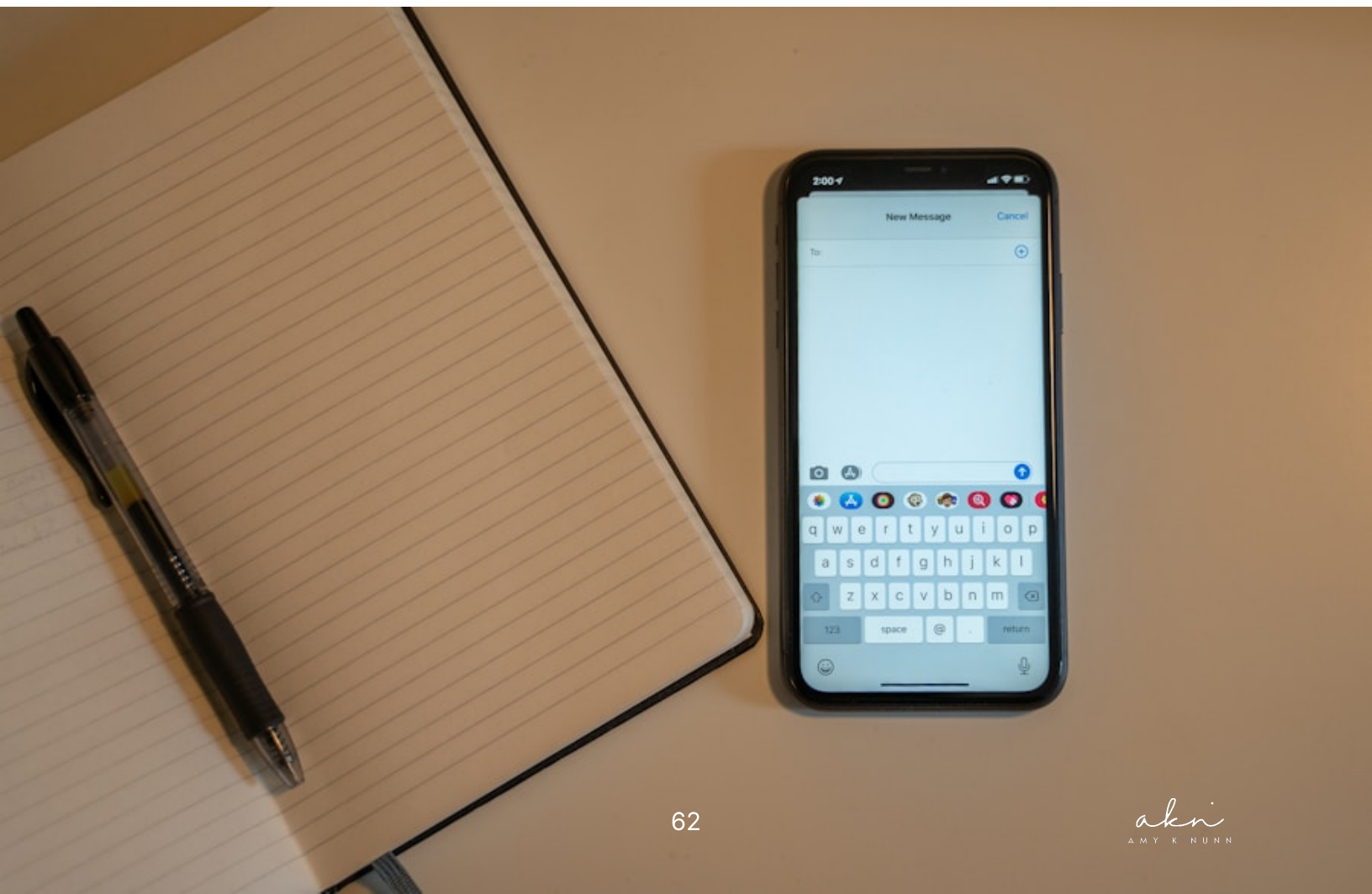
03 Who in my peer circle strengthens me, and who do I strengthen in return?

04 Who might need to hear the words, "Don't shrink back. You belong here" from me?

Next Step: Reach Out to One Person

This week, identify one person who could be a mentor, sponsor, or peer ally. Send a simple, genuine message: "I'd love to hear what you're working on and share ideas."

Because leadership isn't meant to be carried alone. We rise higher when someone goes before us, walks beside us, and reminds us not to shrink back.



Chapter 9:

Overcoming Burnout

& Pressure

On paper, I had everything a leader could want: responsibility, influence, and recognition. But inside, I was exhausted. The work that once filled me with energy now drained me. I found myself pushing through each day, doing what was expected, but no longer feeling alive in it.

I'll be honest, it scared me. For years, I had been the strong one, the dependable one. But now, I felt like I was slowly dying on the inside. What I came to realize was that I wasn't just tired. I was burned out.

That season was painful but pivotal. Burnout became a wake-up call. It forced me to admit that continuing at the same pace and in the same way wasn't sustainable. It was also God's way of nudging me into a new season, one where I could help leaders lead well and create space for women to rise. What looked like failure was really an invitation to redefine the way I led and lived.

Why Burnout Is a Leadership Crisis

Burnout is more than simple fatigue. Fatigue can be fixed with a weekend of rest or a good night's sleep. Burnout, however, is deeper; it is the depletion of physical, mental, and emotional reserves to the point where even rest doesn't feel restorative. It's waking up already exhausted, dreading tasks that once energized you, and feeling numb to the things you used to care about.

The Double Shift Reality

McKinsey research shows women leaders experience burnout at significantly higher rates than men. One reason is the "double shift": women are often expected to excel in the workplace while also carrying the majority of home and family responsibilities. This constant balancing act leaves little margin for recovery, and over time, it erodes well-being and performance.

The Organizational Ripple Effect

Burnout doesn't just affect the leader; it drains entire teams. Leaders who run on empty struggle with clarity, which creates confusion. They lose creativity, which stifles innovation. They lose compassion, which damages trust. A burned-out leader unintentionally spreads disengagement.

Hidden Costs of Burnout

Organizations pay a high price when leaders burn out: higher turnover, lower employee morale, and missed opportunities. Replacing talented leaders is far more costly than preventing burnout in the first place. Yet many organizations still treat it as a personal weakness rather than a systemic issue.

Renewal Isn't Optional

Renewal isn't a luxury for leaders; it's the foundation of sustainable leadership. Without intentional rhythms of rest and reflection, even the most gifted leaders will eventually crash. Renewal restores perspective, sharpens decision-making, and replenishes the resilience leaders need to navigate pressure. It's not selfish; it's stewardship.

Burnout is not just a personal problem to solve; it's a leadership crisis that organizations must recognize and women leaders must guard against if they want to sustain their calling for the long haul.

Where We Get Stuck

- 01 **Ignoring Warning Signs** Burnout rarely shows up overnight. It creeps in quietly through subtle signals, constant exhaustion that doesn't go away with rest, irritability over small things, disengagement from projects you once cared about, or a sense of emotional flatness. Too often, leaders brush these off as "just a busy season." But when ignored, these warning signs spiral into collapse. Projects stall, relationships suffer, and recovery takes far longer than it would have if you had listened early. Denying the signs doesn't make them disappear; it magnifies them.
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- 02 **Saying Yes Under Pressure** Many women leaders feel the unspoken pressure to prove loyalty, competence, or resilience. Saying yes to every request becomes a badge of honor: "They can count on me. I'll figure it out." But underneath, every yes chips away at your energy and focus until you're running on fumes. What feels like loyalty in the short term becomes self-destruction in the long term. The truth is, saying yes without margin doesn't strengthen your leadership; it weakens it by scattering your attention and eroding your health.
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- 03 **Treating Rest as Optional** Perhaps the most common mistake is believing that rest and renewal are luxuries you can't afford. Leaders often think: "Once this season slows down, I'll rest." But the slowdown rarely comes. Treating rest as optional leads to chronic depletion, short tempers, and reactive decision-making. Rest is not indulgence, it's a strategy. It sharpens perspective, fuels resilience, and makes space for creativity. Skipping it doesn't save time; it costs effectiveness.
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Breaking Free from Burnout

Energy Audit Tracker

Burnout often creeps in because leaders aren't aware of what drains them most. The Energy Audit makes those patterns visible.

How to use it:

- For one week, write down your daily activities in 30–60 minute blocks.
- Next to each activity, mark it as (+) energy-giving or (–) energy-draining.
- At the end of the week, review the patterns. Do certain meetings leave you depleted? Does mentoring give you life? Do administrative tasks steal energy while strategic planning fuels it?

Don't just note *what* drains or energizes you, ask *why*. Sometimes it's not the task itself but the way it's structured (e.g., too many back-to-back Zoom calls vs. one longer session). Once identified, cut, delegate, or restructure the biggest drains to protect your energy margin.

Renewal Rhythms

Rest doesn't happen by accident; it must be designed into your leadership. Renewal rhythms ensure you build health back into your schedule consistently.

Ideas to implement:

- ✓ **Daily:** 15 minutes of silence, reflection, or prayer before diving into your day. This grounds you and resets your mindset.
- ✓ **Weekly:** One device-free evening (no emails, no scrolling, no notifications). This signals to your brain that you are more than your productivity.
- ✓ **Monthly:** A personal retreat day. Step away from the routine journal, review your goals, or simply rest. This keeps you aligned with the bigger picture.
- ✓ **Annually:** At least one extended rest break (a vacation, sabbatical, or intentional week off). True restoration requires extended space away from constant demands.

Protect these rhythms like board meetings. They are non-negotiable investments in your sustainability as a leader.

Pressure Pause

Most burnout doesn't come from one giant yes it comes from hundreds of small ones stacked on top of each other. The Pressure Pause interrupts that cycle.

How it works:

- When someone asks you to take on something new, resist the impulse to answer immediately.
- Instead, respond with: *"Thanks for asking. Let me check my current commitments and get back to you tomorrow."*
- In that pause, ask yourself:
 - Does this align with my priorities?
 - Do I realistically have the capacity?
 - If I say yes, what will I have to say no to?

Even if you know the answer on the spot, practice pausing. It models intentional decision-making and prevents guilt-driven yeses.

Delegation Reset

Delegation isn't about letting go of responsibility; it's about multiplying leadership capacity. Many leaders burn out because they carry tasks others could own.

Steps to reset:

1. List out everything on your plate right now.
2. Circle at least three tasks that someone else could handle with a little direction.
3. Choose one to delegate this week.
4. When delegating, provide:
 1. Clear expectations (what success looks like).
 2. Authority to make decisions.
 3. Space to own the process without micromanagement.

Think of delegation as development, not dumping. When you release tasks, you're not losing control; you're growing another leader.

Reflection Prompts

01 What warning signs of burnout have I ignored in the past?

02 Which activities drain me the most, and which give me life?

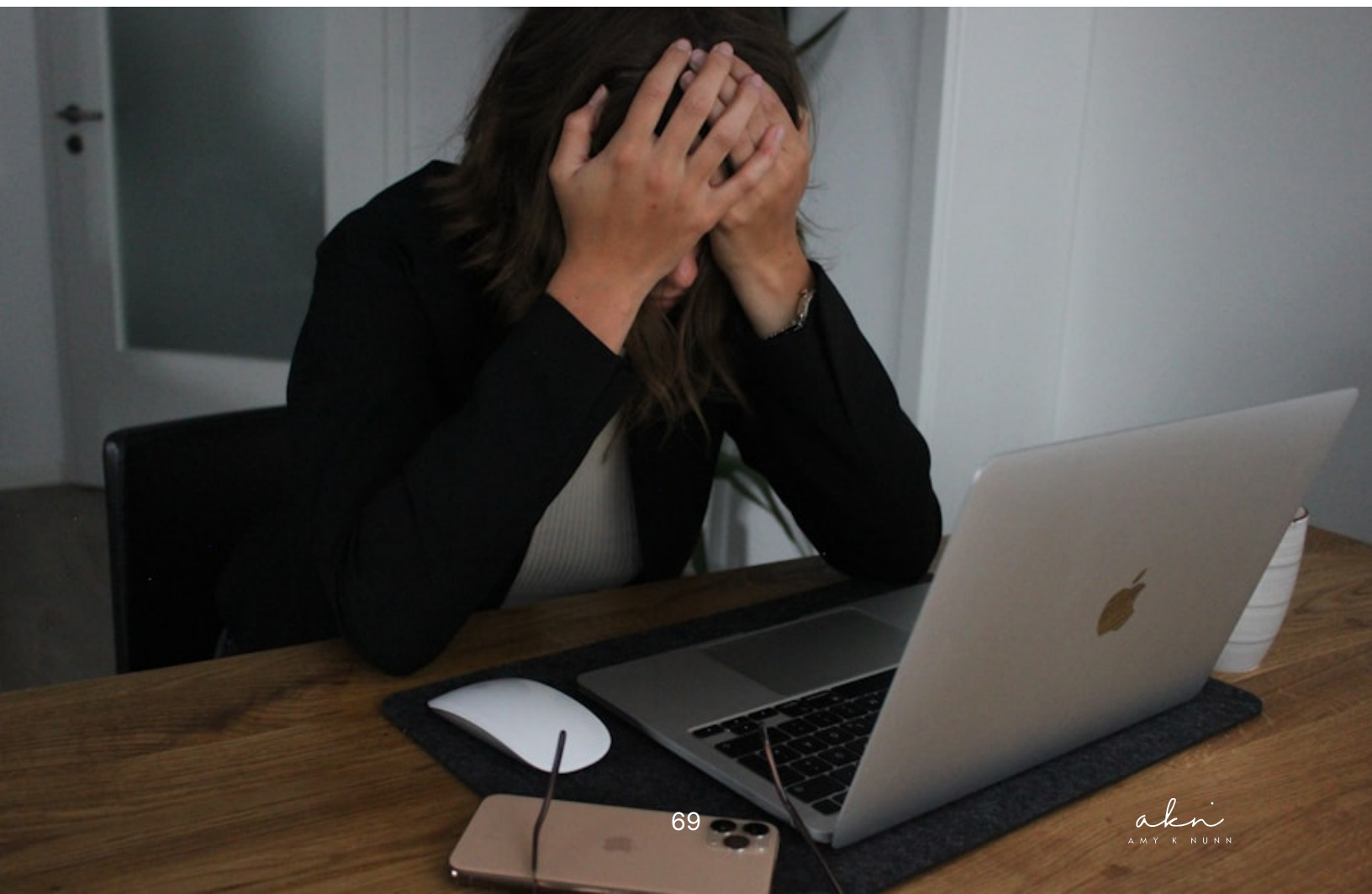
03 Where am I saying yes out of guilt instead of alignment?

04 What renewal rhythm would give me the greatest impact right now?

Schedule Renewal Before Crisis

Don't wait for burnout to force you into rest. Choose one renewal rhythm this week, whether it's a walk, a quiet morning, or an unplugged evening, and protect it like a meeting with your boss.

Burnout isn't the end of your leadership story. Sometimes it's the turning point where God invites you into a healthier, more sustainable way of leading. Your team doesn't need you busy; they need you whole.



Chapter 10: Leaving a Legacy of Leadership

Some of my proudest leadership moments aren't tied to titles or big accomplishments but are tied to people. Over the years, I've mentored many women. I watched them wrestle with insecurity, step into leadership opportunities, and slowly grow in confidence.

The day one of them stood in front of others, leading with boldness, I felt something deeper than pride. I felt joy. She wasn't just repeating what I had taught her; she was stepping into who she was meant to be. In that moment, I realized my legacy wasn't in the projects I finished or the teams I managed. My legacy was in the leaders I raised.

Why Legacy Matters in Leadership

Legacy is not built in the big, shiny moments of leadership; it's built in the daily choices of how you lead, how you treat people, and how you invest in others. Titles and accomplishments may look impressive for a season, but they fade quickly once you step out of a role. What remains is the way you influenced people, the values you modeled, and the leaders you raised.

People Carry Your Influence Forward Long after your job title changes, the people you've poured into will carry your influence into their own leadership. Every courageous conversation, every investment of time, every moment of believing in someone when they doubted themselves, multiplies beyond you.

Legacy Isn't About Perfection; It's About Investment Too often, leaders think legacy requires flawless leadership or monumental achievements. But legacy is not perfection; it's intentionality. It's choosing to invest in people, even on the days you don't feel like it. It's teaching what you've learned, sharing what you've lived, and modeling what it means to lead with both humility and strength.

Breaking Ceilings for Others When leaders build a legacy, it doesn't stop with them. Every time you push through a barrier, you make it easier for the women behind you to step forward. You're not just shaping your own story; you're rewriting the story for future generations. Your courage gives someone else permission to lead more boldly.

Leadership That Multiplies Outlives You Leadership that centers on you, your talent, your presence, and your authority dies when you leave. But leadership that multiplies through others outlives you. When you pour into people who will go further than you, your impact extends beyond your tenure, your role, and even your lifetime. That is the essence of legacy.

Legacy isn't measured by applause or awards; it's measured by multiplication. It's the leaders who rise because you chose not to keep leadership to yourself.

Where We Get Stuck

- 01 **Hoarding Knowledge.** Some leaders operate with a scarcity mindset, holding tightly to their wisdom, experience, and insights. They fear that if they share too much, someone else might surpass them. The result? The next generation of leaders is left unprepared, and the culture stagnates. True legacy is never about keeping secrets; it's about generously passing on what you've learned so others can go further than you did. Knowledge multiplies when it's shared, not when it's stored.
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- 02 **Neglecting Succession.** Many leaders avoid talking about succession because it feels uncomfortable. Preparing someone else to take your place can feel like planning your own irrelevance. But ignoring succession is short-sighted and dangerous. When leaders fail to raise and equip successors, organizations suffer setbacks, teams lose stability, and opportunities are wasted. Succession planning is not about stepping aside; it's about ensuring the work and values outlast you. Legacy-minded leaders know their job isn't finished until someone else is ready to carry the baton.
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- 03 **Chasing Spotlight.** The temptation to make leadership about recognition is real. Leaders who chase the spotlight crave credit, attention, and applause. But spotlight-driven leadership burns out quickly because it centers on the leader, not the mission. The irony? The more you chase the spotlight, the less lasting your influence becomes. Legacy is built not when you're in the spotlight, but when you create space for others to shine. A true legacy leader celebrates when those they've invested in succeed, even if it means they are no longer the one being applauded.
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Building a Leadership Legacy

Legacy Letter

Legacy isn't something that happens by accident; it's something you choose. A Legacy Letter is a tangible way to capture the values, lessons, and priorities you want to pass on.

How to write one:

- + Start by reflecting on the key values you want to be remembered for. (e.g., integrity, courage, humility, service)
- + Write down the lessons you've learned the hard way that you'd want someone else to know sooner.
- + Include the priorities that mattered most to you: family, spirituality, leadership, and impact.
- + Share the letter with those you lead or mentor. It doesn't have to be long, but it should be heartfelt and clear.

Update your Legacy Letter every few years. As you grow, so does your perspective, and your legacy should evolve with you.

Succession Plan

Legacy is not only about what you leave, it's about who you leave behind. Succession planning is a gift to your team and organization.

Steps to start:

- **Step 1:** Identify 2–3 emerging leaders on your team who show humility, hunger, and teachability.
- **Step 2:** Give them stretch assignments and projects that challenge them beyond their comfort zone.
- **Step 3:** Provide visibility by inviting them into higher-level meetings or giving them opportunities to present their ideas publicly.
- **Step 4:** Walk alongside them with feedback and encouragement as they grow into their next role.

Succession planning doesn't mean you're stepping down. It means you're ensuring the mission won't collapse if you step away.

Raise Another Leader Challenge

Legacy is built in small, consistent actions. Make it a weekly rhythm to ask yourself:

"Who did I invest in this week to carry leadership forward?"

That investment can be as simple as:

- Encouraging someone after a win.
- Offering constructive feedback.
- Sharing a leadership insight from your own journey.
- Delegating responsibility in a way that stretches their capacity.

Keep a running list of names. Over time, you'll see how your leadership has multiplied far beyond what you could carry alone.

Celebrate Multiplication

The fastest way to show your team what you value is by what you celebrate. When you publicly recognize leaders who raise other leaders, you reinforce a culture of multiplication.

Examples:

- Highlight a team member who successfully trained someone else.
- Celebrate when someone you've mentored takes initiative or steps into greater visibility.
- Share success stories of leadership growth, not just task completion.

Shift praise from "what got done" to "who grew." This reframes leadership wins from production to multiplication.

Reflection Prompts

01 Who invested in me, and how did it shape my leadership?

02 Who am I currently raising up to lead after me?

03 What values do I want to be remembered for?

04 If my leadership ended tomorrow, what legacy would remain?

Invest in One Emerging Leader

This month, choose one person to intentionally invest in through encouragement, coaching, or an opportunity to lead.

Your greatest contribution won't be the projects you complete. It will be the people you equip. Leaders build legacies not by holding onto influence but by multiplying it.



Lead Boldly

Leadership is both beautiful and brutal. It will test you, stretch you, and sometimes break you. I've been the leader who succeeded beyond what I thought possible, and I've been the leader who failed. I've been invisible in rooms where my voice was dismissed, and I've been fully visible in rooms where I was trusted with influence. I've worked under insecure leaders who tried to silence me, and I've been lifted up by champions who created space for me to rise.

Through every season, I've learned this: **leadership isn't about titles, perfection, or approval. It's about courage, humility, and people.**

The invisible weight may always be there. The pressure to be "too much" or "not enough" won't fully disappear. But you don't have to carry it the same way. You can choose to lead with clarity instead of an apology. You can set boundaries without guilt, raise up leaders without fear, and pursue success that aligns with your values, not someone else's definition.

And here's the truth: your leadership matters. The women and men around you need what you bring. Your family, your organization, your community, they need you leading boldly, not shrinking back.

The world doesn't just need more leaders. It needs more leaders who are authentic, wise, resilient, and compassionate. It needs women like you, women who carry both grit and grace. Women who know that legacy isn't measured by the size of the room they lead, but by the lives they impact.

So here's my invitation to you:

- ✕ Don't wait for perfect conditions.
- ✕ Don't wait for permission.
- ✕ Don't wait for fear to fade.

Lead boldly today.

Because leadership was never about being flawless. It's about showing up, again and again, with courage, humility, and conviction. And it's about leaving a legacy of leaders who will rise because you chose not to shrink back.

Your story is still being written. Let it be one of boldness.

Meet Amy

Amy K. Nunn is a highly respected Leadership Mentor, culture strategist, and expert with over 20 years of experience. As a certified practitioner with Everything DiSC® facilitator and an authorized partner with The Wiley Group, Amy specializes in guiding leaders, teams, and organizations toward better communication, stronger relationships, and more effective collaboration.



Amy is known for her down-to-earth and relatable approach, making complex leadership concepts easy to understand and apply. Her passion for helping others grow is contagious, and her practical, results-driven strategies have earned her a reputation as a trusted mentor and coach. In addition to her leadership coaching, Amy is a seasoned author, sharing personal and professional growth insights that inspire others.

She continues to be a sought-after resource for business owners and leaders, helping them grow their leadership skills while cultivating strong relationships that benefit their businesses and communities.

Leadership doesn't end when you close this book. This is where it begins.

Thank you for taking the time to read this ebook. I hope it gave you encouragement as well as practical strategies to take you to the next level.

Write your Legacy Letter. Start your Mentor-Sponsor-Peer Map. Have that one courageous conversation you've been avoiding. Take your next step today because small, consistent action is what builds bold leaders. And remember: every boundary you set, every voice you use, every person you invest in isn't just shaping your future it's shaping the future for women everywhere.

Want to get in touch, email me at amy@nexttonunn.com.