

# COACHING GUIDE MODULE 6

## LESSON 5: BEHAVIORS THAT HOLD YOU BACK

### LOW SELF-CONFIDENCE - BEHAVIOR #5

One of the biggest barriers for women is lack of self-confidence. This is a big one and its guide in our lives is led by our inner critic.

The inner critic is the critical inner voice inside our heads that judges us by telling us we are bad, wrong, inadequate, worthless, not enough, etc. Our inner critic, sometimes referred to as our gremlin, often produces feelings of shame, deficiency, and causes us self-doubt and low self-esteem. This harsh and relentless negative self-talk prevents us from making the best decisions, realizing our dreams, hinders our relationships, and minimizes our joy - and worst of all, negatively impacts our ability to see our potential. Even though intellectually we know better than to do this to ourselves, somehow, we lose power to this spiral of negative thoughts and emotions which is most often not even based in reality.

The inner voice in our head talks to us all the time. Sometimes we don't even know that it is happening to us. It just seems like it's there. The problem is that the little voice in our head can take us down and out because we stop believing in ourselves and our lack of confidence prevails. Sometimes this little voice becomes a bad habit. My own inner critic often whispers in my ear, "They don't like me." Intellectually, I know this is ridiculous and most likely not true. But here's the problem...

...what we believe about ourselves becomes our reality.

What this means is that we have to be very very careful about how we talk to ourselves and work diligently to silence our inner critic. If we don't, our thoughts will create our results. And it won't be pretty.

Women question themselves more often than men as we wonder if we are smart enough, educated enough, thin enough, talented enough, know enough, pretty enough, etc. What we think and feel drives what we say and do. If you think you are not enough, you will act in ways that confirms these thoughts. Not good. Not good for your reputation, not good for your brand, and not good for living as your best self.

It is important to know what causes your inner critic to activate and when you are more likely to place harsh judgement on yourself. Could it be stress, isolation, overwork, comparing yourself with others, or perfectionism? Each one of us has different inner critic triggers. Do you know yours?

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**EXERCISE 1:** Journal in your notebook the answers to the following questions.

1. What do you think might cause your inner critic to activate?
2. What does the critical voice inside your head say to you most of the time? Be specific with your answer.
3. Identify at least 3 different kinds of situations, particular people, or specific places where you notice you judge yourself as “less than”.
4. What value and strengths do you bring to your work? Make a list of at least 25.
5. What are the personal costs you experience when you feel lack of confidence at work? At home? What price do you pay for your negative self-talk?

**STOP:** It is important to do this exercise before going further.

What to do: Women can build up the confidence needed to lead their lives more powerfully both at work and at home. We need to believe in our worthiness—and learn how to stop the harsh thinking about ourselves and let go of the self-beliefs that no longer serve us. Here are some strategies I use for myself.

- When I notice I’m talking trash to myself, I visualize my inner critic as a gremlin sitting on my shoulder and imagine flicking him off with my fingers to shut him up and send him away.
- I continue to practice admiring someone, especially another woman, without thinking I am “less than” by comparing myself with them in a negative way. Instead, I list all my accomplishments, experience, skills and positive qualities in my head to remind myself I’m really OK and have earned my place in front of the room, at the table or in my role.
- I have a couple of theme songs I sing in my head when I become aware that my inner critic is leading my narrative, to remind myself that I’m fine, just the way I am. Some of my favorite ditties include, “I am Woman” by Helen Reddy, “Life is a Highway” by Tom Cochrane and “Simply the Best” by Tina Turner.
- I call my coach and talk through the scenario that has me question my contribution and impact so I can assemble a more powerful perspective for myself to quiet my inner critic.
- I reach out to my support team for help; sometimes, it’s a girlfriend, a colleague, or even my mother – anyone and everyone in my inner circle who reminds me that I am a strong competent woman.

What strategies can you devise right now to help you diminish the power of your inner critic?

Research says that women’s advancement depends on three factors: performance (how well you do your job), image (your professional brand and how others perceive you) and exposure (visibility with key stakeholders). If you want to work more on how to create and manage your brand, check out Module 4 in this Women Rising series.

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There are issues outside of your sphere of influence and control that might be contributing to holding you back professionally depending on your industry and role within it.

Some examples of these might be outdated norms, stereotypes and unconscious bias, unequal opportunities available for men and women alike, unbalanced organization charts especially at the top, continuous lip service without real or enough results, uneven or unequal pay structures, gender disparities, and unequal mommy versus daddy tracks. It's hard to know what to do about these issues and it's even more challenging when you're not the one at the top running the show. Staying silent doesn't help matters either.

Many women are afraid to call it like it is in the organizations in which they work. There may be many reasons each of us may be hesitant to speak up. Each woman needs to decide where she stands, what's acceptable and what is truly intolerable not only for herself but for all the other women that work alongside her or have yet to arrive. Take action. Here are some ideas: you might call it out – and right in the moment, when you see an injustice playing out. Or you might write a letter and send it to an ally or someone in power to do something about it. Or you might gather other women together in your organization and decide what to do, together. Or you might quit and tell the truth about why you are frustrated about an injustice you perceive. Or you might put your comments up on Glassdoor or other places online where companies are rated. These are only a few suggestions. Select the ones that seem right for you.

## **JOURNAL AND REFLECTIONS**

This exercise will help you think strategically about where you are and where you want to go next by focusing on not only doing your job as best you can but also taking the time to focus on your career and the future and what behaviors might be holding you back.

Journal your answers to the questions below. Journaling is more about writing stream of consciousness versus getting it right or making it sound pretty. Journaling is a process that unearths curiosity and wonder within us. After completing the exercise above, answer the following...

What top 3 observations do you have?

What patterns, if any, do you notice?

What specific ideas resonated most or seem right on target for you? And why?

What resonated least or seems less relevant for you? And why?

What are your biggest ahas or take-aways?

What did you learn about yourself that delighted you most?

What are 1-2 next steps you will take with this information you now have?

## **FOLLOW UP**

Want more help understanding what this all means and how it relates to where you are or where you're going, reach out to me at Wendy Capland, [wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com](mailto:wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com) to schedule a one hour 1:1 Coaching Session. Investment-\$500.