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Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office: Unconscious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers (A NICE GIRLS Book)

by Lois P. Frankel

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29 Highlights

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 207

- Women total 3.8 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs. • Worldwide, 8 percent of top executives are female.
 - Women make up 23.7 percent of US legislators. • There are twenty women heads of state worldwide.
 - Women account for 20.3 percent of elected parliamentarians around the globe (kudos to Nordic countries with 40 percent women!). • Globally, the differences in earnings between men and women vary, with Japan and Korea seeing the largest disparity of 28 percent and 39 percent, respectively (Hungary is the lowest with only a 4 percent difference in earnings between men and women). • On average in the United States, Caucasian women earn 77 percent of what men earn for doing the same jobs, but African American women earn only 69 cents on the dollar and Latinas only 58 cents on the dollar. • Within just one year of completing college, women are earning 8 percent less than the men with whom they graduated, and by mid-career that number increases to more than 20 percent.
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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 291

No matter what hand life deals us, we are ultimately left with the dilemma of how we choose to respond. That is where our control lies. It doesn't lie in the hand that's already been dealt. It doesn't lie in trying to change others—that's an illusion. It lies in the actions we choose to take in response to our particular situations.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 318

There's an A.A. Milne quote I've always enjoyed that I'd like you to keep in mind as you read this book: "There is something you must always remember. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 327

From the outset I want you to know and, even more important, believe that the mistakes impeding you from reaching your career goals or potential don't happen because you're stupid or incompetent (although others might want to make you think so). You are simply acting in ways consistent with your socialization or in response to cultural expectations. Beyond girlhood, no one ever tells us that acting differently is an option—and so we don't.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 365

This might also be a good time to dispel the myth that overcoming the nice girl syndrome means you have to be mean and nasty. It's the question I am asked most often in interviews. Some women have even told me they didn't buy the book because they assumed from the title that it must contain suggestions for how to be more like a man. Nothing could be further from the truth. If I've said it once, I've said it literally five hundred times in the last ten years: Nice is necessary for success; it's simply not sufficient. If you overrely on being nice to the exclusion of developing complementary behaviors, you'll never achieve your adult goals.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 439

I rarely bring food to the office to share with others.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 601

The workplace is exactly that—a game. It has rules, boundaries, strategies, winners, and losers. Women tend to approach work more like an event (picnic, concert, fund-raiser), where everyone comes together for the day to play together nicely. In our desire to create win-win situations, we unknowingly create win-lose ones—where we're the losers. Playing the game of business doesn't mean you're out to cause others to fail, but it is competitive. It means you are aware of the rules and develop strategies for making them work to your advantage.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 625

Make a list of the rules of the game at your workplace. Remember, these are usually unspoken expectations for how fast-trackers should behave. Rather than completing it in one sitting, you may have to compile the list gradually as you observe interactions, memos, and meetings in a different way than you have in the past. Examples of rules in some workplaces include "Don't disagree with the boss"; "Everyone works at least ten hours of overtime"; "Being polite is more important than being right"; "Deadlines must be met no matter what the circumstance"; "Budgets are strictly adhered to"; "The customer always comes first," and so on. As you make your list, begin thinking about how your behavior compares with the expectations.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 642

As an avid but quite average tennis player, I used to hit the ball squarely within bounds for fear of going out and losing the point. In an effort to play safely, I artificially narrowed my playing field. After a while, it occurred to me that I would never win the game playing that way. I had to learn to hit the ball toward the edges of, yet within, bounds if I ever hoped to win. So I started going outside my comfort zone and found that I actually won more games. In any game, points aren't won in the middle of the field, they're won at the edge. Taking calculated risks might sometimes cause you to go out-of-bounds, but as long as you win the majority of points, you won't lose the game. It's important to get yourself out of the women's safe zone and toward the edge of the field where the winners are playing.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 836

Go to the website mentoringgroup.com and order The Mentor's Guide and The Mentee's Guide. These two pamphlets are extraordinarily helpful in establishing roles and responsibilities in mentoring. During your first meeting with your mentor, give him or her The Mentor's Guide, explain what you've learned from your own guide, and use it to discuss the terms of engagement for your relationship.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 859

Sometimes I think women work hard because it's easier to do what they know best, rather than to engage in behaviors that seem foreign to them. One woman complained to me about the guys she worked with who, every Monday morning during football season, spent the first half hour of the day rehashing Sunday's games with the boss. "What a waste of time. Here I am working away, and they're talking about football!" she lamented. What bothered her even more was the fact that these same guys were being tapped for prime assignments. Whereas women see it as "wasting the company's money" to do anything other than focus on the task at hand between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., men know that whether it's talking about football or last weekend's golf scores, they're building relationships that will later work for them. In this situation her male coworkers were bonding with the boss in a way that allowed him to better know these team members. As a result, when growth opportunities became available, he picked them because he was familiar and comfortable with them.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 867

People aren't hired and promoted simply because they work hard. It happens because the decision maker knows the character of the person and feels confident about his or her ability not only to do the job, but also to do it in a way that promotes collegial team relationships.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1005

As of this writing, on average, full-time working women earn \$36,931 compared to men's \$47,715. As mentioned earlier, the figures are even bleaker for African American women and Latinas. Although part of this discrepancy is clearly due to discrimination, and another reason is the fact that women gravitate toward lower-paying jobs, it's largely true because disenfranchised groups are less likely to ask for what they want.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1287

- Prepare for every social event that you attend. Assume that opportunities will present themselves to discuss business matters of importance to you—or to others. Knowing in advance who is attending will help you to identify key issues, challenges, or projects for which you want support or have support to offer.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1296

Attend the Dale Carnegie Course on Effective Communications and Human Relations/Skills for Success. This course focuses on strengthening your interpersonal relationships, being a persuasive communicator, and developing a take-charge attitude initiated with confidence and enthusiasm.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1368

If you fall into the category of being overly sensitive, I have only three words for you: Get over it. In her book *The Male Factor: The Unwritten Rules, Misperceptions, and Secret Beliefs of Men in the Workplace*, Shaunti Feldhahn cites this as one of the top pet peeves men have about women. Men are simply not wired to take things as personally as do women. To them, work is just business; it's not personal. If women want to be seen as having the stamina to play in the big leagues, then they need to take personal out of the equation—especially when it comes to receiving feedback.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1374

Assume the best of intentions rather than the worst. Most people don't start off the day with a fervent desire to hurt your feelings. Shit happens. Before stewing on a comment or action that offended you to the point where it has you boiling over, consider the other person's intent. Yes, an offhanded comment made in a hurry or in the heat of the moment can be hurtful, but you don't have to let it become a festering wound.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1395

Take more risks by acting without first getting input from your supervisor. Begin with small, low-profile decisions. It helps to factor in the combination of data and feelings when taking a risk. If you have all the data you need and you feel really good about it, it isn't really a risk at all. On the other hand, if you have little data and you're not feeling so hot about it, then it's a foolish risk. You've got to have some of both (data and good feelings) to take a good risk.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1447

Differentiate transactional relationships from personal ones and act accordingly.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1557

Don't confuse the men at work with your brothers, father, grandfathers, or husband. Women often project onto men characteristics associated with the men in their families. The norms for interacting with family members are not likely the same ones that should be used with coworkers. Assume equality with your male coworkers regardless of their age or status. It puts you in a better position to go toe-to-toe with them when needed.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1573

The same holds true when a woman is asked to debrief a particular project where something has gone askew. She'll blame herself and identify all the things she could have done differently. What do men do? Again, they're objective and Teflon-like in their descriptions. One man, when accused of designing an ill-conceived methodology, said, "The problem wasn't the methodology, it was that the methodology didn't reflect realistic measures of the process." And who designed the methodology to begin with? Anne Mulcahy, former chairperson and CEO of Xerox, found out the hard way that telling the unadulterated truth can get you into trouble. At an investors conference early in her tenure, she told the world that the company had "an

unsustainable business model.” The next day, Xerox stock lost 26 percent of its value. Mulcahy originally thought that since it was no secret the company was losing money, it naturally followed that there was a problem with the business model. “Looking back,” said Mulcahy later, “I should have said, ‘The company recognizes changes have to take place in the business model.’ ” She advises people to continue being straightforward, but also to make sure “you don’t provide sound bites that can be used out of context...” It seems Mulcahy hadn’t yet learned the art of putting a “positive spin” on a situation. Telling the truth doesn’t require you to cast yourself in a negative light. It requires an honest, objective description of facts without blame or self-flagellation.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1679

A year after *Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office* was released, the second book in the series, *Nice Girls Don’t Get Rich*, was published. In that book I talked about the many mistakes women make with money because of their complex relationship with it. I spoke with women and asked what kept them from being rich. Almost to a woman, they responded they didn’t have the need to be rich; they only wanted to be comfortable. For crying out loud! I’ve been comfortable, and I’ve been rich, and believe me, I’d rather be rich—and you should too. You can think of rich as having all the money you need to live your life the way that you want, free from concerns about money. Money is power, and power is something women misinterpret and avoid. Ask a woman if she’s powerful, and she’ll give you five reasons why she’s not. This translates into feeling uncomfortable with the subject of money and thinking she actually deserves less than she’s due. Or worse yet, she doesn’t give money a second thought except in terms of needing enough to pay the bills. What you focus on is what you get. If you’re not earning a fair salary or not being given the raises you deserve, it’s time to focus on money. It won’t mean you’re any less committed to your work—only that you’re equally committed to your well-being and that of your family.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1785

Unless you’re Betty Crocker, there shouldn’t be home-baked cookies, M&Ms, jelly beans, or other food on your desk. Hillary Rodham Clinton may have been lambasted for her comment about not staying home and baking cookies while her husband was running for president, but her point was well taken. We don’t ascribe a sense of impact or import to people who feed others. It may seem like a small or inconsequential thing, but the fact is, you rarely see food on men’s desks. Similarly, men don’t bring in leftovers from dinner the night before to share with coworkers. The act of feeding is equated with nourishing, and nourishing is definitely a stereotypically female attribute. Additionally, food on the desk is often an invitation to stop and chat a moment (people can’t just “eat and run”). Combined, the aspects of feeding and encouraging conversation emphasize stereotypically feminine qualities, often in the very women who don’t need to emphasize them quite so much!

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1805

Don’t volunteer to organize the company potluck lunch. There are much better things you want to be known for being good at.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1875

Practice your handshake with both male and female friends or colleagues. Get their feedback about whether yours is too limp or too strong. You may have a different handshake for men than for women. Continue

practicing until you find a place where both men and women tell you your handshake conveys the message you want it to. • Here's a tip a colleague's father taught him when he was a young boy: Keep extending your hand until you hook thumbs (try it and you'll see how it works). Don't stop with just grabbing the fingers. (And by the way—how many fathers taught their daughters how to shake hands?) • When meeting someone for the first time, if he or she doesn't offer a hand first, offer yours. It's a sign of confidence.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1884

While I'm on the subject of greetings, the question often comes up as to whether it's appropriate to greet an associate with a hug. This one is tricky. My advice is to never hug someone unless he or she does so first. Not only is it a matter of invading another person's space, but it also softens the greeting.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1937

Although I'm a staunch believer in the servant leadership philosophy espoused by Robert Greenleaf, many women take this to the extreme and encounter the same problems as Kristen when they're promoted to the management ranks or asked to lead a project team. They fail to transition from doer to leader. If you're busy doing, you don't have time to provide the vision, guidance, technical support, and oversight required of a leader.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1999

If climbing the corporate ladder is important to you, there is no such thing as work-life balance. It's not possible for men, and, given their additional family responsibilities, it's even less possible for women. We actually don't even hear the term balance referred to any longer. The new language around it is work-life integration, because the focus is on how to integrate the two aspects of your life as a working woman.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 2023

Focus on quality, not quantity. Staying at work additional hours doesn't make you more effective at your job or perceived as more valuable to the company (if overtime isn't a company expectation). In fact, it could make you seem overwhelmed and inefficient. Similarly, the amount of time you spend with your family isn't as important as the quality of that time. You can be at home physically and absent mentally. Strive to be fully present wherever you are and compartmentalize the various aspects of your life. Personally, I have a visualization exercise that I do when I'm feeling torn between two places. I picture myself putting my concerns or worries in a box and then placing that box on a high shelf in my closet. I tell myself that I can retrieve the box at a later time and deal with the issues then, but for now I must be fully present in the moment.

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