

Notes from Leyla Navaro re:  
Gender & Conflict Resolution Teleconference Salon

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**What Stops Women From Showing Up?**

√ to be modest is an appreciated feminine trait, by both men and women. **Modesty** is still an asset for women no matter what her status is; whereas modesty can be a burden for men. Thus men learn to overcome their modesty; they learn to show up and strongly hold to their visibility as position and status. Thus in demanding positions, women need to unlearn their inhibitions, learn to show up when necessary and hold to their visibility in order to become more convincing and trustworthy.

√ **visibility: appearance.** Till now, women's socially accepted visibility was through their looks and appearance. A successful woman has to keep up with her appearance as well. A man's visibility is not necessarily in parallel with his appearance.

√ **visibility: capacity and success:** a woman's success through her assets and capacity is well received both by men and most women. However, most women still suffer from internal inhibitions to fully enjoy their success and their social visibility.

√ **women didn't learn to win and savor its success.** By contrast, men learn from a young age to be in win/lose games and are trained in winning or losing. They don't necessarily feel guilt towards the loser and don't try to empathize with the loser's feelings. Empathizing and feeling guilt towards the loser are serious handicaps for women in win/lose games.

√ **women are afraid of competition:** showing up invites aggression and competitiveness and women are not well prepared, unlike most men, to address or measure up to aggression and harsh competitiveness, be it their own felt aggression or aggression and competitiveness coming from others.

√ **women avoid showing up** in competitive situations, thus opt to **not use their full potential.**

√ women prefer to play **lose/lose** instead of win/lose because they don't want to comply with the consequent feelings of winning (guilt, empathy for loser, fear of retaliation, fear of success)

√ women resent other women who opt to show up and win. Their usual punishment is **ostracization and gossiping** against her. Most women fear this "*relational aggression*," that is resentment/punishment, thus avoid showing up and being successful for the sake of preserving relationships.

√ relationships and connections are more important to women than success or showing up. By contrast men have been trained for success and show up as part of their male hood. And opt more easily for success and showing up instead of connection and relationship.

√ **“too much”**: those women who assert themselves or can be competitive or openly aggressive are qualified as “too much” both by men and women. This is a superlative used pejoratively only for women. A man is never “too competitive, too intelligent, too strong”. i.e. Hillary Clinton, Condolezza Rice.

√ there’s still a **lack of positive role models for women**: successful women mediators, lawyers, successful female administrators elicit a lot of respect and are displayed in media. There’s more need of those models.

√ **healthy entitlement**: as compared to most men, women have not learned to enjoy healthy entitlement to life assets, i.e. to enjoy and take in admiration, love, success, advancement, etc.

### **Mediation and Gender**

√ mediation requires **EMPATHY, CREATIVITY** and good skills in **CONNECTION** and **RELATIONALITY**. Those are assets acquired mostly by women from young age on. Therefore women are actually more advantaged in their acquired skills to work in mediating roles. However, b/c of the above, that is lack of self-confidence, lack of assertion and self-doubt, women may fail to use their skills in an effective way, consequently losing their convincing power.

√ mediation requires taking and keeping a good **distance** with both parties. Till date, male development emphasized men learning to keep a good distance with emotional or conflictual issues. This works usually in favor of male mediators. Moreover, both as men and women, we’ve learned that mothers are more emotionally involved as compared to fathers; therefore we may have our own prejudices with regard to male or female mediators. Those prejudices may affect the mediating process re: the gender of the mediator, that is, b/c of gender prejudices a male mediator may inspire better confidence than a female one and conflicting parties may be either defensive, prejudiced or feel open to mediation depending on their own prejudices regarding the gender of the mediator.

√ mediation deals directly with win/lose and power-over games which men are better acquainted with and better skilled. Women’s usual approach to win/lose is rather win/win and power-with methods which are quite applicable to mediation. But women’s lack of skills in win/lose and power-over approaches may make them more vulnerable and less effective in those fields.

Suggested Reading, Leyla Navaro and Sharan Schwartzberg (eds). *Gender, Competition and Envy, Theory, Clinical Applications and Group Work* (Routledge 2007).