

USE YOUR VOICE

LIKE A BOSS



TELL ME IF YOU RELATE TO THIS

Most days...You're doing your thing, you're in the zone, and you're leading with power and grace. You feel confident and unstoppable - you are a highly competent, emotionally intelligent, woman in charge. And then someone interrupts you. Or says something offensive and wait, was that a sexist remark? Who does he think he is? I can't believe what's happening to me right now. Oh my gosh, I haven't said anything back yet - have I? Everyone's looking at me.

DOES THAT SOUND FAMILIAR?

What about this one - You're doing your thing, you're in the zone, you're in a meeting minding your own business. You feel calm and present - you are a socially conscious, supportive, incredibly effective team member. And then someone makes an off-color joke, and um - was that racist? Kind of? Is anyone going to say anything? No!? We're just all going to let that happen. Okay, I guess that's what we're doing. So we're all okay with this. Awesome, I guess. And on to the next agenda item...

Ladies, if you have a career, and a point of view, I suspect that at least one of these scenarios has happened to you.

The ability to manage your emotions during hard moments instead of suppressing them or willing them to go away is an asset for any leader. For a variety of reasons, this is an asset many women struggle to cultivate. And let's be real - when you're trying to get your foot in the door, or a seat at the table, or the salary you deserve, thinking about your emotions can take a back burner pretty quickly.

Feelings are just feelings - they're not necessarily good or bad - but they can wreak havoc if you don't allow yourself to experience them. What if you had a reliable process for dealing with those pesky unexpected conflicts and complicated interactions that inevitably arise in your professional life? What if you could find your center - no matter what was going on around you - and be able to move forward to a resolution with authenticity?

I'VE GOT YOU COVERED WITH THE BREATHE METHOD

When you're in a stressful or difficult situation, it's important to breathe (literally) and then check-in with yourself and consciously decide how you'll take action. These steps are designed to help you take care of yourself and find your voice in the wake of an unplanned and unpleasant interpersonal event. You can do this in the privacy of your office (or bathroom stall) - or in a pinch while you're still in the room. Sometimes you'll want to take all seven steps in order, and other times a couple steps will do the trick. The key is to take some amount of time to tend to your own needs before imploding on yourself or launching a full attack on the perpetrator.

WHEN YOU'RE IN A STRESSFUL SITUATION...

BE UNCOMFORTABLE

Acknowledge what you're feeling without condemning it or judging yourself. If you're angry or frustrated, just pay attention, and know that the feeling will subside naturally with some space and reflection. Has your heart rate increased? Are your hands shaking? Appreciate that you can feel uncomfortable without actually dying. On a scientific level, emotions are neurohormones produced in your brain and released into your bloodstream. They affect every cell in your body and they take about 6 seconds to be absorbed. The human body is amazing. Keep breathing and try to let go of any physical tension in your shoulders or abs. You're not going to die right now. You can relax.



REFRAME

A difficult moment is a chance to get clear on your values and may lead to the opportunity to voice those values out loud to other people. This is the stuff that powerful human connections are made of - embrace the possibility! The more practice you get experiencing and working through difficult conversations, the more capacity you develop and the more wisdom you will gain.



EVALUATE

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ASK QUESTIONS

When you're feeling defensive, the natural step is to move to conclusions, "He said that because he thinks I'm _____" Resist conclusions and try to embrace curiosity instead. Recognize that what you're experiencing is one piece of a larger picture, and filling in the rest of the picture with your imagination isn't that helpful. Here are some of my go-to questions: Is there anything happening in my life right now that makes this moment feel more charged? Could there be something going on in this other person's life right now that prompted their behavior? Do I really understand this person's intentions? Can I find anything humorous or amusing here?



TALK TO YOURSELF

Be intentional about the commentary that's running in your head. You are not your brain, but your brain is always talking and YOU are the one listening. Remember that fun fact about emotions lasting about six seconds? New emotions come from new thoughts. If you're cycling the same unpleasant thoughts in your mind, you're going to keep feeling the same unpleasant feelings that go with them. You can actually write the script for what your brain says, so feed in encouraging and supportive thoughts that will help you. For example, if your tendency is to think "I really don't belong here" try instead "Wherever I go - that's where I belong" or "I know I'm here for a reason."



HAVE EMPATHY

Take the other person or people into account, even if it feels challenging to do so. Really see them as a human (not a robot) with thoughts, feelings, ideas, hopes, fears, dreams, families, pets, a favorite color, all of it. Picture them as a little kid with a runny nose, trying to figure out the meaning of life. Try to accept that - however disappointing their actions might be in this moment - ultimately they're probably doing the best that they can from their point of view. Misunderstandings and mishaps are a part of the human condition, and we're all human.



ENGAGE OR EXIT

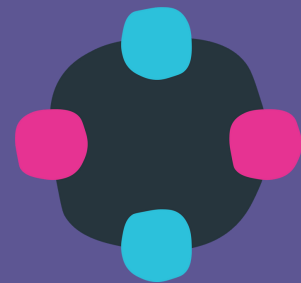
Now that you've taken care of yourself in the most basic way, you can make an informed decision. Pursue the matter further or choose to walk away. Occasionally, we can respond with a snappy, quippy, witty, righteous yet sensitive comment in the moment, but that is very rare. Most of the time, we need some space to figure out what the heck just happened (remember, we're not robots). Even if it seems like the moment is over, you still have the power to reach out if you want to. Send a follow up email or initiate a check-in conversation to explore the issue if that feels appropriate. Some of my most profound realizations have come from what I learned from another person ("the perpetrator") in the follow-up process. Whatever action you take, let it be from a place of compassion and integrity.



ABOUT MALIKA

Malika Amandi is a national speaker and coach based in Massachusetts. In 2017, she founded The Center for Women's Voice, where she teaches women how to communicate effectively and authentically without apologizing or overanalyzing. Drawing from her own experiences in the entertainment industry and as a professional development facilitator for the military, Malika brings a unique perspective that is both approachable and practical for any woman who wants to be heard.

Since launching The Center for Women's Voice, Malika has led hundreds of coaching sessions, and facilitated workshops with women across a spectrum of career stages and fields - from the entertainment industry, to Silicon valley, the nonprofit sector, and academia.



WORK WITH MALIKA

Looking for an executive coach or a workshop facilitator? Get in touch [here](#)