

CHAPTER 23

ON BEING A WOMAN OF INFLUENCE

What is a woman of influence? She is someone who knows her skills, talents, heart, and mind and uses that knowledge to improve her own life and the lives of others.

Gia is a great example. Drugs and alcohol destroyed her parents. People told her she would never amount to anything. She dropped out of high school and found a low paying job answering phones. As time passed, she wanted more. She earned her GED and started college. She made friends with the women in her classes. They reached out to her for support and advice. They looked up to her. She felt empowered. Her career soared, and she became an advocate for other women like herself. “Just look at me NOW!” she says.

Yes, we can change the world. But how? Communication, leadership, finances, community, and philanthropy.

First, Communication.

President Leary was nearly fifty years old before she felt comfortable speaking in public. After becoming president of Bay Path, she forced herself to communicate daily with her staff and faculty, the board of trustees, alumni, students, and community organizations. Each experience increased her ability and confidence.

And, every career involves writing, from emails to letters to reports. The more you write and get feedback on your writing the stronger you make your voice in the world. Although you may hate to write those college papers or speak in class, take every opportunity to become that woman of influence you were meant to be.

Second, Leadership Skills.

Are you managing your family’s activities? Do you plan events or work with others in achieving goals? If so, you lead. Leading is understanding what it takes to accomplish a goal and then achieving it with determination, delegation, and teamwork. It is part of our daily lives. The more we practice, the better we become.

Take every opportunity to hone your leadership skills. Seek out workshops at women’s organizations, your workplace, and at college. Volunteer to run events or fundraisers. If things don’t go as you’d hoped, you’ll know what to do better the next time!

Third, Finance.

This is a key piece of knowledge that many women do not have. Finance, banking, investments, real estate, mortgages, loans, insurance, retirement funds, benefits, and other financial tools may all seem overwhelming, but it is critical that we understand them.

There are horror stories of women left with no money for themselves or their families because they didn't understand savings accounts, insurance, and retirement funds. No matter your circumstances, knowledge of financial affairs and how to manage them yourself protects you and your family.

Finally, knowing how to use money is good for you and the world. Researchers found that 90% percent of women reinvest their money in their families and communities, compared to only 30-70 % of men.

Fourth, Community Involvement.

Community service brings great satisfaction. We learn as we serve others. We may organize a committee or speak in front of groups or motivate others to make our communities better. In so many ways we benefit. Women of influence make a difference in the lives of others.

Fifth, Philanthropy.

Many believe that to be a philanthropist you must contribute thousands of dollars. Not true. Organizations appreciate gifts as small as a few dollars. When you give, even a little, to causes that touch your heart, you are making a difference in the world.

Why is it important to be a woman of influence? It's simple. We improve our own lives, the lives of our families, our workplaces, and our communities.

Never forget the journey – where you began, where you wish to be, and what you wish to do with your college degree. You can seek knowledge for knowledge's sake, and you can seek knowledge for the world's sake.

The choice is yours.