# When Women Are Chronically Unhappy at Work and How to Fix it



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The disparity between men and women in the workplace goes a lot deeper than just pay. Working with my clients, I see that women tend to have a harder time setting boundaries, pushing back against requests and taking a stand for what's important. According to the 2018 Harvey Nash Women in Technology: Building Momentum survey, one-third of women (33 percent) cite a negative environment as a deciding factor in leaving their last job, compared to 23 percent of men. And 23 percent of

female respondents said they moved on in part due to unfair treatment, compared to 13 percent of men.

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According to the Women in the Workplace study from LeanIn.org and McKinsey & Company, women are more sensitive to and wary of the stressors and pressures that may come with higher-level positions than their male counterparts.

No matter how much you love what you do, you may be chronically unhappy at work. Thankfully, it doesn’t have to be permanent. As women, here are three things we can start doing right now to make a difference in being happy at work:

# 1. Build your network by researching and asking.

Despite usually being very social, women often have a hard time promoting themselves. We are more comfortable having others introduce us and connect us. I’ve seen my clients and peers wait around for someone else to reach out or promote them. As women, we must be intentional about connecting with others with whom we can share knowledge, experiences, and make us better at what we do.

Filling your network with a balance of like-minded people and those who offer a diversity of thought not only lets you indulge in what you are most passionate about but opens up tons of opportunities to explore new areas.

**Take five minutes to make a list of your connections.** Not just in the context of LinkedIn but in the wider world. It doesn’t matter if your network is small or large – just think about it as a whole. Have you ever mentored anyone? Helped a neighbor? Get beyond the box of business and think about your holistic life. Identify connections that are missing.

**Do your homework.** Don’t force a connection just for the sake of making one. Be authentic and strategic when building your network to ensure that it is strong and uniquely suited to you. And while it may be tempting to pull together a team of super-women (which you absolutely must!), don’t discount the men in your life.

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**Offer before you ask.** Be very specific about what you are offering and asking. Say something like, “I would love to take you out to coffee and pick your brain about _____.” Often, women are nurturers and fixers. We would choose to give our time rather than ask someone to give us theirs. We need to be conscious of our own time and the quality of how we spend it.

**Be fearless.** You don’t get it if you don’t ask. You admire a woman in your space and want her to mentor you. Someone in your network is building a community garden and you want to implement one in your own community. A woman in your network has your ideal job and you want to sit down with her to pick her brain for advice. Here are some conversation starters to help you out in getting those discussions going.

## 2. Hold those around you accountable to change.

This includes yourself! Women, especially mothers, often feel that they need to put their needs and desires on hold for the world around them. You don’t have to make a choice between work and other parts of your life that matter to you. It’s all about consciously choosing where you want to spend your time and making no apologies for it. Use this quiz to help you see where you are currently spending your time, and where you *want* to spend your time. There may be a surprising disconnect. Be honest about what is important to you and take action to work

toward it.

Holding others accountable is a little trickier. Leading by example is the best way to show what you expect of others while proving you are also human. If you don't see the progress you are hoping for, be radically candid. As an executive coach, I often find the reason that most execs don't hold people accountable is that they don't want to hurt feelings. Accountability done right is never a confrontation, it's a conversation.

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# 3. Try new things.

The day-to-day grind gets exhausting, and women are more likely to feel balancing all those commitments has a negative impact at work. The Women in Tech survey reports 57 percent of women believe that having a family places them at a professional disadvantage, compared to 28 percent of men.

Don't allow commitments outside of work to become barriers to career growth. Look for opportunities within your company to expand your horizons and learn a new skill. Want to become a better public speaker? Volunteer to MC your next company holiday party. Take on projects and offer helping hands and ideas on areas that don't fit into your job description. The adage, "act as if," is true. Break up the monotony and keep your work exciting by filling it with tasks that interest you.

If your job feels stale, take action. Many women often feel they need to downplay what they want out of their career for the sake of not rocking that boat. Well, rock that boat! Turn it over if you have to (as long as you're wearing your life vest). And if the company you are at can't give you what you want, you owe it to yourself to move up and move out.

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