

From the Cincinnati Business Courier:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/news/2018/05/03/heres-how-cincinnati-women-can-overcome-career.html>

Here's how Cincinnati women can overcome career fear

SUBSCRIBER CONTENT: May 3, 2018, 10:05am EDT

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Do more women than men fear success in the workplace? Absolutely. One of the contributing factors is how we are taught to view fear in childhood. Despite 50-plus years of being in the workforce, in 2018, girls are still taught that fear is a signal to stop. Boys, on the other hand, are taught to power through.

Realistically, women do have more to fear in the workplace. The #MeToo movement indicates sexual harassment is a problem. And women *are* treated differently than men at work.

A 2016 “Women in the Workplace” study from McKinsey & Co. and Lean In report that 100 women are promoted for every 130 men. Women tend to get fewer choice assignments, are more reluctant to speak up in meetings and have less access to leadership than men. When you don’t have your finger on the pulse of power in a situation, there is justifiable reason for fear. A study by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission two years ago estimated that 25 to 85 percent of women have experienced workplace harassment.

More importantly, more than 75 percent experienced retaliation when they spoke up.

So what’s a working woman to do? Take charge to overcome your fears.

Women commonly have four main fears in the workplace: fear of having and holding power, fear of conflict, fear of risk and fear of being in the spotlight. But these are learned behaviors and can be unraveled. Women who learn skills to minimize their fears will find a smoother path toward job satisfaction and promotion.

Here are five quick ways to identify and eliminate career fear:

- **Know yourself.** Learn what is at the root of your fear. Something as simple as journaling and asking yourself, “If I wasn’t afraid, I would...” can provide valuable insights. Once you understand what your fears are, learn new skills to counteract them.
- **Identify the skills you need to succeed.** Many women need conflict resolution, negotiation and presentation skills. Attaining skills in those areas may not fix everything, but they can make a big difference in how you’re perceived at work.
- **Stop overthinking.** Sometimes women become paralyzed by fear. They procrastinate, blame themselves for conversations gone wrong, and avoid confrontation. A great book by Mel Robbins called the “The 5 Second Rule” can help.



Provided
Kay Fittes is CEO and founder of High-Heeled Success, a women’s coaching and career consultancy. She is hosting “Steps for Overcoming the Fear Factor,” a seminar for women on June 9 at the Quality Hotel in Cincinnati. Courier readers who enroll by June 1 pay \$149. For more information, visit highheeledsuccess.com.

- **Conduct a fear assessment.** Rank your fear of doing something difficult before you begin the process of accomplishing the task. After you've completed the task, conduct a satisfaction estimation. The difference in scores may indicate how few of your fears came to fruition.
- **Take baby steps.** You can desensitize yourself to fear. Working on a small scale can help build confidence and competence. If you are terrified of speaking in public, begin by addressing small groups. Work your way up to that 200-person ballroom.

Decide today to create a fearless career.