



Women: From Belief to Bold



DONNA HIGHFILL

Born to Fly

5-year-old: "I want to be a doctor or a gymnast. Or maybe both."

6-year-old: "I'm really good at art and I want to be a rock star."

"When I was 8, I wanted to be an archeologist. My first book was about lost cities. Then my mom asked who would take care of my children when I was traveling."



Gravity – What Pulls Us Down?

- Girls' confidence levels decline by 30% between the ages of 8 and 14.
 - Unwilling to take risks
 - Overthinking and people-pleasing
 - Perfectionism and a fear of failure
 - Withdrawal from activities and friends
 - Focused on the physical

Comparing 2023 to 2017, the percentage of girls who report feeling confident has **dropped from 68 percent to 55 percent.**



Tik Tok Star Taylen Biggs, 10 years old

The Journey





The Noise – Word Association and Perfection

- Feminine:
 - Screams like a little girl
 - Throws like a girl
 - Runs like a girl
 - Cries like a girl
- Masculine:
 - Man up
 - Fight like a man
 - You've got a set on you
 - Take it like a man



More Noise: Portrayal in Advertising



More Noise: Small Words Big Impact

- 85% of all BRAND PURCHASES are made by WOMEN.
- 12.6% of advertising agency creative directors are women.
- Men were cast in professional roles 73% more often than women.
- Women were cast 46% more often in domestic roles.

Body Wash Women	Body Wash Men
Dewy	Sport
Luminous	Strong
Sensuous	Workout

Razors Women	Razors Men
Simple	Engineering
Easy to use	Precision
Soothing	Comfort

Noise Become Beliefs

- The Negativity Receptor
 - Brain prioritizes negative info
 - Overlooks and discards the positive
 - We look for what we lack
 - Physical flaws
 - Abilities
- Actions that remove our power
 - Believing the message
 - Playing small
 - Disclaimers
 - Apologizing

CIRCUMSTANCE



THOUGHT



FEELING



ACTION



RESULT

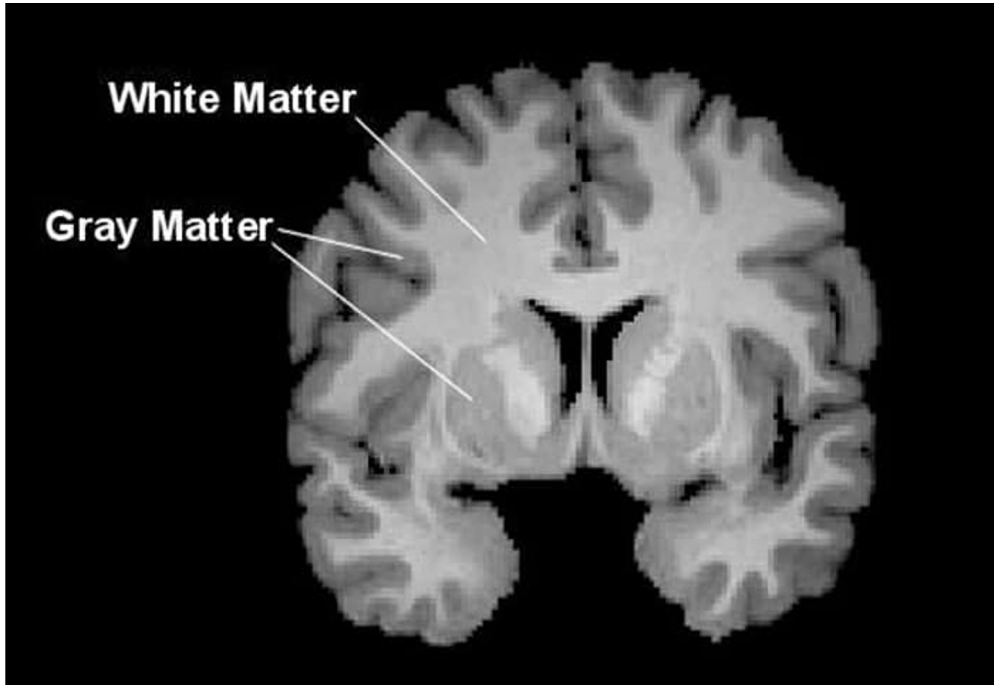
Corporate Noise: The Weaponization of Self-Confidence

😞 Sad but true 😞

- Conflicting Messages
 - Be confident if you want to progress
 - Be likable if you want to progress
- Blame vs Culture
 - Confidence vs. Self-Confidence
 - Assertive vs. Aggressive
- Women vs Women
 - Inconsistent support
 - Relationship vs Performance
 - Feedback vs Noise



Is this Our Game?



Could result in a difference in:

- Behavior in meetings
- Body Language
- Relationship Building
- Communication Style



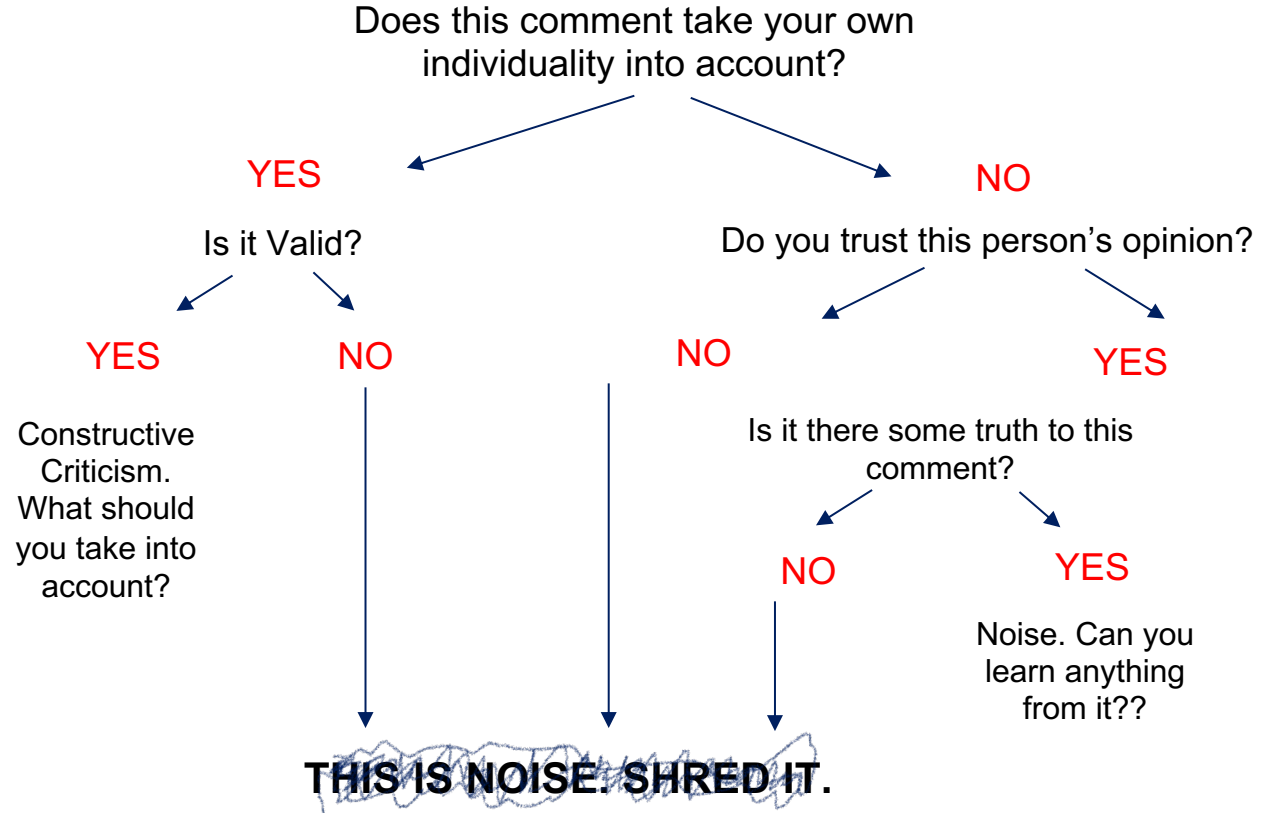
The Journey





Eliminate Noise

Example of your Noise



Tip #1: Eliminate the Noise

1. Study the noise
 - Is this message about me?
 - Is it valid?
 - Does this person know me?
 - Is there some truth to the message?
2. Become objective
 - Change to third person
 - Study the comment objectively
3. Determine action around the noise
 - Do I accept this message?
 - Do I make it part of my belief system?
 - Will it give me positive results?

CIRCUMSTANCE



THOUGHT



FEELING



ACTION



RESULT

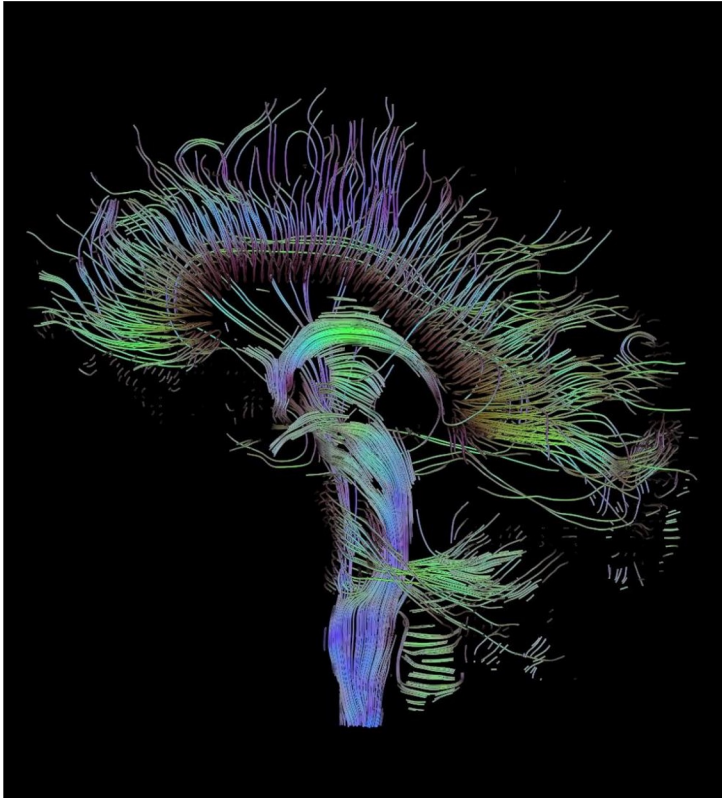
Building Our Confidence

Table Exercise (10 min):

1. What is the “noise” we hear that robs us, as women, of our power? (5 min)
2. What can we do, as women, to build each other up at work? (5 min)



Take Off with Your Inner CEO



As the primary messenger service of the brain, Myelinated nerves can carry impulses up to **100 times** faster than non-myelinated fibers.

Myelin is tied to IQ, language, and grows stronger and faster with repetition.

White Matter = Stronger Intuition = Faster Decisions

“Your inner CEO can help you generate income streams, create opportunities, find people, build your business, maximize your profits, increase your income, solve problems, and improve your quality of life in ways you can’t even imagine now.”

-- Robert Scheinfeld

Tip #2: Use Your Inner CEO

1. What's my first impression?
 - Body Scan
 - Doesn't preclude next step
 - Write down insights
2. What do I need to know?
 - What's wrong with the situation?
 - What's right with the situation?
 - Don't judge responses.
3. What's the best course of action?
 - During analysis, jot down flashes of insight
 - Use your body scan
 - Where did you sense "warning?"
 - Where did it feel right?

Turn your intuitive thought into brainstorming

See if this floats

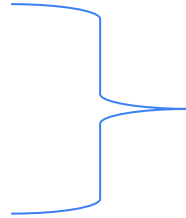
- *I don't have the data to support this yet, but ...*
- *I'm going to take this outside the box . . .*
- *What if we try something that could be a breakthrough . . .*

Tie it to a Past Experience/Trends

- *I have seen this before, and it tends to result in . . .*
- *I see the pattern and have experienced it before . . .*

Tip #3: See the Change Advantage

- Organizational restructuring
- Technology implementation (AI)
- Cost efficiencies



Pace of change has increased 183% over the past 4 years

Source: Accenture Report

This Requires:

- ✓ Faster decision-making
- ✓ Adaptability
- ✓ Resilience
- ✓ Emotional Intelligence

Turn your Change Advantage into a leadership opportunity:

- *I'd like to take a lead in this effort and here's how I would add value . . .*
- *If you want this change to move faster, I have some suggestions . . .*
- *This change will require that we adapt to a new way of thinking, which means we need to bring people along with us. If you'd like help, I have some ideas . . .*

Tip #4: Influence with Definitive Language

EXAMPLES OF HEDGES		
May/Might	In my opinion	Kind of
Could	I think	Sort of
Seems/Seemed	It seems to me	Around
Probably	I believe	About
Maybe	I guess	Generally
Appears	I suppose	A bit

EXAMPLES OF DEFINITES		
Definitely	Guaranteed	Unambiguous
Clearly	Irrefutable	Unquestionable
Obviously	Absolutely	Essential
Undeniable	Everyone	Every time

Tip #5: Speak with Power

Speaking with power makes people seem more confident. It makes them seem more certain, self-assured, and knowledgeable, which makes others more likely to listen.

Limit Hesitation

- ✓ No disclaimers
- ✓ What you have to say and How you say it matters more than status

Consider Tense

- ✓ Past tense conveys a degree of subjectivity and transience.
- ✓ Present tense suggests that speakers don't just have an opinion, they are certain about it.

The book was a good read vs. The book is a good read
I did my job well vs. I do my job well

Tip #6: Change the Game

To change the game, we must:

- ✓ Take up space
- ✓ Allow grace when wrong & stay in the conversation
- ✓ Match behavior
- ✓ Be a problem-solver
- ✓ Separate work performance and work relationships
- ✓ Assert opinions objectively and confidently

“She
remembered
who she was
and the game
changed.”

– Lalah Deliah

Belief to Bold Action Plan

- I believe in myself because _____

- The Noise I am Most Susceptible to is _____
Here's Why _____

- Two Steps I Am Going to Take to Move from Belief to Bold:
 1. _____
 2. _____

- Here's how I will note and celebrate the wins _____

Defying Gravity

*Something has changed within me
Something is not the same
I'm through with playing by the rules of
someone else's game
Too late for second-guessing
Too late to go back to sleep
It's time to trust my instincts, close my
eyes and leap*



Resources

- [Roadmap: The Get-It-Together Guide for Figuring out What To Do With Your Life](#)
- [Magic Words: What to Say to Get Your Way](#)
- [Presence: Bringing your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges](#)
- [Women and the Negativity Receptor](#)
- [How Confidence is Weaponized Against Women](#)



Donna Highfill

 804.370.6665

 donna@donnahighfill.com

 www.donnahighfill.com

 www.fb.com/donnahighfillconsulting/

