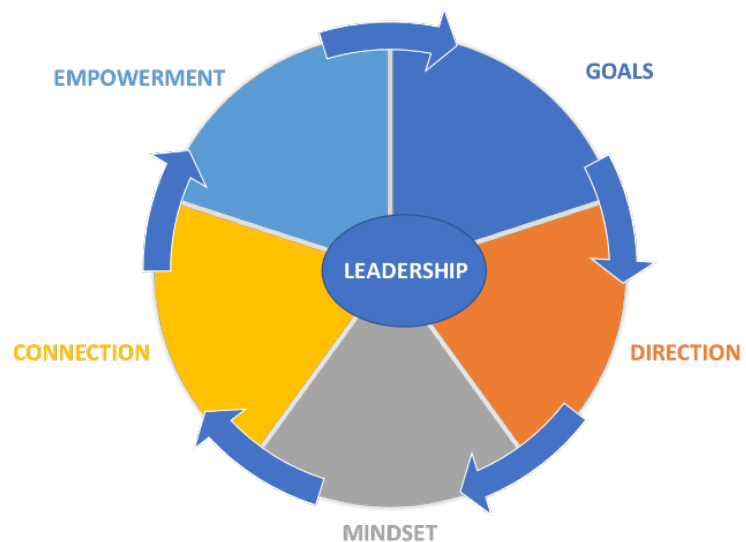




“Emerging Women Leaders”

Session 2 Preparation Material



Our Purpose: *‘To inspire, engage, support and create resilience in our next gen. leaders’*

“Emerging Women Leaders” - Session 2 Preparation

Session 2 - DIRECTION Any road will take you there if you don't know where you are going! And does that matter?

- **How do you manage your career and life in an ever-changing world?**
- What are the “not negotiables” in your life?
- How can you know and use your values to make work/life decisions?
- How do you navigate work/life inflection points?
- How do you reflect and take stock of your life?

Food for thought:

‘Finding your vision is like finding your voice, is a process of self-exploration and self-creation. It’s an intuitive, emotional process.’

Source: Kouzes and Posner Everyday People, Extraordinary Leadership p 57

Strength Tests _ mandatory!!

Understanding your Strengths helps identify your natural talents, enhancing self-awareness and confidence. It guides career choices by aligning strengths with roles, boosting job satisfaction, productivity, and engagement. Understanding your strengths also improves teamwork and leadership skills, making career development more focused, strategic, and personally fulfilling.

Choice of two Tests – recommend you do both.

1. **Personality Test** – “Finally understand yourself completely with the only test that analyses MBTI, Big Five, Enneagram, DISC & Attachment Style in one powerful assessment”. **Cost \$29.00** <https://www.personality-quizzes.com/>
2. **Clifton Strengths Test**
<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252137/home.aspx>

Choose Clifton Strengths Top 5 \$24.99 Get a basic understanding of your top five themes, and improve your performance anywhere.

Recommended Reading/Listening:

1. **Appendix 1 - 4 Phases Of Women’s Careers—Coping With The Crisis And The 30s**
Avivah Wittenberg-Cox

2. **Ted Talk - The power to change the working mom conversation - Gretchen Gagel** A leader in Women in Construction and an IWFA member
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12-plyTMBrs>

3. **“Careers Unplugged” by Meena Thuraisingham**

Essential Choices for a Great Career Meena Thuraisingham is an IWFA member –

https://www.amazon.com/s?k=careers+unplugged&i=stripbooks-intl-ship&ref=nb_sb_noss

Kindle is a good way of getting an online version - \$4.25

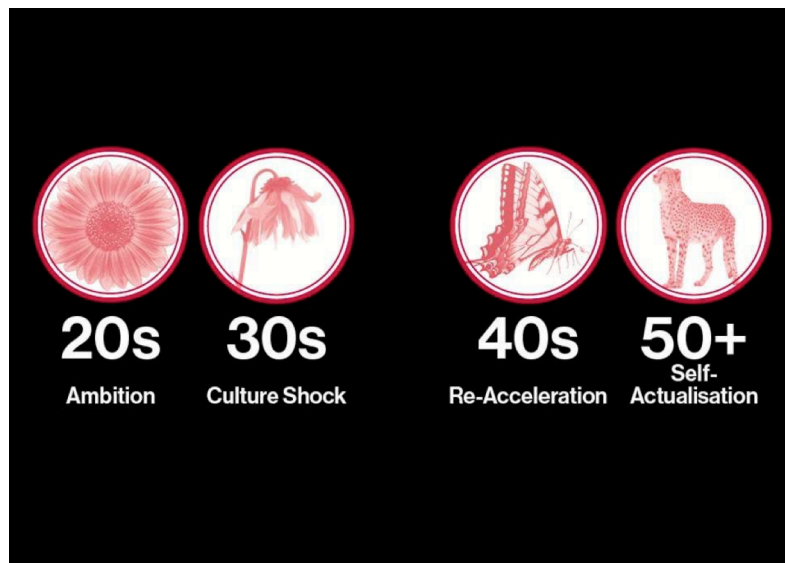
Appendix 1 - 4 Phases Of Women's Careers—Coping With The Crisis And The 30s

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/avivahwittenbergcox/2020/05/10/4-phases-of-womens-careers--coping-with-the-crisis--the-30s/>

Avivah Wittenberg-Cox

Contributor

Gender and generational balance - in countries, companies & couples.



Marie is in the middle of her MBA. She was dreaming of a global career move. Sue is the sole breadwinner and is fearing the financial fallout of the crisis on her family. Anna is expecting her second child and determined to launch a new venture. The coronavirus crisis came crashing into their plans.

How do you manage a career through the current crisis? Or plan for the next step when you can't visualise the future anymore? Or let go of the dream that seemed so attainable just a couple of months ago? How do you adjust to a sudden and unexpected job loss? Or cope with the escalating demands of essential services during lockdown? Last Friday, I spoke with six people on three continents about their careers. All were women. All were in their thirties. No wonder they wanted to talk.

Part of the answer to adjusting to a changed world requires understanding where you are in your life and your career. People don't often think of their careers or their lives in phases.

These women were focused on the short-term and coming to grips with the consequences of the crisis. 'What should I do next?' dominates the discussion. 'Where am I headed?' is a rarer question. But it's precisely when crisis hits that an opportunity opens to revisit the path as well as the programme.

In my work, I've found that women's career trajectories are typically made up of four phases. Do you recognize yourself in one of these?

The Four Phases

Would you recognise yourself in one of these phases?

- **20s – Ambition:** A decade of learning, exploring, growth, independence, and no dependents
- **30s – Culture Shock:** Where potential and parenting crash into today's corporate cultures and systems
- **40s – (Re) Acceleration:** Refocusing on career priorities on the foundations built
- **50+ - Self-Actualization:** When empty nesters discover (often to their surprise) their peak career decades

I call this a 'women's career' cycle because it has a different shape than the traditional (and still dominant) corporate career pattern followed by many successful men and favoured by many companies. However, as men increasingly seek to balance parenting responsibilities with careers, this 'women's' model is trending towards becoming the new normal for working parents of any sex.

Understanding the journey and where you are on it helps you manage the changes and choices that predictably pepper a life. The problem with phases is that they only really become visible in the rear-view mirror. It's hard to understand them when you're in the midst of the challenges each phase sets. So, here are the first two phases. I'll explore the next two in a future blog.

20s – Ambition

The twenties are a decade of ambition. The women emerging from universities around the world are educated, ambitious and equal. They have gotten used to being the majority.

Women represent 60% of university graduates globally. They are increasingly raised by egalitarian parents egging them on, and by a consumerist culture turning to ['go girl' messaging](#).

And women buy it. They own and claim the expectations as their own. It is one of the great successes of humanity in the last 100 years, to have educated and empowered the other half of the human race. It's good for countries, and for companies. Most companies are recruiting men and women in equal proportions at entry and graduate levels. Even traditionally male dominated sectors, from mining to the military, are trying to get more balanced. Some companies are starting to skew female at this phase. [Business schools](#) are gender balancing, while [graduate degrees in the US](#) are dominated by women.

Everyone is pretty happy with this phase. Companies think they've got women sussed. And women are on a roll, gaining in skills, experience and - yes - [salary](#) in an ever-expanding range of sectors. Much of this generation prides itself on being post-gender, and labels the issues still facing women as part of an obsolete 'binary.' The reality is a bit more complex, and still heavily gendered. As the 30s always reminds us.

30s – Culture Shock

The more successful and ambitious women are, the more abruptly they ram into what I call ‘culture shock.’ The momentum built in the 20s powers women forward into their 30s – often straight into a wall.

Women who have prioritised their careers, worked hard, travelled the globe and learned a lot in their 20s, in part by delaying marriage and kids, suddenly focus on the personal. While some women will, of course, choose to stay single, or end up that way, the majority get partnered, and opt to have a child or two (more in some countries, like France). A lot of these major personal milestones now happen, on average, between the ages of 30 and 35.

And that’s where the shock hits. For most companies, the early thirties is when they start pushing and promoting their high-potential talent, the people they want to test, move, stretch and develop. That’s when you start getting bigger roles and responsibilities, or a move to New York, Shanghai or Dubai. Companies and managers always consider this a perfectly gender neutral process because it’s exactly the same whether you’re a man or a woman or any other sexual orientation. But it isn’t. That particular period of 30 to 35, is precisely the wrong age for many women to be tested, stretched and moved. It’s when many want to be momentarily nesting, plateauing, and balancing. In an age of dual-career parents, companies are still trying to ignore the kids.

This is the crux of the difficult and contradictory balancing act of the thirties. Stretched between creating the foundations of a family that the majority still aspire to (80% of the recent internationally-mixed MBA classes I surveyed), and adapting to the existing company career cycles designed decades ago by men for men with non-working wives. Companies have tried to flex over the years, and COVID19 has jolted them to flex unimaginably more, but if the benchmark of the high performer in your company remains the uninterrupted, 24/7, linear male career, it’s impossible to combine parenting with potential. This is where so many companies still lose women, either because they quit, or simply because they disengage. It’s too bad, because after the 30s, it gets better – for both women and companies (see [Part 2 here](#) for the 40s and 50+).

It’s hard to lift your thoughts from the stressful challenges of the immediate and pace mindfully through this minefield of a decade. It takes career planning as a family and a tactical leveraging of the benefits, flexibility and security of being in a [dual career couple](#).

Sit down. Zoom out. Try and map where you are in life, and where you are headed, individually and as a couple and family. Check what is feasible and achievable in this phase and what might be better accomplished in the next one. Because [life - and careers - are a lot longer](#) than most people think. Managing today’s crisis requires one eye on the fire and another on the end goal. Everyone I spoke with had forgotten their dreams (and those of their partners) in their panic. But don’t let the nightmares take hold. Pacing and patience have their place in weathering a pandemic. And a life.

“First you sink into his arms and then your arms are in his sink,” thought [Lara Milward](#) the day she turned 40. An old saying of her mother’s came crashing into her classically constructed marriage-with-two-kids-living-in-the-suburbs life. “Is that all there is to life? What happened to all my ambitions? All my drive?” A decade later, she still remembers the light-bulb moment that woke her up while doing the dishes – and pushed her on to her own, very successful, ‘becoming’ (the evocative title of [Michelle Obama’s memoir](#)).

The 40s – (Re)Acceleration

After the [first two of the 4 Phases of Women's Careers](#), the forties are often a wake-up call – to truly grow up, to get another life, work you really care about, the love you deserve, or the purpose you yearn for. As ambitious women emerge from the 'culture shock' of the 30s, they are chomping at the bit, impatient with what they often experience as having gotten knocked off track from their imagined careers and dreams. After a few gorgeous years of [Goodnight Moon](#), they are dying to get their highly trained brains back in the saddle. For the majority who had children (depending on the country and culture you had them in), adjustments and compromises and care hit the career momentum they launched with. In the forties, with kids tucked into schools, rules and rituals, they want to re-accelerate their careers and return to their younger jeans and growth and potential. Forty (laughably) starts to feel old, time is calling, and they yearn to catch up with the male peers who may have galloped by, promotion-wise. Kids still need a lot of attention, but teen years are not just about adolescents learning independence from their parents. They're also about parents, especially mothers, separating back into their own lives and goals.

Companies are still largely unaware and ill-adapted to women's career phases. The systems still rely on (increasingly obsolete) male norms: linear, unbroken careers that accelerate in the thirties. The misunderstanding of the 30s 'culture shock' phase causes many managers to misinterpret parents' efforts at conciliation as a lack of ambition. When these women (and a growing number of men) 're-appear' and suddenly push for more in their forties, they are off-grid. They may have fallen from the high potential lists, been tagged as 'mommy track,' slipped into relative invisibility, or, as one manager told me of his division, "all the women just... disappeared." A growing number of programs are aimed at 'female returners.' There is lots of advice on [how to gear back up](#), lean back in, hit the [on-ramp](#). It's all true - and not enough.

The thing that will truly shift this gendered career dynamic is the generalisation of [shared parental leave](#). On offer in the Nordics for decades, it is now slowly spreading to other countries that value women's economic contributions. Work will be balanced when parenting and care is too. It's coming. Note to leaders, managers and politicians: If you want to promote gender balance in business, forget the women's programs. The swiftest way to empower women is by strongly encouraging your male employees to take parental leave. It's the next big step towards equality (after the vote, the pill and a good education). The rest is detail.

In the meantime, many women will give up on companies to create their own. The average age of a female entrepreneur in the [US today is 42](#). Women-owned businesses represent [42% of American businesses](#), employ 9.4 million people and generate revenues of \$1.9 trillion.

But careers aren't the only stretch goal life has in store for women in their forties. Almost every dimension of life reaches peak pressure. Jobs and children and challenges all get bigger in parallel. Bodies, marriages and/or friendships may have gone a bit flabby and require time and effort to muscle up to sustain the second half of life. Parents start ageing and may need care. Half of women in the UK will be caring for an elder [by age 46](#), while in the US, the average caregiver [is 49 and female](#).

And yet. Women manage to keep on learning, growing and building. Usually not on their own. [It takes a village](#) – supportive spouses, hired help, extended families or friends, and/or governments that support working parents. No surprise that many of the female political leaders [emerging](#)

[around the world](#) are often from countries, like the Nordics, with strong support systems for parents. It may also explain why they emerge at much younger ages, like Sanna Marin of Finland who is the second-youngest national leader in the world. They are not just inspiring leaders, they are the [consequence of healthy systems](#) that enable women to conciliate personal and professional pressures so that countries and companies can enjoy their considerable contributions. In contrast, Anne-Marie Slaughter wrote a famous piece in 2012 explaining her decision to leave the political role she had dreamt of, explaining to American women why [You Can't Have It All](#).

Around the world, a generation of 40-something women are growing, stretching and maturing. They are only at the end of the first half of their lives. It takes most humans half a century to become themselves and discover what that looks and feels like. So the 40s are not, as some may think, the end – just the end of the beginning. For many women today, given the reality of our half-baked arrival into power and influence around the world, the second half is when we finally emerge into ourselves - and into the world.

50s & Beyond - Self-Actualization

Every decade builds on the one before it. And the second half of life depends on the chances, choices, efforts and pacing of the first half - for both men and women. But because women and men have (for the moment) often spent the first half of their lives with quite different career trajectories, they enter their second halves in different ways as well. Men may be tired of a 30-year sprint focused on their professional personas and breadwinning duties. They may welcome the idea of slowing down or giving back. Women, on the other, often feel free, sometime for the very first time in their lives, to focus on themselves. After serving everyone else's becoming, it's finally their turn to become themselves. Sometime in the fifties, children have [flown the nest](#) (or are independent in all but the bedrooms they may still occupy). Women are so muscled up from the forties' multiple 24/7 management of everyone and everything, that the resounding emptiness of the familial home - and wall calendar - can be momentarily disorienting. In addition, the physical changes of [menopause](#) physiologically mark the end of the hands-on phase of maternal caring duties (the hands-off ones are lifelong). You literally sweat them out. For many women of my generation, the liberation is as unexpected as it can be exhilarating. Suddenly, you've got a supercharged Jaguar mother-motor sitting in the garage of life, and a foot ready to rev the pedal.

That's when it's time to open the door and hit the road for real. Try telling a 30-year-old that the 50s and 60s are women's [best career years](#) and you'll get a look of condescending compassion. They know that fifty is unimaginably old and largely over the hill. They will assure you, kindly, that gender constructs are a thing of the past. I know too that ageism is alive and well and many women of this age will complain of their 'invisibility.' But remember it was JK Rowling that turned the invisibility cloak into a super-power. Look around the world. See at what age significant numbers of women emerge onto a larger stage (see table). They are only the tip of the first massive wave of educated women moving through life. They are the role models of our collective, more gender-balanced futures. There are more on the way, each wave more educated, more powerful and more connected.

This phase isn't limited to the 50s. With longevity, it stretches ever longer. The women in visible leadership roles around the world are more often over 60 than under it. As I fast approach that age, I recognise that I published my first book at age 47, hit my professional stride in my 50s, and am inspired by many of the women older than me in my life. Barbara Beck, a role model, worked full time running The Economist magazine's Special Reports section into her late 70s. [Scilla Elworthy](#), at 76, continues a half-century's work in conflict resolution and peace-making. [Germaine Warkentin](#),

my oldest friend's mother and Emeritus Professor at the University of Toronto, after contributing or co-authoring 17 books, is writing her first solo book, at 86, on the history of the book as an information medium. My own mother, now 94, worked well into her 70s as a Professor of French and French literature.

With them in mind, I'm gearing up for another two or three decades. Who knew? And that's one of the challenges. We mostly aren't aware of the shape of women's careers. And because their shape is unrecognised and unacknowledged, we're too often found wanting and under-performing in our first halves – even by ourselves. But pre-50 may just be the warm-up act to our new, [100-year lives](#). The message for women in these decades? Relax, pace yourself, prepare strategically for the peak. Let time be your friend, rather than your foe. You'll want a backpack full of strong relationships, happy couples and families, deep knowledge, wide ranging experience and networks. Enjoy building, adjusting and fine-tuning them. They are worth every bedtime story, every couples' therapy session, every negotiation with resistant employers. Your time is coming, just not when you think.

You can have it all. Just not all at once. It might just be later than you were planning. Luckily, you're likely to live a lot longer than you thought. So wherever you are in these four phases, pace yourself for [a marathon](#). The world needs you.

Follow me on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#). Check out my [website](#) or some of my other work [here](#).



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