

Selena Rezvani
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Five Ways to Pull Other Women Up

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When I present to **women's groups around the country**, there is always—and I mean always—one person in the audience who raises her hand and asks, "What about strategies for handling other women who cut you down?"

Yes, many of us have witnessed the man who comments on a woman's hotness just as she leaves the room. But what about the woman who criticizes another's appearance (*Did you see what she was wearing in there?*) or frowns on a woman's unapologetic use of power (*Just who does she think she is?*)



Sometimes it's not the ugly remark that stings but the feeling of being invisible. I remember speaking at a women's conference in Europe where I was ushered into the speaker's lounge. About 14 female CEOs and high-ranking women were gathered around a conference table...most of whom were 20 years my senior and all of whom I admired. My attempts at friendly introductions were greeted with awkward silence. My interjections into conversation were met with averted eyes and splintered side conversations. Being "iced out" was especially upsetting at a forum meant to convene and empower women!

I know I'm not the only one who's experienced something like this. In honor of Women's History Month, I'd like to offer 5 ways we can counteract this kind of dynamic. Let's pull other women *up with us*.

- **Be a sponsor:** As I've discussed before, **engaging a sponsor** has a career changing effect on a young person's life. Consider using your clout to develop a promising up and comer. Don't be afraid to put the strength of your reputation behind hers and fight for her to get the important roles and assignments.
- **Spearhead a women's forum:** Create strategic partnerships or form a group to boost each other's professional goals. This can look different—from small lunch groups, to peer mentoring circles, to a large network you might convene around a central topic.
- **Promote other women's successes:** It may be hard to totally avoid judging others, but make it a point to celebrate and applaud other women's wins. You can also encourage a high-potential woman to apply for **an award**, a scholarship or other recognition and help her by offering to write her a recommendation.
- **Let gossip wither and die with you:** Even if the world's juiciest **gossip** lands right smack in your lap, don't amplify the volume by passing it along to anyone else. Flinging around gossipy information about another woman is usually done through the filter of the speaker. Remember, promoting gossip weakens the reputations of *all the players* involved.
- **When speaking to younger women, talk to them in terms of possibilities, never limits:** Consider how much you're mentoring the next generation of leaders and who you're shepherding through the early stages of their careers. Share with them your own path including mistakes *and* triumphs. If they tell you about potential roadblocks, push them **to negotiate new, better terms**, not to avoid the source of strain all together.

As we're all tired of hearing, women in top-ranking positions are a tiny minority. For example, we're only **4.6% of Fortune 500 CEOs** and **18.3% of Congress**. It would stand to reason that within each organization, women would band together creating clusters of support. Yet more than **one article** argues that the opposite is true. In an article in Forbes by Lisa Quast, Quast quotes researchers at **The Workplace Bullying Institute** who found that women bullies target other women 71% of the time. I don't accept lightly that women are a barricade in each other's ways.



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Besides the obvious altruistic benefits of helping someone by being supportive, encouraging, active in their career development, your reputation will gain too. And at the end of day, your reputation is all you have. In the words of the formidable Madeleine Albright, "There is a special place in hell for women who do not help other women."



Career Woman, Inc.