

## Leading Ourselves while Leading Others

I like to use the metaphor of a hot air balloon when I think about women in leadership. There was a picture I once saw that showed a colorful array of hot air balloons resting on the ground, waiting for the moment of ascension to the sky.

We are all like these hot air balloons brightly lit and sometimes resting on the ground. But the balloon's best view is not from the ground, it's from the air. Like these hot air balloons, we must rise from the ground go past the known shorelines. We have to lead ourselves to reach for the sky, for that is where we have the best view and can be viewed from the best light. When we're on top of the world, on top of our challenges, at the top of our game, our view of the world changes. It's bright like lighted balloons.

But we won't get to the top resting, we must take control and lift ourselves up from whatever and wherever we are and lead ourselves to a higher place. We will rise and fall like a hot air balloon, but we have the controls, and we direct and guide our lives. It takes courage to lead ourselves to new heights

I recall when I was offered a position in the IT department of a major corporation. I thought to myself, "I can't do this." But that voice came into my head and it said, "never say can't, you can do what you put your mind to do." That was the voice of my mother, who believes that you study, you try and you figure things out. What you don't do is whine about it and not think that things aren't possible. The job was possible, a new career was possible, and running my own business was possible. It was possible because I started leading myself in the same way we lead our organizations, churches and clubs.

What is possible for you today, if you just started leading yourself? Kouzes and Posner, noted authors, have five practices of exemplary leaders; follow these for yourself and it will be possible.

1. Model the Way – step out and do what you say you want to do. We tell our children, be brave, don't say can't, be creative, and have fun. What are waiting for? I took the challenge to move out of operations into high tech. I don't believe that I could tell my daughter, "I didn't take that job, it was too hard."
2. Inspire a Shared Vision – What are your aspirations and goals? Share these with your family and friends. Get their support, they will help you. I returned to college

after being out of schools for several years, my vision was leave a legacy. I delivered the student commencement speech. What do you aspire to do?

3. Challenge the Process – We have to get out of autopilot mode. Can you think of some things that you routinely do, and don't even think about it Take matters into your own hands. What is getting in the way of your doing that which you desire. I had decided that when I turned 40 I was going on a cruise. As it turned out, I was in college at the time and finals were approaching. Not going on the cruise was not an option. But who said you couldn't take accounting books on a cruise ship? Figure out what assumptions you are making and then look at alternative.
4. Enable Others to Act – We do too much, because we aren't tapping into all the available potential, which includes all our family members. :Let someone else cook, grocery shop and do the laundry. Don't worry about perfection that comes in time or not. Enjoy the freedom you gain from allowing other to do. What do you need to do today in order to strengthen yourself? Think about your own self-talk, is it enabling you or disabling you?
5. Encourage the Heart – We should take time out to encourage ourselves in the same way we encourage others. Journaling, reflection, walking are all ways that we can encourage ourselves. Set goals and reward yourself when you reach those goals. After all, you have earned them.

Sojourner Truth once said, “..... I know that is hard for one who has held the reins for so long to give up; it cuts like a knife. It will feel all the better when it closes up again”

Give up those things that are getting in your way and lead yourself to greatness. The short-term pain will soon dissipate, the long-term gain will be forever rewarding.

I have always been encouraged to rise above the adversity, let your balloon rise and shine to new heights.