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Women in the workplace: 3 red flags that indicate you need assertiveness training

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Whether you work in corporate America or own your own business, it's an uphill battle for women in the workplace today. If women are not assertive, they're not respected, paid well or receive the perks they want and deserve.

After 25 years of studying women in the workplace and how they can best achieve their professional goals, I've noticed that women of all ages need help with assertiveness training.

While a woman can dress professionally, wear the right shoes and jewelry and use the correct power gestures in meetings, she sabotages herself when her appearance and verbal communications are diametrically opposed.

Do you need assertiveness training? See if these red flags describe you:



Kay Fittes of High-Heeled Success (Photo Provided)

- Is it important to you to be the nicest person in the room? This is a trap many nice women fall into and it's a personality thing, not age-related. An executive I know was taking home mountains of extra work at night and on the weekends. She was the boss, yet allowed employees to eat up 90 percent of her time at work with their projects, not hers. She couldn't get her work done within office hours and worked nights and weekends instead. With assertiveness training, she made enormous strides and was able to recapture her personal life.

- Can you say no without explaining? Many working women are mothers, and over-commit. If you spend your life catering to everyone else's needs, you become a piece of driftwood in the stream of life. When my children were school-age, I once returned home at 11 p.m. from an out-of-town presentation and remembered I was supposed to make brownies for a school party the next day. So despite my exhaustion, I was cutting fresh brownies on the kitchen counter at midnight. What did I learn from that experience? 'If Kroger doesn't make it, I don't take it.' Women want to do a lot, and can do a lot, but we have to set boundaries and be realistic about our limitations.

- Are others offered opportunities you are not? If you obsess about what you should have said in meetings, or resent opportunities given to others that are not offered to you, you may not be communicating your wants and needs effectively at work. I counseled a woman executive who was determined to attend a national convention. She planned to network, build relationships and increase her value to her organization. She cleared her schedule, registered for the conference, purchased her plane

ticket, and discovered a few days before leaving that a colleague was also attending — and the colleague was expensing the trip. What was the difference between the two women? My client didn't ask.

Assertiveness training can be used for asking for a raise, saying no to an extra project, standing up for yourself with a colleague, or even reigning in aggressive behavior in others. And while it's difficult to believe that in 2017, assertive women can still be perceived as being aggressive for exhibiting the same behaviors men in the workplace exhibit, the bottom line is this: when a woman is assertive, everyone's rights are adhered to. When a woman is aggressive, the only rights being paid attention to are her own.

For women who need more information, I'll offer an assertiveness training seminar Saturday, Sept. 23 in Cincinnati. Focus will include how to ask for what you want and get it; saying 'no' effectively; speaking up without being pushy; listening for assertive success; and showing anger appropriately in the workplace. To enroll, contact me at (513) 561-4288 or Kay@highheeledsuccess.com.

Kay Fittes is CEO of High-Heeled Success, a women's business coaching and career consultancy she founded and leads. "Kick Up Your Assertiveness Quotient for Maximum Success" seminar for women will be held Saturday, Sept. 23 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Cincinnati in Blue Ash. Readers pay \$149 with this code: BC149 through midnight on Thursday, Sept. 21. For information on the seminar or other events, visit www.highheeledsuccess.com.