

This an excerpt from *No Sex at Work*.  
Please click [here](#) to purchase the full book.

# No Sex at Work

IT'S ABOUT LEADERSHIP NOT GENDER:  
CAREER TIPS AND STRATEGIES TO THRIVE

JUDITH BECK



First published in 2021 by Major Street Publishing Pty Ltd  
E: info@majorstreet.com.au W: majorstreet.com.au M: +61 421 707 983

© Judith Beck 2021

The moral rights of the author have been asserted.



A catalogue record for this book is available  
from the National Library of Australia

Printed book ISBN: 978-0-6487964-8-0

Ebook ISBN: 978-0-6487964-9-7

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under *The Australian Copyright Act 1968* (for example, a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review), no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, communicated or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All inquiries should be made to the publisher.

Cover design by Tess McCabe

Internal design by Production Works

Printed in Australia by Ovato, an Accredited ISO AS/NZS 14001:2004

Environmental Management System Printer.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**Disclaimer:** The material in this publication is in the nature of general comment only, and neither purports nor intends to be advice. Readers should not act on the basis of any matter in this publication without considering (and if appropriate taking) professional advice with due regard to their own particular circumstances. The author and publisher expressly disclaim all and any liability to any person, whether a purchaser of this publication or not, in respect of anything and the consequences of anything done or omitted to be done by any such person in reliance, whether whole or partial, upon the whole or any part of the contents of this publication.

# Contents

Preface	xi
1. No Sex in My House	1
2. No Sex in Your Job Application	19
3. No Sex in the Interview	35
4. No Sex on Your First Day at Work	55
5. No Sex in Public	75
6. No Sex as the New Manager	91
7. No Sex Talk	111
8. No Sex With Your Mentor	131
9. No Sex When Negotiating Your Worth	145
Conclusion	159
Author acknowledgements	163
Contact the author	165
Index	167

# Preface

Over the years, many people have asked me why I haven't written a book on my experiences. Having run executive search firm Financial Recruitment Group (FRG) for 25 years and founded membership organisation Financial Executive Women (FEW) in 2012, I have seen it all when it comes to career management. I guess when you are working hard in a field you are passionate about, you're not thinking about taking time out to write a book.

Now that I am towards the end of my career and reflecting on why I was able to achieve what I did without the issues that I see so many people experiencing, I became curious to understand the whys. Why didn't I experience the workplace bullying, sexual harassment or discrimination that I have heard others discussing almost daily? Why was I able to successfully navigate a male-dominated industry? Why did I get business in a very competitive environment when other women were finding it difficult? And why didn't I hit the kinds of glass ceilings other women have?

My inspiration in writing *No Sex at Work* is to help you navigate these kinds of situations, and to share with you some of the do's and don'ts that I have learnt from my own experiences and from mentors and people I respect.

At FRG and FEW I have met and mentored thousands of inspiring, successful executives (men and women) in the financial services industry. I've listened to their concerns and helped them step up

and achieve their full potential in their careers – and I've seen where they've gone wrong.

I believe most issues we encounter at work are a result of specific behaviours – it's nothing to do with our sex. The fact that you are a man or a woman shouldn't be relevant in determining your success in the workplace. If you want to be among the top 10 per cent of high achievers in the workplace (what I call the T10Ps), you need to focus on how to get from A to B as a business professional. Don't be side-tracked by the barriers you believe are holding you back due to your sex. The skills needed for business success are the same for everyone.

### **Keeping sex out of work**

You are not a sex at work, you are an individual.

This is the basis for *No Sex at Work*. I know barriers for women still exist in the workplace. On occasion, bad attitudes and assumptions still emerge that seem intent on holding women back. However, I truly believe that we can create our own barriers when they may not even be there. This book is all about helping you to work out how to get around, over or under the real barriers that do exist, not create them when they don't – and arrive at a point where sex is truly not important at work.

My belief is that you are a businessperson first. You must focus on how to get from A to B in your career. The path should be the same for everyone regardless of gender, race, religion, footy club, high school or any other label people try to apply. In this book, I focus on removing the gender label.

Keep sex out of work by:

- building the soft skills you need to handle certain situations in the work environment

- developing the business skills you need to help progress in your career
- highlighting your capabilities as a T10P
- not categorising yourself as a gender, race, religion or any other label society puts on you as an individual or as part of a group.

So, how do you know if sex is currently in play at your work?

If you've found yourself in any of the following situations, you really need to read this book.

- You take a role without negotiating the salary. You say to yourself, 'Don't ask for more money, they will think I am aggressive. I am just happy to get the job'.
- An internal promotion becomes available, but you don't put your hand up. You think your manager would ask you to apply if they thought you were ready. You feel you do not have all the required skills to do the job, and think they'll just hire their buddies anyway, so why waste your time.
- You think business is done on the golf course and you don't play golf, so you feel left out and discriminated against.
- You take a new role where your boss gives you all the clients that no-one wants. You accept it, but you feel it is unfair.
- You are in a meeting with all males and you are asked to take the notes. This makes you angry and you don't know how to respond, so you just do it.

These are just a few examples of sex at work that are experienced every day. How many more have you experienced and how did you handle these situations?

## **The T10Ps**

You will see me refer to the T10Ps throughout this book. These are the top 10 per cent executives – the people who are successful and at the top of their game. They know how to get from A to B in business and they have great soft skills. Sex doesn't even cross their mind at work. They are individuals and they don't allow barriers to be put in front of them – and they certainly don't put any barriers in front of themselves. They all have one thing in common: they follow basic business rules of engagement. When I mention a tip in this book, the action I'm recommending is what the T10Ps do.

You may wonder how I determine who is and isn't a T10P. With more than 25 years in recruiting at senior levels, I have interviewed over 20,000 professionals. I have also consulted to and mentored some of Australia's most successful leaders. This gives me the insight required to see the very clear patterns that highlight why some people are successful and others aren't.

Who do you look up to? What have you observed them doing that makes them successful? These are the people and the actions you should be aiming to replicate.

In the following chapters, I show you how to separate what is direct discrimination and bad business behaviour from your own or others' misconceptions. I include many examples and stories from my life and my 25 years' experience in recruiting, along with points of reflection throughout the book. These points can also be used for your own self-reflection, as you look at how you can apply my experience to your situation. Most importantly, throughout this book I provide you with the tips you need to navigate your career successfully without sex as an issue. This is what I mean by no sex at work.

## CHAPTER ONE

# No Sex in My House

You've likely heard the old saying, 'Monkey see, monkey do'. As children, we imitate those we see in front of us who become our role models. Our formative years are also commonly believed to have a significant impact on the way we behave as adults.

It isn't surprising that children take after their parents. You don't need to be a psychologist to understand that as adults we influence our children's behaviour for the rest of their lives. I can tell you without a doubt in my mind that my family upbringing influenced most of my behaviours and the way I look at things. Because of my family's influence, I have grown up believing in individuality without focusing on gender biases, especially in the work environment.

### REFLECTION

Do you hear yourself repeating something your parents said?  
Is this something that influenced you to act in a certain way?

I remember very clearly my mother saying, 'There is no time like the present and you only live once'.



I have repeated this to myself so many times in my life. I feel this one sentence helped create the entrepreneurial spirit I have, as well as being the excuse every time I splurge on a new outfit!

My mother also said, 'Wait until you get married, dear'. I didn't listen to this one, which could mean some advice doesn't sink in.

What advice did you take that made a difference in your life?

What advice didn't you take that would have been a good idea?

What did you learn?

## Family sayings live on

Let's look at a few more sayings from my childhood and how they influenced me. Think about whether your parents said any of these to you and if you too were influenced:

- **'The early bird gets the worm':** My grandmother and father said this one all the time. This was a good statement for me to hear as a child to emphasise that if you want something worth having, you need to get out of bed and go for it.
- **'Work is not easy; that's why they call it work':** My father would say this one when we complained about doing our chores. I guess the message here is sometimes you need to do jobs you don't like.
- **'Don't put off to tomorrow what you can do today':** My grandmother would always say these exact words to me when I was indecisive. In later years, I often said this to myself when procrastinating about doing administration work in my business. I would reflect on what Grandmother said and then say to myself, 'Just get it done now and then it is off my list'.

- **‘This too shall pass’**: Another Grandmother saying. I say this when experiencing conflict, because I know everything does pass and things eventually get better.
- **‘Things always look better in daylight’**: My mother would say this when any of my sisters or I were upset about situations happening to us. My take on this was to always take a breath before reacting. In my business, if a problem emerged with a staff member or a client, I would always wait a day to calm down before responding. With a calm mind, you will see things more clearly, and even find another way of looking at a situation.
- **‘You need to save for a rainy day’**: Another one from my grandmother, and I have always lived by this in my businesses. Grandmother would say that things happen when you least expect them, so you need to be prepared and save for a rainy day. I have thanked her in my head so many times when circumstances changed or the economy shifted, and I had money in the bank to ride out the storm.
- **‘The squeaky wheel gets the oil’**: This is probably my favourite one of all time, and my mother, father and grandmother all said it. This has been a staple in my work diet. If you don’t speak up, how are people going to know what you want? I often tell women in the FEW membership base that they need to speak up and let their boss know what they want and if anything is bothering them, because people are not mind readers.

These were all positive things that my family said to me. What about the negative sayings we heard as children that influence how we see ourselves and how we act? I asked several of my friends to tell me what they remember their parents saying that influenced them

in a negative way, and they provided a few examples. Some of the behaviours I have seen in the past by women I have met could have been the result of this type of childhood influence. These kinds of negative comments include:

- **‘Wait until you are asked’:** Hearing comments such as this is possibly one of the reasons women don’t put their hands up for jobs – because they are waiting to be asked. I heard this all the time in recruiting when I approached female candidates about why they didn’t apply for a role – they would say they were waiting to be asked by their employer. Does this sound familiar? If only they had heard that the squeaky wheel gets the oil!
- **‘Don’t be so bossy’:** The use (or overuse) of the word ‘bossy’, especially in relation to women, generated a whole campaign in 2014. This campaign aimed to ban the word, arguing that its use discourages girls and women from seeking positions of leadership. It also makes them self-conscious about speaking up for fear of sounding aggressive. I hope this can be turned around even further and we start telling our girls to be the boss. Be bossy and own it!
- **‘Apply for jobs in large companies where you could meet a husband’:** I’m lost for words with this one!!
- **‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’:** I heard this one at almost every job I have gone to. It’s a great way to squash creativity or suggestions.

Many more sayings are passed down from generation to generation. What sayings influenced you? Who were your influencers and what impact do they have on you now in the work environment? Did sex play a part?

## **My family influences**

I grew up in a large family. I was the youngest of five girls and one boy. We lived in a middle-class neighbourhood and my father had a good job running a shoe store until I was five. We had a nice house and car, and life was good. Then, when he was in his early forties, my father lost his job, and everything changed.

In those days, men of his age found it hard to find new employment because they were perceived to be ‘over the hill’. My father never went to university, because he had been in the air force during World War II. He found not having a degree was another barrier preventing him from getting a job.

He tried selling insurance, but those jobs were commission-based and income was up and down. He just couldn’t get anything permanent.

### **REFLECTION**

Think about those times in your life when a crisis, a major change or something unexpected occurred. How did the experience shape you? Was it a wonderful learning experience? Were you thankful that it happened when you reflected on it later? Did those situations have an impact on how you operate at work today?

For example, my father losing his job could have influenced my need to be financially independent.

During this time, I saw my father being persistent and getting in front of potential employers. He didn’t lie around the house and hope something would come to him. He would look in the paper every day and cut out the employment ads and get on the phone. Time after time, he was knocked back and he knew it was his age or not having a degree or both, but he still kept trying.

Children witness similar examples of this all the time, often without their parents realising the influence it has. Are they teaching resilience or how to give up?

We have all heard the saying, 'Actions speak louder than words'. Did you learn resilience from your parents, or do you have a habit of giving up early?

Eventually we lost the house my parents were paying a mortgage on, and they almost went bankrupt. My grandmother encouraged them to move back to her neighbourhood and rent a house up the street so she could help with babysitting.

Months went by with no income. I remember the landlady knocking on the door for rent and my parents pretending no-one was home. My parents argued about money and it was sad seeing my dad losing confidence. We saw his funny teasing sense of humour less and less.

In happier times, my father would always make a tense situation lighter by making a joke of it. If I were upset or having a tantrum, as kids do, he would say something like, 'It's not the end of the world and if you think this is bad, you ain't seen nothing yet'. That was his way of telling me to get over it.

### **REFLECTION**

How do you react in hard times? How much of how you react do you believe comes from your parents? Are you paying attention to how your own behaviours are being perceived?

I believe seeing my parents struggle financially motivated me to make sure it didn't happen to me. In my mind, lack of money to pay bills would cause arguments and could put a strain on a good relationship.

One thing my parents never did was feel sorry for themselves or blame others for their hardship; they just kept trying. Seeing this has made me a fighter in times when things have not gone my way. I also don't blame others for my mistakes.

If you make mistakes or things aren't going your way, do you blame others? What can you do to take responsibility?

Before this, my siblings and I had all been going to a private school; however, with no money coming in we had to change to the public system. My grandmother made sure I went to a Catholic school until eighth grade but, after that, my parents would no longer accept her continuing to pay for my school fees. They insisted I go to the public high school my siblings already attended.

While I was devastated when I had to move schools because I wouldn't know anyone, I soon settled into the new school and loved it. With hindsight, attending public school prepared me to be able to interact with people from all walks of life, and I learnt to look at things from diverse perspectives. I really was very fortunate to have that experience.

### **REFLECTION**

Were you exposed to others from diverse backgrounds when you were growing up? Do you feel comfortable with different perspectives now, or thrown by them?

Going to the public school after being in a private school was a huge change in my world. The high school I went to had every nationality and socio-economic group represented. About 40 per cent of the students at the school were from African and Hispanic backgrounds. In contrast, the Catholic school had at most two or three non-white students. I was so fortunate to be able to make friends from diverse backgrounds, and these

friends gave me a different perspective on things and opened my mind to other possibilities. I believe this also helped me with my no sex at work attitude.

How has your experience of different backgrounds and perspectives shaped how you relate to others in the workplace?

### ***My mother, the boss***

Until my father lost his job, my mother had managed the house. Even in those days, it cost a lot to raise six children, and that was without indulging them with the latest brands and gadgets. As the youngest of six, I rarely got anything new; most of my clothes and toys were handed down.

Now with no income, my mother needed to think of creative ways to make what little money we had last. She managed to make meat-loaf with oatmeal and veggies feed everyone for several days. There were days when we only had popcorn to eat for dinner because it was so cheap.

In times of adversity, you learn to make use of what you have, and my mother was great at making things stretch. Maybe her upbringing during the Great Depression and World War II taught her how to be grateful for what she had and to make the best of everything.

After over a year of my dad not being able to find a job, however, I think my mother just said to herself, 'Enough is enough. If he can't find a job, I will'.

Even though my mother was also in her forties, she was attractive and looked as if she were 30, and this proved an advantage. She easily found a job demonstrating products in retail stores, home shows and fairs. She also had a natural talent for speaking to people and proved she was a great salesperson. My mother quickly became the main breadwinner in our family.

Her boss found out very quickly how good she was but still thought he could pay her less than the men. When she found out from her male co-workers that she was being paid less, even though she was the top-performing salesperson, she confronted her boss. His response was, ‘Yes, but they have families to support’. My mother shot back, ‘What do you think I have!’ Shortly after that, she quit.

Back then, women were treated as second-class citizens. Few people, and especially not women, would speak back to a boss. For my mother to do that showed a real sense of self-worth and confidence.

Looking back, I am sure we would have all said, ‘Yeah, Mum!’ It wouldn’t have been unusual for us kids to see her stand up for herself because that was her nature. Even though my mother was always polite, she wouldn’t think twice about speaking her mind.

**You can still be polite and get your point across.**

After working for another employer for a few years, my mother developed the confidence to go out on her own and build her own network of demonstrators working in retail stores and home shows. No discussions in the household led me to believe this was unusual. I heard no comments that women shouldn’t run a business; it just happened, and everyone accepted it – including my father.

My mother got my dad involved with the new business, so he was now working for her.

**REFLECTION**

What was your first job and what did you learn from it?

My mother also had all of us kids working in the business during school breaks. This provided me with the foundation experience I needed in dealing with people as customers. We often would



work from seven in the morning to ten at night, which also introduced me to a hard day's work.

We were always paid for the work we did and never expected to work for free. This provided us kids with a cash flow. Our parents never told us how to spend our money. My mother would simply say, 'Spend it wisely because when it's gone, it is gone and there is no more where that came from until it's earned'.

How did your earliest work experiences shape your work ethic and attitude today?

Seeing my mother calling the shots showed me that a woman could be the boss. Her actions also showed me that you could be a boss without being aggressive or shouting at people. She didn't let people take advantage of her good nature, however, and was always firm but fair.

I also learnt what it was like when business was good and when it wasn't. Some of the products my parents sold were not winners. With each product failure, my mother had to re-focus and search for a new product they could sell. Eventually they found the right one. For the next 25 years, they sold non-stick cookware until they retired at 80. I think this showed me you may have to try a few things before you get it right but you should never give up.

Even though my mother's business had ups and downs, our situation was never again as bad as when my dad didn't have a job.

### ***My father had to adapt***

My father was never intimidated by my mother working and bringing in money when he couldn't find a job. They were a team. While she was working, his job was taking care of us. Very 2020s if you think about it!

While his self-confidence was affected by not being able to provide financially for his family, he was resilient enough to adapt and make the best out of what was in front of him. He didn't take his failure to get a job out on my mother; he accepted that work for him would now be different. He was no longer the boss, but that was okay.

My father would always discuss things openly at the dinner table with my mother. Having this open communication meant I was listening and learning at the time without knowing it. Children pick up on what the adults are saying, so if you have conversations demonstrating equality, chances are this will set a good example for the ones listening. My parents rarely spoke behind closed doors, and we heard everything – sometimes maybe too much!

Even though my father would joke that children should be seen and not heard, we were a loud family. Everyone had an opinion and speaking up was not an issue. When you are the youngest of six, you also learn to speak up or you will be drowned out. That didn't mean that we could interrupt our parents. Manners were high on the list, and my father would be quick to let you know if you were out of line.

Money was extremely tight when my dad wasn't working. He couldn't afford a nice car so he drove an old red and white one with a green fender. He couldn't afford to paint it and it barely worked. I was embarrassed to be seen in it, so I would ask him to drop me off a block before school. Looking back, I realise that must have made my dad feel terrible.

### **REFLECTION**

How comfortable was your family when you were growing up?  
Could your family afford everything they needed, or was life more of a struggle?

At 19, I took out my first loan for a new car. All my life I have been car-obsessed. Would I be so obsessed if my dad had driven a nice car? That green fender made such an impact that the memory is so vivid, even today. The only difference now is that I feel ashamed about having him drop me off a block before school. I am proud of my dad for the way he handled a tough situation. I should have just been grateful for the ride to school and not worried about what people thought. How many times have you been worried about what others think and as a result hurt the feelings of someone you care about?

I believe my father was supportive when it came to equality in the family because his mother was strong. His mother is the grandmother I refer to in this book. He grew up seeing a woman being in control and working equally with her husband. In fact, I believe my grandmother was the boss in their family. My father never spoke back to her and if she wanted something done, he did it with no questions or complaints. He had an older sister who ran her own restaurant who was also strong. His upbringing no doubt influenced what we were taught.

How did your childhood influence your ideas on financial security? Did you see good or more negative examples of equality between men and women?

### ***My grandmother***

I was very lucky to have a strong grandmother who lived just up the street, and she became a big influence on me as well. When my grandfather died, I asked my mother if I could live with Grandma for a year to keep her company. My mother was working, so I would always go to Grandma's house after school anyway; it wasn't a big adjustment.

My grandmother was entrepreneurial for her time and rented out her large house as apartments and single rooms to the military men

returning from overseas. She charged extra for making them dinner and doing their laundry and cleaning. Nothing was provided for free and they understood right from the beginning that she was a good businessperson; they knew not to mess with her.

She was a 5 foot 2, 100 per cent proud Irish Catholic woman who ran her own race; a strong woman who never let anyone tell her what to do. She was nice, funny and always got her way.

Grandma's favourite saying was, 'You catch more bees with honey'.

She always went the nice route first and gave people a second chance, but if she didn't get what she wanted – watch out! There'd be no more honey and the bee would sting!

I watched how she dealt with people and felt she was always fair and would listen to others' views, but she was also firm on her convictions. People never crossed her, because she had a way of putting you in your place with a very stern tone that would make you feel two feet tall.

Grandma was so confident that when she walked into the room, you knew it. She wasn't especially attractive, but knew how to dress and look the best she could. When she was older, she was as wide as she was tall but that didn't matter; she commanded attention and respect, and she got it. Her attitude and confidence got her everything she wanted.

I remember when we went to church, my grandmother would always make a beeline for the front row. Often, we would be the only ones in the front while every row behind us was full. She loved it, and I think it made her feel in control and important.

During the service, my grandmother would sing louder than anyone else, even though she couldn't hold a tune. She would also pray louder – and if that wasn't bad enough, she was always a step ahead

in the song or prayer than everyone else. Maybe she thought God was a man and so she better let him know she meant business and not to underestimate her! I was embarrassed at the time, but now realise it was just Grandma living life on her own terms. Also, she should have known that God is a woman and there was no need to shout! 😊

### **REFLECTION**

Why is it that no-one wants to sit in the front row? Anyone who has spoken at events will notice that few people go willingly to the front row - and especially women.

One time when I was the keynote speaker, I instructed the ushers to take the front row of chairs away after the second row was filled. I could see people were uncomfortable with their new front-row position. At the beginning of the presentation, I then told the story of my grandmother always going to the front row.

I wanted to make people think about their discomfort. Why do we feel we can't go to the front? Does it come from our school days of not wanting to be asked a question and be put on the spot? Or do we want to duck out early without being seen if the speaker isn't good?

Remembering my grandmother now, I wonder: how many times do we shy away from making our voice heard? How many times do we worry about what other people think, and feel judged for just being ourselves?

My advice to you is to speak up! Sit in the front row and be seen. If you are asked a question you don't know, just say you don't know. It's not the end of the world. If you must leave early, then yes, sit in the back.

## **Lessons learnt in the home**

I think it is very important for parents to think about the messages we give our children. What are they taking with them when they leave home? How are we going to make them resilient? I learnt some very clear lessons from my childhood.

### ***Make your own money and then you will have choices***

One time, a friend of my grandmother said to me, ‘It is just as easy to marry a rich man as a poor man’. That made my grandmother so mad that she took me aside and said, ‘Make your own money, then you will have choices’.

I liked that idea, and the suggestion that a man could be a financial plan also annoyed me. I was determined to never, ever ask someone for money. I wanted my own money, and I wanted those choices my grandmother spoke about. To this day, I can’t think of anything worse than not being able to control what I spend.

My grandmother especially instilled in me that no-one is better than you. She said people have different jobs and skills and that you need to find what you are good at. If someone is a movie star, they are good at remembering lines and showing emotion in the delivery of their lines. That is their skill and they shouldn’t be put on a pedestal – it just means they are good at their job.

I think this is one of the reasons I have never levelised people (more on levelising later). I’ve never been starstruck. If I met the Queen of England, I would shake her hand and be as respectful with her as I would with anyone else, but I would not be prepared to curtsy. I really like her and respect her, but she is just a person; she isn’t better or worse than anyone else.

## **REFLECTION**

Did you start earning your own income as quickly as you could? How did your first experience of employment shape you?

Along with working for my parents during the school holidays, I also worked part-time after school in retail. I already knew that if I wanted to have my own income, I needed a job. Working gave me freedom to be able to fund my entertainment.

When you are young, you do the jobs you are given - usually the ones the more experienced staff don't want to do. My grandmother and parents would say that to get anywhere you need to start at the bottom or the beginning. Be grateful for the opportunity and learn everything you can about the business. If you do a good job, you will be noticed and rewarded. I believe this stands true today.

Their guidance equipped me to handle many situations during this time as a young employee. The lessons I learnt from my grandmother and parents meant I wouldn't put up with bad behaviour to keep a job.

Did you experience bad behaviour in your early jobs? How did you deal with it? Did you call it out or were you too afraid to say anything?

## ***Equality is learnt***

I was lucky enough to learn about equality and resilience and have the confidence to stand up for myself from seeing my mother standing up to her boss for paying her less than her male colleagues.

I have never once been scared to leave a job or speak up if I felt something wasn't right. Maybe if my mother had displayed different behaviours and had accepted being paid less than her male colleagues as 'just the way things are', I would have felt fearful if I had faced a similar situation myself.

During my childhood, I never once felt that I was any less capable than my brother or boys in general. I was taught that I could do anything I put my mind to. Although we were poor, this wasn't a roadblock to success.

Some gender stereotypes applied when chores were divided, with my brother having to do outside yard work and us girls having to do the inside chores. However, if we had been over six foot tall like my brother maybe it would have been different!

All of us siblings were taught that nothing is for free and money doesn't grow on trees. We had to earn our way.

We were never taught that girls were any different from boys when it came to choosing a career. This meant that, when I started my first job, I didn't think of myself as a particular gender. I had no idea about sex at work.

I focused on the skills I needed to develop to progress within my career. Gender stereotypes didn't cross my mind at the time, so I didn't feel suppressed because of my sex.

All my sisters went to university and became professionals. I have never heard them complain about sex at work, discrimination or any gender-related issues. Again, I'm not saying these issues don't exist. However, I do believe the attitude and approach you choose go a long way to combating them. I wouldn't mess with my sisters: anyone who does will quickly find out they can stand up for themselves, and that's because of what they learnt growing up.

My oldest sister became a judge, and she would have been appointed at a time when there were very few women judges. Why did she succeed? Why did I succeed, and my other sisters?

Maybe it's because we were taught to respect and stand up for ourselves.



***Our mind is the only roadblock***

When it comes to sex at work, I believe our minds are the only things getting in the way of us achieving what we set out to achieve.

It is amazing that adversity can sometimes spark things within us that we didn't know we had. For instance, if my dad had kept his job, my mother would have continued to be a housewife in the traditional way that was common in those days. How would that have changed my perceptions of what women can and can't do? I wonder if I would have turned out differently.

**Whatever role you take in your family and career, it is important to be in control of your destiny and not be limited in what your dreams are.**

Your sex should in no way control what these dreams are.

Let's now look at how we can take what we have learnt growing up and either fine-tune or undo behaviours to ensure our success at work as an individual and to become a T10P.