

I TRUE TO NATURE

Do you know this woman? She could be your college roommate. She could be working in your office. Or she could be living in your body. She's someone who feels she needs to make a change. She doesn't lack talent or a work ethic, but her life and career don't seem to be on the right track. And she's afraid the train might derail completely. Or maybe she'll just get off the train and walk home.

She knows her workplace has modern attitudes. Her boss may even be a woman. But something is still wrong. She's unsure of herself. She's not living up to her potential. She's frustrated. She's good at multitasking, but the push-pull of work and family can be just too much.

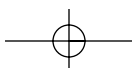
She's suffering from a problem that affects only women: female behavior confusion disorder.

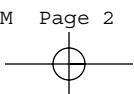
Too Hot? Too Cold?

What's a woman to do? How do you get it right in the workplace?

Your instincts may tell you to "be nice," but be too nice and you might not be taken seriously. If you are too assertive and exhibit the same leadership qualities that are praised in a man, you risk that familiar epithet referring to a female dog that, curiously, has no male equivalent.

Even Catalyst, the research organization that's been studying the "female brand" and the workforce for thirty years, isn't sure. But at least it knows we're in a double bind. Its 2007 study "Damned If You Do, Doomed If You Don't" found that women face three double-bind dilemmas:¹





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- **Can't-win perceptions.** If women act like women, they are perceived as weak. If they act like men, they are viewed as too tough.
- **Higher bar—low reward.** Women have to work harder and often receive less.
- **Competent yet disliked.** Women with successful male leadership skills such as assertiveness are often disliked.

It's the Goldilocks dilemma. If you're too hot, you're branded as out of control. If you're too cold, you're labeled an ice queen. The same behavior that's acceptable in a man is often criticized in a woman. It's almost impossible to get it just right.

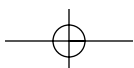
How Do You Cope?

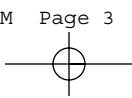
It's a woman's dilemma. Whether we supported her or not, many of us felt Hillary Clinton's pain when she ran for president of the United States in 2008.² Or we cringed in sympathy or embarrassment for Sarah Palin when she ran for vice president that same year. Both women had to struggle with female behavior confusion disorder, too.

We could identify with the challenges Clinton and Palin faced as female candidates trying to get into the boys club. Many of us have faced similar difficulties in the professional world, especially if we're ambitious and interested in doing more, or if we've tried to break new ground in a role that was previously male-only turf. From a marketing perspective, we're female brands trying to get shelf space in a market dominated and controlled by male brands.

It's one thing for Clinton and Palin to be critiqued on their politics and point of views, but their hair and clothing were also critiqued. Nothing was off limits, not even Sarah's shoes or the thickness of Hillary's ankles. In debates with male opponents, each woman's voice, pitch, and tone were scrutinized, not just the content of their answers.

Laughing too loud or coming close to tears in front of a reporter was a big media story for Hillary—even her authenticity was called into question after she choked up when asked how she copes each day. And then to top it all off, there was CBS reporter Katie Couric's interview of Sarah Palin that was famously channeled by Tina Fey on *Saturday Night Live*. In one swoop, Palin got branded as a ditz, Couric's hard-news credentials were refurbished, and Fey's star power shot into the stratosphere.





You're Not a Man

The conventional wisdom has been that women have trouble succeeding because they don't act like men, the top-selling brand in the career marketplace. The advice we've been given is to try to act like a man in the workplace. So we took courses and tried to be more assertive. In the past, we were even encouraged to "dress for success," which meant like a man, so we turned to dark, skirted suits with shoulder pads, briefcases, and tie-like scarves. Or we tried to adopt the male command-and-control model. Or we tried to model ourselves after male leaders in our company.

If that's the conventional wisdom, it's wrong. Playing it like a man doesn't work. Acting like a man brands you as tough and aggressive. When women adopt attitudes such as forcefulness and assertiveness, we are lambasted as "too tough" and "unfeminine."

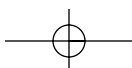
I remember a certain female executive back when I first worked on Wall Street. We'll call her "Alex." She was smart and got the job done, and done well. But her ideas on team building and compassion came right out of Joseph Stalin's playbook. Alex played the tough guy so well, you could imagine her as a fire-eater in the circus. Alex behaved like a bully and everyone was afraid of her, even her own staff. Alex represented what I hoped was a dying breed, a type not much discussed in women's leadership circles—the tough, successful female who is mean to other women and tries to sabotage them.

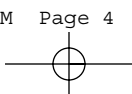
One day she called me to complain about a member of my staff, "Sophia," who had the audacity to disagree with the recommendation one of Alex's people had made in a meeting. And Alex complained to me about it in typical Alex fashion. "Tell your person if she does it again, I'll break her [expletive deleted] kneecaps."

Ouch! I didn't pass along Alex's stupid threat but counseled Sophia to always use all the diplomatic skills she could muster when talking with Alex or anyone on Alex's staff.

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Bad behavior is disliked in a man.
But it's despised in a woman.
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This sort of behavior is counterproductive and ultimately destructive. A few years later, as usually happens, Alex had a big project that





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blew up. She needed some supporters to rally around her and maybe put the blowup in perspective. Unfortunately for her, but fortunately for the company and everyone else, Alex had no supporters and left the firm. The reign of terror was over, and we all gave a big sigh of relief. Her bad reputation was so well known in the industry that she was never able to land a big job again.

Be Who You Are—A Woman

Trying to act like a man is stupid for the most basic reason. We're not men! And that's an advantage!

It's common sense to be authentic, and it's smart branding. Great commercial brands are always built on authenticity and on a brand's inherent strengths, and it's the same with you. Your brand must come from who you are, what makes you tick, what your passions are, and what your strengths are, even what your biology dictates. Confidence comes from being comfortable in your own skin.

You'll avoid the stress of trying to be something you're not and constantly attempting to fix your shortcomings. You'll be worth more as well.

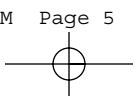
The choice is between increasing results using your aptitudes and assets or making minor improvements to weak areas that will probably never be a major strength. Your house of cards may eventually collapse around you. Don't shortchange your assets and your power.

Tune In to Your Wiring

Turns out Mom was right. She always said, "Boys will be boys and girls will be girls."

We *are* wired differently. "Not that there's anything wrong with that," to quote Jerry Seinfeld. We don't need a million-dollar research study to tell us that what we are and how we are—how we think and how we behave—are different. Just go to a playground and watch girls and boys play.

I used to think that many gender differences resulted from being raised differently. To say that our biology has some effect on our minds and how we see the world still strikes some as un-American. We shouldn't be determined by anything, right? But once I had a son, I



could see with my own eyes how differently the genders are wired from the beginning. How much is due to genes? How much to hormones? Trying to eliminate any taint from the social environment, Professor Simon Baron-Cohen videotaped more than one hundred infants at one day old. His study showed that baby girls were most attracted to a mobile of a face, and baby boys were more fixated on a mechanical mobile.³

It's fascinating to watch the toys that each gender likes to play with. By and large, girls are more fascinated with faces and people—by dolls and playing house. Boys are fascinated by things—by cars and construction sets. Both casual observation and academic studies by Baron-Cohen and others confirm these preferences.

So how does this play out in life—girls and people versus boys and things?

One basic difference is women's tendency to be more social and to focus on people and connection. We tend to have good radar for detecting the effect we have on others and sensing their feelings. And that can be a two-edged sword. One study focused on fourth-grade Israeli children running on a track. There was no speed difference between the boys and girls until competition was thrown into the mix. When they were put in paired groups to run, the boys ran faster and the girls ran slower. And the girls ran slowest of all when running with another girl.⁴

In contrast to a woman's interest in empathy and connection, studies by Baron-Cohen and others show that men have a more outward orientation and focus on understanding and building systems. Of course there are exceptions, but on the whole women are a people-oriented brand and men are a thing-oriented brand.

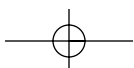
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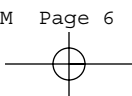
The female brain is hardwired for empathy and connection.

The male brain is hardwired for building systems.

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Hormones rev up our natural instincts toward connection even more. As girls become teens, they focus even more on personal emotions and intimate relationships, because when estrogen floods the brain, it bolsters female social skills with an intense drive toward connection.⁴ Estrogen and oxytocin also help power women's intuition and empathy. Motherhood brings about more changes and hormones, driving an over-





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riding urge to nurture, avoid conflict, and build connection with others. With menopause, women experience a final shift in hormones. Estrogen and oxytocin are lower. Now, rather than being driven by a desire to connect with and nurture others, we women, often for the first time, focus on ourselves. At last we give ourselves permission to do our own thing.

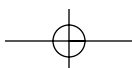
The Female Brain

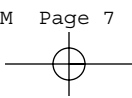
Because some gender studies have displayed contradictory results, one of the hottest areas in gender research is the field of neuroscience, which studies the structure and function of the brain and nervous system. While the male and female brains are similar in so many ways, neuroscientific studies point to some female advantages and aptitudes: strong empathetic ability, verbal skills, keen emotional responsiveness, and other advantages

To make their discoveries, neuroscientists use a four-ton device called a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scanner. These machines record changes in the oxygen level of blood feeding the brain. Because the brain rapidly supplies blood to working areas, active areas virtually light up to provide a mini-movie of what's going on. A "brain-to-brain dance" takes place when we connect with another person, and different areas of the brain "light up" during certain activities in men and in women.

One interesting difference shown in the MRI pictures is that most women use both the right and left hemispheres of the brain for processing verbal, visual, and emotional experiences. Men use only one.⁶ The bundle of nerves connecting the two hemispheres is also thicker in women, making for a wide boulevard of connection. And that's not the end of it. A neuroscientist counted the neurons in the brain tissue of men and women—thin slice by thin slice—and found that the female brain is densely packed with 11 percent more neurons in the language area.⁷

Most women are smaller than men, and the female brain is about 9 percent smaller. This size advantage led some scientists to speculate that men were smarter than women.⁸ But it turns out that women have just as many brain cells as men. Our brain cells are just packed more tightly into a smaller braincase.





Intelligence

Women are just as intelligent as men, too, if you look at average IQ scores. But men tend to overestimate their brainpower, and women underestimate their smarts, what one researcher dubbed the “male hubris, female humility effect.”⁹ This tendency to play dumb about our intellectual capabilities is something we must resist. People might believe us!



*The average IQ of women and men is about even,
though men tend to overestimate and
women tend to underestimate their intelligence.*

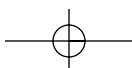


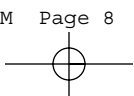
Memories of old-fashioned thinking about female intellectual ability added fuel to the fire that engulfed Lawrence Summers, the former president of Harvard University. In 2005, Summers made a remark in a speech questioning whether the relative scarcity of women in science was due to innate differences in ability between men and women. The story took on a life of its own in the media, and Summers’s comments generated such a storm of protest that he thought it best to resign.

It’s true that there are fewer women working in the sciences and math, but it’s not lack of ability that is holding us back. Tests show that women can do math and science extremely well.¹⁰

Perhaps science and math aren’t presented in the right way for women, and these fields have a male brand-image (the computer nerd) that discourages women, similar to the guys-only image of top corporate jobs.

The real reason may be the simplest and most profound. Many women aren’t interested in math and science as careers. Women often think of math and science as too abstract and systems oriented (a male preference) and not sufficiently people and content oriented (a female preference). One study showed that people who liked to work with tools or machines were more likely to choose information technology careers. People who liked working with people were a lot less likely to choose IT careers (more women fall into this camp).¹¹





Preferences and Options

One landmark study followed more than three thousand mathematically precocious boys and girls from middle school to middle age over a thirty-five-year period. All were gifted in math, but when it came time to choose a career, a chasm emerged.¹² The men selected engineering and physical sciences, and the women were more likely to choose medicine, biological sciences, humanities, and the social sciences.

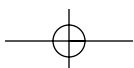
In short, this large-scale study over three decades showed that mathematically strong men prefer to work with “inorganic” things in fields involving machines, abstractions, and the like. The women, in general, prefer to work with “organic” or living things in fields involving social interaction with people and helping people.

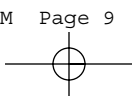
Something else in this study was startling. The women had more options. Women who were gifted in math were more likely than the men to have strong verbal skills, too. So they could choose careers in science or become lawyers, marketers, or teachers. The males who were good in math tended to have weak verbal skills.

This gender divide in the sciences is greatest in countries that allow women the most freedom to choose. For example, there are five to seven times more females in the hard sciences (such as physics) in Russia and the Philippines than in Canada, the United Kingdom, or the United States. And most of the girls who succeed in math in the U.S. are immigrants or the daughters of immigrants.¹³

As barriers come down, gender gaps seem to widen. With more opportunities, we have choices. For most women, a career in technology or the hard sciences doesn't match our DNA. We're in a culture where math and IT have a decidedly male, nerdy brand image. It doesn't fit our brand unless it's a people-oriented job like medicine or a people-oriented role like sales and marketing in a technology or science company. And it's doable. About 70 percent of the jobs in IT companies are nonprogramming jobs and are highly “organic,” involving strong interpersonal skills.¹⁴

If, like many women, we're good at both, we may like math but love literature and the humanities. This is freedom.





Take the Middle Road

Gender expert Roy Baumeister points out that men go to extremes more than women do. He says that we can see this male-female dichotomy in intelligence, in height, in on-the-job risk taking, in status, and in society.¹⁵

Look at intelligence, which, as we pointed out, is about equal. Men are more often at the extremes here, too. There are more men at the top of the IQ heap and also more men at the bottom. There are fewer women at the extremes and more in the middle range in intelligence. But overall, average intelligence is about equal.

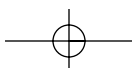
Look at the business, social, or political pecking order. Men are running most things—at the very top, running large companies and leading nations—but there are more men at the other extreme, too. There are more men by far at the very bottom of society, locked up in our prisons. (Women made up 7 percent of the prison population in 2006.)¹⁶

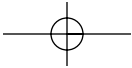
Men typically are viewed as the stronger sex, but they are also the weaker sex. Fewer boys than girls survive through birth. Men are more likely by far to have developmental and learning disorders like attention deficit disorder. As adults, men on average have more illnesses and die younger than women (an average life span of seventy-eight years for men versus eighty-four years for women).¹⁷

Tap into the Female Leadership Style

Of course, each of us develops her own personal leadership style, but there are characteristics of the female brand that many of us instinctually gravitate toward. We tend to have a big-picture orientation. Women leaders are more like mentors or coaches, favoring collaboration, involving colleagues in making decisions, and nurturing the various members of the team. We tend to be highly intuitive and more people oriented in making leadership decisions and more service oriented in dealing with clients.¹⁸ We can be great talent developers, and at the end of the day, the quality of the people can make the difference between a company that does just OK and one that clicks.

Again, it's a generalization, but the male brand tends to be more of a command-and-control type. Men are often more objective and ana-





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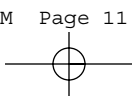
lytical in making leadership decisions. The male style is powerful, too, with its focus on analysis and getting the system to work in the best way.

What you want to do is to lead with a style that's natural to you, and don't try to be like a man if that's not your style. Otherwise, we won't use what's different and powerful about our exceptional advantages and style, our singular abilities and sensibilities, which can give the female brand an edge in the workplace and everywhere.

Leverage Your Female Edge

Branding is about leveraging your edge over competitive brands. The female mindset gives us powerful aptitudes that we should leverage in the workplace for career success:

- **Exceptional empathy.** We've got antennae that are terrific at reading gestures, tone of voice, faces, and postures. In short, we can read between the lines and know what's really going on with someone.
- **Uncanny intuition.** We can go with our gut. We often know the answer through an unconscious process that can be remarkably accurate and insightful.
- **Strong verbal and communication skills.** Women score better in reading comprehension, writing, and other verbal skills, all of which are crucial in the workplace.
- **The social gene and the ability to build deep personal relationships.** Women are better at connecting with and nurturing other people. Women specialize in building strong, supportive relationships.
- **More openness in communicating and sharing feelings.** Women are more willing to open up, start talking, and share their emotions. We are more likely to speak out about problems that are affecting morale in the workplace.
- **Collaborative, team-oriented leadership style.** Rather than turning to a command-and-control leadership style, women tend to build consensus and lead with active group participation.
- **More appearance tools at our disposal.** Women can use their flair and sense of style to create a stronger visual identity through



clothing, hairstyles, makeup, and accessories—a core component of personal branding.

Try the Brainstormer below to explore your female attributes.

BRAINSTORMER

Leverage Your Female Edge

How do you stack up in the *female strengths* most women are biologically wired for? Write down your thoughts about your aptitudes:

Empathy: your ability to connect with others through a sense of similarity

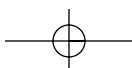
Intuition: your ability to sense what's really going on in a situation

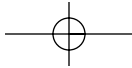
Verbal ability: your overall communication skills in writing and speaking

People skills: your social gene and ability to connect with others

Leadership: your personal leadership style

Visual identity: your self-presentation





Work the Female-Brand Advantage

Look at the aptitudes of males and females listed below. Of course, none is carved in stone for any individual, but they represent tendencies and orientations wired into most of us because of our gender. As women, we have strong proficiencies based on our verbal prowess, our keen abilities to read the room and connect with people, and our collaborative and community-building skills. These characteristics are essential to brand building. Even our variety and range of personal style and wardrobe give us an advantage in building a strong visual identity. It's a brand manager's dream.

MALE MINDSET	FEMALE MINDSET
Commander	Team leader
Individuality	Connection
Competition	Collaboration
Narrower focus	Big picture
Facts and figures	Story and context
Reason	Intuition
Employees	Community
Analysis	Empathy
More and shallower relationships	Fewer and deeper relationships
Large groups	Small groups
More homogenous appearance	More differentiated appearance
Thinker	Feeler
Things and systems	People
Spatial ability	Language ability

Nurture What You Want to Grow

So many things shape us—our family and friends, the education we receive, and the times we grow up, in along with our biology, our evolutionary history, and our genes.

The interesting thing is that what we nurture is what grows in us. And neuroscientists are proving it. Scientists talk of “neuroplasticity”—how what we experience and focus on can actually “sculpt” the shape, size, and number of neurons, even the thickness of the connections between them.¹⁹ It’s like Mom always said: “Use it or lose it.”

Many of us begin with great callings and then move on to duties and demands. But often we’re great at managing priorities—at least, everyone’s priorities but our own.

We need to put ourselves and our career success back into the equation. We need to leverage our personal strengths and our aptitudes as women. It’s not helpful to blame the old boy network or the glass ceiling. We need to focus on what we can control and on our best assets—our personal strengths and the aptitudes we’re wired for as women.

The goal is to be ourselves, have fun and succeed, and maybe even make the world a little better place.

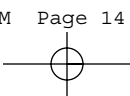
We’re women, after all.

DREAMS ARE FOR LIVING

Meenu Chhabra

president and CEO, biotechnology company

My childhood was full of mixed messages about the role of women in society. My mother, like my father, had a PhD, but she lived the life of a traditional Indian woman. Mother always told me, “You are equal to any man,” but she knew that she was not a role model for gender equality.



My background made me determined to lead by example as well as words in my life. I strive for bold and clear communication in my career and urge women to speak in a large voice and never be intimidated by male bravado.

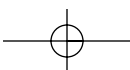
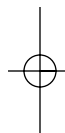
My mother's acquiescence to the status quo when she had so much potential caused me to strive aggressively for high achievement. I was twenty-two by the time I finally rebelled against my father's backward ideas and had my first date. I trained as a neuropsychopharmacologist and earned an MBA.

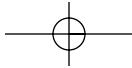
My goals in life were fueled by desires to travel and to create things that hadn't existed before. I first worked in Italy but then moved to a Swiss multinational pharmaceutical company, which allowed me to travel the world and learn about deal making and cultural differences.

I was often the youngest person as well as the only female in meetings. This helped strengthen my brand as being exceptional. Being young and female can help open doors, but then you need to prove your ability to stay there. I knew I was destined to run a company like I'm doing now. Working in the biotech field on vital, breakthrough endeavors like curing disease is a dream come true. It's always challenging to be a CEO, but being young and a woman compounds those challenges. My strategy is to find brilliant people and let them know that I depend on them to teach me things. I'm not an isolated figurehead, and I can be wrong. I want them to feel that they can say anything to me.

Women's lives are often more complex than men's. Women have more to juggle besides their careers. They generally have the primary role to play with the children and the myriad things that take place in a family's life. So women have to think in terms of what's important to them and then simplify their lives around that. When I mentor ambitious women, here's what I say:

- **Determine your priorities.** If your first priority is your children, focus on situations that will give you maximum quality time with your family.
- **Create a career goal.** If your goal is to become a CEO, determine when you would like to achieve that and build a plan backward from there.
- **Get a career coach.** Objective advice from someone without an agenda is crucial.
- **Identify personal champions.** It is vital to create personal champions who are senior, well connected, and respected—





people who can alert you to leads before anyone else knows about them.

- **Treat your job search like a business deal.** Know the terms you would like and identify partners willing to give you those terms.

“You are equal to any man” is no longer an abstract notion for women. There are gender issues, of course, but more and more those differences are recognized as strengths.

I've learned there are no limits. I have a lot more I want to accomplish as CEO, but I also want to sail around the world, grow olives in Spain, create great photographs, raise a beautiful child, and be an inspiring example.

