8 ways to boost female empowerment

March 8 is International Women's Day. Over the past several decades, we have seen a dramatic shift in how women show up not only in the workplace but also in our day-to-day lives.

When a woman feels empowered, she has an increased sense of decision-making power and self-worth. She also has more resources, opportunities and better control over her own life with the ability to effect change.

As the world continues to change, there's a lot we can do to help the women in our lives and around the globe feel more empowered. Here are eight ways to get started.

1. **Share your story and listen to others.**
   One thing that helps a lot of women speak up for themselves is hearing stories from other women. By talking about our experiences, we can help women who have been through similar situations without even knowing it. Your story can help motivate other women to step up and share theirs.

   Equally as important: listen to other women's stories. Their experiences are just as valid and important as yours. Not only will you learn a lot about them, you'll also learn more about yourself. Sharing stories will help women come together and make a difference.

2. **Promote empowerment and self-expression.**
   Supporting other women is a truly powerful act. Make them feel heard and valued as individuals by listening and offering advice and praise. And if you have a daughter, niece or other young girl in your life, support her self-expression early on. Encourage her to explore different wardrobes, activities and interests so she feels comfortable showing up as her own authentic self.

3. **Tell the women in your life how much you care about them.**
   The easiest and most effective way to encourage empowerment is to start with the women you already have in your life. This could be a friend, family member or co-worker. Share how much you appreciate them and think of ways to show it with a card, gift, compliment or nice gesture. Strengthening the relationships you already have will set you up for success when empowering other women.

4. **Offer female mentorship.**
   A lot of women don't know where to start when it comes to self-empowerment. By offering your time, knowledge and encouragement, you can help another woman understand her true potential and get started on the right path. An ideal mentee is someone who shares common interests or is looking to work in a similar field. Having been in that woman's shoes before, either professionally or personally, is a great way to help you relate to them and support them.

5. **Encourage equal pay initiatives.**
   Women across the globe continue to experience pay inequality at work compared to men. Encourage the women in your lives to make sure that they know their worth and feel empowered to advocate for it.

6. **Help out a new mum.**
   New parents often feel overwhelmed – especially new mums who do it all. Offering to help a new mum clean the house, run errands or babysit so she can relax will go a long way in supporting her. Not only will she feel less exhausted, but she'll appreciate knowing that someone is looking out for her.

7. **Contribute to women-owned and women-run businesses.**
   Your local community is likely to have businesses owned and/or run by women. Consider donating to and investing in these companies to show your support. If the business sells goods and services, you can also buy their products and use word-of-mouth marketing to tell others about them.

8. **Assist women-empowering organisations.**
   There's a lot you can do to support women-owned organisations, especially those focused on empowering women. Some ideas include donating your time and/or money to the organisation or referring a woman to that organisation. Also, use social media to spread the word about organisations doing good work.

10 tips to support your physical and mental health

Because we've faced many challenges over the past year, we have more reasons than ever to stay healthy and focus on self-care. Here are some tips to help boost your physical and mental health:

1. **Eat a healthy diet.** Include foods rich in vitamin C, found in citrus fruit, strawberries, spinach and peppers; vitamin B6, found in chicken, green veggies, salmon, tuna and chickpeas; vitamin E, found in spinach, nuts and seeds; and vitamin D, found in salmon or fortified foods, such as milk and some juices.

2. **Stay active.** There are several theories on how exercise may help boost immunity, including helping improve the ability of your white blood cells to fight illness. While your gym may be closed, you can still go for a walk, run or bike ride (while practising social distancing), work out to videos online, or even just dance around the house.

3. **Get enough sleep.** Sleep is important for healthy immune system function. It also helps support emotional and mental health. Aim for at least seven hours of sleep every night, and try to go to sleep around the same time every night to create a normal routine.

4. **Don't smoke or vape.** Smoking and vaping don't just affect the lungs, but can also affect the immune system. People who smoke or vape may have a harder time fighting infections.

5. **Avoid drinking too much alcohol.** Alcohol can lower the immune system's ability to do its job. In general, one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men is acceptable. However, some people shouldn't drink at all.

6. **Combat stress.** Sustained stress may contribute to lowering the levels of infection-fighting white blood cells. Relaxation, deep breathing, meditation and even laughter are all good stress-busters.

7. **Stay hydrated.** Drinking enough water can help your body carry white blood cells and other germ-fighting cells through your system.

8. **Say yes to yourself.** It's easy to fall into a routine of saying yes to everyone else, especially when you'd feel guilty saying no. However, adding other obligations to an already-full plate can lead to stress and burnout. Learning to normalise saying no will help you prioritise better and feel more confident.

9. **Get outside.** Breathing in the fresh air can do wonders for your mental and physical health, such as reducing stress and fatigue. Try adding an activity such as gardening or walking to your outside time to help you make the most of it.

10. **Do more of what you love.** A lot of people don't take the time to enjoy their favourite activities, but doing just that can help you manage stress and feel more relaxed. Consider cooking a nice meal for yourself, going for a drive or reading a good book.

Staying healthy is everyone's top priority these days. Try to trade in your worry or feeling of helplessness by taking

immune-boosting steps each and every day. Remember – by remaining physically and mentally healthy, you're helping to keep those around you healthy, too.

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Get motivated to achieve your goals

Staying motivated is important when it comes to setting and completing goals. When we combine our desires, values and beliefs, we create motivation. Since we have influence over each of these three elements, we can also control our level of motivation. When you value something and choose to set realistic goals for attaining it, it's likely that there will be a positive outcome.

Steps to get motivated

Getting motivated begins with a choice. The following steps will help you generate the energy needed to take action:

- Identify your values, beliefs and desires.
- Think specifically about your work, health and relationships. How do they relate to your values, beliefs and desires? Write down these connections.
- Prioritise your goals. Are some of these items long-term or short-term? Do you see any themes emerging with your list?
- Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses to assess what goals are realistic.
- Adjust your goals accordingly, because not every circumstance is under your control.
- Understand that success is the result of your motivation, goals, circumstances and hard work.

Motivation tips

When it comes to goals, it can be easy to get sidetracked or stalled. Consider these tips to gain and maintain your motivation:

- **Accountability** – Surround yourself with supportive people who are working towards similar goals. Encouragement from others is important, especially those who have previously completed a goal like yours. If you're constantly competing with others, you'll feel alone and lose momentum.
- **Inspiration** – Look for daily ways to uplift your mind and motivation. This might mean posting an inspiring quote or picture to your mirror, or reading about influential people you admire.
- **Consider the alternative** – If you don't make this change, what will your life be like? Your reaction to this question is a clue to how much you value this goal.
- **Practise self-care** – When you take care of yourself, you're more likely to reach your goals. This could be as simple as drinking more water, getting good sleep or exercising a few times a week. Small changes like these can make a big difference to your energy level and mood.
- **Forgive yourself** – It's all too easy to be your own worst enemy. Understand that you'll have days when you fail, make mistakes or get rejected. However, if you stay positive and refuse to beat yourself up, you've already won the battle. Learn to forgive yourself and move forward.

Goal-setting steps

When it comes to setting goals, sometimes it can be hard to know where to start. Consider the following guidelines when determining your new goal:

- **Plan** – Set aside some time to think about your goals. Sometimes, you might have a few false starts when you begin. Don't be discouraged; this is a normal part of the goal-setting process.

- **Think big** – Put logic aside for a moment. We can be afraid to think and dream big when we set goals. Negative thinking can quickly take over. Remember – just because you cannot reach a goal today does not mean that it's never a possibility.
- **Stay positive** – Use uplifting language when you are constructing your goal. Focus on what you want for yourself rather than what you don't want.
- **Break it down** – Goals should be broken up into attainable and measurable tasks. Setting a daily or weekly goal will continue to keep you motivated. This also allows you to monitor your progress.
- **Envision your future** – Who and where are you in five or 10 years? What are you doing? Who is around you? What is making you happy? Imagining yourself in the future can be highly motivating.
- **Write a vision statement** – When you feel overwhelmed with daily tasks, having a clear and concise vision statement can help you stay on track. This is sometimes known as a "why" statement. The more passionate you feel about your purpose, the more determined you will be to stay the course.
- **Be flexible** – There is no rule that says you cannot revise your goals or daily tasks. As we move through life, our circumstances and passions will change. Sometimes, we need to alter the steps toward our goal as we learn along the way. It's important to be flexible and open to change.

Learning to set and meet goals is a lifelong process. When you achieve one goal, be sure to set time aside to celebrate the victory. Then, set your sights on a new objective, and include others in your process. Helping another get started on their journey is a great way to stay motivated and keep moving in the direction of your dreams.