



Moving Past #MeToo Coaching to Empower Female Law Students and Associates

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Session Outline

- Setting the Scene
- Unpacking bias
- Counteracting irrational fears
- Shielding against unconscious bias
- Coaching for a grit/growth mindset
- How to be an active ally/champion for women in the profession

Setting the Scene: Goals and Limitations of Session

Goals

- Co-construct strategies
- Promote discussion
- Equip attendees with tools and take-aways

Limitations

- Opinion and expertise
- Gender
 - Cisgender female-identified

Setting the Scene: Positive and Negative Impacts of the #MeToo Movement

Pros:

- Slightly increased likelihood of women being believed
- Slightly increased likelihood of action being taken
- Generally more public awareness

Cons:

- Backlash (women are “too sensitive” or hysterical; it’s gone too far)
- Men have fear of working with / mentoring women (fear of false accusations)
- Women perhaps not benefitting from as much mentorship / development as a result

What now?

- How to coach and empower through a variety of scenarios you may have already encountered

Activity – Scenario 1

- Groups of 2-3
- 2-3 minutes to discuss the following scenario:
- **Law firm:** *A male partner expresses unease with mentoring a female associate, given what he's heard about the #metoo movement.*
- **Law school:** *A male professor expresses unease with advising a female student given what he's heard about the #metoo movement.*

How would you advise the partner/professor?

Debrief

- What are *your* thoughts?

Discussion: Unpacking the bias and stereotypes at play

- “Women are untrustworthy, over-sensitive etc., and as a result, men can easily be falsely accused”

Discussion: Addressing the myth / stereotype

- Fear about false allegations
- Sexual stereotypes of women and the disruption of power dynamics
- So, should men be afraid?
 - If they harass/assault
 - If they *don't* harass/assault

Discussion: Impact

- What is the impact of this irrational fear?
 - Women may be missing out on mentorship or career opportunities
 - Gives as “easy out” to those who do not want to invest time into mentorship and to those who are not ready to challenge their biases

What Can Managers / Leaders do to counteract the irrational fear?

- If you are a man, speak with other men (more likely to be listened to / believed)
- Regardless of your gender, engage men to speak with men
- In particular, engage men to:
 - Debunk the myths
 - Express lack of personal fear
 - Act as a sponsor of women (vocally promote them, give them opportunities and encourage others to do so)
 - Encourage them when they demonstrate inclusive behaviors

Activity: Scenario 2

- **Law Firm:** A female associate comes to you and says that she's not getting as many work assignments as she used to – particularly from male partners. One partner told her that he's sometime a bit nervous about working with women. Not because he will behave inappropriately, but because he's worried that people will become suspicious if he works with young women.
- **Law School:** A female student approaches you and says that at an on campus interview, the interviewers asked her how she feels about the #MeToo movement. She was worried that they wanted her to prove that she was "cool" and not caught up in gender issues.

How do you advise the female associate/student?

Debrief

- What are *your* thoughts?

Discussion: Coaching Women to Shield Against Bias / Irrational Fear

- The disclaimer: Sharing the burden of bias

Discussion: Identifying the Bias

- Identify the biases that are likely in play:
 - Assumptions common to all unconscious bias
 - Sexualization
 - Baby bias
 - Personality assumptions

Tools for shielding against bias

- Personalize yourself (move from stereotype to individual)
- Identify and leverage your “hook”
- Identify the unconscious
- Vocalize the unconscious and counteract it (otherwise known as doing the work for them).
- Be the first out of the gate and set the stage
- Indirectly talk about the effects of unconscious bias via questioning
- Find a sponsor

Activity: Scenario 3

- A student is at a law firm interview (or practicing in a mock interview). The student asks some questions at the end of the interview, to learn more about the firm. One of the questions is, “I notice you have a female managing partner. Can you tell me more about women in relationship to diversity initiatives at the firm?”
- **Please consider this scenario with two iterations: a male student asking the question, and a female student asking the question.**
- **Recruiters:** If you were at a law firm, how would you address this question? How might your answers change, based on the gender of the student?
- **School-side:** If you were giving a mock interview, how would you give feedback about this question to the student? How might your feedback change based on the gender of the student?

Debrief

- What are *your* thoughts?
- How would you react based on if the student was a male or female?

Discussion: Coaching men and women from a growth mindset/grit perspective

- Self-reflection on own biases
- Encouraging both men and women students/prospective employees to challenge norms
 - Women demonstrating “grit” when asking tough questions
 - To lean in, or lean out?

Being an active ally/champion

- Being proactive instead of reactive
- Seek ways to show your support
- Support grassroots initiatives
 - Bottom up instead of top down

Supporting Grassroots Initiatives

- Let the students and young lawyers guide us towards meaningful change - what do *they* need in order to succeed and discuss important issues?
- Listen!
- Attend events, support clubs, show up at seminars that discuss important feminist diversity issues

Supporting Grassroots Initiatives

- Example: [#LawNeedsFeminismBecause](#)
 - Pan-Canadian legal feminist campaign
 - 1000+ portraits
 - 16 law schools
 - 3 national forums



#LawNeedsFeminismBecause

MEN WEAR SUITS
BUT WOMEN WEAR
"POWER SUITS"?



2019 NALP Annual Education Conference

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#LawNeedsFeminismBecause

you can be a great
lawyer AND a
great mother



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THERE IS
STRENGTH
IN DIVERSITY



#LawNeedsFeminismBecause

change can happen!
#metoo needs to be a
beginning, not an end.



Thank you!

Contact Information

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