

# ACE WOMEN'S Network™ Michigan

***Mentoring Mondays***  
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“The too much/not enough divide is another of those ‘damned if you do, damned if you don’t’ double binds that frequently plague women, and become more problematic as you move to a higher level.” This is yet another situation where women have to deal with balance in the workplace – juggling our emotions, words, and behaviors. Let’s look at the next habit that we, as women, are encouraged to break as we move up the leadership ladder.

## **Habit 10: Too Much**

These two small words “too much” have the potential of derailing your career. Most likely, you are unaware that you have been categorized in such a manner. Have you ever gotten feedback that you “came on too strong or too intense” in a meeting? Women often hear these types of comments. Below are some of the “too much” categories that can be landmines for women:

**Too much emotion:** Marshall has observed during his work with male clients that “. . . anger is the emotion most likely to get in their way. Successful men who lash out in anger often justify doing so as a ‘useful management tool.’ They imagine it’s an effective way to motivate sluggish employees and send a strong message about the importance of whatever is at stake. Women are more likely to display strong emotion in the form of anxiety, resentment, frustration, or fear. And the expression of these painful sensations is the primary reason many women get tagged as being volatile or too emotional.” From this explanation, are we then to conclude that men are intentional and women simply react?

To be clear, what you feel is not the problem. “Speaking while in the grip of strong emotion is usually a bad practice. Your perceptions may be distorted . . . you overstate your case . . . and come across as touchy or out of control. To recap: Feeling and identifying your emotion gives you power. Reacting to what you feel squanders it.” Ideally, you want to “respond in a way that is powerful, confident, measured and authentic, explicitly rooted in emotion (*passion*) yet expressed in terms that appeal to logic and common sense.”

**Too many words:** “Research shows that women speak an average of 20,000 words a day while men typically speak around 7,000.” Typical thoughts about too many words include: takes too much time to get to the point; speaking in sentences instead of bullets; over-explaining; etc.

Such wordiness can be caused by insecurity, but it is often a counter-productive habit rooted in behavior that may reflect your greatest strengths. The challenge in becoming a more effective communicator is to retain these strengths while addressing the habits that undermine you.” The suggested solution – be concise – be succinct – focus on what is most essential. This takes preparation and practice.

Referring to a case study, the authors noted this comment from one of the leaders, “The women in our company are great, but a lot of them over-communicate. . . . There’s a definite male tone in meetings here, an expectation that people will be very crisp and never say anything superfluous. It is seen as being professional and authoritative. Now I see women signaling one another when they hear phrases like, ‘let me give you a little background.’ That kind of support is really making a difference.

**Too much disclosure:** “Women who over-disclose usually do so for one or two reasons. Either they assume that building good relationships and finding common ground requires the sharing of personal information or they’re convinced that being authentic depends on disclosure. Women deploy personal information as the primary means of bonding with one another. By contrast, men rarely build relationships by exchanging intimacies . . . . In fact, men are most likely to bond with one another by doing things together, often in highly competitive situations. So a subtle (or not so subtle) one-upmanship often characterizes male bonding.”

“Workplace cultural standards around the world have been almost entirely set by men, especially at the leadership level. . . . Disclosure represents a landmine for many women . . . “and it’s a trap most likely to ensnare women who may feel encouraged to abandon qualities of professionalism and discretion in the pursuit of being fully authentic – being your “real self.”

Consider the benefits of “being real” vs “being professional” if there is a distinct difference between the two in your behavior. Is one behavior “too much?”

To secure your copy of “*How Women Rise*” by Sally Helgensen and Marshall Goldsmith, visit [www.hatchettbooks.com](http://www.hatchettbooks.com).