

Being an "Only" As a Senior-Level Woman at Work

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SISO Executive Women's Forum



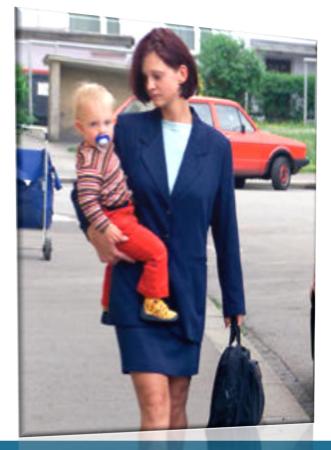
Today's Focus

- Challenges senior women face when we are an "Only"
- Strategies and best practices for dealing with the "Only" challenge





Women share experiences in organizations that men don't have, including:



- unconscious bias
- Subtle gender discrimination
- balancing work and family life

Being an Only

- As we advance, many become an "Only"
- "Only" women who are often or always the only female in the room at work.
- (Anyone here today?)
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New Research by LeanIn.org and McKinsey

- Surveyed 64,000 women in 279 companies and found that 1 in 5 (20%) are "onlys."
- This finding rises to 40% for women in senior or technical roles.



Research Findings: Onlys Face More Challenges Than Other Women

- Half reported that they need to provide more evidence of competence.
- Onlys are twice as likely as other women to be mistaken for someone more junior.



They are twice as likely to be subjected to demeaning comments.

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Research Findings: Onlys Face More Challenges Than Other Women

☑ They are twice as likely to report being sexually harassed at some point in their careers.



The situation is worse for women of color who are Onlys by both race and gender.

AND Onlys can become exhausted and come to doubt themselves.

Case Study: The Story of Isabelle





Table Discussion

What resonates with you?





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Strategies: Why We Need Women's Support

Networking vs. Cliques (National Academy of Science)

- Men are told to develop a broad network and avoid cliques.
- Research shows this works for men, but not for women.
- Success for women lies with having a broad network AND a clique of women -- an inner circle of 2 or 3.
- 77% of the highest-achieving women had strong ties with a clique.

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 Each woman in the clique serves as a bridge to a vast number of connections.

Strategies: Why We Need Women's Support

- To help keep our grounding and balance in the face of unconscious bias, subtle gender discrimination, and the challenges of balancing work and family life.
- For validation: "no, you are not crazy or alone."
- To help us strategize about ways to deal with the challenges of being an Only.
- To help us stay focused on our goals and not on the "side show" of organizational life as an Only.
- Women lean toward "tend and befriend" in difficult circumstances; men tend to either quit or push through alone because of differences in our socialization (Boston Marathon story).

What Support Can Look Like

- → Networking meetings where common interests are discovered
- → UP-TO-SOMETHING groups where women come and pitch their ideas for projects, goals, or promotions and other women offer ways they can be supportive, such as an introduction to a resource, sharing of expertise, etc.
- → Book groups for professional development
- → Sharing and celebrating accomplishments



What Support Can Look Like (Continued)

- → Sharing best practices
- → Strategizing for advancement or salary negotiations
- → Peer mentoring/coaching
- → Arranging speakers for professional development





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TABLE DISCUSSIONS

<u>Table Group</u>: Share Best Practices for dealing with being an "Only" *(15 Minutes)*





TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Individually: Complete your Action Plan

Pairs: Share your action plans

Commit (and plan) one phone call to follow up and hold each other accountable for your action plans.

Wrap-up: Table Reports





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