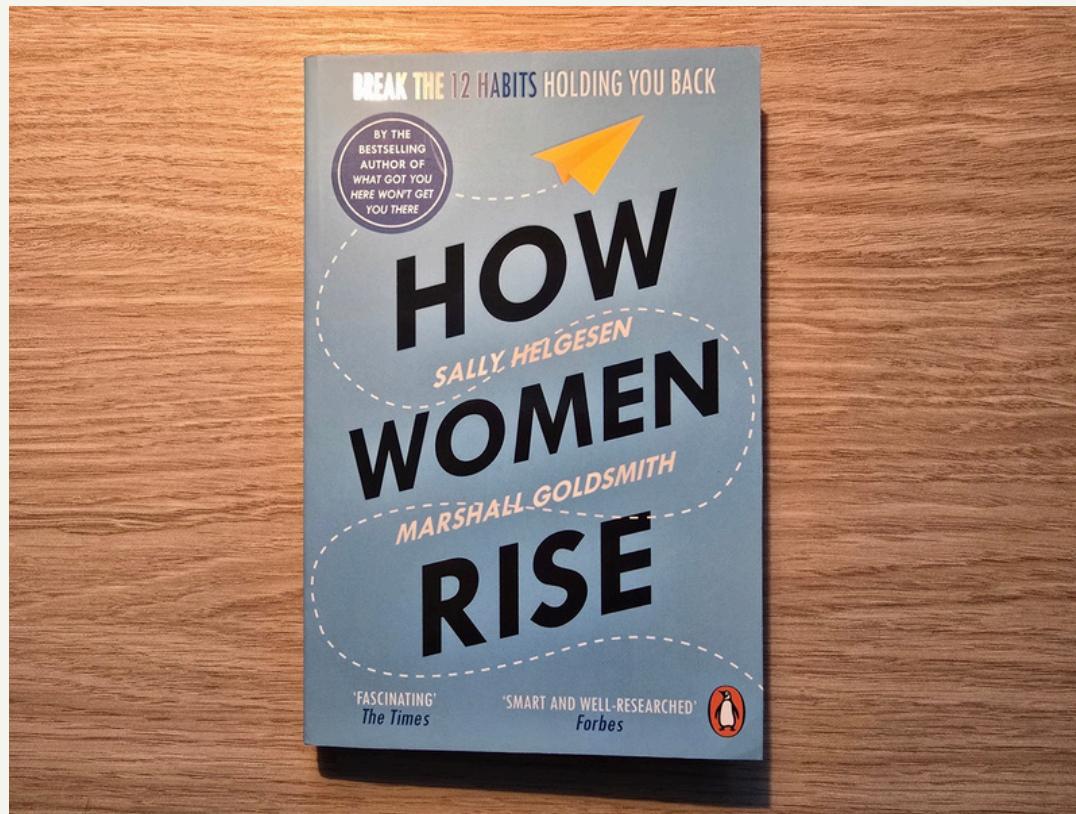


HOW WOMEN RISE

Essential Lessons for Overcoming Self-Doubt



Have you ever felt overlooked at work, despite working just as hard as everyone else? You're not alone and you're not imagining it.

In this article, discover the hidden habits that could be holding you back, and how you move forward with confidence.

INTRODUCTION

As someone deeply committed to supporting professional women in overcoming confidence challenges, especially those stemming from imposter syndrome, both in 1:1 coaching and through our group coaching programme, **✨Elevate Her✨**, I'm always seeking resources that offer practical, evidence-based guidance.

One book that stands out in this regard is *How Women Rise* by **Sally Helgesen** (an internationally acclaimed speaker and consultant who specialises in helping women achieve their potential in the workplace) and **Marshall Goldsmith** (widely recognised as the world's most influential leadership expert).

The book addresses the unique habits and behaviours that can hinder women's career advancement and provides strategies for recognising and overcoming tendencies such as - reluctance to claim achievements to perfectionism and overvaluing expertise - **empowering you to unlock your full potential and thrive in leadership roles.** It's a must-read if you are aspiring to break through career barriers.



KEY INSIGHTS

Here I share my take on each of the 12 habits from the book and strategies for overcoming them:

Reluctance to claim your achievements - instead of downplaying these, learn how to confidently communicate your accomplishments. If it feels uncomfortable, focus on the facts.

Expecting others to spontaneously notice and reward your contributions - unfortunately it is often a case of 'those who shout the loudest' so think about investing in some proactive self-promotion. If it feels uncomfortable, start small.

Overvaluing expertise - in your early career the focus was very much on technical mastery but as you progress developing your strategic visibility will benefit your career far more. Think about developing your network, understanding the business' long-term strategic goals and how you can contribute to these.

Building rather than leveraging relationships - whilst women typically excel at relationship-building, you might be reluctant to use your connections to advance your career - reframing this can help to overcome this hurdle. Connect / leverage with generosity - be reciprocal.



KEY INSIGHTS

Failing to enlist allies from day one - it can be really tough transitioning into a career or new role but cultivating alliances early on can help build your confidence and network. If this feels daunting, think about an opportunity to cross paths or get an introduction that feels more natural.

Putting your job before your career - ever demanding roles with fewer resources means that your long-term growth could be at risk due to you focusing solely on current responsibilities so have a clear career goal and plan and revisit it regularly. Check in with an accountability buddy.

The perfection trap - it's a falsehood. Striving for perfection impedes your progress by creating unnecessary stress and risk of burnout. Learn to develop a 'good enough' mindset. Again, think about an accountability buddy if you're struggling with this one.

The disease to please - having a tendency to seek approval, often comes at the expense of your personal boundaries and priorities so learning to develop a healthier relationship with saying 'no' and managing boundaries supports wellbeing. Start small, try to say 'no' or renegotiate once a week.



KEY INSIGHTS

Minimising - your language and body language could unintentionally be diminishing your authority and presence so become consciously aware of this, ask for feedback, watch others in action. Do you have a role model? Watch their body language and listen to their language. Which of their strategies can you adopt?

Too much - break the cycle of over-preparation and over-delivery (often a sign of imposter syndrome) so that you can focus on what truly matters - acknowledge progress over perfection. Think back to adopting a 'good enough' mindset.

Ruminating - learn how to move forward constructively instead of dwelling on past setbacks. Everyone makes mistakes and nobody has all the answers. You can't control what's already passed so focus your energy on what you can control and influence.

Letting your radar distraction you - women typically have a heightened awareness and your ability to notice a lot of things at once can be hugely distracting and result in you losing focus and/or taking on others' problems so again, learn how to channel this productively so that you can focus on what truly matters.

MY MAIN TAKEAWAYS



1. Update old 'scripts' that no longer serve you.
2. Adopting a growth mindset is key.
3. Reframing continues to be a powerful technique.
4. Neuroplasticity means you can create better habits.
5. Remember to pause - practice gratitude, tracking all the small wins.

🧠 PERSONAL REFLECTION - *why these lessons matter*

Research shows that **imposter syndrome affects circa. 70% of people** at some stage during their life so if you work with or support professional women, or aspire to grow as a female leader, How Women Rise offers invaluable insight. It's a resource I recommend wholeheartedly to anyone committed to breaking through barriers and realising their full potential.

Many of the habits outlined in How Women Rise resonate with my own personal experience. Each of them has shown up at various stages of my earlier career and I can say without a doubt, they held me back at the time. For a very long time, I didn't realise that I was experiencing imposter syndrome. **I felt like the odd one out, I felt alone and frustrated at missing out on great opportunities (self-imposed).** Once I learnt about imposter syndrome, understood where it stemmed from and that I could overcome it through a variety of strategies, it was hugely liberating.

YOUR INVITATION TO REFLECT

(Qs taken from the book)



- ❓ Where are you right now in your work and your career?
- ❓ Are you in a place that feels satisfying and gives scope to your talents?
- ❓ Are you valued not just for your contributions but also for your potential?
- ❓ Do you feel your work is leading to a place that will satisfy your ambitions and help you make the difference you want to make in the world?
- ❓ If not, which of the 12 habits are holding you back the most?



ACTION PLANNING

(Headings taken from the book - strategies from my own practice)

✓ **Start with one thing** - choose one of the 12 setbacks to develop. Write down an overarching goal and build a consistent system of habits that will lead you there. This is more sustainable than focusing on the end result. Take a leaf from James Clear's Atomic Habits book - aim to be just 1% better each day. Small, incremental changes compound over time and are more likely to lead to significant results.

❓ Connect with your goal emotionally - why is it so important to you? What will it enable you to do? Why's that important to you?

✓ **Don't do it alone** - with the greatest will, consciously making changes to ingrained thoughts and habits is difficult and we naturally revert to type so having a support network, accountability buddy or coach will increase your likelihood of success. Someone who can gently challenge your negative thought patterns and reluctance to take action.

❓ Who do you trust in your network? Who are your cheerleaders?



ACTION PLANNING

 **Let go of judgement** - instead of giving yourself a hard time, practice self-compassion by treating yourself with the same kindness you show to others. Use mindfulness to observe your thoughts without judgment, and challenge negative thoughts by questioning their validity and focusing on the evidence and your strengths. An effective strategy is journaling - write down your thoughts, look for emerging patterns, notice what and when, think about how you can reframe them into something more compassionate.

 **What got you here** - Marshall Goldsmith often talks about "what got you here, won't get you there". I love this - this was a lightbulb moment for me when I moved from full-time employment to running my own business. 'The skills, behaviours, and attitudes that led to your current success may not be sufficient or appropriate for achieving future, higher-level goals. To reach the next stage of success, you must adapt, learn new skills (especially people skills), and unlearn old, unhelpful habits.'

 Who do you want to be?

 What do you want to be doing?

 What do you need to develop to get there?

CONCLUSION

Many of the habits also show up for a lot of my 1:1 coaching clients. By using the 12 habits as a framework, I help my clients identify which habits are holding them back, and we **co-create strategies** to overcome them.

Similarly, in our **Elevate Her** programme for aspiring female leaders, we reference these habits to facilitate group discussions, self-reflection, and peer support. Participants gain clarity on the patterns shaping their career journeys, and together we cultivate practical skills for self-advocacy, leadership, and resilience.

The book's actionable advice provides a shared language for growth helping aspiring leaders step into their strengths and rise together.

If you're wondering what's holding you back in your career or you're aware of what is but unsure of how to tackle it, this book is an easy read and provides you with a **framework** to explore your thoughts and feelings, as well as being able to develop some helpful strategies.

Remember, you're not alone and you don't have to do it on your own. 

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