

WOMEN professionals in a STEM FIELD

This resource is for women who work in a STEM field. **It includes communication strategies, information on attrition among women in the STEM work force, and tips on successfully balancing work and home life.**

Women face many unique challenges when working in fields dominated by men. Communication can be a real struggle if you find yourself surrounded by a room full of boisterous men. Below are some strategies to employ to ensure you have your voice, and your ideas, heard!

- Pump up the volume! Speak loudly enough to be heard in a noisy room.
- Jump right in. Don't be afraid to dive into a conversation when you have something to say. Sitting back silently does nothing for you or your future within the company.
- Get outside of your comfort zone. Make yourself get involved in experiences that are challenging. Pushing yourself in situations outside of work will have a positive impact on overcoming the communication obstacle in front of you.
- Speak to crowds. Get involved with public speaking through Toastmasters or another group. Facing your stage fright in a public arena will help you communicate more effectively in smaller groups with your colleagues.
- Speak with groups of your peers. Join a professional organization or sit on a board. You will be given the opportunity to express your opinion in

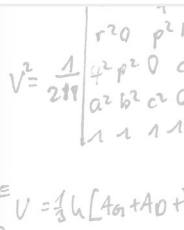
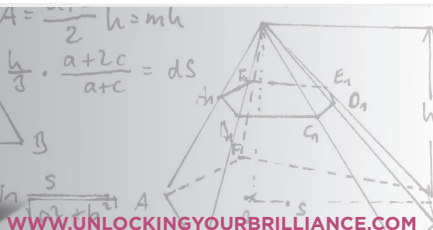
front of others in a safe environment, which will bolster your confidence in your work environment.

- Practice, practice, practice! Take each and any opportunity presented to you to speak with or to people about your area of expertise. This will help you feel more capable and at ease when in an uncomfortable setting with your male colleagues. You know your stuff, so don't be afraid to say so!

Alongside the problem of attracting more women to STEM fields of study and work is getting women to stay in their chosen STEM field long term. Women leave their jobs in STEM at higher rates than women in other fields and then men in similar fields. Below are the top reasons why this happens and a list of ways to help overcome this hurdle and stay in the career you've worked so hard to create.

Why do we leave?

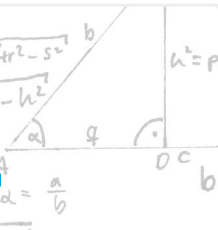
- Women encounter bias in the workplace, including the ability to rise through the ranks as quickly as men with promotions
- Long hours, heavy travel requirements and inflexible schedules that do not mesh well with family life



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- Work environments that are uncivil or even hostile towards women
- Perception of or actual bias in pay scales for women versus men
- A feeling of isolation and lack of mentorship

What can we do to help us keep our STEM career?

- When a position opens up that you want to be considered for, ask for it! Aggressively pursue advancement if that is truly what you want and if you are the best candidate for the job you will get it. If you feel you are being slighted based on your sex, go to the person hiring for the position and ask if they can provide some feedback as to why you weren't chosen. If there really isn't a good reason, you may be right and can talk to someone internally about the issue.
- Speak to management about flexible work hours or reducing your travel requirements before submitting your resignation. Work out the details on how you would continue meeting your responsibilities for your employer and build a strong case that they will find difficult to deny.
- If you find yourself in a workplace culture that is uncivil or demeaning, stand up and speak out. You don't have to confront your attackers directly, though that is certainly an option. If you are uncomfortable calling attention to the misbehavior of others in public, speak confidentially to HR or your superior to get the issues addressed.
- If you are performing well in your job and it is economically feasible for the company to offer it, ask

for a raise. Do your research to determine what the market rate is for a job like yours with a similarly sized organization. If your pay falls far short and you have experience and a successful track record, you have a good case for asking for more.

- Find and develop a relationship with a mentor in your field. Many women site lack of mentorship as the primary reason they leave their job in STEM. Having a supportive relationship with a mentor can make all the difference when things get tough in your career.

Achieving Work/Life Balance in Your STEM Career

If you decide to have a family, the additional responsibilities that come along with that decision can make for a hectic and demanding schedule. Below are some tips to help you have a happy work and home life.

- Rely on your spouse to share equally in the home responsibilities. You are a super woman, but you don't need to take on everything alone.
- Set aside time for yourself and make it a priority each and every week, at least.
- Stay healthy with good eating habits and regular exercise. You are going to need all the energy these practices can provide and more.
- Maintain flexibility. Know that the only constant in your schedule as your family grows is that it will be constantly changing.
- Foster a loving, supportive relationship with your spouse by making time for one another on a regular basis. Get a babysitter and get out together!

