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The Power of Presence: How Women Leaders Can Transform Cultures, Break Barriers, and Build Legacies

Carlotta Gabriele*

Department of Nursing, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia

*Correspondence to: Carlotta Gabriele, Department of Nursing, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, E-mail: cgabby72@yahoo.com

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership doesn't always announce itself with a title. Sometimes it begins in a quiet moment—the one when you decide you will no longer sit silently when change is needed. I learned this early in my nursing career, long before “Director” was attached to my name. It happened the day I watched a brilliant nurse's voice be dismissed in a meeting because she was “too passionate.” I spoke up. It wasn't easy, but it was necessary. And that moment was a turning point, not just for her, but for me.

I have carried that same conviction through my roles as a nurse leader, an author, a speaker, a coach, a mother, and an advocate for women. In each role, I've seen the same truth: leadership is less about the position you hold and more about the presence you bring.

Defining Leadership as a Woman

For generations, leadership has been framed in ways that didn't always reflect the natural strengths of women— strengths like empathy, collaboration, and adaptability. Too often, these qualities were labeled “soft skills,” as if they were less valuable than decisiveness or authority. But in reality, these very traits are the foundation for transformational leadership.

Women bring a holistic perspective to the table. We lead not only with strategy but with heart. We don't just manage processes—we nurture people, foster growth, and build environments where others can thrive.

Lessons from the Journey

Over the years, I've led initiatives that transformed toxic workplace cultures into healthy, high-performing teams. I've seen processes improve not because of policy alone, but because of relationships, trust, and vision. Here are four principles I've learned:

Presence Over Position

Your influence is not defined by your title. It is defined by your consistency, integrity, and ability to show up—even when no one is watching.

Courage to Challenge

Real change requires respectfully disrupting systems that no longer serve people. Speak up not just for yourself, but for those whose voices aren't heard.

Vision and Voice

Leadership means casting a clear vision, then using your voice to rally others around it. Never underestimate the power of a well-timed, well-spoken word.

Legacy Building

The greatest leaders think beyond their tenure. They lead in ways that make it easier for the women coming after them to step into their own power.

Leading Like a Mother

Motherhood has been one of my greatest leadership classrooms. As a mother of three high-achieving children a teacher, a nurse, and a soon-to-be college freshman I've learned that leading is not just about directing, but about nurturing, advocating, and creating safe spaces for growth.

The same principles apply in the workplace. Leading like a mother means:

- Protecting your team while pushing them to grow.
- Holding high expectations with empathy.
- Building trust through presence and follow-through.

Your Leadership Toolkit

If you are ready to lead with more intention, here are practical ways to start:

- Begin each day with reflection. Ask yourself: “How will I show up today in a way that aligns with my values?”

- Use your voice strategically. Don't speak to be heard— speak to move things forward.
- Build your circle. Surround yourself with mentors, peers, and allies who challenge and support you.
- Prioritize self-care. Rest is a leadership strategy. You cannot pour from an empty cup.
- The world needs your vision. Your presence. Your voice.
- So stand tall. Speak up. Lead boldly.
- Your leadership isn't just for you—it's for every woman who will walk the path you are paving.

The Call to Lead

Leadership is not about waiting to be invited to the table. It's about having the courage to build your own table—and pulling up chairs for others.